

MAGILL'S CHOICE



Holocaust Literature

HOLOCAUST
LITERATURE

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HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

Volume 1

The Accident - Letters and Papers from Prison

Edited by
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The personal accounts are horrific beyond belief. Survivor David Bergman, a boy at the time of his first deportation to Auschwitz from Czechoslovakia, recalled how he was “crammed in an open cattle car with 150 living skeletons headed for another concentration camp”:

One by one they fell down and were trampled. After half died, it was possible to sit on the dead. Someone fell on me—he was dying. I hadn't had any food or water in four days. With all my remaining strength I pushed the body off and fell on top of him. He tried to push me away, but we were both too weak. In a final effort, he bit my leg and then died.

Survivor Alice Lok Cahana, from Hungary, recalled arriving at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp:

Nothing ever in literature could compare to anything that Bergen-Belsen was. When we arrived, the dead were not carried away any more, you stepped over them, you fell over them if you couldn't walk. There were agonizing . . . people begging for water. . . . Day and night. You couldn't escape the crying, you couldn't have escaped the praying, you couldn't escape the [cries of] “Mercy,” it was a chant, the chant of the dead. It was hell.

And of course, as Leo Schneiderman remembered, there were those who did not survive:

It was late at night that we arrived at Auschwitz. When we came in, the minute the gates opened up, we heard screams, barking of dogs, blows from . . . those Kapos, those officials working for them, over the head. And then we got out of the train. And everything went so fast: left, right, right, left. Men separated from women. Children torn from the arms of mothers. The elderly chased like cattle. The sick, the disabled were handled like packs of garbage. They were thrown in a side together with broken suitcases, with boxes. My mother ran over to me and grabbed me by the shoulders, and she told me “Leibele, I'm not going to see you no more. Take care of your brother.”

Between the rise of Nazi Germany in 1933 and the end of World War II in 1945, six million Jews—and hundreds of thousands of Roma Gypsies, disabled persons, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, communists, and others who did not fit the Nazi regime's plan for a “master Aryan race”—perished in a state-sponsored program of persecution and murder. Their civil rights, their human rights, and ultimately their lives were progres-

sively, and legally, relegated to nonhuman status. Now known as the Holocaust, this systematic destruction of “degenerates” lasted so long, reached so far, and destroyed so many that its horrors are hard for some to accept, both then and now. The world looked away while the evil spread. Even today, some self-described “revisionists” deny that the Holocaust ever took place.

State documents, however, remain; they list, in nauseating, bureaucratic detail, the statistics of death. Those who managed to survive have recorded their experiences on videotape and in oral histories maintained by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and other archives. And those who personally witnessed the hell of the Holocaust have generated a rich and thought-provoking body of memoirs, analyses, social criticism, novels, plays, and poetry to mark an event that threatened not only humankind but also humanity—the humanity of both the persecuted and the persecutors.

Holocaust Literature offers literature reviews of more than 100 core works about the Holocaust. In these two volumes, editor John K. Roth, Edward J. Sexton Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights at Claremont McKenna College, has succeeded in identifying the most important works on the Holocaust by both first- and second-generation survivors as well as by philosophers, novelists, poets, and playwrights reflecting on the Holocaust today.

Teachers and students will find the key works here, from Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl* to Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz*, Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, and Simon Wiesenthal’s *The Sunflower*. Core works of nonfiction—histories, biographies, memoirs, diaries, survivor testimonies, reflections on religion, philosophy, ethics—form two-thirds of the list, joined by literary fiction, poetry, and drama: classics such as Aharon Appelfeld’s *Badenheim 1939*, William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice*, and Yehuda Amichai’s *Open Closed Open*. Also represented are more recent works, such as Joshua Sobol’s play *Ghetto* (1984), Władysław Szpilman’s *The Pianist* (1999), Ian Kershaw’s two-volume biography *Hitler* (completed in 2000), Deborah E. Lipstadt’s *History on Trial* (2005), William T. Vollmann’s *Europe Central* (2005), and Heather Pringle’s *The Master Plan: Himmler’s Scholars and the Holocaust* (2006). The resulting set of essays introduces the literature of one of the defining events of our time, essential reading for all serious students of history, literature, social psychology, ethics, and philosophy.

Each volume includes a list of the major European concentration camps and a time line of Holocaust events. At the end of volume 2, three appen-

dixes point readers toward additional Holocaust literature and resources: a secondary "General Bibliography" of works about the Holocaust, a list of more than 200 additional works in "More Holocaust Literature," and a list of Web sites devoted to the Holocaust and/or Holocaust literature. Three finding aids round out the second volume: a Genre Index (works by genre and subgenre), a Title Index (complete list of contents), and an Author Index (works by author).

As the last survivors of the Holocaust grow into old age and pass on, the rich literary legacy of their experiences will remain to remind the world not only of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi state but also of the banality and efficiency of the evil that gives rise to such inhuman acts. They also leave us with the mandate to deny complacency in the face of modern genocide: in the Balkans, in Chechnya, in Rwanda, in Darfur, in terrorism driven by a variety of extremist ideologies. The literature of the Holocaust reminds us never to forget—what happened in Hitler's Germany, and also what can happen, is happening, now.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

WHEN ONLY WORDS REMAIN

If my life ends—what will become of my diary? (Chaim Kaplan, August 4, 1942)

Driven by twenty-first century threats of climate change and global warming, Alan Weisman published his profoundly thought-provoking book called *The World Without Us* (2007). Based on extensive scientific, anthropological, and historical research, Weisman's work invites readers to consider what would happen to Planet Earth if human life disappeared completely. Over time, Weisman asks, how would the natural world change? As centuries and millennia pass, what traces of human existence, if any, would remain?

Humanity, Weisman emphasizes, has arrived in the cosmos recently, at least if one considers how long the galaxies and earlier life-forms existed before anything resembling human life evolved. The emergence of that life made history. Consciousness of past, present, and future grew and expanded. Eventually, human memory led to the recording of experience in storytelling, art, writing, and then through contemporary forms of communication such as radio, film, television, and the Internet. People became linked together ever more closely. In time's eons, however, these developments are but brief episodes. Long after human beings have come and probably gone, the universe will continue.

Anyone who reads *The World Without Us* becomes newly aware that, in the cosmic scheme of things, one's life and the existence of one's people, nation, culture, or religion may turn out to be insignificant. Weisman's purpose, however, is not to argue that humanity's existence lacks importance and meaning. On the contrary, while urging us to gain perspective about our finite place in reality, he wants people to feel deeply that our humanity is distinctive and precious, that what we think and do makes a huge difference not only in history but also because human activity has awesome implications for our world's environment and even for the vast universe that is Earth's home and ours as well.

Weisman wants his readers to understand that humanity has done great harm in and to the world. There may well be ways, he suggests, in which the world would be better off without human beings who consume, even ravage and destroy, its natural splendor. His predominant points, however, are that nature has immense recuperative power and that too much of irretrievable value would be lost if the world were really to exist without us. What is needed, he urges, is a renewed sense of respect, rever-

ence, and responsibility for the gift of life and the wondrous universe in which it moves and has its being.

The World Without Us does not concentrate on the Holocaust, the subject of the entries in this two-volume set, *Magill's Choice: Holocaust Literature*. Nevertheless, there are links between these two works; the implications that they have for each other are noteworthy. First, Weisman's thought experiment leads to reflection on the significance of history and on the importance of particular events within it. A part of his analysis indicates that human consciousness may eventually disappear from reality. If that happened, history would be null and void; arguably, it would be as if no particular event had happened, because historical awareness, and in that sense history itself, depends on memory. Historical documents would decay, artifacts would erode, places would eventually disappear virtually without a trace. If anything human did remain—Weisman thinks plastics of various kinds are among the human artifacts that have the best prospect of lasting longest—the chances of detecting their meaning would probably be slim or none. By this cosmic standard, no human event, including the Holocaust, looms very large.

At the same time, if people are to heed Weisman's urgently needed call for a renewed sense of respect, reverence, and responsibility for the gift of life, then the Holocaust and memory of it loom very large indeed. A key reason for that assertion is that Adolf Hitler, his German followers, and their allies engaged in much more than a thought experiment when they launched their genocide against the Jewish people and other so-called inferior groups. From 1933 to 1945, they acted on their anti-Semitic and racist creed with an arrogant tenacity. That creed entailed that it would be better for their world, indeed for the world as a whole, if entire human groups were consigned to oblivion. What followed was a systematic, bureaucratic, unrelenting, state-sponsored process of destruction that, under the cover of World War II, annihilated two-thirds of Europe's approximately nine million Jews and millions of other defenseless children, women, and men as well.

Nazi Germany's genocidal project was not entirely successful, but as the essays in this book make clear, its aims came too close for comfort. If there is not to be a world without us, then we ignore the Holocaust at our peril because disrespect for the particularity and diversity of human existence harbors selfishness, insensitivity, and hubris, which, in turn, can spark devastating violence, none of which makes humanity fit for survival.

As the pages in this book reveal, the Holocaust has much to teach us. One thing that can be learned from that event and this book is that many Jews—the murdered ones as well as those who survived—wrote about

what happened to them and their families. As those diaries and memoirs describe an unremitting catastrophe, they frequently include observations about the seasons of the year, the weather, the sky, and other features of the natural world. *Night*, Elie Wiesel's famous Holocaust memoir, is a case in point. Narrating how the Holocaust engulfed his family and community, dispatching them to enslavement and murder in Auschwitz, that text repeatedly notes small but significant seasonal details as time went from the spring of 1944 to the spring of 1945. A collection of Wiesel's comments illustrates that their combination can be poetic, even as such words form a jarring context in which genocide is embedded:

Spring 1944. . . . The trees were in bloom.
The eight days of Passover. The weather was sublime.
Some two weeks before Shavuot. A sunny spring day . . .
All this under a magnificent blue sky.
A summer sun.
The lucky ones found themselves near a window; they could watch the
 blooming countryside flit by.
The night had passed completely. The morning star shone in the sky.
It was a beautiful day in May. The fragrances of spring were in the air. The
 sun was setting.
"All of creation bears witness to the Greatness of God."
Winter had arrived.
An icy wind was blowing violently.
Snow was falling heavily.

Taken by themselves in this listing, removed as the individual descriptions are from the context in which they appear within Wiesel's *Night*, these references to the natural environment are entirely ordinary. In fact, however, they are an extraordinary contrast and backdrop to the events that make *Night* as ominous as it is unforgettable. One more brief passage from Wiesel's testimony makes this point in a particularly powerful way: "Never shall I forget," writes Wiesel, "the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky." That sentence is part of a tipping point in *Night*, for upon Wiesel's entry to Birkenau, the part of Auschwitz that was both the arrival point for his deportation transport and the main killing center in the vast Auschwitz camp complex, he was forever changed as he saw children, alive and dead, thrown into flaming pits and consumed. "Never shall I forget," he repeats seven times. "Never shall I forget those things, even were I condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never."

Night's descriptions of nature anticipate, foreshadow, or help to recall

what Wiesel cannot forget and what human beings should remember as a warning if there is not to be a world without us. There are at least three dimensions to these relationships.

First, at times the beauty of nature contrasts markedly with the brutality that human beings inflict. That brutality includes cattle-car deportations to human-created places of human-created degradation, filth, starvation, disease, death-dealing labor, violence, murder, and graves unmarked, often massive but also nonexistent because corpses were turned into smoke and ash, traversing and permeating in ways unseen but real nonetheless the earth's atmosphere and the air people have breathed. Second, in *Night's* descriptions, nature sometimes appears to be conspiratorial in compounding the suffering that the Jews experienced at the hands of their German captors. Particularly the extreme heat of summer or the icy cold of winter diminished life chances for those who had no protection against the weather's extremes. Even more pronounced, a third implication in *Night* is that nature was indifferent to the Jewish plight during the Holocaust. The sun rose and set, twilight gave way to night and then to morning, the stars shone and the moon beamed, the seasons passed, the earth stayed in its orbit while devastation raged and seemed to make no difference in nature's order. Yet, it is possible that a fourth dimension exists in these relationships as well, for we may miss much of what can be learned from the Holocaust if we overlook how that event did and should affect the natural environment that is our home.

Specifically, while ours may be a world where contemporary concerns (global warming, for instance, or the ongoing war against terrorists) loom so large that attention to the Holocaust sometimes seems beside the point, it remains the case that we ought not to ignore the Holocaust, let alone forget it. If we remember well, Holocaust-related memories will impel us to bear witness for the living and the dead in ways that protest against and resist the forces that lay waste to human well-being. In addition, this protest and resistance will be less than fully responsible if we do not recognize and respond effectively to the fact that caring for our natural environment is crucial. If we fail to remember the Holocaust, we lose a resource that can help to ensure that there will not be a world without us.

Such concerns and hopes include other Holocaust-related connections. Consider, for example, that a teacher of Hebrew named Chaim Kaplan kept a journal in the Warsaw ghetto. Dated August 4, 1942, the final line in its last entry asks a question: "If my life ends—what will become of my diary?" Kaplan sensed that there was nothing hypothetical about the first part of his uncertainty. No "if" existed; it was only a matter of "when." And "when" was soon. By the end of that month, Kaplan had been mur-

dered in the gas chambers at Treblinka, a Nazi killing center northeast of Warsaw. About 800,000 Jews were gassed to death there.

The only open part of Kaplan's question was "what will become of my diary?" That issue was not on Kaplan's mind alone. Diaries—thousands of them, Anne Frank's among the best known—were kept by men, women, and children wherever the Nazi scourge targeted Jews. It is likely that some version of Kaplan's question was asked by most of those writers.

A picture, it is often said, is worth a thousand words. Yet neither the haunting silence of melodies that have disappeared nor the speechless power of line and color or of a photograph can substitute for words. Especially during the Holocaust, words were the most available resource for recording what had to be remembered. Whether spoken or written, they could give the dying a lasting voice. Focusing on the written testimony, we cannot know how many eyewitness accounts have been lost forever. Those that survived make one wonder how they did. Smuggled, buried, occasionally just left behind—some of these scrolls of agony resurfaced, many of them from people who did not survive the Holocaust. These include the testimonies of Janusz Korczak, who accompanied the children of his orphanage to their deaths at Treblinka, and Emmanuel Ringelblum, who coordinated *Oneg Shabbat*, the historical archive in the Warsaw ghetto, as well as the tragic witness borne in writings buried by Jews in the *Sonderkommando*, who had to burn the bodies of their fellow Jews before their own lives were consumed in the flames of Auschwitz. Linked with their company are survivors such as Primo Levi and Jean Améry, Charlotte Delbo and Ruth Klüger, to mention only a few, who have groped for words to write memoirs that tell as directly as possible what happened, disappeared, and remained.

In addition, there are other writers—some of them survivors, others who were not in the Holocaust, still others who were and did not survive—who have enlisted the characters of fiction, the cadences of verse, the analyses of historical research, the insights of philosophical and religious reflection to respond to the catastrophe that engulfed European Jewry and other populations targeted by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Such work constitutes what can be called Holocaust literature. That category includes books and essays—historical, philosophical, and religious—as well as diaries and autobiographical accounts of eyewitnesses, in addition to those works of poetry and prose fiction that are substantively governed by the Jewish plight under Hitler. As the entries in this book illustrate, Holocaust literature at its best underscores especially well the major implications and lingering questions that are fundamental for anyone who studies the Holocaust with the respect and concern that its history deserves.

Just as Holocaust literature includes diverse genres, its authors represent varied nationalities and traditions, and they write in different languages as well. Many, though by no means all, are Jewish, but even that shared identity promotes a broad stylistic spectrum. Permeating the diversity, however, are issues that these writers and their interpreters, including the authors of the essays found here, confront in common. They invite their readers to wrestle with them too. Despite their literary gifts, nearly all of these authors feel a profound ambivalence, one that is shared by the best Holocaust historians as well as by the most able poets, novelists, philosophers, and theologians who write about this event and its aftereffects: It is impossible to write adequately about the Holocaust; yet that task must be attempted. They regard themselves as less than fully equipped to do such work; yet they are compelled to try. The corresponding tension for a sensitive reader—at least for one who was not “there”—is between an effort to understand and an awareness that, at least to some extent, the Holocaust eludes representation, let alone full comprehension.

These dilemmas have multiple dimensions. The Holocaust, for example, outstrips imagination. It is one thing to be creative when the possibilities open to imagination exceed what has become real. It is quite another to find that reality has already given birth to persons, places, and events that defy imagining. “Normal men,” observed a survivor named David Rousset, “do not know that everything is possible.”

Perhaps history, including Weisman’s book *The World Without Us*, prepares post-Holocaust minds to be more accepting of the idea that “everything is possible.” Nonetheless, how is one to comprehend that the Nazi way included “idealism” that did not merely permit torture and murder but commanded that they occur day and night? So a problem remains: Can poetry or prose—in essay or fictional forms—help one to know what really happened, in its concreteness and detail, and to cope with its impact? There are no metaphors or adequate analogies for the Holocaust. Nor, arguably, can Auschwitz appropriately be a metaphor or an analogy for anything else. If those realizations inform the ambivalence of those who write poetry or reflective and analytical prose about the Holocaust, still they must feel that their expressions are at least potentially capable of communicating something urgent that can be said in no other way. But that conviction makes their task no easier, and when a reader works to grasp what the best of the Holocaust writers say, he or she will sense how the Holocaust makes those writers struggle with words. How can words tell the truth, describe what must be portrayed, convey and yet control emotion so that clear insights will emerge? Every sensitive and imaginative author faces such questions, but they become unusually demanding when one en-

gages the Holocaust. Now words and art forms must be used against themselves, because they are unable to say all that is required, and yet no other resources can substitute for them.

When writers emphasize the impossibility of communicating the realities of the Holocaust via words, they are sometimes accused of mystifying that event. They either make the Holocaust so exceptional that it loses contact with the rest of human history, the argument goes, or they obscure and becloud it in rhetoric that invests the Holocaust with a mythical or mystical aura that opposes lucid, rational analysis. Critical opinion may reach varied verdicts on those charges where different authors and works are concerned, but the works explored in these pages do not pull the Holocaust out of worldly reality. On the contrary, they are rooted both in the enormity of human loss brought about by the Holocaust and in the need to retrieve whatever can be left of a human future after Auschwitz has exposed the illusory quality of so many cherished assumptions.

When only words remain, the Holocaust-related themes they emphasize—including survival, honesty, bearing witness, and protest—help to reveal what can and ought to be communicated about the Holocaust and its reverberations. Doing so, such reflection reminds us of much that needs to be remembered if we are to care well for a world that, we should hope, will not be without us.

—*John K. Roth*

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NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

This partial list of Nazi concentration camps shows the location and the estimated number of deaths that occurred at each.

<i>Camp</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Estimated Deaths</i>
Amersfoort	Amersfoort, Netherlands	1,000
Auschwitz-Birkenau	Oświęcim, Poland	1,100,000
Belżec	Belżec, Poland	435,000 to 600,000
Bergen-Belsen	Near Celle, Germany	35,000
Buchenwald	Near Weimar, Germany	56,000
Chełmno	Chełmno, Poland	152,000 to 320,000
Dachau	Dachau, Germany	28,000 to 32,000
Flossenbürg	Near Nuremberg, Germany	30,000
Gross-Rosen	Gross-Rosen, Germany (now in Poland)	40,000
Janowska	L'viv, Poland (now in Ukraine)	At least 40,000
Jasenovac	Jasenovac, Croatia	700,000
Koldichevo	Baranovichi, Belarus	20,000
Majdanek	Lublin, Poland	360,000
Mauthausen	Mauthausen, Austria	119,000
Mittelbau/Dora	Near Nordhausen, Germany	20,000
Natzweiler-Struthof	Natzweiler, France	At least 17,000
Neuengamme	Near Hamburg, Germany	At least 50,000
Plaszów	Kraków, Poland	At least 9,000
Ravensbrück	Near Berlin, Germany	90,000
Risiera di San Sabba	Near Trieste, Italy	5,000
Sachsenhausen	Near Berlin, Germany	At least 30,000
Sobibór	Sobibór, Poland	167,000 to 250,000
Soldau	Działdowo, Poland	13,000
Stutthof	Sztutowo, Poland	At least 60,000
Theresienstadt	Terezín, Czechoslovakia	33,000
Treblinka	Treblinka, Poland	870,000 to 925,000
Warsaw	Warsaw, Poland	200,000

HOLOCAUST CHRONOLOGY

1933

- Jan. 30 Adolf Hitler is appointed chancellor of Germany by German president Paul von Hindenburg.
- Feb. 3 Hitler presents his *Lebensraum* program, in which he argues that Germany needs more “living room” and should find it in the East.
- Feb. 27 The Reichstag (German parliament) building is set on fire.
- Mar. 20 The first concentration camp is established at Dachau, near Munich, Germany. The camp opens in June.
- Mar. 23 The Enabling Act is adopted, giving Hitler the legislative authority to assume dictatorial powers.
- Apr. 1 The Sturm Abteilung (SA), the paramilitary organization of the Nazi Party, begins a boycott of all Jewish businesses, physicians, and attorneys. Jews in Germany are barred from attending universities.
- Apr. 7 A law is adopted that prevents Jews from holding civil service jobs, except for veterans who fought on the front lines in World War I. This is the first of about four hundred anti-Semitic laws that will be enacted in Nazi Germany.
- Apr. 11 Laws defining “Aryans” and “non-Aryans” are adopted. “Non-Aryans” include anyone descended from non-Aryans, especially from Jewish parents or grandparents.
- Apr. 26 The Gestapo, the Nazi secret police organization, is established.
- May 10 After Nazis declare that books containing material that is “subversive” to German thought and the German people shall be destroyed, a massive book-burning campaign begins. Many of the books burned are those written by Jews as well as by opponents of the Nazis.
- July 14 Opposition political parties are banned, allowing the Nazis to be the only political party in Germany. Laws are adopted whose primary purpose is to revoke naturalization and cancel German citizenship for Jews from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Croatia, and other eastern territories.
- July 20 The Nazi Party and the Vatican sign a concordat.
- July 21 In Nuremberg, Germany, the SA arrests hundreds of Jews and parades them through the streets for hours.

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- Sept. 22 The Reich Chamber of Culture Law is created to control literature, the press, radio, theater, music, and art, with these efforts to be directed by the Ministry of Propaganda under Joseph Goebbels.
- Oct. 4 The Editor Law is adopted, regulating the role of newspaper and magazine editors and restricting Jews from working as editors.
- Oct. 14 Germany quits the League of Nations, releasing the country from the international controls over rearmament that had been accepted by the Weimar Republic.
- Oct. 23 Martin Buber and fifty-one other Jewish educators are fired from their university jobs.
- Oct. 24 A law against "habitual and dangerous criminals" is adopted to justify the confinement of the homeless, alcoholics, and the unemployed in concentration camps.
- Dec. 18 A law is adopted barring Jews from working as journalists and in associated professions.
- 1934**
- Jan. 24 Jews are banned from the German Labor Front, the Nazi Party's organization of trade unions.
- Jan. 26 Germany and Poland sign a ten-year nonaggression pact.
- May 17 Jews are prohibited from obtaining health insurance.
- June 29-30 The Nazis murder Hitler's rivals in the SA, including SA head Ernst Röhm. This purge is kept secret until July 13, when Hitler publicly announces what he calls "the Night of the Long Knives."
- July 20 The Schutzstaffel (SS), the Nazi Party's military and security organization, which had been controlled by the police, becomes an independent organization. Heinrich Himmler is appointed chief of the SS.
- Aug. 2 President Hindenburg dies, and the positions of chancellor and president are combined, with Hitler assuming both offices. Hitler also becomes commander in chief of the armed forces.
- Oct. 1 Hitler defies the Treaty of Versailles by expanding the German army and navy and creating an air force.
- Oct. 7 Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany declare their political neutrality and vow to defy Nazi restrictions on the practice of their religion.
- 1935**
- Mar. 16 Germany begins military conscription.

Holocaust Chronology

- Apr. 1 Jehovah's Witnesses are banned in Germany because members of the group will not declare allegiance to the Third Reich.
- May 21 A defense law is adopted that requires Aryan heritage as a prerequisite of German military duty.
- June 28 The German criminal code is revised to criminalize all acts of male homosexuality.
- Sept. 15 In a special session, the German parliament adopts the Nuremberg Laws, which comprise the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor and the Reich Citizenship Law. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor prohibits marriage and sexual relations outside of marriage between Jews and Germans. The Reich Citizenship Law deprives Jews of German citizenship.
- Nov. 14 In the first decree issued under the Reich Citizenship Law, Jews are barred from voting and holding public office, and all Jews are fired from their civil service jobs, including World War I frontline veterans. In the first decree issued under the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, Jews are prohibited from marrying non-Jews, Jews are prohibited from working in all but a few professions, and Jewish children are prohibited from using the same playgrounds and locker rooms as non-Jewish children.
- 1936**
- Mar. 7 German troops occupy the Rhineland.
- July 12 Construction begins at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, located near Berlin.
- Aug. 1 The Olympic Games open in Berlin. During the two weeks of the games, anti-Semitic posters are temporarily taken down and the Nazis downplay their militarism and anti-Semitic agenda.
- 1937**
- July 16 The Buchenwald concentration camp opens near Weimar, Germany.
- Autumn The Nazis begin systematically to take over Jewish property. Jews also are forced to sell their businesses, usually at prices far below their value.
- 1938**
- Mar. 13 Germany annexes Austria and begins to persecute Austrian Jews.
- Apr. 22 Jews are required to declare all property worth more than 5,000 reichsmarks (\$1,190).
- June 9 The synagogue in Munich, Germany, is destroyed.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- June 14 Jews are required to register and identify all of their industrial enterprises. Lists of wealthy Jews are created at treasury offices and police districts.
- June 15 About 1,500 Jews who were previously convicted of crimes, including traffic violations, are arrested and scheduled to be sent to concentration camps.
- July 21 Jews begin to receive identity cards. All Jews are required to have these cards by November, 1939.
- July 28 Medical certification is canceled for all Jewish physicians, effective September 30. After that date, Jewish physicians can work only as nurses for Jewish patients.
- Aug. 10 The synagogue in Nuremberg, Germany, is destroyed.
- Aug. 17 All Jews are mandated to add either "Israel" or "Sara" to their names, effective November, 1939.
- Sept. 12 Jews are prohibited from attending public cultural events.
- Sept. 27 The licenses of all Jewish lawyers are canceled, effective November 30.
- Sept. 29 The Munich Agreement is adopted, in which Britain and France accept Germany's plan to annex the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia.
- Oct. 1 German troops enter the Sudetenland.
- Oct. 5 A passport decree is issued requiring the confiscation of all passports held by Jews. Passport reissuance is made more complicated, and all passports newly issued to Jews must be stamped "J" to identify the holders as Jews.
- Oct. 15 German troops occupy the Sudetenland.
- Oct. 28 Between 15,000 and 17,000 Jews of Polish origin are expelled to Zbąszyń on the Polish border.
- Nov. 9-10 Kristallnacht, a Nazi-organized pogrom against Jews in Germany, results in the murder of at least 91 Jews, the destruction of 191 synagogues, and the looting of 7,500 shops. More than 26,000 Jewish men are arrested and scheduled to be sent to the Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps.
- Nov. 12 The Nazis issue decrees mandating Jews to pay for all damages caused during Kristallnacht. German Jews also are required to make "atonement payments" of one billion marks, are eliminated from involvement in the German economy and are prohibited from attending movies, concerts, and other cultural performances.
- Nov. 15 Jewish children are expelled from German schools.

Holocaust Chronology

- Nov. 25 About fifty male concentration camp prisoners are transferred to Ravensbrück, near Berlin. The prisoners will build the Ravensbrück concentration camp, which will be the primary camp for women prisoners in Germany.
- 1939**
- Jan. 17 A decree mandates the expiration of permits for Jewish dentists, pharmacists, and veterinarians.
- Feb. 21 Jews are required to give up all of their gold and silver.
- Mar. 14 Slovakia declares itself an independent state to be protected by Germany.
- Mar. 15 Germany occupies Czechoslovakia, creating the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia and introducing the anti-Semitic decrees that are already in force in Germany.
- Apr. 18 Anti-Semitic laws are passed in Slovakia.
- Apr. 27-28 Germany rescinds its nonaggression pact with Poland and its 1935 Naval Agreement with Britain.
- Apr. 30 Laws are adopted that regulate rental agreements with Jews and cancel eviction protection for Jews. Legal preparations are made to move Jewish families into "Jewish houses."
- May 15 The SS transfers almost 900 women prisoners from the Lichtenburg concentration camp to Ravensbrück.
- June 29 About 440 Romani (Gypsy) women and their children arrive in Ravensbrück from Austria. By 1945, about 5,000 Romani women will pass through this camp.
- July 4 Jews are barred from holding government jobs in Germany.
- Aug. 23 Germany and the Soviet Union sign a nonaggression pact.
- Aug. 31 The British fleet mobilizes, and civilian evacuation begins in London.
- Sept. 1 World War II begins after Germany invades Poland. The Nazis start to conduct numerous pogroms in Poland.
- Sept. 3 Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declare war on Germany.
- Sept. 10 Canada declares war on Germany.
- Sept. 17 The Soviet Union invades Poland.
- Sept. 21 Reinhard Heydrich, second in command of the SS, orders the creation of Jewish ghettos and *Judenräte* in occupied Poland. The *Judenräte*, or Jewish Councils, were charged with maintaining order in the ghettos.
- Sept. 23 Radios are confiscated from Jews.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Sept. 27 Warsaw surrenders to Germany.
- Sept. 29 The Germans and the Soviets divide Poland. More than 2 million Jews live in the German area, and 1.3 million live in the Soviet-controlled territory.
- Oct. The Nazis begin to implement a program of euthanasia, targeting sick and disabled Germans.
- Oct. 6 Poland surrenders to Germany.
- Oct. 7 Jews are resettled in the Lublin district of Poland.
- Oct. 8 The first Jewish ghetto is established in Piotrków, Poland.
- Oct. 12 The first group of Jews from Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia is deported to Poland.
- Oct. 18 Jews in Włocławek, Poland, are required to display the Star of David on their clothing.
- Oct. 26 Jews in German-occupied Poland begin to be used for forced labor.
- Nov. 12 Forced deportation begins for Polish Jews from West Prussia, Poznań, Gdańsk, and Łódź.
- Nov. 23 Jews throughout German-occupied Poland are required to display the Star of David on their clothing.
- 1940**
- Jan. 25 Oświęcim (in German, Auschwitz), Poland, is selected as the location of a new concentration camp.
- Jan. 28 Wartime rationing of goods begins in Britain.
- Feb. 10-13 Deportation begins for Jews from the Pomerania area of Poland to Lublin, Poland.
- Apr. 9 Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- Apr. 20 The high command of the German armed forces issues a secret order that all persons of "mixed blood" and men who are married to Jewish women are to be discharged from the military.
- Apr. 30 The first guarded Jewish ghetto is established in Łódź, Poland.
- May 1 Norway surrenders to Germany.
- May 10 Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, and France.
- May 15 The Netherlands capitulates to Germany.
- May 20 The Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp is established.
- May 26 Evacuation of all Allied troops from Dunkirk begins.
- May 28 Belgium capitulates to Germany.

Holocaust Chronology

- June 3 Evacuation of Dunkirk ends.
- June 10 German troops defeat Denmark and Norway. Italy declares war on Britain and France.
- June 14 The Nazis occupy Paris.
- June 18 Hitler presents a plan to Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to transfer Madagascar from France to Germany and resettle all European Jews in the new Mandate of Madagascar.
- June 22 The French army surrenders and Marshal Philippe Pétain signs an armistice with Germany.
- June 30 All Jews living in Łódź, Poland, are required to live in the ghetto, which is sealed off.
- July 10 The Battle of Britain begins.
- July 23 The Soviet Union captures Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania.
- Aug. 8 Romania adopts anti-Semitic laws.
- Aug. 17 Hitler declares a blockade of the British Isles.
- Sept. 7 Germany begins a military blitz against England.
- Sept. 16 The United States adopts a military conscription bill.
- Oct. 3 The new Vichy government of France adopts the Statut des Juifs (Anti-Jewish Laws).
- Oct. 7 German troops enter Romania.
- Oct. 22 Jews are deported from Alsace-Lorraine, Saarland, and Baden to southern France and, in 1942, to Auschwitz. Jewish businesses in the Netherlands are required to be registered.
- Oct. 28 Jews in Belgium are required to register their property.
- Nov. 15 The Warsaw ghetto is sealed off.
- Dec. 29-30 Germany launches a massive air raid on London.
- 1941**
- Jan. 22-23 The Nazis begin to massacre Jews in Romania.
- Feb.-Apr. About 72,000 Jews are sent to the Warsaw ghetto.
- Feb. 22-23 About 400 Jewish hostages are deported from Amsterdam to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria.
- Mar. 1 Construction begins on the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp.
- Mar. 2 German troops occupy Bulgaria.
- Mar. 11 U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the Lend Lease Act, which allows the United States to send war supplies to Britain, the Soviet Union, and other Allied nations.

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- Apr. 6 Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.
- Apr. 24 The Lublin ghetto is sealed off.
- May 14 About 3,600 Parisian Jews are arrested. Romania adopts laws requiring Jews to perform forced labor.
- June The Vichy government revokes the civil rights of French Jews in North Africa and issues numerous restrictions against them.
- June-July Mass shootings of Jews begins in the Ponary Forest, near Vilna, Lithuania. By 1944, 70,000 to 100,000 people are murdered there.
- June-Aug. Numerous pogroms are conducted in German-occupied areas of the Soviet Union.
- June 6 About 300 male prisoners from Dachau arrive at Ravensbrück, where the SS holds them in a separate camp for men. These men are forced to build factories in the area.
- June 22 Germany attacks the Soviet Union.
- June 27 The *Einsatzgruppen* (Nazi mobile extermination squads) and local residents murder some 2,000 Jews in Luts'k, Ukraine.
- June 28 The Romanian Iron Guard, an anti-Semitic paramilitary group, murders 1,500 Jews in Iasi.
- June 30 Germany occupies L'viv, Poland (now in Ukraine), and 4,000 Jews are murdered by July 3.
- July The Majdanek concentration and extermination camp is established in Lublin, Poland.
- July 1 The *Einsatzgruppen* begin operating in Bessarabia, Soviet Union, where 150,000 Jews are shot by August 31.
- July 8 Jews in the Baltic countries are required to display the Star of David on their clothing.
- July 20 A Jewish ghetto is established in Minsk, Belarus.
- July 24 A Jewish ghetto is established in Chişinău, Moldavia (now Moldova), where 10,000 Jews are killed.
- Aug. Jewish ghettos are established in Bialystok and L'viv, Poland.
- Aug. 5-8 About 10,000 Jews are killed in Pinsk, Belarus.
- Aug. 15 The Jewish ghetto in Kaunas, Lithuania, is sealed off.
- Aug. 20 The Nazis begin the siege of Leningrad.
- Sept. Janowska, an extermination camp, opens near L'viv, Poland.
- Sept. 1 Police order all Jews in Germany age six and older to display a yellow Star of David on their clothing at all times, effective September 19.

Holocaust Chronology

- Sept. 3 The experimental gassing of prisoners at Auschwitz with Zyklon B begins.
- Sept. 6 A ghetto is established in Vilna, Lithuania, with a population of 40,000 Jews.
- Sept. 15 About 150,000 Jews are sent to Trans-Dniestria, Moldavia (now Moldova), where 90,000 die.
- Sept. 19 The Zhitomir ghetto in the Ukraine is liquidated , resulting in the murder of 10,000 Jews.
- Sept. 28-29 The mass murder of Jews at Babi Yar near Kiev, Ukraine, results in the deaths of 33,751. In 1961, Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko publishes “Babiy Yar” (“Babii Yar,” 1965) a poem that relates anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union to the atrocities committed there.
- Oct.-Nov. The *Einsatzgruppen* begin the mass murder of Jews throughout the southern Soviet Union.
- Oct. 3 German Jews are required to perform forced labor.
- Oct. 4 Thousands of Jews are murdered at Fort IX in Kaunas, Lithuania.
- Oct. 8 The Vitsyebesk ghetto in Belarus is liquidated and more than 16,000 Jews are killed.
- Oct. 10 A Jewish ghetto is established in Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia.
- Oct. 11 A Jewish ghetto is established in Czernowitz, Romania.
- Oct. 12-13 About 11,000 Jews are massacred at Dnipropetrovs’k, Ukraine.
- Oct. 14 The Nazis order the deportation of all Jews from Germany as defined by the country’s 1933 borders.
- Oct. 16 German Jews begin to be deported to the ghettos in Łódź, Poland; Riga, Latvia; and Minsk, Belarus.
- Oct. 23 About 34,000 Jews are massacred in Odessa, Ukraine.
- Oct. 28 About 34,000 Jews are massacred in Kiev, Ukraine.
- Nov. 1 Construction begins on an extermination camp at Belżec, Poland.
- Nov. 6 About 15,000 Jews are massacred in Kaunas, Lithuania.
- Nov. 24 A “model” concentration camp is created at Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia.
- Nov. 26 The Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau) concentration-extermination camp is established.
- Nov. 30 About 30,000 Jews from Riga, Latvia, are shot in the Rumbuli Forest.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Dec. 1 A unit of the *Einsatzgruppen* in Lithuania reports that it has murdered 136,441 Jews during 1941.
- Dec. 7 The Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor.
- Dec. 8 The Chełmno extermination camp opens in Poland, where 360,000 Jews will be murdered by April, 1943.
- Dec. 8 The United States and Great Britain declare war on Japan.
- Dec. 11 Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.
- Dec. 21 More than 40,000 Jews are shot at the Bogdanovka concentration camp in Romania.
- Dec. 22 Of the 57,000 Jews who once lived in Vilna, Lithuania, about 33,500 have been murdered.
- Dec. 30 About 10,000 Jews are killed in Simferopol', Ukraine.
- 1942**
- Jan. 14 The Nazis start to expel Jews from the Netherlands.
- Jan. 15 Prisoners from Łódź, Poland, are sent to the extermination camp at Chełmno.
- Jan. 20 Nazi officials hold the Wannsee Conference, where they finalize their plans for the "final solution"—the deportation and extermination of European Jews.
- Jan. 26 The first American armed forces arrive in Britain.
- Jan. 31 A unit of the *Einsatzgruppen* reports it has murdered 229,052 Jews in the Baltic states.
- End of Jan. The Nazis begin deporting Jews to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.
- Feb.-Mar. About 14,000 Jews are murdered in Kharkiv, Ukraine.
- Feb. 24 More than 30,000 Jews from Łódź, Poland, are sent to the Chełmno extermination camp.
- Mar. 1 The first Jews are murdered at the Sobibór extermination camp in Poland, where 250,000 Jews will be killed by October, 1943.
- Mar. 6 The Nazis hold their first conference on sterilization, where they define the use of sterilization for persons of "mixed blood."
- Mid-Mar. Germany begins Aktion Reinhard, an operation that aims to murder Jews in the interior of occupied Poland within the time line of the "final solution."
- Mar. 16-17 The Belżec extermination camp begins operations. Some 600,000 Polish Jews from Lublin, the Lublin district, and Galicia will be murdered there.

Holocaust Chronology

- Mar. 21 The Jews in the ghetto in Lublin, Poland, are resettled, with 26,000 sent to extermination camps at Belżec, Majdanek, and other locations.
- Mar. 23-24 The SS transfers 1,000 German Jewish and Romani (Gypsy) women from Ravensbrück to Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, where a women's camp is created.
- Mar. 26 About 60,000 Jews from Slovakia are sent to the extermination camps at Auschwitz and Majdanek.
- Mar. 28 The first Jews from Paris are transported to Auschwitz.
- Apr. Jews are prohibited from using public transportation, except for forced laborers who must travel to workplaces more than seven kilometers from their homes.
- Apr. 30 A Jewish ghetto is established in Pinsk, Belarus.
- Early May The first mass murders are conducted in the Sobibór extermination camp.
- May 4 Prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau who are considered weak, sick, or "unfit" are the first people to be murdered there.
- June 1 Jews in France and Holland begin wearing the Star of David. An extermination camp opens in Treblinka, Poland, where gassing of prisoners begins on July 23; about 700,000 Jews will be murdered there by August, 1943.
- June 2 The Nazis begin deporting German Jews to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.
- June 12 Anne Frank, a Jewish girl living in the Netherlands, celebrates her thirteenth birthday and receives as a gift a diary, in which she immediately begins to write.
- June 22 The first prisoners from the Drancy assembly camp in France arrive at Auschwitz.
- June 30 Jewish schools in Germany are closed.
- July 1 Jews are massacred in Minsk, Lida, and Slonim, Belarus.
- July 2 Jews from Berlin are sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.
- July 4 The mass gassing of prisoners begins at Auschwitz.
- July 6 Anne Frank and her family leave their home and go into hiding in an empty section of a warehouse building in Amsterdam.
- July 15 The first Jews from the Netherlands are transported to Auschwitz.

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- July 22 The *Umsiedlung*, or mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to Belżec and Treblinka extermination camps, begins. By September 13, about 300,000 Jews will be sent to Treblinka, where 265,000 will be murdered.
- July 23 The gassing of prisoners begins at Treblinka.
- Aug.-Sept. Jews are deported from Zagreb, Croatia, to Auschwitz.
- Aug. 4 The Nazis begin deporting Belgian Jews to Auschwitz.
- Aug. 10-22 About 40,000 Jews from the ghetto in L'viv, Poland, are sent to extermination camps.
- Aug. 14 The Nazis arrest 7,000 Jews in unoccupied France.
- Aug. 17 The first all-American air attack is launched in Europe.
- Oct. 4 The Nazis decree that all Jews who are imprisoned in concentration camps will be sent to Auschwitz.
- Oct. 28 The first group of prisoners from the Theresienstadt concentration camp is sent to Auschwitz.
- Oct. 29 About 16,000 Jews are executed in Pinsk, Belarus.
- Nov. 1 The first group of Jews from Bialystok, Poland, is deported to Auschwitz.
- Nov. 25 The deportation of Jews from Norway to Auschwitz begins.
- Dec. 10 The first group of German Jews arrives at Auschwitz.
- 1943**
- Jan. 18 The Jews in the Warsaw ghetto stage their first act of armed resistance to deportation.
- Jan. 29 The Germans order that all Gypsies be arrested and placed in concentration camps.
- Feb. 2 The Germans surrender at Stalingrad—the first significant defeat for Hitler's armed forces.
- Feb. 15 About 10,000 Jews are killed in the ghetto in Bialystok, Poland, before the rest are sent to the extermination camp at Treblinka.
- Feb. 25 The first group of Jews from Salonika, Greece, is transported to Auschwitz.
- Feb. 26 The first group of Gypsies arrives at Auschwitz.
- Feb. 27 Jewish armament workers from Berlin are sent to Auschwitz.
- Mar. Dutch Jews are transported to Sobibór, while Jews from Prague, Vienna, Luxembourg, and Macedonia are sent to Treblinka.

Holocaust Chronology

- Mar. 13 The Jewish ghetto in Kraków, Poland, is liquidated and its residents are deported to the Płaszów concentration camp. Oskar Schindler, a member of the Nazi Party and owner of an enamel factory near Kraków, is moved by these events and is determined to transfer his Jewish employees out of the area so they can avoid a similar fate. He obtains permission from the camp commandant to open a branch of his factory outside the Płaszów camp, and this action saves 900 Jewish workers from being imprisoned at Płaszów.
- Apr. 19 The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising begins on the eve of Passover. Ghetto residents continue their resistance as German troops surround the area.
- Apr. 23 Marek Lichtenbaum, the *Judenrat* chairman in the Warsaw ghetto, and his deputies are murdered by the Nazis.
- May 8 The Nazis liquidate Mila 18, the bunker that serves as headquarters for Jewish resistance fighters in the Warsaw ghetto.
- May 10 Many of the Warsaw ghetto resistance fighters escape through the sewers, arriving in the non-Jewish area of the city.
- May 16 German officials proclaim that the Warsaw ghetto is free of Jews and set fire to a Warsaw synagogue.
- May 19 The Nazis declare that Berlin is *Judenfrei* (free of all Jews).
- June 11 Himmler orders that all Polish ghettos be liquidated. On June 21, this order is expanded to include ghettos in the Soviet Union.
- June 21-27 About 20,000 people are killed during the liquidation of the Łódź ghetto.
- July 9-10 The Allies land in Sicily, Italy.
- Aug. 2 Prisoners revolt at the Treblinka extermination camp and the Krikov labor camp in Poland.
- Aug. 16-23 The Białystok ghetto is destroyed following a revolt there.
- Sept. 3 A group of Belgian Jews is arrested and scheduled to be deported to Auschwitz.
- Sept. 11 The Nazis begin to raid Jews in Nice, France.
- Sept. 11-14 The Jewish ghettos in Minsk and Lida, Belarus, are liquidated.
- Sept. 23 The Vilna ghetto is liquidated.
- Oct. 2 The Nazis order the expulsion of Jews from Denmark. However, rescue operations by the Danish underground enable 7,000 Jews to be evacuated to Sweden, and the Nazis capture only 475 Danish Jews.
- Oct. 13 Italy declares war on Germany.

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- Oct. 14 Prisoners in the Sobibór extermination camp stage a revolt.
- Oct. 18 The first Jews from Rome are sent to Auschwitz.
- Oct. 21 The Minsk ghetto is liquidated.
- Nov. 3 The Riga ghetto is liquidated. About 17,000 Jews who remain in the Majdanek extermination camp are killed.
- 1944**
- Jan. 22 The Allies land at Anzio, Italy.
- Feb. 11 Primo Levi and other Italian Jews interned at a camp near Modena, Italy, are transported to Auschwitz in twelve cramped cattle cars. Levi spends eleven months at Auschwitz before the extermination camp is liberated, and he later writes a memoir of his experiences in the camp.
- Feb. 24 The Gestapo raids a house in Haarlem, Netherlands, where Casper ten Boom and his daughters, Corrie and Betsie, have been hiding Jews and members of the Dutch underground. The three are arrested. Corrie and Betsie eventually are taken to Ravensbrück, where Betsie dies. Corrie survives and in 1971 publishes *The Hiding Place*, a book about her experiences.
- Mar. 19 Germany invades Hungary.
- Apr. 14 The first Jews from Athens are sent to Auschwitz.
- Apr. 16 The Hungarian government orders that all Jews must be registered and confiscates their property.
- May 15-July 8 About 438,000 Hungarian Jews are sent to Auschwitz.
- June 6 D day, the start of the Allied invasion of Normandy.
- July Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, arrives in Budapest and starts issuing documents aimed at saving Hungarian Jews.
- July 7 The Hungarian government stops the deportation of Jews.
- July 8 The ghetto in Kaunas, Lithuania, is liquidated.
- July 13 Jewish resistance fighters help liberate Vilna, Lithuania, where only 2,500 of the city's 57,000 Jews survive.
- July 23 Soviet troops liberate the Majdanek death camp. The Red Cross visits Theresienstadt.
- Late summer Oskar Schindler receives permission from the German army and the SS to move his Jewish workers and other endangered Jews from Płaszów to Brünnlitz in the Sudetenland. There, he and more than 1,000 of his employees establish a bogus munitions factory in order to protect the Jewish employees until the end of World War II. Schindler's efforts to save Jews are later recounted in Thomas Keneally's novel *Schindler's List* (1982).

Holocaust Chronology

- Aug. 4 Anne Frank and her family are discovered and arrested by the Gestapo in Amsterdam.
- Aug. 6 About 27,000 Jews from camps east of the Vistula River are deported to Germany.
- Aug. 7 Nazis begin to liquidate the Łódź ghetto, deporting 74,000 Jews to Auschwitz.
- Aug. 25 Paris is liberated from the Nazis.
- Sept. All Jews in Dutch camps are transported to Germany. Additional prisoners are deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. The final group of prisoners is transported from France to Auschwitz.
- Sept. 4 The Allies liberate Antwerp, Belgium, where fewer than 5,000 Jews survive.
- Sept. 11 British troops enter the Netherlands.
- Sept. 14 American troops arrive at the German border.
- Sept. 23 Jews in the concentration camp in Kluga, Estonia, are murdered.
- Oct. 31 About 14,000 Jews from Slovakia are sent to Auschwitz.
- Nov. 2 The gassings at Auschwitz are terminated.
- Nov. 18 About 38,000 Jews from Budapest are sent to Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, and other camps.
- Nov. 26 In an effort to hide evidence of the extermination camps, Himmler orders the destruction of the crematorium at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Dec. 16-27 The Battle of the Bulge is fought in the Ardennes.
- 1945**
- Jan. 16 Soviet troops liberate 800 Jews at Częstochowa and 870 in Łódź.
- Jan. 17 Soviet troops liberate Warsaw, where few Jews remain.
- Jan. 17 About 80,000 Jews in Budapest are liberated.
- Jan. 17 Auschwitz is evacuated and the prisoners begin their "death march."
- Jan. 27 Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz.
- Feb. 13-14 Dresden, Germany, is destroyed in a firestorm after massive Allied bombing attacks.
- Apr. 6-10 About 15,000 Jews are evacuated from Buchenwald.
- Apr. 12 American troops liberate Buchenwald.
- Apr. 15 British troops liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.
- Apr. 23-May 4 The Sachsenhausen concentration camp is evacuated. The SS conducts its last massacre of Jews.

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- Apr. 27 The final prisoners are evacuated from Ravensbrück, where the SS forces about 15,000 prisoners on a death march.
- Apr. 29 American troops liberate Dachau.
- Apr. 30 Hitler commits suicide.
- May 2 Representatives of the International Red Cross take over Theresienstadt.
- May 5 The Mathausen concentration camp is liberated.
- May 7-9 Germany unconditionally surrenders, ending the war in Europe.
- May 8 V-E (Victory in Europe) Day.
- May 23 Himmler is captured and commits suicide.
- Nov. 20 The Nuremberg war crime trials begin.

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THE ACCIDENT

AUTHOR: Elie Wiesel (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Le Jour*, 1961 (English translation, 1962)

GENRE: Novella

SUBGENRE: Psychological realism

Wiesel draws on his own experience as a Holocaust survivor in telling the story of Eliezer, a young man who, some years after World War II, struggles to live with ever-present memories of the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps. For Eliezer, the tragedies of the past make impossible any hopes for the present or the future.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Eliezer, the narrator, a journalist

Kathleen, Eliezer's sweetheart

Eliezer's grandmother, a victim of the Holocaust but still present in Eliezer's memory

Dr. Paul Russel, the young resident who cares for Eliezer in the hospital

Sarah, a prostitute who as a twelve-year-old girl was sexually abused by the Nazis

Gyula, a painter of Hungarian origin

OVERVIEW

The Accident, a novella of little more than one hundred pages, is a psychological, philosophical, and spiritual journey. The narrator of the story, Eliezer, is a young journalist who has been spiritually immobilized by the Holocaust, in which he lost his family and of which he is a survivor. The narrative opens as Eliezer and Kathleen, his sweetheart, who loves him profoundly but to whom he is unable to make a commitment, are going to see the film version of *The Brothers Karamazov* in New York City. Hot, tired, bored, and lifeless, Eliezer lags behind Kathleen in crossing a street and is struck and dragged several yards by a taxicab. Suffering severe injuries, he is taken to a hospital, where, after three days, he undergoes surgery. The young doctor who attends him, Paul Russel, takes a special interest in him, showing a curiosity that makes Eliezer suspect that the doctor knows some-

thing about him. The reader discovers that Eliezer was subconsciously a willing victim of his nearly fatal accident.

Dr. Russel's mention of Kathleen causes Eliezer to recall meeting her for the first time in Paris, some five or six years earlier. At that time, as now, he had come to the end of his hope and strength because of the oppressive memories of his experiences during the Holocaust. For years he has suffered from what is called "survivor guilt," just as, when a young boy, he felt guilty for being happier than a less fortunate orphan boy. Throughout the narrative, as it moves back and forth between present and past, Eliezer returns to thoughts of his grandmother and the rest of his family, all of whom were executed by the Nazis. He thinks of himself as being dead with them and the other six million people destroyed by the Holocaust. Kathleen attempts to alleviate his guilt and suffering by suffering herself; still, she is never able to penetrate the wall that Eliezer has put up around himself.

During his recovery from the accident, Eliezer wonders whether Kathleen knows the cause underlying it and that he allowed himself to be hurt because he did not care enough to get out of the way. Dr. Russel, who has just felt the joy of saving a young boy's life, asks Eliezer one day why his patient does not care about living. Eliezer evades the doctor's angry questioning, but the reader is apprised of the answer: Those who have survived the Holocaust are no longer normal human beings; a spring has snapped inside them from the shock, and the results must appear sooner or later. Eliezer does not want the doctor to understand and thus lose his equilibrium. By abstractions and grandiloquence and evasions akin to lying, Eliezer persuades the doctor to believe that he does love life, proving it by his love for Kathleen.

Eliezer's relationship with Kathleen provides one of the main transitional devices in the narrative. For example, Kathleen asks him who Sarah is, since Eliezer, she says, had spoken her name during a coma. Sarah, he tells her, was his mother's name. It was also, however, as a flashback reveals, the name of a prostitute whom Eliezer had met in Paris long before he came to know Kathleen. That Sarah was twelve years old when she was sent to a special barracks for the pleasure of the Nazi officers at a concentration camp. Eliezer considers Sarah to be a saint, like his mother. Kathleen's slight resemblance to his mother turns Eliezer's thoughts back to the time of Kathleen's emotional struggle when they became lovers again after a separation of five years. The past—and all that it meant to Eliezer—stood between them; thus, Kathleen extracted a promise from him that he would allow her to help him in his fight against memories of the train station from which his mother and father and little sister were taken to their deaths.

The last chapter of the book introduces Gyula, a painter, originally from

Hungary, who ignores Eliezer's attempts to explain his suffering and the reason behind the accident. Gyula pleads for him to forget the tragic past and make a commitment to life. He then paints a portrait of his friend in which the eyes are those of a man who had seen God commit the unforgivable crime of senseless killing. Enraged because Eliezer is intent on perpetuating the past rather than returning to the present, Gyula sets fire to the canvas and leaves, forgetting—as Eliezer says in ending his narrative—to take along the ashes.

Consonant with the story in which they appear, the characters in Elie Wiesel's novella are shadowy and disembodied, either alive in the midst of death or dead in the midst of life, depending on their purpose in the narrative. The characters can be no other way, as the narrator sees life only with the eyes of death. His grandmother has long been dead, but she is more of a presence in the work than the physically living Kathleen or any of the other characters.

Gyula and Dr. Russel are an evanescent opposition to the nihilism of Eliezer. They pass quickly through the novella without being fully developed. Wiesel wanted nothing more from them, artistically, than their appearance as voices in support of life and love. Kathleen is like them, ineffectual in spite of her love and energy. No character can counter the gloominess of Eliezer, while characters such as Sarah and his grandmother act as constant reminders of death.

Though Wiesel's characters are grounded in his own Holocaust experience, the story springs more from his imagination than from his life. There are many influences working on his imagination: culture, history, stories, myths, and the Bible. For example, from Jewish culture Wiesel draws the Hebrew name of God (El) in the naming of Eliezer; other characters—Sarah, Shmuel, and Sarah the prostitute—also have biblical origins.

Self-annihilation by surrendering to death is a central theme of *The Accident*. Some years after surviving the death camps, in which he lost his family, Eliezer can no longer continue struggling to live. Even his love for Kathleen is insufficient to give meaning to his existence. It is easy, therefore, for the reader to accept that Eliezer passively intended to take his life when he stepped in front of the taxicab that seriously injured him. Suicide among survivors of the Holocaust is a phenomenon that Wiesel explicitly addresses in a preface written for the 1985 edition of *The Accident*. Referring to the hundreds of Jewish children in Poland who quietly surrendered to death after World War II, he suggests that they “were abruptly forced to realize to what extent they were depleted. And vanquished. And stigmatized. And alone.” Eliezer's state of mind, affected by the same tragedy, is similar to that of those children.

The primary message of *The Accident* is that one who has experienced the Holocaust and survived it is almost certainly doomed to live it obsessively over and over again, to feel self-hatred as a consequence of survivor guilt, to resent those who are not outraged by the individuals responsible for the Holocaust, and to cry out against God for apparently acquiescing to the horror.

Life and love, the other central themes of the novella, are set in contrast to the themes of death and hatred and suffering. Eliezer is urged again and again to return to life, just as he is urged to put the past behind him and to accept love and give it. The effort to achieve forgetfulness is too much for him, however, and the last line of *The Accident* ("He [Gyula] had forgotten to take along the ashes") reveals the finality with which Eliezer has chosen death over life. Neither love nor life can erase the ever-present memory of the Holocaust. The tragedies of the past make impossible any hopes for the present or the future for him.

The Accident was Elie Wiesel's third book and should be read in sequence following its predecessors. His first book, a memoir recounting his experience of the Holocaust, had a complex publishing history. Originally written in Yiddish, and running to some nine hundred pages in manuscript, it first appeared in its present form in French translation, radically condensed, as *La Nuit* (1958; *Night*, 1960). Wiesel himself has said that "*Night* is not a novel, it's an autobiography. It's a memoir. It's testimony." Nevertheless, it has frequently been classified as fiction. *Night* was followed by the novellas *L'Aube* (1960; *Dawn*, 1961) and *The Accident*. Unfortunately, the English title chosen for the latter obscures the thematic progression of the three books: *Le Jour*, the original French title of *The Accident*, means "day." Metaphorically, the French title suggests the survivor's full confrontation with the ongoing reality of life after the "night" of the Holocaust; the sequence of "night," "dawn," and "day" traces an ongoing struggle, not a neatly resolved movement from despair to hope.

As the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, Wiesel has enhanced an already considerable worldwide literary reputation. He has long been recognized as one of the foremost interpreters of the Jewish experience and, inseparable from that experience, the Holocaust. Eliezer, the protagonist of *The Accident*, the victim, the survivor, may be seen as a living counterpart of any one of the six million who did not survive the death camps. With other writers who cover the Holocaust—such as André Schwarz-Bart, Primo Levi, Nelly Sachs, Paul Celan, Ernst Weichert, Vladka Meed, Pierre Gascar, and Tadeusz Borowski—Wiesel has helped create a literature intended to ensure that victims, living or dead, of any kind of inhumanity will never be forgotten.

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—David Powell

AFTER AUSCHWITZ

HISTORY, THEOLOGY, AND CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM

AUTHOR: Richard L. Rubenstein (1924-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, 1966 (revised and enlarged as *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, 1992)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Philosophy; ethics; religion and spirituality

In this work, Rubenstein, one of the first Jewish thinkers to explore deeply the ethical and religious implications of the Holocaust, questions the credibility of claims about God's presence in history and also addresses the topics of overpopulation, modernization, bureaucracy, and the persistent threat of genocide in the modern world.

OVERVIEW

Calling their regime the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945. The Holocaust, Nazi Germany's planned total destruction of the European Jews and the actual murder of nearly six million of them, took place during those years. More than a million Jews were gassed at Auschwitz. The catastrophe that befell his people, the Jews, during the Holocaust led Richard L. Rubenstein to write *After Auschwitz*. The first edition, published in 1966, assured Rubenstein's significance in Jewish theology. Revised and expanded in 1992, this book remains required reading for anyone interested in post-Holocaust philosophy and religion.

Significantly, the Holocaust did not occur until the mid-twentieth century, although conditions necessary, but not sufficient, to produce it were forming centuries before. *After Auschwitz* helps to show how Christian anti-Judaism and its demonization of Jews were decisive antecedents of the Holocaust. It also discusses the importance of the post-Holocaust emergence of the State of Israel, but the book is best known for its emphasis on a collision between faith in the God of history—some Christian beliefs about such a God have produced Christian anti-Judaism—and the disastrous reality of the Holocaust.

The 1992 version of *After Auschwitz* is more a new book than a second edition of an old one. Nine of the original version's fifteen chapters were eliminated; those that remain were substantially rewritten. Ten new chapters that had been published elsewhere were also added to the revised edition, which is the source for all of the quotations in this article.

In the 1992 edition of *After Auschwitz*, Rubenstein describes a meeting with Swami Muktananda of Ganeshpuri, a deeply religious man. "You mustn't believe in your own religion," the swami advised him, "I don't believe in mine. Religions are like the fences that hold young saplings erect. Without the fence the sapling could fall over. When it takes firm root and becomes a tree, the fence is no longer needed. However, most people never lose their need for the fence."

Rubenstein found the swami's advice helpful because he received it at a time when he was feeling very pessimistic about humanity, a mood that included what he acknowledged as an intolerance toward people in his own Jewish tradition who apparently declined to face difficulties about the relationship between a God of history and the Holocaust. Rubenstein heard the swami saying something that spoke to him in ways that are reflected in the opening paragraph of *After Auschwitz's* second edition. The first version, Rubenstein explained, contained a "spirit of opposition and revolt, which was an almost inevitable consequence of my initial, essentially uncharted attempt to come to terms theologically with the greatest single trauma in all of Jewish history." Governing the second edition, he went on to say, was a "spirit of synthesis and reconciliation." Rubenstein stated that he had kept his fundamental insights but had done so in the second edition "with a greater degree of empathy for those who have reaffirmed traditional Jewish faith in the face of the Holocaust." Rubenstein discerned that Swami Muktananda had urged him not to give up his fundamental insights but to use them to look deeper and to see beyond their limited meanings.

Even before he received the swami's advice, Rubenstein showed that he had already been practicing some aspects of it in the first edition of *After Auschwitz*. This book challenged some of the most fundamental beliefs held by Jews and Christians. Specifically, Rubenstein argued, the Holocaust calls into question the existence of a redeeming God, one who is active in history and who will bring the upheavals of human existence to a fulfilling end. In the late 1960's, *After Auschwitz* provoked considerable controversy. One result was that Rubenstein found himself linked with three American Protestant thinkers—Thomas Altizer, William Hamilton, and Paul van Buren—and all four were identified as key players in what came to be known as the "death of God" movement.

At the time, the three American Protestants hailed the “death of God” with considerable enthusiasm. Optimistic about the human prospect, they celebrated the liberation that men and women could experience when they moved beyond an outmoded theological past to see that the whole world was no longer in God’s hands but solely in the hands of the people. Rubenstein’s outlook differed in important ways. He was not alone among those thinkers in denying that he was an atheist who literally believed “God is dead,” but Rubenstein made clearer than most his view that “the ultimate relevance of theology is anthropological,” a perspective reflected in his long-standing use of psychoanalytic insights in his discussion of religion. What Rubenstein meant was that whenever people speak about God, they are talking about what they believe about God, which is not the same as talking about God directly. Therefore, it can make sense to say, as Rubenstein did in *After Auschwitz*, that “we live in the time of the death of God,” but, as Rubenstein explained further, we cannot say whether “the death of God” is more than an event within human culture.

Rubenstein’s emphasis on the anthropological dimensions of theological discourse did not mean that he was indifferent about the nature of ultimate reality. One place, for example, where he parted company with the Christian “death of God” theologians involved his impression that they “‘willed’ the death of the theistic God” with very little regret. In contrast, Rubenstein found himself unwillingly forced to conclude that the idea of a God of history lacked credibility after Auschwitz and felt saddened by that outcome. He recognized that history had shattered—at least for him—a system of religious meaning that had sustained people, especially Jews and Christians, for millennia. The destruction of such meaning was no cause for celebration. On the contrary, it suggested to Rubenstein the melancholy prospect that human existence is ultimately absurd and meaningless.

That conclusion, however, was not to be Rubenstein’s last word on the subject. Seeking an alternative that could work for him and for others who might share his outlook about the God of history, Rubenstein went on to write movingly and positively about his vision of “God after the death of God,” as the final chapter of the revised version of *After Auschwitz* is titled. Instead of “faith in the radically transcendent Creator God of biblical religion, who bestows a covenant on Israel for His own utterly inscrutable reasons,” Rubenstein affirmed that “an understanding of God which gives priority to the indwelling immanence of the Divine may be more credible in our era.”

Drawing on both Eastern and Western mystical traditions, including strands from his Jewish heritage, Rubenstein amplified the idea of divine

immanence by speaking of God as the Holy Nothingness. Submitting that “omnipotent Nothingness is Lord of all creation,” he used that concept to refer to “the ground, content, and final destiny of all things,” adding that “God as the ‘Nothing’ . . . is not a thing” but “no-thing.” Beyond distinctions between the masculine and the feminine or human understandings of good and evil, Rubenstein’s Holy Nothingness is not the “absence of being, but a superfluity of being . . . a *plenum* so rich that all existence derives therefrom.” The best metaphor for this concept, he suggested, is that “God is the ocean and we the waves. Each wave has its moment when it is identifiable as a somewhat separate entity. Nevertheless, no wave is entirely distinct from the ocean, which is its substantial ground.”

This perspective’s advantages, Rubenstein argued, include “a judgment on the overly individualistic conception of the self which has predominated in the Western world.” Emphasizing the interdependence of all things, Rubenstein insisted that “the world of the death of the biblical God need not be a place of gloom or despair. One need not live forever for life to be worth living. Creation, however impermanent, is full of promise.” Granted, if omnipotent Nothingness is Lord of all creation, we can ask but never really answer the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Far from reducing the horror of “ethnic cleansing” and the Holocaust, that outcome may make human life more tragic than ever. However, it does remove the theological “problem of evil” that intrudes when such devastations are interpreted as part of a world created and sustained by a powerful biblical God of history whose providential purposes are supposedly governed by goodness, justice, and love.

The concerns that drove Rubenstein to reject the traditional God of history, however, were never directed by unsatisfactory attempts to solve a dilemma whose dissonance had been reduced to the abstract question, “If there is radical evil in the world, how can God be omnipotent and completely good?” His issue was far more concrete, particular, and historical. After Auschwitz, how could sense be made of a Jewish tradition of covenant and election, a perspective in which Jews interpreted themselves to be specially chosen by God, bound to God in a covenant that entailed God’s blessing for faithfulness and God’s judgment against infidelity? Common to that tradition’s self-understanding was the belief that “radical communal misfortune,” as Rubenstein called it, was a sign either that God found the Chosen People wanting and dispensed punishment accordingly, or that God called on the innocent to suffer sacrificially for the guilty, or that an indispensable prelude for the messianic climax of Jewish history was under way, or some combination of such outlooks. In any case, the Holocaust, an event in which Nazi Germany was hell-bent on destroying Jewish

life root and branch, made Rubenstein collide head-on with the biblical tradition of covenant and election, which seemed to him to lead consistently to a positive answer to the question "Did God use Adolf Hitler and the Nazis as his agents to inflict terrible sufferings and death upon six million Jews, including more than one million children?" Such an answer Rubenstein could not accept. He wrote *After Auschwitz* instead.

Rubenstein had to decide whether to affirm the logical implication that he found belief in the God of history to entail, namely, that God was ultimately responsible for Auschwitz. Finding that affirmation obscene, he looked elsewhere to make sense of his Jewish identity. Rubenstein's developing religious perspective led him to reject a providential God and to emphasize instead a sense of the sacred in which "creation and destruction are part of an indivisible process. Each wave in the ocean of God's Nothingness has its moment, but it must inevitably give way to other waves." Nevertheless, Rubenstein affirmed, we have considerable freedom to direct the journey we take during our limited time on earth. That journey can be joyful and good.

After Auschwitz was a crucial departure point for Rubenstein's distinctive journey. Decades later he returned to that work and saw that "no person writing about the religious significance of contemporary history can rest content with what he or she has written at a particular moment in time. As history is an ongoing process, so too is theological writing concerning history." As the second edition of *After Auschwitz* made clear, however, Rubenstein consistently followed his conviction that theology's basic relevance is anthropological—what it tells us about humankind. Thus, the accent of his work fell increasingly on history, politics, economics, and sociology—always with reference to religious thought and practice but with emphasis on the conditions that produce human conflict and the safeguards that must be shored up to limit that conflict's destructiveness.

Important though they are, none of Rubenstein's other books is likely to eclipse the significance of *After Auschwitz*. Particularly in the United States, its sustained impact has rightly been considerable in Jewish circles and on many Christian audiences as well. Rubenstein's reflections were among the first to probe the significance of Auschwitz for post-Holocaust religious life. Few, if any, have better stood the test of time.

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—John K. Roth

ALBERT SPEER

HIS BATTLE WITH TRUTH

AUTHOR: Gitta Sereny (1921-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1995

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Biography

Sereny's biography of Albert Speer is concerned primarily with the years 1933-1946 and focuses on the factors in Speer's character that prevented him from admitting to the world that he had known about the systematic murder of Jews before 1946.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Albert Speer (1905-1981), an architect who was the German minister of armaments from 1942 to the fall of the Third Reich and was a close confidant of Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Margarete Speer, Albert's wife

Annemarie Kempf, Speer's secretary

Rudolf Wolters, an architect who was Speer's friend and chronicler

Karl Hanke, the state secretary in the German ministry of propaganda and later gauleiter of Lower Silesia who greatly aided Speer's rise in the Nazi hierarchy

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), the German minister of propaganda, 1933-1945

Hermann Göring (1893-1946), the German interior minister and minister of aviation, 1933-1945, and Hitler's designated successor

Rudolf Hess (1894-1987), the deputy leader of the Nazi Party

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the commander of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and Gestapo

Martin Bormann (1900-1945), Hitler's secretary and a great rival of Speer

OVERVIEW

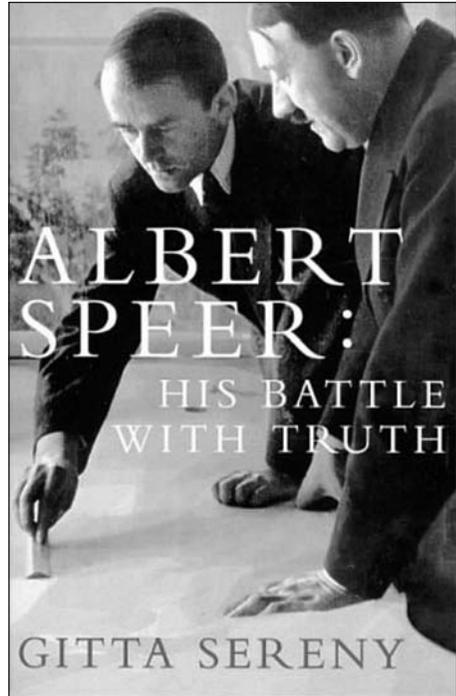
Hungarian-born journalist and free-lance writer Gitta Sereny based this gossip and critical biography of Albert Speer primarily on extensive inter-

views with Speer himself, his wife, and a host of individuals who knew him at some time during his life. She also made use of Speer's own writings, the memoirs and diaries of many people who had an influence on his life, and on extensive research in the archives of several countries. In a number of instances, the author uncritically accepts dubious assertions by the people she interviewed. Professional historians will be dismayed by her failure to provide exact citations for the sources of the many quotations she includes.

Albert Speer emerges from Sereny's pages as a complex, clever, charming man of considerable genius with a hopelessly flawed character that he never managed to overcome. According to Sereny, Speer's flawed character prevented him from ever admitting to the world that he knew about the assembly-line murder of Jews before the revelations at the Nuremberg Trials, even though he must have known about the "final solution" no later than 1943. Despite the knowledge that Sereny insists he had, Speer continued to serve Hitler's regime until the end. His genius in organizing the German armaments industries prolonged the war by at least a year and resulted in hundreds of thousands if not millions of deaths, according to the author.

Sereny's biography devotes few pages to Speer's early life. Born into an upper-middle-class family in Heidelberg in 1905, Speer enjoyed all the advantages wealth could provide. The author briefly recounts Speer's childhood, portraying it as unhappy despite his affluent upbringing. The unhappiness stemmed from Speer's conviction that he was not well loved by his parents, and from the bullying he endured from his brothers. Sereny suggests that his lonely and loveless childhood contributed to the lack of compassion and ruthless ambition she sees as his most defining adult characteristics.

Speer's marriage and family life also receive only cursory coverage in Sereny's biography. According to Sereny, Speer's parents never approved



of his wife Margarete, whom they considered of a lower station. The author suggests that Speer married in part as an act of rebellion. Despite the five children she bore him, Sereny portrays Margarete as having had little influence on Speer's career. According to the author, Speer was incapable of showing real affection to his children, most of whom became estranged from him, or for his wife. Sereny's Speer was much too intent on aggrandizing himself to devote any appreciable time to his family, either before or after his confinement in Spandau prison. Sereny writes that only shortly before his death did Speer form a close human relationship—with a much younger woman.

Sereny writes little about Speer's university years during which he trained as an architect, first at Karlsruhe, then at the Munich Institute of Technology, and finally as a graduate student in Berlin studying with the famous architect Heinrich Tessenow. The author portrays Speer as being cushioned by his father's wealth from the hardships suffered by most students during the economic depression. Oddly, Sereny's compassionless Speer shared both his food and his living quarters freely with other students who were in need. In 1931, Speer attended a speech delivered by Adolf Hitler and became a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, or Nazis). According to the author, Speer joined the party not out of ideological conviction but because of his ambition and his fascination with Hitler. Speer's life changed forever.

Most of Sereny's biography focuses on the next period of Speer's life: his actions as a member of the Nazi Party and as an important functionary in Hitler's government. She also explores at great length Speer's strange relationship with Hitler, whom she surprisingly portrays in many cases as a likable and relatively benign (if tyrannical) father-figure. Throughout her account of the fifteen years Speer served the Nazis, Sereny constantly explores Speer's attitudes about the Jews, his reactions to the Nazis' treatment of them, and his knowledge of their ultimate fate.

Sereny portrays the relationship between Speer and Hitler as one of subconscious and unfilled sexual love. Driven by his desire to please Hitler and his lust for power, Speer became oblivious to the crimes of the Nazi regime and to the suffering of the millions of workers under his authority. As the overseer of Germany's war industries, Speer sacrificed the welfare of German and foreign workers in a spectacularly successful attempt to increase the production of weapons of war. Sereny writes that Speer must have been aware of the brutal treatment, inhuman working conditions, and insufficient food and medical treatment that many of the millions of (often involuntary) foreign workers later related at war crimes trials. Sereny insists that he must also have known about the attempted extermi-

nation of the Jews, not only because of his high position in the government but also because of his intimate knowledge of the German economy. Sereny argues that the diversion of trains to take the Jews of Europe to the extermination camps in Poland and the huge quantities of material diverted to the camps could not have escaped Speer's notice. Nevertheless, Speer did little to alleviate the plight of the workers and failed to protest or intervene on behalf of the Jews. Sereny identifies these two omissions as Speer's greatest crimes, both of which stemmed from his love for Hitler and his lust for power.

The most effective and informative sections of Sereny's book deal with the personalities of the Nazi leaders and the power struggles and political infighting between them. The author shows that Speer himself became a master of political intrigue and as amoral as his rivals in his efforts to accumulate power and please his master. The leading figures of the Third Reich (and the women in their lives) emerge from Sereny's pages as having been without political or moral convictions and completely dominated by the personality of Hitler. Although all of the surviving leaders denied any knowledge of the fate of the Jews of Europe during World War II at the subsequent war crimes trials, Sereny expends many pages attempting to prove that all of them not only knew what was going on but also were willing participants.

Sereny provides only a brief account of Speer's attempts during the last year of the war to prevent the implementation of the "scorched earth" policy ordered by Hitler to slow his enemies' advance. She also largely dismisses Speer's supposed plan to assassinate Hitler as having never been serious. The author gives the impression that Speer's defiance of Hitler's orders only began after he realized that the war was lost and were part of a clever plan by Speer to save his own life once Germany's enemies triumphed and began meting out punishment. Sereny develops this same theme through her account of the trial of the "major war criminals" before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg in 1946.

During the trial, Speer alone of the twenty-two defendants accepted responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi regime, while denying any knowledge of specific atrocities. In his later writings, Speer attributed his admission of guilt to a belated realization that Hitler was a criminal, that the German government had perpetrated criminal actions, and that as a member of that government he himself was guilty. Sereny strongly suggests that Speer admitted responsibility for German crimes not because of conscience or, as he himself wrote later, to divert guilt from the German people. Instead, his admission was part of a desperate strategy he adopted to escape the gallows. Her evidence for this thesis was Speer's refusal—

throughout the rest of his life—to admit personal knowledge before 1946 of any specific crime or atrocity committed by the Nazi government. The author implies that Speer succeeded in tricking the tribunal into giving him a sentence (twenty years' imprisonment) much too lenient considering his involvement in Nazi criminality.

Sereny's book contains little concerning Speer's years of incarceration at Spandau prison in Berlin. She bases her account of that lengthy period of Speer's life largely on the letters he wrote to his family and others, the first draft of his 1970 best-selling book *Inside the Third Reich*, and interviews with two clergymen who attempted to help Speer overcome what he admitted were shortcomings in his own character. Sereny apparently believes that Speer's constant denunciations of Hitler and his supposed quest to become "good" were part of Speer's carefully conceived plan to rehabilitate his reputation once his prison term ended in 1966.

Sereny scatters comments about Speer's personality and life after Spandau throughout her biography, drawing from her many interviews with him. Some sections of the book are almost stream-of-consciousness excerpts from the interviews with Speer and others that confusingly deal with many different segments of Speer's life. Sereny describes him during the post-Spandau years as a charming and brilliant man who sought public attention to proclaim at the same time his guilt and his innocence. Friendly but withdrawn, he stubbornly refused to acknowledge that he knew about the fate of the Jews before Nuremberg. Sereny feels that such an acknowledgment would have done much to still the clamor from a growing element in world society that insists that there was no official or systematic attempt to exterminate the Jews by the German government during World War II. Sereny denounces these "revisionist" historians in her book. She points out that Speer was disgusted by what he termed this attempt to perpetrate a new "war guilt lie" to mislead yet another generation.

Sereny's biography convincingly portrays Speer as a complex, cold, calculating, brilliant man whose desire for power and psychological domination by Hitler blinded him to the brutality of the regime he served. Her accounts of Speer's relationships with the leading personalities of the Third Reich provide perceptive insights into the nature of the Nazi regime. She also persuades that Speer admitted responsibility for Nazi actions at Nuremberg and later not out of conviction or true remorse but in order to save his life and rehabilitate his reputation. She ultimately fails, however, to prove her major contention: that Speer had personal knowledge before Nuremberg of the murder of European Jews. The documentary and testimonial evidence she presents seem to show that Speer, too overwhelmed

with the burdens of his responsibilities to read the many clues concerning the fate of the Jews, remained ignorant of the true situation until confronted with the evidence at Nuremberg.

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—Paul Madden

ALL RIVERS RUN TO THE SEA

MEMOIRS

AUTHOR: Elie Wiesel (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Tous les fleuves vont à la mer*, 1994 (English translation, 1995)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Memoir

Haunted by the Holocaust but determined to bear witness for the dead and the living, Wiesel remembers the persons and places, the traditions and tragedies, and the dreams, hopes, and questions that have governed his life and thought.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Elie Wiesel (b. 1928), a Jewish writer and survivor of the Holocaust

Sarah Wiesel, Elie's mother

Shlomo Wiesel, Elie's father

Hilda,

Bea, and

Tsiporah, Elie's sisters

Rabbi Israel, Elie's parents' rabbi

OVERVIEW

Autobiographies pour out names and faces. Memoirs are detailed by encounters large and small. While conforming to those conventions, this book is unconventional. It is distinctive not only because Elie Wiesel recalls extraordinary encounters and remembers striking names and faces but also because it shows how his remarkable moral and spiritual outlook emerged from the twentieth century's greatest darkness.

Intertwined, three fundamental facts pulse at the heart of Wiesel's story. He is a Jew, a writer, and a survivor of the Holocaust, which was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of nearly six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Wiesel weaves the particularity of his life into the fabric of twentieth century history, which has been ripped by unprecedented mass murder and torn by immeasurable human suffering.

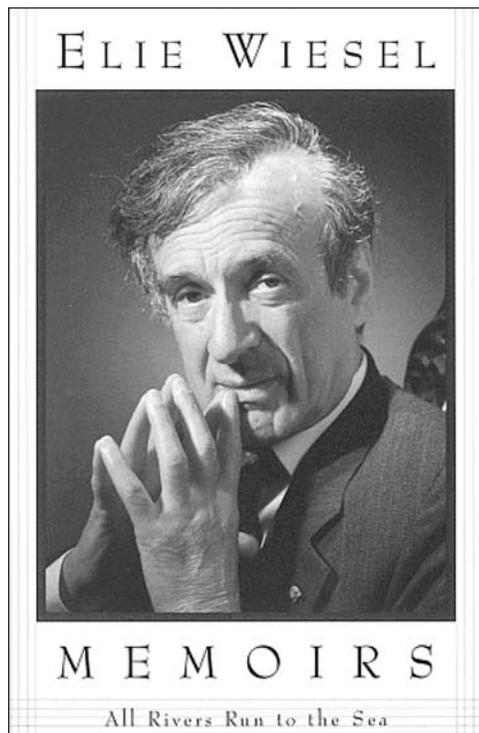
One day when he was eight years old, Wiesel accompanied his mother, Sarah, when she went to see her rabbi. After speaking to her in the boy's presence, Rabbi Israel spent time with him alone. What was he learning about Judaism? the old man wanted to know. After the young Wiesel responded, Rabbi Israel spoke to his mother again—this time privately.

When Sarah Wiesel emerged from that encounter, she was sobbing. Try as he might, Elie Wiesel never persuaded her to say why. Twenty-five years later, and almost by chance, he learned the reason for his mother's tears. Anshel Feig, a relative in whom Wiesel's mother had confided on that day, told him that Elie's mother had heard the old rabbi say, "Sarah, know that your son will become a *gadol b'Israel*, a great man in Israel, but neither you nor I will live to see the day. That's why I'm telling you now."

Wiesel tells this story early in his memoirs. It reveals much about him and sets the autobiography's tone. For Wiesel, stories are important because they raise questions. Wiesel's questions, in turn, lead not so much to answers as to other stories. Typically, autobiographies settle issues; memoirs put matters to rest. Wiesel, however, has a different plan for this book as well as for its projected second volume. His storytelling invites readers to share his questions, but the questions his stories provoke do not produce indifference and despair. Instead they lead to more stories and further questions that encourage protest against those conditions.

Wiesel's life makes him wonder—sometimes in anger, frequently in awe, often in sadness, but always in ways that intensify memory so that bitterness can be avoided, hatred resisted, truth defended, and justice served. The stories within Wiesel's story can affect his readers in the same way.

Rabbi Israel was right about Elie Wiesel. The shy, religious Jewish boy grew up to become an acclaimed author, a charismatic speaker, and a dedicated humanitarian. In 1986, he received the Nobel Peace Prize,



one of the world's highest honors. In his particularity as a Jew—it includes dedicated compassion for Jews who suffered under Soviet rule and passionate loyalty to Israel—as well as in his universality as a human being, Wiesel qualifies as “a great man.”

Rabbi Israel was also right about Sarah Wiesel. Neither she nor Rabbi Israel, nor Wiesel's beloved father, Shlomo, lived to see Elie's major accomplishments. Wiesel insists that none of his success is worth the violence unleashed, the losses incurred, and the innocence demolished in a lifetime measured not simply by past, present, and future, but through time broken before, during, and after Auschwitz. He would be the first to say that it would have been better if his cherished little sister, Tsiporah, had lived and all of his many books had gone unwritten, for in that case the Holocaust might not have happened. Wiesel's honors weigh heavily on him. They are inseparable from a question that will not go away: How can I justify my survival when my family and my world were destroyed?

Wiesel did not expect to survive the Holocaust. Ever since, he has wondered how and why he did. At the same time, his Jewish tradition and his own experience underscore that events never happen purely by accident. And yet—Wiesel's two favorite words—especially where the Holocaust is concerned, the fact that events are linked by more than chance does not mean that everything can be explained or understood, at least not completely. Only by testifying about what happened in the Holocaust, only by bearing witness as truthfully and persistently as possible about what was lost, does Wiesel find that his survival makes sense. The sense that it makes, however, can never be enough to remove the scarring question marks that the Holocaust has burned forever into humanity's history and God's creation.

Wiesel's memoirs are not triumphal vindications. They are drenched in sadness and melancholy. Yet sadness and melancholy, and the despair to which they might yield, are not their last words. Out of them Wiesel forges something much more affirmative. Optimism, faith, hope—those words are too facile to contain his outlook. Defiance, resistance, protest—those terms come closer, but even they have to be supplemented by an emphasis on friendship, dialogue, reaching out to others, helping people in need, working to make people free, and striving to mend the world.

This book's greatest contribution is ethical and spiritual. It shows how Wiesel found ways to transform his suffering into sharing, his pain into caring. These transformations do not mean that Wiesel forgives any more than he forgets. The Holocaust was too immense, too devastating, to be redeemed by forgiveness that God or anyone else can give. Because the world has been shattered so severely, Wiesel believes that the moral imper-

ative is to do all that one can to repair it. Otherwise, hatred and death win victories they never deserve.

In 1964, Elie Wiesel revisited his hometown. For more than one reason, his return to Sighet, that place in Eastern Europe where Sarah Wiesel and Rabbi Israel had their fateful conversation, was anything but easy. After his liberation from Buchenwald in April of 1945, Wiesel had gone to France, where he eventually became a reporter for an Israeli newspaper. Years later, his journalistic work took him to New York, where he became an American citizen.

Sighet was far away. The distance, however, did not involve mileage alone. Once a part of Romania, then annexed by Hungary, and once more under Romanian control, Sighet stood behind the Iron Curtain in the 1960's. Cold War politics made the journey difficult and dangerous. Nevertheless, Wiesel was determined to go back to Sighet, "the town beyond the wall," as one of his best novels calls it.

Memory drew him there, even though Wiesel already knew what his visit would confirm: Sighet no longer existed—at least not as it was when he was born there in 1928, or as he had known the place until he left it at the age of fifteen in 1944. More than time had passed. People had come and gone, but that fact only began to tell Sighet's story. Those things happen everywhere, but the way they happened in Sighet, the particularity and enormity of what happened there and in thousands of places like it, made Sighet's disappearance so devastating that the world itself could never again be what it was before. Sighet vanished in the Holocaust's night and fog. Only traces remained of what once had been. Sighet's streets looked familiar to Wiesel in 1964, although one called the Street of Jews contained apartments that seemed as modest as they now were empty. His boyhood eyes must have been unaware of the poverty that many of Sighet's Jews experienced.

The motion picture house still existed. The family house still stood. It had not been sold but taken; strangers occupied it. Wiesel found that Jewish cemetery. He lit candles at his grandfather's grave. Elsewhere, Sighet was filled with living people, but Wiesel's hometown was gone. As the Germans liked to say twenty years before, Sighet had become *judenrein*. Along with hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews, the largest remaining community of European Jews that had not yet been decimated by the Nazis, the Jews of Sighet were deported to Auschwitz in the spring of 1944.

Wiesel and his two older sisters, Hilda and Bea, survived the Holocaust, but most of Sighet's Jews, including his father, mother, and little sister did not. Few of the survivors went back to Sighet after the Nazis surrendered in May, 1945. Poignantly, Wiesel reflects on all that was lost as he describes his visit to one of the few synagogues that was still open two decades

later. Stacked inside were hundreds of books—Wiesel calls them “holy books”—that had been taken from abandoned Jewish homes and stored there. He discovered some that had belonged to him. Tucked inside one were “some yellowed, withered sheets of paper in a book of Bible commentaries.” Wiesel recognized the handwriting they contained. It was his. Summing up his sadness, his memoirs observe that the finding of those pages is “a commentary on the commentaries I had written at the age of thirteen or fourteen.” This story, the existence of yellow, withered sheets of paper, a boy’s reflections on the Bible—all are part of a world that disappeared. Wiesel seeks to make it live again through memory, testimony, and writing. The episodes he records make questions explode: Why did the Allies refuse to bomb the railways to Auschwitz? Why did Wiesel’s family not accept the help of their housekeeper, Maria? One of the very few Christians in Sighet who offered assistance to Sighet’s Jews, she might have hidden the family successfully. Why was the world so indifferent to Jewish suffering? Why was God?

Wiesel’s narrative does not follow a strictly chronological form. His story does not fit the usual style of beginning-middle-end. The memories of his life circle around one another too much for that. From time to time, Wiesel breaks this commentary on himself even further by reflecting on his dreams. In one of them, the Wiesel family has gathered for a holiday celebration. Elie is asked to sing, but he cannot remember the traditional songs. He is asked for a story, but the stories have been forgotten, too. “Grandfather,” Wiesel calls out in his dream, “help me, help me find my memory!” Astonished, Wiesel’s grandfather looks back at him. “You’re not a child anymore,” he says. “You’re almost as old as I am.”

Elie Wiesel has lived for a long time. He has experienced and remembered more than most people, but he wrote profoundly about forgetting. If we stop remembering, he warns, we stop being. Wiesel is older now than most of his extended family who perished in the Holocaust. Taking his memoir’s title from the biblical book of Ecclesiastes, which speaks of how generations come and go and of how the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing, Wiesel sounds a characteristically mystical note as he considers how all rivers run to the sea.

Beginning in obscurity, streams of experience and memory rush forth. As they grow and merge, life’s currents become a flood that eventually pours into the ocean’s awesome depth. Like Elie Wiesel’s memoirs, the sea does not yield all of its secrets. Instead its storms rage, its waves crash, its tides ebb and flow, and there are moments of beauty, calm, and silence, too. Through it all, the sea endures, which is not an answer but an invitation to more stories and to their questions about how and why.

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—John K. Roth

AND THE SEA IS NEVER FULL

MEMOIRS, 1969-

AUTHOR: Elie Wiesel (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Et la mer n'est pas remplie*, 1996 (English translation, 1999)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Memoir

In his second volume of memoirs, Wiesel explores the paths that took him through the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz to international recognition as a humanitarian, influential writer, and post-Holocaust interpreter of Jewish tradition.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Elie Wiesel (b. 1928), a Jewish writer and survivor of the Holocaust

Marion Erster Rose, Elie's wife

Elisha Wiesel, Elie and Marion's son

Sarah Wiesel, Elie's mother

Shlomo Wiesel, Elie's father

Hilda,

Bea, and

Tsiporah, Elie's sisters

OVERVIEW

"All rivers run to the sea," says Ecclesiastes, "and the sea is never full." Elie Wiesel took the title of his first volume of memoirs from that biblical verse's initial phrase. *Tous les fleuves vont à la mer* (1994; *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, 1995) ended where its sequel begins, with his marriage to Marion Erster Rose in Jerusalem on April 2, 1969. On June 6, 1972, their son Elisha was born. Both events, life-changing and joyful ones for Wiesel, figure prominently in his second volume, which also takes its title from Ecclesiastes. That title theme—the sea is never full—identifies the rhythm that governs this autobiography: Wiesel's memoirs contain amazing success stories, but each is linked to twentieth century darkness, to a labyrinth of heartbreaking memories that breed unanswerable questions. Exploring those tensions in compelling ways, Wiesel's memoirs provide moral guidance at the dawn of a new century.

Wiesel's life brims with accomplishment: more than thirty widely read books, distinguished professorships, literary awards, and honorary degrees, the confidence of political leaders, the Nobel Peace Prize. His parents, Shlomo and Sarah, had the more modest dream that he would become a *rosh yeshiva*, the leader of a Jewish school where the Talmud is studied. Assaulted by Nazi Germany's fanatical anti-Semitism, the world of Eastern European Jewry that spawned their hope no longer exists. Nevertheless, Wiesel fulfilled a version of his parents' longing; few persons have done more to encourage the post-Holocaust study of Jewish texts and traditions. At the time of his birth in 1928, however, it could scarcely have been imagined that events would take him from his humble origins in Sighet, Romania, to the international acclaim that he achieved seventy years later. Yet—that theme is among Wiesel's favorites—the sea is never full, for the events that took Wiesel to fame include what he calls "the Event"—the Holocaust, Nazi Germany's attempt to annihilate the Jewish people.

Hasidism, Wiesel's best-loved Jewish tradition, emphasizes the celebration of life's goodness. It also recognizes what Wiesel understands profoundly; namely, that life's preciousness must be acclaimed in spite of the forces of hate, injustice, indifference, and violence that push humanity to the brink of hopelessness and despair. So the sea is never full. However much Wiesel has done, whatever his successes may be, he cannot forget that his status in the high-powered worlds of New York and Washington, Paris and Moscow, Oslo and Jerusalem, is not so far removed from the boyhood home that he shared with his older sisters, Bea and Hilda (they, too, survived the Holocaust), or from Auschwitz, where the Germans murdered his mother and his little sister Tsiporah, or from Buchenwald, where American troops liberated Wiesel but not before his father perished there.

Wiesel works to sustain memory. "I am afraid of forgetting," he writes, and thus a single photograph hangs above his writing desk. "It shows my parents' home in Sighet," he explains. "When I look up, that is what I see. And it seems to be telling me: 'Do not forget where you came from.'" In one of the book's most moving episodes, Wiesel describes a journey in July, 1995. He takes his son Elisha and his nephew Steve Jackson to see where their grandparents had lived in Sighet and then guides them on the memory path to Auschwitz. Grief and joy, loss and promise mix and mingle. "Ours is the tree of an old Jewish family whose roots touch those of Rashi and King David," Wiesel recalls. "And look: Its branches refuse to wither." That refusal comes in spite of what memory recalls. Wiesel brings Elisha and Steve to Birkenau, the killing center at Auschwitz. It was in Birkenau, 1944, that Wiesel discovered what he calls "evil that saps all joy." Never-

theless, he testifies, the sapping, let alone the elimination, of joy must not have the last word.

Above all, "death is never a solution," a point that Wiesel registers as he contemplates the apparent suicide of Primo Levi, another Holocaust survivor who became a brilliant writer. Although Wiesel says that he understands Levi's ending, Wiesel's memoir seems to rule out suicide as an option for him. Instead, his life stays charged with energy that shows little sign of waning. True, he travels less enthusiastically. Yes, he guards his writing time more jealously. Although time is not on his side, he still envisions books to write; he alludes to works in progress, a study of his teachers and a novel about judges. He speaks of doors still to be opened, secrets yet to be discovered, questions that have not been fully pursued, among them why he remained so reluctant to talk with his sisters about their Holocaust experiences or to speak more explicitly, more often, about the Event itself.

These unfinished and perhaps unending quests often revolve around Wiesel's father, whose presence surrounds the book. Frequently, that presence emerges in italicized meditations—often they involve dreams—in which Wiesel's father appears to him. The two hold silent conversations that raise more questions than they answer. The questions usually intensify Wiesel's uneasiness about whether he is living up to his own imperative: "For the dead *and* the living, we must bear witness."

His prose typically spare and lean, Wiesel favors a minimalist style that permits the silence created by what is not said to provoke thought that goes beyond the written or spoken word. *And the Sea Is Never Full* contains no observation more understated than the one expressed in a simple sentence that says: "I have lived a few lives." One of them involves the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. That remarkable institution—it receives millions of visitors annually—bears Wiesel's imprint in more ways than one. Not only are the words of his imperative, quoted above, inscribed on the museum's walls, but also from 1979 to 1986 he oversaw the planning that led to the museum's opening on April 19, 1993, the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Wiesel recalls the museum's birth pangs. They ranged from factional disputes and personal rivalries to crucial debates about "the specificity or universality of the Holocaust." Wiesel's position on that point has been unwavering: Far from being "just another event," the Holocaust is unique, "the ultimate event, the ultimate mystery." It is "a Jewish tragedy with universal implications" that are best examined through a focus on the Event's Jewish particularity. Wiesel did not win all the battles he fought during the museum's creation, but without him, it would not exist. His feelings about this success include ambivalence. The museum, he thinks, tries "to illus-

trate too much." He preferred "a more sober, more humble edifice, one that would suggest the unspoken, the silence, the secret," and thereby leave visitors saying: "Now I know how little I know." Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the museum is "undeniably impressive." It plays, he affirms, "a pedagogical role of the first order."

While Wiesel led the museum planning, his public impact emerged in two other notable ways. On April 19, 1985, he went to the White House to receive the rarely awarded Congressional Gold Medal. After Ronald Reagan bestowed it on him, Wiesel appealed to the president: He must not go to the German military cemetery at Bitburg, where the dead include members of the Schutzstaffel (SS), the elite who carried out Nazi Germany's so-called final solution to the "Jewish question." For some time, controversy had swirled about Reagan's acceptance of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's invitation to visit Germany on the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. At the award ceremony, Wiesel said to Reagan, Bitburg "is not your place, Mr. President. Your place is with the victims of the SS." Probably Wiesel's retrospective judgment is an exaggeration—he thinks that his White House speech "touched a thousand times more people than I had with all my previous writings and speeches"—but even though it was unsuccessful, his plea to Reagan (it was shared with the White House in advance) became not only a media event but also a moral moment that made Wiesel more visible than ever.

Less than two years later, Wiesel's stature as a defender of justice and human rights—his untiring support for oppressed Jews in the Soviet Union is only one example—was magnified by the Nobel Peace Prize, which he received in Oslo, Norway, on December 9, 1986. Wiesel recalls listening to Egil Aarvik, the chair of the Nobel Committee. As he wondered silently whether Aarvik could really be speaking about him, Wiesel saw himself again in his parents' house. His son at his side, Wiesel accepted the prize, but before he could deliver his response, he saw his father and relived, for a moment, his death in Buchenwald. His father's last moments had included cries to which Wiesel could not respond because he would have been beaten to death. Wiesel's memoirs make clear that his protests against injustice and indifference, his passion to be with those who suffer, his emphasis on friendship are all intensified by the memory of those cries, which "tore me apart" then and "tear me apart still."

Early in this book, Wiesel remarks that "the introvert will yield to the extrovert." The forecast proves correct as Wiesel writes at length about his encounters with influential figures around the globe. The list is as long as it is illustrious: Mikhail Gorbachev and Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, as well as Israeli leaders such as Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin,

and Shimon Peres. Just as Israel and particularly Jerusalem hold a special place in Wiesel's heart, which leads the media to keep waving "the Israel-Arab problem" and questions about Palestinians at him, France and especially Paris are also dear to him. France was his post-Holocaust haven. He writes in French. Parisian publishers get the first options on his books. For years, moreover, the French president François Mitterrand was among Wiesel's best friends. Their friendship, however, did not last, for it eventually became apparent that Mitterrand had ties to the Vichy regime, which collaborated with the Nazi occupation of France and expedited the deportation of French Jews to Auschwitz. The full extent of that story broke in 1994 with revelations of Mitterrand's support of René Bousquet, the French chief of police who had organized the deportations of French Jewry. As Wiesel recalls Mitterrand's death on January 9, 1996, he takes no joy in his passing or in the demise of their friendship. Both leave haunting questions summed up by "why?" That most human of questions is one that Wiesel asks again and again. He seeks to understand where it leads, especially when "why?" interrogates the God with whom he argues and against whom he protests in the tension of his post-Holocaust Jewish faith.

Another encounter with a French friend raises additional questions for Wiesel, among them, "What can I say to a converted Jew?" The converted Jew in question is not inconsequential. He is Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the archbishop of Paris. Not least because the cardinal's mother died at Auschwitz, Wiesel wonders about Lustiger's Christian identity, for Wiesel cannot forget that the Holocaust took place in Christian Europe. Although it pains Wiesel that Lustiger calls himself a "fulfilled Jew," they engage in sustained dialogue—a word and practice that Wiesel values—and their friendship grows. Lustiger's Christianity remains robust, but he stops calling himself a "fulfilled Jew," and his commitment to Jewish causes and to Israel deepens. Wiesel finds Lustiger's presence disturbing, and not only because of his conversion. Lustiger, he says, is "an ally of all those who militate against fanaticism and injustice wherever they are found." Against tough odds, both men create disturbances that make the world more humane. Built on persisting and yet respected differences, their friendship endures.

Upon finishing this book, its readers understand that they have spent time with an exceptional storyteller. Whether the narratives are about contemporary political leaders, Wiesel's beloved Hasidic teachers such as Rebbe Nahman of Bratzlav, or the biblical figures he brings to life in books and lectures, Wiesel's stories always highlight ethics. It is fitting, therefore, that these memoirs include a story about Adam, the Bible's human father of us all, who provoked God to ask "*Ayekha*, where are you?" when Adam

fled after eating the forbidden fruit. As Wiesel tells the story, God knew Adam's whereabouts, but the story's moral insight depends on the Hebrew word *Ayekha*, which means: "Where do you stand in this world? What is your place in history? What have you done with your life?" These are questions that Wiesel asks himself and his readers as well. His ways of doing so in *And the Sea Is Never Full* make this book significant, as humanity begins a century more full of promise and also of greater potential for destruction than any other.

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—John K. Roth

“THE ANGEL OF HISTORY”

AUTHOR: Carolyn Forché (1950-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1988 (revised and collected in *The Angel of History*, 1994)

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRES: Meditation; war poetry

The mental and emotional work of comprehending shapes Forché’s poem, which recounts the horrors of war and the Holocaust-related experiences of a European Jew through disconnected fragments as well as repeated phrases that create powerful rhythms.

OVERVIEW

Many of the eighteen sections of Carolyn Forché’s poem “The Angel of History” recount recollections of World War II, particularly horrors of persecution, dislocation, and loss. The memories belong primarily to a war victim named Ellie, a deported Jew whom the speaker befriended and has known for a number of years. Ellie is the poem’s magnetic center, attracting a variety of associations, some of which are clarified in notes. While the poem does not proceed chronologically, images and repeated phrases link the sections, some analytical, others narrative.

Indeed, the mental and emotional work of comprehending shapes the poem. The first section portrays the shock of knowledge on the speaker, and the next three sections elaborate. When children are destroyed in concentration camps, windows seem blank, games become ominous, sleep is impossible, and “the silence of God is God.” The speaker’s descent into the poem takes the form of disconnected fragments, but images of sea, light, vigilance, sleeplessness, fire, and memory create a matrix of emotion.

The next seven sections develop Ellie’s experience—the loss of sons, her husband’s death from cholera, her affliction with Saint Anthony’s fire, the memory of her wedding dress, prompted by news of a plane crash. The events range from the war to her confinement much later in a French sanatorium. Her suffering and hatred of France have made her bitterly defiant. Homeless, sure that no country is safe, she believes that God is “insane,” and she wants “to leave *life*.” The speaker devotes herself to caring for Ellie,

missing events of her own son's childhood. She laments that Ellie's predicament "is worse than memory, the open country of death."

Whereas many poems move toward resolution, the last seven sections of "The Angel of History" emphasize disturbance. The speaker is haunted by an undefinable presence ("as if someone not alive were watching"). An unidentified voice in section 12 recounts a nightmare of nonexistence in the process referring to sites of atrocities in El Salvador. The process of empathizing, recounted in the thirteenth section, affects the speaker to the extent that it seems "as if it were possible to go on living for someone else." The next two sections depict her disorientation. A letter from Ellie describes changes over eight years, but in the speaker's memory, Ellie does not change: "Here you live in an atelier."

The sixteenth section opens with a bitter definition—"Surely all art is the result of one's having been in danger, of having gone through an experience all the way to the end"—and recounts the terrifying evacuation of Beirut, Lebanon, where the women first meet and the speaker first tried to comfort Ellie. The repeated phrase "And it went on" suggests not only the rigors of the evacuation but also their lasting impact on the speaker. Just as her recollection of Ellie seems more vital than the more recent events Ellie describes in her letter, the speaker's mind has associated (her word is "confuse") Ellie and the entirety of wartime horror. Logic and language both falter, as difficulties in translation illustrate. Initially a polite inquiry, Ellie's "Est-ce que je vous dérange?" ("Am I disturbing you?") sounds here and in the final section like a bell tolling and assumes ironic resonance. The final section serves as a musical coda, reiterating emptiness and irreparability. The poem ends not with any final pronouncement but with the voice of Ellie, or perhaps a nameless victim, inquiring of the reader what the speaker has said.

One understands that the poem, while cohesive, cannot resolve. The horrors that Ellie (and countless others) endured radically alter the world and the way one speaks of it. Like writers who endured the horrors of Nazism—Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, critic George Steiner, and poet Paul Celan, to name a few—the speaker becomes a witness even as she questions the adequacy of language to carry out her task.

"The Angel of History" looks unconventional. Its lines are sentences—one or more. Never enjambed, they cross the page like prose. Often the sections have divisions, but they have more to do with content than with stanza structure. On the other hand, "The Angel of History" *sounds* like a poem. The lines are lyrical and emotional, the limpid images a consistent synthesis of the beautiful and the ruined. Repeated phrases (repetends) create powerful rhythms and a sense of recurring dream.

That the subject is distant, even exotic, contributes to the mystique. That the poem is not continuous or linear may also contribute, at least at first. Forché is employing montage—the technique of combining disparate elements into a unified whole. In Forché’s hands, montage means composing without violating essential qualities of the vision she describes in her notes on the poem as “polyphonic, broken, haunted, and in ruins, with no possibility of restoration.” Individual images may not be surreal, but the world about which Forché writes and her discontinuous presentation of it may seem to be. Montage thus permits the reader to share in comprehending and feeling.

Few American poets of the past hundred years have dedicated themselves to witnessing great human rights catastrophes. From Forché’s early interest in people’s vibrancy and suffering has grown a poetry that applies a persuasive lyricism to some of the worst horrors of the age. In portraying what she observes (and what she feels while observing), Forché imparts immediacy and emotional intensity to vignettes of political significance. After observing the grisly prelude to El Salvador’s civil war in the 1970’s, she vowed, “I will live/ and living cry out until my voice is gone/ to its hollow of earth.” The power and desperation of this declaration must be understood against the background of two realizations that Forché made at that time. First, language lacked the means to describe horrors

she was seeing; in fact, the shock might well render one speechless. Second, among the societies and nations of the world, Americans were anomalous—protected yet confined in relative calm “like netted fish.” Witnessing events in various parts of the world severed Forché from the complacency of her country and from the hope of comfort and rest.

The travel—geographical and spiritual—that led to “The Angel of History” might be seen as fulfilling the legacy of Anna, the Slovak grandmother Forché mentions throughout her poetry, who had firsthand experience of World War II and became, in “What It Cost,” the first other voice to speak



Carolyn Forché. (Courtesy, Blue Flower Arts)

an entire Forché poem. Forché's program, explicit by the end of the 1970's, has included intensive study of languages, translations of poets such as Salvadoran Claribel Alegría, and the production of the 1993 anthology *Against Forgetting: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Witness*. Thirteen years separate the publication of her second and third books of poems, a period that she calls "the muffling and silence of a decade." When the "wound" of her accumulated experiences opened, "The Angel of History" took her beyond the limits of the "first-person, free-verse, lyric-narrative of my earlier years."

Another valuable context for appreciating the poem is its epigraph, the German Jewish Marxist philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin's description of the angel of history's helplessness amid ruin. To the angel, history is "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage." He would like to "make whole what has been smashed," but he is propelled "irresistibly . . . into the future." The storm blows from Paradise, indicating both the origin of the angel and the standard against which he views history. Moreover, the storm, carrying him backward, blows so hard that the angel cannot close his wings. That such a figure, longing to repair the infinite ruins, cannot free himself from the catastrophe suggests the immensity against which Forché's characters struggle.

When the modernist poet T. S. Eliot wrote of the horrors and disillusionment of World War I in his famous poem *The Waste Land* (1922), he chose urban European settings and pitted imagery of illness and dissipation against the vulnerable beauty of the month of April. Seven decades later, when Carolyn Forché wrote of the horrors of World War II in "The Angel of History," April was the time when "the tubercular man offers his cigarette and the snow falls, patiently, across the spring flowers." Eliot composed, from fragments of the world's cultures, allusions to traditions that he and many of his contemporaries believed had been destroyed by World War I. Forché, too, composes from fragments, but "The Angel of History" consists of individuals' memories. Her main character has survived the horrors of persecution, grief, dislocation, and continuing trauma, while the speaker herself has lived through the evacuation of Beirut.

The speaker's carrying and giving birth to her boy emphasize one of the great causes of Ellie's suffering—the loss of two sons. Forché also makes gestation and birth her metaphor for the immense importance of "The Angel of History" and the other poems published with it, referring to it as "a work which has desired its own bodying forth." In the language of the poem's opening, the speaker's time of "intimacy and sleep" has given way to a "vigilance" of the irreparable damages that the rest of the poem—as well as the book it initiates—reveals.

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—Jay Paul

ANYA

AUTHOR: Susan Fromberg Schaeffer (1941-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1974

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Historical fiction; young adult literature

This novel relates the story of Anya Savikin, a happy young Jewish woman who is studying to become a doctor until the Nazis invade Poland. After the invasion, Anya's world is destroyed, and she must struggle to survive.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Anya Savikin, a beautiful, studious young woman who is one of the first women and one of the first Jews to study medicine at her university

Boris Savikin, Anya's vegetarian and atheist father, a businessman who prefers scholarly activities

Rebecca Savikin, Anya's mother, a strong woman who is proud that her daughter is studying medicine

Verushka Savikin, Anya's younger sister, who is a gifted pianist and more of a romantic than Anya

Stajoe Lavinsky, Anya's first husband and the father of Ninushka

Ninushka Lavinsky, Anya's daughter

Rutkauskus Vishinskaya, a Catholic Lithuanian who gives Ninushka a home during the war

Onucia Vishinskaya, Rutkauskus's wife, who Ninushka, for a while, thinks is her mother

Max Meyers, Anya's second husband, an Auschwitz survivor

Erdmann, a Jew disguised as a German soldier, who helps Anya escape from a concentration camp to find her daughter

OVERVIEW

The horror of World War II and Nazi persecution changes Anya Savikin's life and causes her to contemplate God's existence and why she survived when so many did not. Until the war, Anya lives an idyllic, family-oriented life in Vilno, Poland, with her Jewish parents, sister, and two

brothers. Her family observes some Jewish traditions, more because of a love for the custom than because of strong religious beliefs.

To her parents' delight, Anya becomes a medical student. A telephone call in which her father warns her that some students are attacking and disfiguring the faces of Jewish girls makes Anya ponder about God: She decides it was fate and not an accident that allowed her father to hear about the incident and call to save her. She begins to believe in a supernatural power, although not necessarily the God about whom she has been taught. While in medical school, Anya marries Stajoe Lavinsky, a Polish Jew and engineer. They move to Warsaw, where Anya plans to continue school but never does. She has one miscarriage and then bears a daughter, Ninushka.

When the Germans invade Warsaw, Anya, Stajoe, and the baby leave for Vilno, but the situation is no better there. From her parents' house, Anya watches as her father is taken from the street and put in a truck to be sent to a concentration camp. She remembers that her father always said that justice does not exist in the world. Eventually, the Germans take the rest of the family to a concentration camp. Soon Anya is numbed by the murdering of her family: her sister, brothers, husband, and earlier her father. Only mothers and daughters are left: Rebecca, Anya, and Ninushka. Later Anya learns that young children are to be killed, so she manages to have her daughter taken from the camp and left on church steps. She finds out that a childless, Catholic Lithuanian couple, Rutkauskus and Onucia Vishinskaya, have her daughter and call her Luisa Vishinskaya.

Shortly after giving up Ninushka, Anya and her mother are forced from the concentration camp and separated. Recognizing that her mother is in the line of those too old or disabled to work and therefore most likely to be killed, Anya tries to join her but is stopped by a soldier. Rebecca shouts to remind Anya that she must live for her daughter, Ninushka. Anya is sent to another camp but escapes and makes contact with the man who has Ninushka. He takes her to her daughter, but Ninushka, young when taken from Anya, does not recognize her mother. After the Lithuanian Gestapo search for Jews in the Vishinskayas' house, Anya decides she must leave without Ninushka. Anya, again thinking of all the times she has escaped and survived, decides that a supernatural power that wants her to live must exist. She apologizes to her dead father, who was an atheist.

When the Soviets arrive to liberate the Poles from the Germans, Anya tries to make contact with the Vishinskayas to reclaim her daughter. She learns, however, that the Vishinskayas were shot for hiding Jews and that Ninushka is in an orphanage somewhere. When Anya finds Ninushka, she

discovers that her daughter still does not know who she is. Eventually, however, Ninushka accepts that Anya is her mother, but Anya is aware that Ninushka is very different from what she might have been if the Jewish Anya had reared her without war instead of the Catholic Vishinskayas during the war. After learning that her husband's family was also killed, Anya decides to leave Europe and move to the United States. She and Ninushka settle in New York City, where Anya marries Max Meyers, a Jewish Auschwitz survivor.

Four important themes in *Anya* are the senselessness and horror of bigotry and war, the confirmation of the existence of a supernatural power, the special relationship between mothers and daughters, and women's need for work outside the family. The brutality of war is shown not only by the book's numerous details of atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jews but also by changes in Anya's psyche: The trusting, optimistic young Anya becomes a suspicious, pessimistic older woman. Ultimately the changes in Anya convey that the survivors of war are victims as much as the dead; the war is never over for Anya, for she constantly relives the past.

Yet, ironically, this nightmare is what makes her believe in God. Anya thinks that her own survival is a miracle that only a supernatural power could have performed. Still, the war raises questions Anya cannot answer; she longs to find a purpose, a reason, for the war but cannot. The war also illuminates the importance of constancy and nurturance in the relationship between mother and daughter. Anya's relationship with her mother is compared with Ninushka's relationship with Anya. The former relationship, which was nurtured and bloomed before the war, is a warm and trusting one, but the latter, disrupted and distorted by war, is, at times, explosive and distant. Even so, Ninushka was Anya's motive for surviving, and, even after the war, Ninushka is the one Anya loves most.

Although family and child are most important to Anya, she also has a strong need for meaningful work. The necessity of work for women and the questioning of the female traditional role are highlighted by Anya's two marriages. The first marriage occurs when Anya is young and before the war; the girlish Anya unwittingly gives up the role of doctor for the roles of wife and mother. After the war and one marriage, Anya makes it clear to her prospective second husband that she is going back to school and must work. Her second husband, moreover, serving as a foil to her first husband, is supportive of Anya's desire for a career, and, therefore, Anya's second marriage is, in a sense, more successful than her first. The war, however, ruins Anya's chances to be a doctor, for courses taken in Europe cannot transfer to American schools. When Anya then chooses to be a

nurse, she cannot, for she associates the pain she sees in the sick with the afflictions she saw during the war. The effect of the war on Anya is all-consuming.

Anya is poet and novelist Susan Fromberg Schaeffer's second novel. Schaeffer's novels often focus on women who are undergoing crises. Her first novel, *Falling* (1973), is about Elizabeth Kamen, a Jewish woman who attempts suicide; therapy reveals Kamen's traumatic childhood and unstable family relationships. Elizabeth, then, like Anya, must relive her past and try to make some sense of it.

Agnes Dempster, the heroine of Schaeffer's fifth novel, *The Madness of a Seduced Woman* (1983), is committed to an asylum after being convicted for murder and being found insane. The book reveals that, like Anya and Elizabeth, the protagonist Agnes is a complex person whose life has been a disturbing one and consequently has a severe psychological effect on the heroine. While Anya is historical fiction, it is also, like *The Madness of a Seduced Woman* and *Falling*, psychologically realistic.

Critics have noted that, unlike many novelists who have written about the Holocaust, Schaeffer, in *Anya*, does not rely on allegory and mythology. Instead, with its numerous details about the concentration camps and ghettos and with Anya's inability to find any meaning in suffering, the book abounds in realism. The critic Alan Mintz, moreover, believes that the lack of Jewish symbols makes Schaeffer's work more appealing to non-Jews as it seems more about universal suffering. The critic William Novak, however, believes that Schaeffer joins other Jewish American writers, such as Cynthia Ozick and Arthur Cohen, in a move away from literature dealing with identity and assimilation problems to literature that shows a greater consciousness about being Jewish.

For young adult readers, *Anya*, having a universal appeal while being about the Holocaust, is important because it vividly portrays the nightmare of the Nazi persecution of the Jews and makes readers more aware of the evils of bigotry. In addition, *Anya* is important because it personalizes history: Unlike textbooks filled with facts, the novel brings history to life by showing the effect of a specific period of time on an individual. Yet *Anya* also deals with significant contemporary issues that young adults must face, such as career and marriage, which allows young readers to empathize and identify with the protagonist.

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—Michelle Van Tine

AT THE MIND'S LIMITS

CONTEMPLATIONS BY A SURVIVOR ON AUSCHWITZ AND ITS REALITIES

AUTHOR: Jean Améry (Hans Mayer; 1912-1978)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne: Bewältigungsversuche eines Überwältigten*, 1966 (English translation, 1980)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Essays; autobiography; history

In five essays, Améry presents reflections on his experiences as a Jewish refugee, as a prisoner in the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz, and as a survivor of genocide. Améry discusses his ethical and historical views on being an intellectual in a concentration camp, on the meaning of torture, on the collective guilt of the Germans for the Holocaust, and on the "necessity" of being a Jew.

OVERVIEW

Jean Améry was the name taken by Hans Mayer, a writer who was born in Vienna, Austria, to a Jewish father and a Catholic mother. His father died in World War I, when Améry was a small child. He was raised as a Catholic by his mother, aware of his Jewish ancestry and in contact with his Jewish paternal grandparents but with little exposure to Jewish religion or traditions. Against his mother's wishes, Améry married a young Jewish woman.

In 1935, Germany passed the Nuremberg Laws, a set of legal restrictions on Jews. As Améry later recounted, in *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* and elsewhere, reading the Nuremberg Laws convinced him that he had been defined as a Jew and that the laws were a death sentence on Jews, to be carried out at some undetermined time in the future. Three years later came the Anschluss (Germany's annexation of Austria). The German troops who entered Austria were enthusiastically welcomed by the Austrians, and the two countries were joined together into a single Reich, or empire.

Améry and his bride fled Austria for Belgium, but with the outbreak of war between Belgium and Greater Germany, the Belgians classified Améry as a German enemy alien and deported him to France. The French



The entrance to the Auschwitz concentration camp. (Tulio Bertorini)

interned him in a camp, but he escaped and returned to Belgium, where he became involved with the Belgian Resistance after that country was occupied by the Germans. The Germans arrested him while he was handing out propaganda, and he was tortured and then imprisoned at Auschwitz for the rest of the war. These events form the subject matter of the five essays that make up *At the Mind's Limits*. In the book, Améry reflects on the questions of his own identity, the human experience in extremity, his homelessness, and the guilt of the Germans.

The first essay, from which the book takes its title, treats the case of the intellectual in Auschwitz. Améry defines an intellectual as someone who lives in the realm of the spirit, who is dedicated to the humanistic arts of the mind. Remaining close to his autobiographical base, he puts himself forward as the representative of the intellectual. For such an individual, there is no place in a concentration camp; the intellectual must be a total outsider in a place that utterly rejects the values of the spirit. In Auschwitz, those prisoners who had some manual skills were relatively advantaged. In contrast, those who had been members of the "higher professions" became the lowest within the camp order. Lacking colleagues with whom to share their thoughts, intellectuals received no satisfaction or consolation from their aesthetic views or their stores of ideas. Auschwitz, for Améry, really was the utmost limit of the mind, in which thought could offer no

connection to other people, no assurance in the face of death, and no wisdom.

Améry's second essay, titled "Torture," is a contemplation of the torture he underwent after his arrest and of the meaning of torture both for those who experience it and for those who administer it. Améry describes his own place of torture, at Fort Breendonk in Belgium, and recounts the events that led up to his arrest and then his agonies. In discussing his torturers, the author rejects a sexual motivation but maintains that they indulged in a "sadism" of a broader sense, a satisfaction derived from the assertion of complete control by one human being over another. Améry confesses that the reason he did not give up the information his torturers wanted, the names of other Resistance members, was only that he did not know the true names of his colleagues. This leads him to consider the true nature of moral courage and who may be said to possess it and under what circumstances.

The third essay in *At the Mind's Limits* is titled "How Much Home Does a Person Need?" Here, Améry examines the nature of homeland and homelessness, especially for Jews during and following the Holocaust. Améry contrasts the position of the Jews from the German lands or lands occupied by Germany with that of anti-Nazi German exiles. The latter could feel homesickness. The former, the Jews, might feel homesickness, but it was of an entirely different order because they had been utterly deprived of their homes and rendered completely rootless. Austria had become a foreign land to Améry as soon as it was annexed by Germany. He suggests that for conquerors, the sense of home can be replaced by an imperial consciousness, and he indicates that this had already happened for great-power states such as the United States and the Soviet Union. Some critics have suggested that Améry's emphasis on the nation as "home" and "fatherland" echoes some of the sentiments in the enemy Nazi perspective. Ultimately, Améry is unable to say how much home a person needs and can only end with the observation that it is not good to be homeless.

Améry's third essay, titled "Resentments," is perhaps the most controversial in the book. Here he addresses the issue of German national collective guilt for the Holocaust. Améry's own resentments against Germany were strong. He had changed his own ethnically German name to a French one in order to distance himself from things German. He observes that international attitudes toward Germany had changed from the last years of World War II to the time at which he was writing, in the 1960's. The view that the German nation should bear moral responsibility for the atrocities carried out by its soldiers and in its name had largely disappeared, replaced by a general acceptance or forgiveness and a rejection of the concept

of collective guilt. Améry argues that even if every individual German did not support the program of genocide, enough accepted or actively participated in the program that the nation as a whole should be considered to bear moral responsibility. Moreover, if young Germans, born after the war, wanted to consider themselves heirs to the highest achievements of German thought, literature, and music, they also had to accept the Holocaust as part of their heritage. The victims of the war's atrocities had the burden and the frustration of reminding a forgetful world of the misdeeds of the perpetrators while still suffering from those misdeeds and seeing the German nation return to general worldwide acceptance and prosperity.

Améry's essay "On the Necessity and Impossibility of Being a Jew" evokes some of the sense of being placeless. Here, the issue is one of identity. In many senses, Améry was not a Jew. As he remarks in this essay, he was brought up attending Catholic Mass and celebrating Christmas, the father he knew only from a photograph was a soldier in the Austrian army, and he had little knowledge of Jewish culture or tradition. Even if he were to move to Israel and learn to speak Hebrew, he could not really become a Jew because he could not leave the earlier life that had shaped him. At the same time, the experience of Auschwitz had removed from him every identity but that of a Jew, and this would remain with him forever.

In *At the Mind's Limits*, Améry brings together discussion of personal, historical, and ethical aspects of the Holocaust. The essays make painful reading because they present dilemmas that cannot be finally resolved and confront readers with bitterness and pain that will not disappear. With these essays, Améry encourages readers to face the tragedy of the Holocaust rather than try to explain it away.

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—Carl L. Bankston III

AUSCHWITZ AND AFTER

AUTHOR: Charlotte Delbo (1913-1985)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Auschwitz et après*, 1970-1971 (English translation, 1995); *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 1965 (*None of Us Will Return*, 1968); *Une Connaissance inutile*, 1970 (*Useless Knowledge*, 1995); *Mesure de nos jours*, 1971 (*The Measure of Our Days*, 1995)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Memoir; poetry

In these three volumes, Delbo, who was a member of the only group of non-Jewish Frenchwomen sent to the Nazi concentration camps, recounts her struggles during her imprisonment and after her release.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Charlotte Delbo (1913-1985), a member of the French Resistance who was imprisoned in Auschwitz
 Georges Dudach, Delbo's husband
 Viva,
 Lulu Thenevin,
 Jeannette "Carmen" Serre,
 Madeleine "Mado" Doiret, and
 Germaine, companions of Delbo in Auschwitz

OVERVIEW

Charlotte Delbo, an essayist, poet, and playwright who is well regarded in her native France, was until 1995 largely unknown in the United States. Her greatest work is her trilogy about her imprisonment in the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz. Although Delbo completed a manuscript shortly after her return to France after World War II, she was unsure of the importance and the authenticity of her own work, and she did not publish the first volume, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, until 1965. In 1970 and 1971 she published the second and third volumes, *Une Connaissance inutile* and *Mesure de nos jours*. An English translation of *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* by John Githens, titled *None of Us Will Return*, was published in 1968, but it attracted little notice at the time. It was not until 1995 that Rosette C.

Lamont's masterful translation of the entire trilogy, published with the collective title *Auschwitz and After*, introduced a large group of American readers to Delbo's work. Lamont's translations of the three volumes—titled *None of Us Will Return*, *Useless Knowledge*, and *The Measure of Our Days*, respectively—have been examined by critics and read widely by college students in the twenty-first century, more than half a century after the experiences Delbo describes.

None of Us Will Return opens with several poems under the heading "Arrivals, Departures." Their central images are the trains and the train stations that prisoners passed through on their way to the Nazi concentration camps. The first and longest poem includes a narrative of hundreds of people arriving at the camps, the men being separated from the women and children, and then the children being separated from their mothers. All are made to remove their clothes as part of their processing, and the shame of mothers forced to strip in front of their children is an idea to which Delbo returns again and again.

This first set of poems introduces important characteristics of Delbo's approach to her material. The language and imagery are stark and unblinking, moving in close to focus on one person or one dialogue and back again to show large groups of people. Rather than an extended narrative, the book is a collection of short prose scenes and poems in roughly chronological order, generally told in present tense and in the first person. Rarely does Delbo argue a position or take on philosophical or sociological questions, or even describe how she feels about what she is telling; rather, she presents vivid scenes so that the reader will see what happened without intellectual filters. Delbo's gaze is unrelenting, whether she is describing in minute detail the movement of one foot in a pile of dead and nearly dead bodies or the mesmerizing glimpse of a single tulip growing at an abandoned house near a work site.

None of Us Will Return is made up of thirty-three titled pieces as well as several short, untitled poems. The titles of the individual pieces are brief, and often, as in the cases of "Evening" and "Morning," they seem to reveal little. Others, including "Alice's Leg" and "The Tulip," are more evocative. Several of the titles, including "The Men," "Roll Call," "Farewell," and "Thirst," are repeated in this and the second volume, creating a resonance and a feeling of circling back and looking again that is the centerpiece of Delbo's structure. *None of Us Will Return* also introduces some of the women who were imprisoned with Delbo: tough-minded Lulu, who helps Delbo avoid inattentive mistakes; Viva, who nurses Delbo through a fever; and Alice, who dies of exhaustion.

Delbo herself was not Jewish, but she and her husband, Georges Du-

dach, were active in the French Resistance, writing, printing, and distributing anti-Nazi materials. When France was invaded by the Germans in 1940, Delbo was working in Argentina, but she chose to return to France to work against the Nazis. In 1942, she and her husband were arrested and sent to separate camps. *Useless Knowledge*, the second volume of the trilogy, opens with "The Men," a prose piece and a poem about being allowed to say good-bye to her husband shortly before he was shot. Months later, Delbo and 228 other women of the Resistance were sent to Auschwitz and held together in a compound separate from the Jewish women imprisoned at the camp; of these, only 49 survived. *Useless Knowledge* moves more loosely through time than does the first volume, as Delbo remembers small details of life in France before the occupation and moves ahead of her story to tell the fate of a comrade or further ahead to reflect on her own writing process years later.

Although its descriptions of hardships and despair are vivid, *Useless Knowledge* is in some ways the most hopeful of the three volumes. One prose piece, "The Stream," recounts a delicious few minutes when the women were uncharacteristically allowed to wash themselves quickly in a stream during a lunch break. There is an account of a Christmas celebration the women managed to put together by sharing and smuggling food and even creating costumes for a play. Later in the volume, Delbo, her friends Lulu and Carmen, and others are transferred to another camp, Ravensbrück, where they are put to work growing experimental crops. This work is a bit less brutal than the work at Auschwitz. Finally, at the end of the volume, word reaches the women that they will be released, and they are eventually freed. The final piece in *Useless Knowledge* is a poem titled "Prayer to the Living to Forgive Them for Being Alive."

The third volume of the trilogy, *The Measure of Our Days*, deals with material that has been examined perhaps less frequently by writers about the Holocaust: the difficulties that survivors faced after they were released from the camps. Delbo describes months of lethargy, of confusion and frustration when faced with what had before been simple choices, such as what to buy at the market. Delbo is paralyzed at first, but over a period of years she finds her way back to the world while maintaining tentative relationships with some of the women who were imprisoned with her. When one of them, Germaine, becomes ill and then dies, Delbo and others re-establish contact.

The Measure of Our Days contains longer prose pieces than those that make up the earlier volumes, many of them titled with the names of other women Delbo knew in the camps, spoken in their voices and presenting a variety of ways these women dealt with their trauma. Newly released

Gilberte is unable to make simple arrangements at a hotel until a stranger intercedes. Mado mourns that she should not have survived; she speaks the words most often quoted from the book: "I'm not alive. I died in Auschwitz but no one knows it." Marie-Louise seems to be living in a blissful state of denial with her husband, insisting to everyone that she is happy. Delbo does not comment on or interpret these women's narratives; she simply allows each woman to present her own story. *The Measure of Our Days* ends with Germaine's funeral and Delbo's reflections on reality, starting over, and hope.

With the three volumes of *Auschwitz and After*, Delbo created an intensely personal account of one non-Jewish woman's experiences in the Nazi concentration camps. Delbo was a writer before she was a prisoner, and this may have contributed to the effectiveness of the trilogy. Her language and imagery are powerful, her structure is inventive and controlled, and her focus is on lived experience rather than on ideology or politics.

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—Cynthia A. Bily

AUSTERLITZ

AUTHOR: W. G. Sebald (1944-2001)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Austerlitz*, 2001, in Germany (English translation, 2001)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Psychological fiction

Jacques Austerlitz, evacuated as a child to Wales by his doomed Czech Jewish parents when the Nazis invaded Prague, relates to an unidentified narrator the haunting stories of his “false” English life and his journeys—physical and psychic—to the “far side of time,” where he must keep appointments with his history’s unburied dead.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

The narrator, unnamed but presumably a doppelgänger for Austerlitz
Jacques Austerlitz, an architectural historian whose evocative conversations with the narrator convey a determination to relive his parents’ fate

Emyr and Gwendolyn Elias, a dour Calvinist preacher and his troubled wife, who raise the six-year-old wartime emigré as Dafydd in a remote Welsh village

Penrith-Smith, a kind headmaster who informs the boy of his double identity

Andre Hilary, a history teacher whose description of the battle of Austerlitz awakens the boy to the strangeness of his new name
Maximilian and Agáta Aychenwald, Jacques’s biological parents
Vera Rysanova, Agáta’s former maid, who recalls the family history

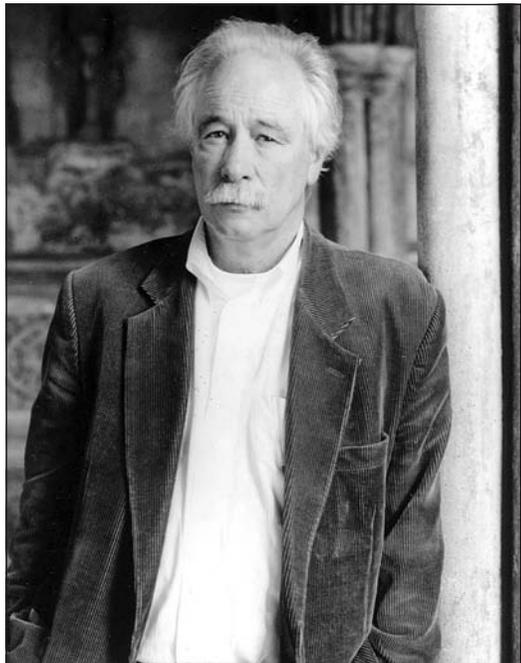
OVERVIEW

The death of W. G. Sebald in an auto accident in December, 2001, brought an abrupt end to a challenging literary career. It was easy to classify Sebald’s *The Emigrants* (1996), his first novel for American readers, as an example of Holocaust literature. The last of the book’s four stories presented a famous painter, Max Ferber, a German Jew sent out of Nazi Germany as a child to safety in England. *The Rings of Saturn* (1998) and *Vertigo* (1999) resist so easy a label. *Saturn*’s dark intimations included not just

Jews but all of Western life and achievement. *Vertigo* introduced Sebald's favorite motif, the man without a habitation, the "foreigner" whose mind, Susan Sontag suggests, is in mourning and, because it can never accept the past as buried, is itself posthumous.

With *Austerlitz*, although Sebald again orchestrated slowly but surely toward the Holocaust, it would be a mistake to pigeonhole so exceptional a novel under so confining a rubric. To be sure, Austerlitz, like Ferber, has been uprooted as a boy to England from Central Europe—in this case not Kissingen, Germany, but Prague, Czechoslovakia. However, in this novel, the word "Jewish" does not even appear until page 172—nearly two-thirds into the book. It would appear that the author wished to avoid the label, that he wanted this novel, unanchored by events alone, to join a distinguished lineage. To do so, Sebald, like every serious fiction writer, set up a system of narrative decoding that he believed could best illuminate even the darkest mindscape.

In *Austerlitz*, Sebald deepens his examination of the dispossessed by focusing solely on one member of his haunted company. He anatomizes Austerlitz's inner life but does so with the narrative assistance of a secret sharer, an inside outsider, a *doppelgänger* who, distanced in time from him for as long as twenty years, can yet provide a continuity Austerlitz as sole speaker would lack. The narrator and Austerlitz encounter each other



W. G. Sebald. (© Jerry Bauer/
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for the first time in an Antwerp railway station in the late 1960's and periodically reconnect in chance meetings in similarly transient travel zones over the next thirty years. Finally, in 1996, Austerlitz begins to relate his life story.

Although superficially *Austerlitz* is closer to a conventional narrative structure than Sebald's previous novels, this conventionality is an illusion. For instance, readers, unless endlessly vigilant, may encounter difficulties in remembering Austerlitz's unnamed spokesperson at all. Translator Anthea Bell apparently saw no alternative but to insert "said Austerlitz" scores of times, but never after quotation marks, to remind readers they are getting Austerlitz's story secondhand. In fact, there are no quotation marks and only eleven paragraph breaks in the book's 298 pages. Sebald relies for sequence on special devices of his own, of which his noncommittal narrator is only one.

In the words of the animated sign outside the magic theater in Hermann Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf* (1927; *Steppenwolf*, 1929), this novel is "not for everyone." What Princeton Germanist Theodore Ziolkowski wrote of the title character in the Hesse novel can be applied to Austerlitz. As a storyteller, he is eidetic; that is, he is a commentator capable of producing subjective images out of what the deceptively passive narrator might seem to take as vast stockpiles of facts on military fortifications, rail stations, or the secret lives of moths.

While Austerlitz appears to be only a traveler with his inevitable rucksack, his alter ego is really filtering—and elevating—mundane déjà vu to some higher level of consciousness. What keeps Sebald's writing evocative, even in translation, are the pictures framed in Austerlitz's mind's eye—never more vividly than during a visit to London's Royal Observatory when Austerlitz explains why he has never owned a clock of any kind:

I have always resisted the power of time . . . keeping myself apart from so-called current events in the hope . . . that I can turn back and go behind [time], and there I shall find everything as it once was . . . in which case none of what history tells us would be true, past events have not yet occurred but are waiting to do so at the moment we think of them . . .

If humans are indeed formed forever by what happens long before puberty, is Jacques Austerlitz, intellectually advanced, ruled by the damnation of not knowing his earliest past and obsessed, like Proust's Marcel, by the compulsion to rescue it from oblivion?

As if to reinforce an inner journey about whose source and destination he remains puzzled—almost diffident—Austerlitz documents every visi-

tation in the real world with photos and all sorts of graphics that are amazingly reproduced on the very pages where they are relevant. There are eighty-five of these—far too many—and their efficacy is mixed. Without them, Sebald would have had a book of less than two hundred pages. With them, that quality that Sontag praised collectively in *Vertigo* as “an exquisite index of the pastness of the past” can become in *Austerlitz* a distraction. Album photos from the Prague years are the best, including the book’s cover illustration of Jacques, at five, lavishly costumed as the Rose Queen’s page. It is easy to infer that this is Sebald.

In fact, it is in recounting his childhood that Austerlitz finally engages the reader’s interest. Austerlitz was brought up as the son of a Calvinist pastor named Emyr Elias and his wife Gwendolyn. His is not the displaced child’s life so classically portrayed in W. Somerset Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage* (1915). Its poignancy is muted by its being as-told-to. Yet the scene at boarding school where he learns his real name resonates. Even a year later, told that Napoleon won a great victory at a town named Austerlitz and more recently that dancer Fred Astaire was born Frederick Austerlitz, he still deplors his name’s alien sound.

Although frequently referring to his English years as “false,” Austerlitz settles there as an architectural historian. Britain stands as a buffer against a past he resists. Many of his reunions with his alter ego take place at London’s Great Eastern Hotel, perhaps talismanic of the direction he will finally take to solve the mystery of his identity.

At last, Austerlitz finds himself—in both senses of the word—in Prague, where he locates an old woman, Vera Rysanova, who once worked as a maid for his real mother, Agáta, who was an actress. Agáta did not make it out of Czechoslovakia; first she was interred in the camp of Terezín, then transferred, presumably, to Auschwitz and died. Vera produces the photo of the costumed Jacques, age five, which triggers the memory of a dream in which he returned to the family apartment whose burned-out remains he now photographs:

I know that my parents will be back from their holiday, and there is something important which I must give them. I am not aware that they have been dead for years. I simply think they must be very old, around ninety or a hundred . . . But when at last they come through the door they are in their mid-thirties at the most.

Austerlitz is moved to another disclaimer about time: “It does not seem to me that we understand the laws governing the return of the past. . . . [W]ho are still alive are unreal in the eyes of the dead.”

From Prague he goes to Paris, the last-known whereabouts of his businessman father, Maximilian Aychenwald, and then to the suburb of Drancy, where doomed internees were placed on trains for the death camps. He leaves his interlocutor in Paris and changes trains, appropriately, at the Gare d'Austerlitz. He must now go to the foothills of the Pyrenees, to a village called Gurs where in 1942 there was a camp, his father's last-known stop.

In "A Mind in Mourning," the first comprehensive essay in English on W. G. Sebald's three translated novels, written nearly two years before the publication of *Austerlitz*, Susan Sontag stresses the primacy of the journey. In Sebald, she emphasizes, "it is the return to a place of unfinished business, to retrace a memory, to repeat (or complete) an experience; to offer oneself up . . . to the final, most devastating revelations." The reader welcomes late starters like Sebald, who published his first book at forty-six. Only Joseph Conrad, who wrote his first novel in his fortieth year, comes to mind as being, like Sebald, one who traveled widely in seldom-charted realms and out of whose memory an eidetic universe reveals itself on the printed page.

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- Richard Hauer Costa

“BABII YAR”

AUTHOR: Yevgeny Yevtushenko (1933-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: “Babii Yar,” 1961 (English translation collected in *The Poetry of Yevgeny Yevtushenko, 1953 to 1965, 1965*)

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRES: Dramatic monologue; lyric poetry

In this simple poem, Yevtushenko uses metaphor to establish his thesis of the existence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, despite official disclaimers, and to protest against that anti-Semitism by using the powerful symbol of Babii Yar, the Ukrainian site of a Nazi massacre of thousands of Jews.

OVERVIEW

“Babii Yar” is a poem in free verse consisting of ninety-two lines. The title, roughly translated as “Women’s Cliff,” refers to a ravine near Kiev where thousands of Jews were massacred during the Nazi occupation of the Ukraine in the Soviet Union. The name of the place in itself has no symbolic connotation in the poem, even though Babii Yar (also known as Babi Yar, Baby Yar, or Babiy Yar) has become one of the most recognizable symbols of the Nazi crimes perpetrated against the Jews. The Holocaust is not the main focus of the poem. The very first line, “No monument stands over Babii Yar,” reveals Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s main concern. The original crime was bad enough, he seems to say, but it has been compounded by a lack of visible recognition and respect for its victims.

The poet immediately identifies with the Jewish people. He goes back to ancient Egypt and the agony of crucifixion, then leaps across the centuries to Alfred Dreyfus, who was the subject of a celebrated case of prejudice and persecution in nineteenth century France. The poet then turns to a boy in Byelostok, a town in Byelorussia (now Belarus) near the Polish border that had a large Jewish population that has been decimated—first in the pogroms in czarist Russia, then during the Holocaust. Finally, the poet identifies with the feelings of fear and the needs for love and kindness expressed by the young Holocaust victim Anne Frank in her *Het Achterhuis* (1947; *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 1952).

In the final verses, the poet identifies with the victims buried in Babii

Yar; this is his most powerful declaration of solidarity. As the trees stand as judges and "all things scream silently," he sees himself transformed into one massive, soundless scream, thus becoming the voice of each old man, each child who was murdered and buried there. He vows never to forget the tragic fate of these innocent victims, which brings him to his last point. He believes that there is no monument at Babii Yar because of the forgetfulness of the non-Jewish survivors and, more ominously, because of the anti-Semitism that existed before the advent of the



Yevgeny Yevtushenko. (Jean-Claude Bouis)

Nazis and remains latent in the Russian people. This is illustrated by the shout of the pogrom bullies: "Beat the Yids, Save Russia!" By invoking the name of the "Internationale," the battle cry of the Russian revolution, the poet declares that he will fight against the anti-Semites until the last of them is defeated. He is not concerned that the anti-Semites hate him as a Jew even though there is no Jewish blood in his veins. On the contrary, it is because of their hatred that he sees himself as a true Russian, since the Russians are "international to the core."

"Babii Yar" is a simple, unambiguous, declarative poem, told in the first person and replete with straightforward rhetorical statements such as "O my Russian people!" "I am behind bars," "I am afraid," "I know the goodness of my land," "And I love." Such direct, terse statements fit a particular style of verse making that was popularized in Russia by Vladimir Mayakovsky and in the United States by William Carlos Williams. Such verses often consist of only one or two words lined in a cascading fashion. They are used primarily for emphasis, but they also add a dramatic flair, which Yevgeny Yevtushenko, a gifted actor and skillful reader of poetry, inherited from Mayakovsky, who was also a powerful declamator.

The main device Yevtushenko uses in this poem is metaphor. In a series of identification metaphors already mentioned, he not only drives his points home but also makes his references in an interesting way. When he

says that he is an old Jew plodding through ancient Egypt, he immediately establishes a link between a history-laden people and himself as a present-day observer of history. When he sees himself crucified, he subtly reminds the reader or listener of the common origin of Christ and the Jewish people. A very brief mention of Alfred Dreyfus (only six words) is sufficient to evoke the terrible injustice done to him and all Jews. The metaphor of a young boy in Byelostok being kicked while lying in the blood that is spilling over the floors brings into stark relief the bestial cruelty of crimes among whose victims are the innocent young.

The poet reserves the most powerful metaphor for Anne Frank, to whom he devotes one-fourth of the poem. During his "conversations" with her, Anne's innocence and tenderness evoke the noblest feelings in him. Even the love he professes for her is ethereal, just as she is "transparent as a branch in April." By emphasizing the innocence of a young girl on a threshold of life, the poet underscores the depth of the injustice perpetrated against her and all young people like her. The images employed here tend to highlight the interplay of innocence and injustice. In addition to the visual image of a branch in April, the poet uses auditory images such as the steps of the police Anne hears and the smashing down of the door; to soothe Anne's fears, he tells her they are the booming sounds of spring and the ice breaking, respectively. The love that his encounter with her brings forth is unreal, desperate, and painfully tender, used to raise hope in a hopeless situation and to confirm the existence of humaneness in an inhumane world. Yevtushenko is at his best in creating metaphors and images that flesh out and animate his references.

It is clear that "Babii Yar" is a poem with a thesis. The thesis is that anti-Semitism exists in the Soviet Union, the official disclaimers notwithstanding. Yevtushenko protests against it by using perhaps the most suitable symbol—Babii Yar. The fact that the atrocities were committed by the hated enemy, the Nazis, amplifies the unforgivability of anti-Semitic attitudes, let alone actions. The fact that this anti-Semitism is camouflaged makes the original crime even more heinous.

Throughout his career, Yevtushenko has been known as a fiery dissident. He has used many of his poems to express his dissatisfaction with, and disapproval of, things that have happened in his country (next to "Babii Yar," "The Heirs of Stalin" is perhaps the best example). His protests have met with varying degrees of success, and his animosity toward the system has had its ebb and flow, but he has never been reluctant to speak his mind. In "Babii Yar," as a member of a post-Holocaust generation of Soviet citizens, Yevtushenko makes a strong statement on behalf of his peers.

"Babii Yar" is, however, more than a political statement about a problem in the Soviet Union. It is a declaration of solidarity with the oppressed, no matter who they may be, no matter where and when the oppression may be practiced. This solidarity with all humankind gives the poem a universal appeal, raising it above local politics and ideology. That is why the poet identifies with ancient figures as well as modern ones such as Dreyfus, Anne Frank, and the boy from Byelostok. It is evident, therefore, that Yevtushenko is warning not only the Soviet authorities and his compatriots but also the entire world against the pernicious effects of anti-Semitism and, in fact, of all injustice. While it is true that he has written other poems to this end, "Babii Yar" can be considered Yevtushenko's main protest against injustice, and a plea for a better world.

The ultimate merits of this poem lie in its aesthetics, however, and in the poet's ability to dress his basically nonliterary aim in a formidable artistic garb that transcends all mundane concerns. The best proof of the effect of the poem is its use by Dmitri Shostakovich in the opening movement of his Thirteenth Symphony.

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—Vasa D. Mihailovich

BADENHEIM 1939

AUTHOR: Aharon Appelfeld (1932-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Badenheim, 'ir nofesh*, 1975 (English translation, 1980)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Historical fiction

Set in an Austrian resort town shortly after the Anschluss, Appelfeld's novel reports the steps taken by the "Sanitation Department" to gain control of the town and abridge the freedoms of its inhabitants while revealing how specific people react to each succeeding deprivation.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Dr. Pappenheim, the "impresario" and director of the summer festival in Badenheim

Martin, the pharmacist

Trude, Martin's wife, considered "disturbed" because of her visions of the impending Holocaust

Frau Zauberblit, a guest who has escaped from a nearby sanatorium

Leon Samitzky, a Polish musician who reflects attitudes toward Eastern Europeans relative to the impending Holocaust

Professor Fussholdt, a vacationer at the resort and a famous historian

Mitzi Fussholdt, Professor Fussholdt's young, vain wife

Dr. Schutz, a mathematician who lives off his mother's money

Karl, a divorced vacationer who terrorizes people

Lotte, Karl's girlfriend

Princess Milbaum, an elegant woman who believes others are conspiring against her

Nahum Slotzker, a boy singer from Poland who grows fat at the resort

Professor Mandelbaum, a violinist

Salo, a traveling salesman

Peter, the pastry shop owner

Dr. Langmann, an angry Jew who hates Jews

The rabbi, who is old and sick

Sally and

Gertie, middle-aged prostitutes

OVERVIEW

Badenheim 1939 displays a sequence of both realistic and symbolic events beginning in the early spring of 1939 in the Austrian resort town of Badenheim and ending with the deportation of the Jews in late fall of the same year. A third-person narrator, in detached and understated style, reports the steps taken by the Sanitation Department to gain control of the town and abridge the freedoms of its inhabitants while revealing how specific people react to each succeeding deprivation.

The novel opens in 1939, amid swirls of unidentified rumors, as a foreboding, uneasy spring returns to Badenheim with the sound of country church bells ringing, two Sanitation Department inspectors examining a flow of sewage, and Trude delirious with a haunting fear that is also beginning to infect her husband. Shortly after the arrival of Dr. Pappenheim, the director of the summer festival, the perennial vacationers arrive and the town is abuzz with activity as the city people, anxious to relieve themselves of worry and the memories of an unusually strange past winter, stream toward the forest.

With the arrival of the feisty musicians, the vacationers wildly vent their emotions on liquor and pastries, and an inspector from the Sanitation Department appears at the pharmacy, asking peculiar details about the business and taking measurements with a yardstick. As time passes, Trude worries even more about her daughter, Helena, who married a non-Jewish military officer against her parents' wishes and, in Trude's visions, is being held captive on her husband's estate, where she is beaten every evening when he returns from the barracks. Concurrently, the Sanitation Department expands its power to conduct independent investigations as it spreads all over town, taking measurements, putting up fences, planting flags, unloading rolls of barbed wire, and preparing cement pillars. The large south gate to Badenheim is closed, and a small, unused gate is opened for pedestrians. The guests, interpreting these activities as attempts to make the summer festival the best one ever, pursue gluttonous merriment even though Dr. Pappenheim's "artists" are breaking their promises to appear at the festival. With a memory of the past summer, when the musicians surprised even themselves and annoyed the regular guests by sliding into playing Jewish melodies, a new theme is introduced.

Badenheimers become estranged, suspicious, and mistrustful of one another as the Sanitation Department completes its investigations and in the middle of May posts a "modest" sign requiring all Jewish citizens to register with the Sanitation Department. Who is and is not Jewish becomes a matter of heated debate, with some denying Jewishness because of either

personal conviction or conversion and others readily proclaiming their Jewishness. Foremost for all is the belief that they are Austrian first and Jewish second and that their national allegiance supersedes all others. Badenheimers are discomfited, and several begin remembering their past while some of them blame the Department's intrusion on the Ostjuden, the Eastern European Polish Jews, many of whom have not abandoned their Jewish heritage to assimilate into the Austrian culture.

As brief glimpses into the background of some of the guests are revealed and alliances and schisms among people are developing, the Sanitation Department posts pictures and descriptions of Poland and invitations to leave Austria and go to Poland. Twin-brother readers foreshadow the future by performing their specialty, readings of the death poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, and the Sanitation Department denies everyone except the milkman and the fruit truck driver entrance to or exit from the town. More deprivations follow as forest walks, picnics, and excursions are terminated as well as swimming in the pool, because the water supply is closed. Meanwhile, the non-Jews are leaving Badenheim.

The lives of other guests and their feelings about being Jewish are revealed as people are forced into closer contact with one another, and the "alien orange shadow" and "leaden sun" symbolize the town atmosphere. Vegetation grows unchecked as people learn that they are prisoners in the town with no postal service and that all Jews, even Jews who renounced Judaism or whose parents had converted to Christianity, will be forced to "transfer" to Poland. With only a few exceptions, people accept the edict, and many try to find the positive in the transfer. Food supplies begin to dwindle as the town fills with strangers—people dragged in from all over Austria because they were born in Badenheim. Even the feeble town rabbi, long ago relegated to an isolated old-age home, is brought into town. Derangement and chaos erupt as people seeking drugs loot the pharmacy and the musicians steal the hotel's dinnerware in preparation for their forced "transfer" to Poland. Finally, Helena comes home without her non-Jewish husband. ("A goy will always be a goy. And your goy too is a goy. I'm not sorry," says Trude.)

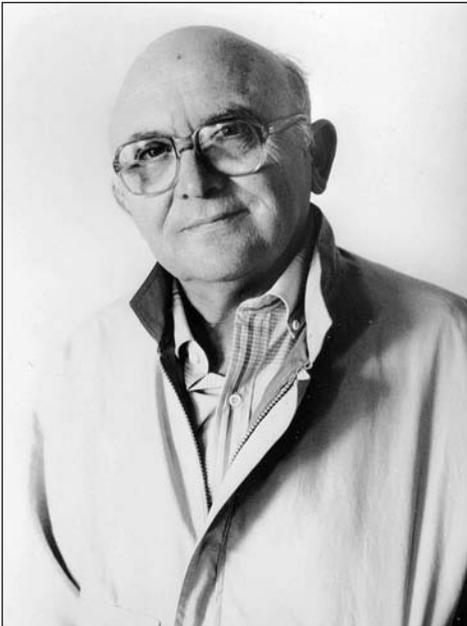
Even the four dogs, pets of the headwaiter, try to escape by jumping the fence; driven back, all but one is shot. Ultimately, blame is placed on Dr. Pappenheim as "the arch Ostjude and source of all our troubles," because he invented the festival and "filled the town with morbid artists and decadent vacationers."

At last, the time for deportation arrives: "How easy the transition was—they hardly felt it." In fact, the policeman who escorts the Badenheimers to the train station has a very easy task because people, glad to be free of their

confinement, are in fine spirits as they discuss the advantages of Poland. As if he were responsible for the “transition” as part of the happy festival arrangements, Dr. Pappenheim is overcome with tears of joy. As they are “all sucked in as easily as grains of wheat poured into a funnel” into the four filthy freight cars that come to take them away, the narrative ends with the impresario’s observation: “If the coaches are so dirty it must mean that we have not far to go.”

Rather than being rounded, the characters of *Badenheim 1939* are archetypes of people and conflicts repeated throughout the Holocaust. Unnamed and defying rational explanation, the Holocaust is the most powerful force in this novel. Revealed as a symbolic orange shadow enveloping Badenheim and gnawing at the geraniums, as a leaden sky blotting out the sun of the once-beautiful resort town, and as a general, undirected fear, its reality is confirmed only by its effects. Like William Blake, who cannot comprehend “The Tyger” although he sees it, the Badenheims neither comprehend the actions of the Sanitation Department nor foresee the consequences of those actions. The power of evil is clearly felt, however, as it directs an increasingly and overwhelmingly destructive course.

The Sanitation Department, efficiency and thoroughness personified, is the agent of the Holocaust. As the orange shadow symbolizes the Holocaust, the Sanitation Department is both literally and symbolically the



Aharon Appelfeld. (© Jerry Bauer)

organizer and collaborator of the Holocaust—the Nazis and others who, in not defying them, become their agents. The Badenheims never rise up against the Sanitation Department, a faceless, large, well-equipped omnipotent agency, because they cannot even imagine the Department’s ultimate purpose. Instead of directing their anger about the increasing deprivations and humiliations toward the Sanitation Department, the Badenheims make the grave error of assuming an unseen rationality and instead look to themselves for the cause of their problems.

Except for Trude, whose initial visionary perceptions of the truth and resultant fears are considered hallucinations and signs of disease, the characters remain blind to their mortal danger. Trude, like the other characters, however, is a loosely drawn type—one who sees the Holocaust coming but who is considered mad even to fear its portents. Still, when their daughter Helena returns home as Trude has predicted all along, “Martin knew that everything that Trude said was true.”

Dr. Pappenheim, the impresario who has arranged for the town’s summer entertainment for thirty years, was considered the most important person in Badenheim because summer was devoted solely to the pursuit of pleasure. With the confinement of Jews to the town and their imminent deportation, however, people blame the impresario and begin to treat him with hostility, which he does not recognize in his futile and continuing efforts to make the summer festival a success. Dr. Pappenheim’s greatest pleasures appear to be making people happy and seeing the regulars return to Badenheim each summer. Ignoring each succeeding Sanitation Department imposition and perpetually rationalizing his way to optimism, Dr. Pappenheim tries to dispel the mounting anxiety about the Sanitation Department’s increasing restrictions. He succeeds so well that a holiday atmosphere prevails as the Jews board the deportation trains to the sound of his optimistic prediction about the train ride.

Among other residents of Badenheim in 1939 is the musician Samitzky, who is the prototypical Ostjude whom the others hold responsible for their rejection by the Austrian world. Unpretentious, simple, and open, he is proud of his Polish roots, loves the Yiddish language, and becomes the lover of Frau Zauberblit, another prototype and an escapee from a nearby tuberculosis sanatorium whose non-Jewish husband has divorced her and whose daughter had brought her papers to sign renouncing all claims of motherhood. Thoroughly depressed and seeing no escape, Samitzky chooses to spend each day in a drunken stupor.

The Jews’ perceptions of and reactions to specific government actions leading to the Holocaust are the focus of this novel. Badenheim and its inhabitants symbolize the Jews’ tenure in Austria—outsiders enjoying a deceptively gay vacation in a death row that masquerades as a festival. The Sanitation Department, the organization and its agents who want to cleanse the city of its “waste” in the most expeditious manner, prepares for the Jews’ deportation to the “Poland” of death. As the Jews’ freedoms are increasingly abridged until they are prisoners, the naïve victims accept what the Department does with minor grumblings, some despair, and, in some cases, great anger at one another for causing the problems. Excepting only a few people who consider themselves non-Jews but whom the Depart-

ment nevertheless considers Jews, no one confronts the Department or even tries to leave, despite the ominous warnings. Situational irony, confirmed by an analysis of the historical period, highlights these opposites. Because the Jews were condemned as targets for the Sanitation Department, the deportation was tolerated by many rational “non-Jews.” Yet the Jews’ willingness to cooperate fully and be model citizens in a country they loved but that did not love them enabled the Department to deport them without encountering fierce attempts to ensure self-preservation. Similarly ironic, Trude, the only Badeneimer able to sense the impending catastrophe, is considered insane because of her fears; those who accept the unfolding plot by ignoring what they see or through frenzied drinking and gluttony are considered sane.

Dramatic irony, painful because the events are historical while also highly symbolic, pervades almost every line of the deceptively simple prose. Instead of perceiving the deportation to Poland as the next step toward death, the guests and Jewish townspeople, despite the forced return of all former Badenheimers to the town and many deaths among them, greet the filthy trains of death with joyful anticipation, seeing them as the vehicles of escape from their imprisonment.

Euphemistic symbolism names events and interprets actions with simultaneously figurative and literal images. The orange shadow that “gnaws at the geraniums” ominously predicts illness, death, and crematorium fires. As the vacationers compliment the thoroughness and efficiency of the Sanitation Department, they reflect both a historically documented pride in “their” country and the dramatically ironic efficiency of the technology and psychology used to exterminate them.

Because Badenheim is representative of Europe, each event symbolizes its larger European counterpart. Included are the initial acceptance of deprivations, the internal conflicts among Jews that hindered their leaving earlier, the carefree holiday illusions of security that clouded a clear image of reality, and finally, the misplaced optimism of a possible new “Golden Age,” in which Jews would be fully enfranchised citizens, an idea that lulled them into believing that the evil would disappear with the orange shadow, leaden sky, and the cutting of the “creeping vines” that sealed the doors.

Other images that enhance the action include the forest, symbolizing freedom; the new blue fish placed into the tank, which are deceptively fun-loving during the day but strew the tank with corpses at night; and finally the clichéd reversal—instead of people being treated like dogs, dogs are treated like people and are killed.

Matching the simple naïveté of the unsuspecting but fearful Baden-

heimers is the deceptively simple writing style. Short, simple sentences predominate, but the reader must attend to every word, lest important ideas be lost. Subtleties shade and enhance nuances of meaning and reveal symbolic imagery requiring thought, and each subsequent reading opens new avenues for consideration.

Badenheim 1939, Aharon Appelfeld's first work published in English translation, introduced his writing to American readers. Although he had produced, in Hebrew, volumes of poetry, more than three hundred stories, and more than twenty volumes of fiction and essays, and although he emerged as a major Israeli author in the 1960's, he was largely unknown outside Israel until the publication of *Badenheim 1939* in English translation. Almost immediately, the novel was recognized as a new form of Holocaust literature, and each succeeding novel has enhanced the author's reputation.

The novel also established a set of images and techniques that Appelfeld used in his subsequent novels, the most unusual being his treatment of the Holocaust, whereby he evokes its atrocities without direct allusion to the historical events that led to them, taking his readers "through the chill of enveloping horror without ever wallowing in the horror itself," as Stephen Lewis has put it.

Also introduced in *Badenheim 1939* are images found throughout Appelfeld's work—travel, trains, forests, abandoned children, lost mothers, ugly fathers, intermarriage, and the negative prewar Jewish image. All are woven into an allegorical but realistic world that intensifies the reader's vision of the inception of the Holocaust.

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—June H. Schlessinger

CONSTANTINE'S SWORD

THE CHURCH AND THE JEWS—A HISTORY

AUTHOR: James Carroll (1943-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2001

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; religion and spirituality

Carroll presents a lengthy account of Christians' attitudes toward Jews. His highly personal approach reveals his own piety and the anguish he has suffered over the Holocaust and the questions it has raised about Christian responsibilities.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Saint Paul (c. 10 C.E.-c. 64 C.E.), the brilliant thinker whose spiritual struggle illuminates the New Testament

Constantine the Great (c. 272-285 C.E.-337 C.E.), first Christian emperor of Rome

Saint Augustine (354 C.E.-430 C.E.), one of the most important Christian theologians

Pius XII (1876-1958), controversial Roman Catholic pope during the years of Adolf Hitler's regime

OVERVIEW

James Carroll constructs his long story of the Christian attitude toward Jews in eight parts, and the first, "The Cross at Auschwitz," begins with the indignation many Jews expressed when, in 1984, a group of Carmelite nuns established a convent outside the gate at Auschwitz and prayed for the souls of the almost two million who died there and at Birkenau. As part of their efforts, the nuns planted in a nearby field the wooden cross from the papal altar in Kraków. Perhaps 250,000 non-Jewish Poles died in the two camps, but Jews protested Christian prayers for the 1.5 million Jews murdered there with banners bearing slogans such as "Do Not Christianize Auschwitz and Shoah!" In 1994, Pope John Paul II prevailed on the nuns to move their convent a few hundred yards away, and in return Jewish leaders allowed the cross to stand temporarily. The dispute intensified until 1998, when Catholic fanatics planted explosives on the site along with

more than one hundred small crosses. Finally, in 1999, the Polish government had the small crosses removed but left the large cross at Auschwitz permanently. Carroll concludes of the controversy, "The cross here was simply wrong." He explains: "When suffering is seen to serve a universal plan of salvation, its particular character as tragic and evil is always diminished. The meaningless can be made to shimmer with an eschatological hope, and at Auschwitz this can seem like blasphemy." His reasoning resembles that of Jews who reject the term "holocaust," which means "burnt offering," with the repugnant implication that the genocide was an offering to God. The Hebrew word *Shoah*, or "catastrophe," avoids the suggestion of a "redemptive, sacrificial theology of salvation."

Carroll's revisionary reading of the history of supersessionism—the replacement of the Jews as God's chosen people by the "Jesus movement"—increases the responsibility of the Romans and lessens the role of the Pharisees. The Romans' destruction of the Temple convinced Christians that God was on their side, and the result was "the Judaism of the Jesus movement, which evolved into the Church, and the Judaism of the Pharisees, which evolved into rabbinic Judaism." The received reading of the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees derives from second-generation non-Jewish followers and has poisoned relations between Jews and Christians ever since. Tying Jesus' fate to the assault on the money changers has made the name "Pharisee" a pejorative, whereas in Carroll's reading "almost nothing said by Christians about these particular Jews is true." Paul, who had been a Pharisee himself, tried to avert the breach developing between Christians and Pharisees, especially in his "hymn of love" to the Corinthians, but became a victim of it, the "martyr of Shalom" (or harmony), as Carroll describes him.

In 285, the emperor Diocletian divided the Roman Empire in half, taking the eastern part for himself and naming the general Maximian his counterpart in the west. In 306, Constantine assumed the Western Empire; and in 312, after experiencing a vision of a cross in the sky, he defeated the rebel Maxentius and converted his army—and eventually the empire—to Christianity. Constantine transformed the cross into his sword—that is, a long spear with a bar across it—putting the cross at the center of Christianity and thereby emphasizing death and violence rather than the hope of the Resurrection. This shift in focus hurt the Jews, who were blamed for the crucifixion, and the cult of St. Helena (Constantine's mother), with its legends of the True Cross and the Seamless Robe, encouraged Saint Ambrose (339-397) to stress Jewish guilt.

Saint Augustine (354-430) took a more humane position than Ambrose, but his mercy derived from his understanding of Jews as witnesses to Old

Testament prophecies. Carroll explains the irony: "Those first, grief-struck followers of Jesus had created a narrative of his Passion and death in part out of reports of what had happened, but more out of the consoling Scriptures of their Jewish religion. All too soon, that creation narration had come to be understood as 'history remembered' instead of 'prophecy historicized.'" Carroll calls the years 306 to 429 the Age of Constantine, unified by the Council of Nicaea in 325. It was a period in which the joining of Christianity to the Roman Empire was disastrous for Jews, with Christians making Jerusalem "the spiritual navel of the world." The result was a crisis: "How could the Gospel base its validity on its being the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy, yet be repudiated by the holders of title to the prophecy?"

Persecution of Jews intensified in 1096, when the Church defined violence as a sacred act, enabling the First Crusade and its butchery of Jews in the Rhineland. Saint Anselm (1033-1109) taught that God became man and suffered on the cross in expiation of humanity's sins, a teaching that inevitably stressed Jewish guilt. He was unsuccessfully rebutted in 1130 by Peter Abelard, who argued that Christ's life was meant as a guide to humans, not a sacrifice to a monstrous Father. So-called blood libels began in the twelfth century, with claims of ritual murders of children by Jews; in 1215, Pope Innocent III convened the Fourth Lateran Council, which decreed no salvation outside the Church; and in 1231, Pope Gregory IX's *Excommunicamus* authorized the Dominican and Franciscan Inquisition trials. These events reached a culmination in 1242, when thousands of copies of the Talmud were publicly burned in Paris.

Carroll's section on "The Inquisition: Enter Racism" tells the story of how attempts to convert Jews to Christianity ultimately led from anti-Judaism, or hatred of Jews as Christ killers, to anti-Semitism, a hatred based not on religion but on race. When Christians won Iberia back from the Muslims in 1212, the region's three million people included several hundred thousand Jews who had been living peacefully with Muslims and Christians in a relationship known as *convivencia*, or "coexistence." King James I of Aragon, apparently unsettled by Jews' aggressive teaching of the Kabbala, ruled in 1242 that all Jews in his kingdom must listen to conversionist sermons preached by Dominicans and Franciscans. The failure of this policy was followed by the plague that hit Europe between 1348 and 1351, killing over twenty million people. Its terror spawned rumors of wells being poisoned by Jews and led to terrible pogroms beginning in the Rhineland. Riots in Seville, Valencia, and Barcelona killed hundreds of Jews in 1391. Fear led many Jews to convert, and by 1425 as many as 200,000 of these *conversos* were living in Spain. At mid-

century, Jews were being defined not by religion but by blood, and by the end of the century, the *conversos* were being scapegoated as much as the unconverted Jews. The blood purity regulations, called by one scholar "the ancestor of the Nazi Nuremberg laws," continued into the twentieth century. In its early stages, the Inquisition did its work only halfheartedly, but with the appointment of Fray Tomás de Torquemada (1420-1498) as the first grand inquisitor, torture and execution of *conversos* in Spain became common under the auspices of the Crown. Rome even established, in 1552, its private Inquisition, which led to the burning of dozens of Jews under Gian Pietro Caraffa. When Caraffa became Pope Paul IV, his 1555 bull *Cum Nimis Absurdum* confined Rome's Jews in a foul ghetto for three centuries. Of sixteenth century Spain, Carroll observes, "If the beginning of what we think of as modern anti-Semitism can be located anywhere, it is here."

Carroll is alert to the role played by secular philosophers in his story. He admires the "pluralistic ideal" of Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677), but it is Voltaire's "false promise of emancipation" that gets most of Carroll's attention. Voltaire (1694-1778) had no use for Christianity, but he developed an anti-Semitism based on his reading of the hatred of Jews in pagan antiquity. Carroll is contemptuous of those modern Christians who "claim exoneration on the basis of Voltaire's paean to paganism," and he rejects Hannah Arendt's thesis that the Enlightenment represented a break between Christian anti-Judaism and Nazi anti-Semitism. Carroll, in fact, scorns "the self-satisfied illusion of an Enlightenment that regarded its age—Reason!—as superior to the point of being discontinuous with what went before."

Carroll pays special attention to Martin Luther (1483-1546) and to Karl Marx (1818-1883). He follows historian Richard Marius in explaining Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543) as a product of his terrible fear of death and the threat to Gospel consolation represented by Jews. Carroll notes that on November 10, 1938, Luther's 455th birthday, the Lutheran bishop of Thuringia, Martin Sasse, "exulted" that "the synagogues are burning in Germany." The occasion was Kristallnacht (the "night of broken glass"). Marx's "Jewish self-hatred" (Edmund Silberner's phrase) burst out in "On the Jewish Question" (1843), in which Marx ranted at Jews for their "huckstering," and Carroll concludes that "in the European imagination . . . and in the socialist imagination, thanks in no small part to Marx, the figure of the Jew and the capitalist would be identical. The Jewish 'financier,' as the target of revolutionary hatred, would dominate the age." After the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, Marx wrote a defense of the movement that led to his demonization by conservatives as "that

Jew." Carroll is blunt in his judgment that Nazism and the Church both identified the Jew as "financier and communist."

Carroll's survey of Christian-Jewish relations in the nineteenth century includes a critical account of Pius IX's attack on "Modernism," accusing the Church of preparing for the "fascist/Nazi campaign of Jewish degradation." Carroll also lays out how persecution of the innocent Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, was prolonged bitterly by the vicious attacks on him in *La Croix*, the most popular Catholic publication in France. Carroll traces the rise of anti-Semitism (a word coined in 1879 by Wilhelm Marr, a German journalist) to its usefulness as a "source of connection between Catholic clergy and people buffeted by modernity." The so-called Kulturkampf in Germany began in 1871 under Otto von Bismarck, enforcing many restrictions on the activities of Catholics, but it withered under Catholic resistance after the formation of the Catholic Center Party in 1870.

The twentieth century brought changes. In 1919, the Center Party won six million votes, and its growth weakened the Jews' position in Germany because Catholics saw no need to ally themselves with a group so vulnerable. The Center press, in fact, although a "moderating influence" in the 1920's, exploited the anti-Semitism of its readers; soon after Hitler was elected in 1933, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli proved eager to sign a treaty with the Nazis. Carroll quotes the historian John Cornwell: "When Hitler became Pacelli's partner in negotiations, the concordat thus became the supreme act of two authoritarians, while the supposed beneficiaries were correspondingly weakened, undermined, and neutralized." Carroll attributes much of Hitler's success to "the connivance of the Roman Catholic Church" in his transition period. Pacelli became Pope Pius XII, but Carroll—obviously no admirer—dismisses charges that he was a coward and a Hitler sycophant yet holds him responsible for the deportation to Auschwitz of the Jews from the Roman ghetto. Carroll's final explanation for Pius XII's callous indifference to the Jews' fate was that he knew he had the support of the Catholic masses, a support he needed to solidify papal power.

Carroll has written a history that will stimulate controversy for some time, but to the common reader it will be informative and often shocking. How many know, for instance, that while the Nazi Franz von Papen was sentenced at Nuremberg to eight years in prison, in 1959 he was made a papal private chamberlain by the Vatican? Whatever weaknesses scholars may find, *Constantine's Sword* deserves high praise.

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—Frank Day

“DADDY”

AUTHOR: Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1965, in *Ariel*

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRES: Dramatic monologue; confessional poetry

Plath's poem employs images of Nazis and fascism in addressing the author's unhealthy attachment to and anger toward her father. It may be said that "Daddy" is about individual freedom and two of its principal prerequisites: self-knowledge and courage.

OVERVIEW

Written on October 12, 1962, four months before her suicide, Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" is a "confessional" poem of eighty lines divided into sixteen five-line stanzas. The persona, a daughter speaking in the first person, seeks to resolve the manifold conflicts with her father and paternal authority that have dogged her life. Her readiness for the task is unambiguously evident in the first stanza's opening lines: "You do not do, You do not do/ Anymore."

"Daddy," begins the second stanza, "I have had to kill you." The deceased, titanic patriarch, first represented as "Marble-heavy, a bag full of God," has his godliness immediately modified when he is referred to as a "Ghastly statue," with that phrase's related intimations of corpses and ghosts. The death of her father, an awesome figure with "one gray toe/ Big as a Frisco seal" and "A head in the freakish Atlantic," had not daunted the speaker's hopes of reunion; as she puts it in the third stanza, "I used to pray to recover you./ Ach du." Her belief in the power of prayer is, however, a thing of the past, no longer tenable.

The father's European roots—he is imaged as a Nazi in the fourth stanza—prove elusive to the speaker, a relatively unimportant handicap, given the significant affliction she discovers in the fifth stanza: "I never could talk to you./ The tongue stuck in my jaw." A less circumscribed and more dire speechlessness emerges in the sixth stanza.

In the seventh stanza, the Holocaust is introduced, and the speaker recovers her powers of speech in the context—if not as a result—of having

pointedly established herself as a Jew. A couple of overworked Nazi emblems are demythologized in stanza 8: "The snows of Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna/ Are not very pure or true," while she identifies herself with Gypsies, another group much hated by the Nazis. In stanza 9, she brazenly mocks fascist discourse as "gobbledygo," and does much the same to her father's Nazi image: "And your neat mustache/ And your Aryan eye, bright blue./ Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You—." When, in stanza 10, one reads "Not God but a swastika/ So black no sky could squeak through," one is confronted with a profoundly potent evil capable of overwhelming the heavens.

The penultimate patriarchal image appears in stanza 11: father as teacher-cum-devil. Although, she recalls, "You stand at the blackboard, daddy,/ In the picture I have of you," the innocuous snapshot of a pedagogue does not distract her from perceiving the father's demoniac nature. The hauntingly sadistic image, in the twelfth stanza, of the father who, before dying, "Bit my pretty red heart in two," is juxtaposed with her vain pursuit of him ten years hence, in an attempted suicide. Failing at that, she tries, in stanzas 13 and 14, a more effective, somewhat less self-destructive tactic: "I made a model of you/ A man in black with a Meinkampf look/ And a love of the rack and the screw," and marries the surrogate.

Predatory and erotic, the ruinous, eerie image of the father as vampire in stanza 15 anticipates the speaker's ritualistic solution. "There's a stake in your fat black heart/ And the villagers never liked you," begins the poem's sixteenth and final stanza. The speaker's decisive, triumphant patricide permits her to say, "Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through," and, for the first time, call her life her own.

Given the emotionally damaged speaker's mercurial discourse and her father's protean nature, Plath's characterizations of the two and their interrelations—particularly the series of continually modulating images of the father—are among the most psychologically sound, aesthetically impeccable, and effective formal accomplishments in "Daddy."

There is a significant conceptual corollary to the poem's frequent nursery-rhyme rhythms when, in the first stanza, the speaker echoes, with wit and irony, the nursery rhyme about the "old woman who lived in a shoe . . . [who] didn't know what to do." This character, however, is a woman who knows exactly what to do in order to end her thirty-year habitation in her old man's shoe and to exorcize the related intimidation, control, passivity, and entrapment: She must commit a symbolic patricide.

For all the speaker's strident declamations, however, there is nothing to obscure the fact that hers is an ambivalent discourse. Savior and tormentor, the object of nostalgic affection and vituperation—these are the conflicting

dualisms that form her troubled attachment to the first man in her life (and to his reincarnation, her husband), dualisms that have set the terms of her persecution and imprisonment. Although she "used to pray to recover [her father]," her present goal, transformed by experience, no longer aimed at *recovering*, is to *uncover*—to lay bare the inventory of her heart's wounds, which shaped and dogged the future, all father-inflicted during childhood. The resulting narrative, awash with untrammelled emotion, produces an intricately wrought compound image of the father.



Sylvia Plath. (Eric Stahlbert, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College)

The permutations that produce the compound image of the father follow a devolving trajectory. In broad terms, the father, first imaged as a god of titanic proportions (stanza 2), is transformed in short order into a sadistic devil (stanza 11) before being finally described as a vampire (stanza 15). Introduced as a worshiped and scorned god-cadaver-statue, the paternal image is modulated and degenerated into the image of a viciously racist, sadistically misogynistic Nazi. When, with bitter irony, the speaker says, "Every woman adores a Fascist," the statement is cast as an affront to feminist sensibilities, so typical is it of male presumptions about what "every woman" wants. The feminist theme continues into the succeeding image of the father as teacher-devil, as traditional gender roles would typically represent, as complementary images, male tutors and untutored females. The semantically dense imagery and characterization that occur here are typical of Plath's poetry.

In the poem's final degenerative permutation, the speaker integrates her father and husband into a single ghastly image of a vampire, a parasitic male who has been drinking her lifeblood. The father's precipitous fall from deity to evil incarnate, conveyed in the serial pattern of paternal imagery, sets up the poem's denouement: a ritual killing of evil, the one necessary prerequisite for the speaker to regain a life worthy of the name.

In the course of discussing Sylvia Plath's poetry, Joyce Carol Oates has

contended that the poet did not like other people because she doubted “that they existed in the way that she did, as pulsating, breathing, suffering individuals.” The ostensible subject of “Daddy” is the speaker’s somewhat belated acknowledgment of her unhealthy attachment to and anger toward her father and her eagerness to explode the Oedipal prisonhouse in which she has been captive so that she might have a life that is truly her own. Accordingly, it could be said that “Daddy” is about individual freedom and two of its principal prerequisites: self-knowledge and courage.

Like all good poetry, “Daddy” raises many questions. In the case of “Daddy,” among the most compelling of these questions is, What is the speaker’s understanding of the predicament from which she seeks to escape? Certainly, the sincerity of her testimony is as apparent as her anguish and rage. She speaks as if she were the victim of an error that her current insights empower her to rectify. Herein lies a major source of the poem’s pathos: Plath’s speaker fails to detect the resemblance between her situation and that of the Greek hero for whom Sigmund Freud named her presumed psychopathology, Oedipus. She suffers from the intractable consequences of fate.

The speaker’s account also implies a subscription to a bizarre mutation of the doctrine of Original Sin, the central postulate of which is that all errors are the result of unconscious guilt. This moral drama entails two shaky assumptions: that the world is just and that, despite all contrary evidence, people who suffer have only themselves to blame. As Dorothy Van Ghent, however, once pointedly asked about tragic heroes, “Is one guilty for circumstances?” One must deal tactfully if not compassionately with human fictions—while under one’s breath lamenting their folly—and Plath’s speaker surely deserves such consideration. Unfortunately, redefining herself and reclaiming her life by assuming full responsibility for her dilemma offer the same prospects for complete success as railing at the world for not being just. Perhaps Plath understood the speaker’s inadequate sense of her situation sufficiently for suicide to emerge in her life as the more decisive, if unhappy, alternative.

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—Jordan Leondopoulos

DANIEL'S STORY

AUTHOR: Carol Matas (1949-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1993

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Historical fiction; young adult literature

This novel tells the story of a German Jewish adolescent's four-year struggle to survive as he and his family are shunted from Frankfurt to the Jewish ghetto in Łódź, Poland, then to the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Daniel, a fourteen-year-old German Jewish boy, the novel's narrator

Erika, Daniel's younger sister

Joseph, Daniel's father

Ruth, Daniel's mother

Oma "Grandma" Miriam, Daniel's paternal grandmother

Leah, Daniel's aunt

Peter, Daniel's uncle

Rosa, Daniel's Polish girlfriend

Karl, a non-Jewish Buchenwald internee

OVERVIEW

In 1987, Carol Matas published *Lisa's War*, a novel for young adults that recounts the experiences of a young Jewish girl living under the Nazi regime between the early 1930's and 1945. This novel attracted considerable attention for its success in relating for young people the horrors that the Nazis perpetrated in their attempt to eradicate European Jews. Some six million Jews were killed by the German Nazi regime between 1938 and 1945, more than one million of them children.

When directors of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., decided to mount an exhibition to detail the ordeals that many children suffered during the Holocaust, they titled the exhibition *Daniel's Story: Remembrances of the Children*. They invited Carol Matas to write an accompanying novel that would focus on Jewish youth under Nazism, as she had in *Lisa's War*. The museum directors wanted the novel

they commissioned to relate to the photographs displayed in the Holocaust exhibition, and this caveat provided the framework for *Daniel's Story*. Matas met this requirement by creating Daniel, a German Jewish protagonist, to narrate the story. An adolescent interested in photography, Daniel is fourteen when the story begins and eighteen when it ends.

Some reviewers have criticized Matas's device of having Daniel refer often to the photographs that he carries with him or, after they have been confiscated, that he envisions in his imagination. The criticism is perhaps valid, but Matas had to make Daniel's photography central to the story as requested by those who commissioned it. Actually, Matas uses the prescribed framework to good advantage, making Daniel's photography an effective way for him to describe many of the pertinent scenes throughout the book. As the story develops, Daniel expresses his hope that what he is recording on film will eventually stand as testimony to what happened to innocent people during the Holocaust. Daniel has a strong sense of history, and he realizes that the details of the Nazi horrors must be documented and remembered if the world is to prevent the recurrence of such events.

In several parts of *Daniel's Story*, Matas refers to the slavery of Jews in ancient Egypt, establishing the long history of anti-Semitism that predated the common era. Pogroms, the organized annihilation of Jews, have long pervaded Jewish existence. Throughout *Daniel's Story*, Matas reveals the techniques the Nazis used to make the annihilation of the Jews seem acceptable, even desirable, to most of those who permitted the Holocaust to happen. She describes the Nazis' depiction of Jews as insects or rodents, distasteful organisms to be eradicated without qualms about their extermination.

Daniel's Story devotes several passages to scenes in which the Jews held in custody are killing the lice that infest their barracks, vermin that can spread diseases such as typhus. Matas creates a parallel that reinforces the notion that extermination is acceptable, but, ironically, the incarcerated Jews are to the lice what the Nazis are to the Jews in their custody. By dehumanizing their captives, the Germans were able to rationalize the "ethnic cleansing" that was the Holocaust.

Daniel's family has lived in Germany for as long as any of his relatives can remember. Daniel's father's family can trace its German roots back more than six hundred years, his mother's more than a thousand. His father, Joseph, owned a flourishing hardware store, but when the Nazis took command, the word "JEW" was painted on the windows of the store and Schutzstaffel (SS) guards stood outside the establishment forbidding customers to enter. In time, the hardware store was confiscated, taken over by a German who then employed Joseph to work for him in order to keep Jo-

seph's faithful clientele as customers. To justify the confiscation, the Nazis paid Joseph a pittance for his valuable business.

Daniel's family still lived in Frankfurt in their residence, although they bore many indignities. Daniel, a student in a public school, was humiliated by his teacher for being a Jew. In front of Daniel's classmates, the teacher, declaring that true Aryans have specific head measurements, measured Daniel's head and said, "You see! Inferior species. Head too small, no room for brains, a close relative to the vermin in our gutters." Daniel soon left the public school and entered a Jewish school.

Daniel's favorite uncle, Peter, discharged from his teaching job in the public schools because of his ethnicity, was arrested and imprisoned because some years earlier he had received two citations for illegal parking. During his first year in prison he wrote to his family frequently. His release seemed imminent, but then his letters ceased. A year later, a box arrived containing his ashes. Peter's wife, Leah, and their four children moved in with Daniel's family. Leah gave Peter's camera to Daniel, who used it to record what was happening as Nazism made inroads on human rights.

Daniel's paternal grandmother, Oma Miriam, feeble and confined to a nursing home, made Daniel a Hitler Youth uniform, which he kept hidden and occasionally wore to gain access to places closed to Jews. There he took pictures to document the effects that the rise of Nazism was having on German society. Oma Miriam, realizing that the life she had known was disintegrating, hoarded her sleeping pills until one night she swallowed them all and fell into a sleep from which she did not awaken.

Daniel's family was soon ordered to report to the railway station for re-deployment. They ended up in Łódź, Poland, where they lived in the crowded Jewish ghetto for two years doing forced labor. While there, Daniel met and fell in love with a girl named Rosa. The family members, including Leah and her children, were still together, although they were forced to live under unbearable circumstances. Finally, however, people in the ghetto were to be deported if they were unfit for work. Two of Leah's daughters were to be sent away—as it turned out, they were to be sent to Auschwitz, where they would certainly be killed. When Leah, who was to remain in Łódź, tried to rescue her daughters, the SS guards killed all three of them. Throughout the novel, the wrenching disintegration of families forms a major part of the story.

Eventually, Daniel and his father are shipped out of the ghetto, first to Auschwitz, then to Buchenwald. There they see Erika, Daniel's younger sister, still alive but so frail that she can barely stand. Daniel is assigned to work with Karl, a political prisoner who has been at Buchenwald since 1939, a punishment for his being a Communist. Karl, a photographer, leads

a clandestine resistance movement within Buchenwald and soon enlists Daniel. The Russian troops are approaching from one direction, the Americans from another. The nightmare of World War II will end soon.

Karl has hidden weapons that he now distributes to members of the resistance, including Daniel, who is forced to use his to shoot two SS guards, one of whom dies. Daniel wants vengeance, and he refuses to help the other guard he has shot, but Joseph tells him to tie a cloth around the dying man's wound. Daniel's father reminds him that if the Nazis have made him like them, they have succeeded.

Soon, American troops arrive, and Daniel and Joseph are liberated. Erika is also set free, but prolonged starvation has so weakened her that she dies. At her deathbed is Rosa, the Polish girl with whom Daniel fell in love in Łódź and with whom he is reunited when he returns there. The book ends on a note of hope. Daniel and Rosa will undoubtedly marry and create a new generation. They talk of joining the Jewish community in Palestine.

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—R. Baird Shuman

“DEATH FUGUE”

AUTHOR: Paul Celan (1920-1970)

FIRST PUBLISHED: “Todesfuge,” 1952, in *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (English translation collected in *Poems of Paul Celan*, 1988)

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRE: Lyric poetry

In this poem, Celan uses the musical structure of systematic repetition, along with allusions to music, in depicting the machinery of death in a Nazi concentration camp. The poem derives its effect as much from the irony of its musical aspects as it does from the juxtaposition of extreme opposites.

OVERVIEW

“Death Fugue” is structured like a musical fugue, in which a main idea or phrase is systematically repeated throughout the composition. The six irregular stanzas present the speaker’s perspective on a Nazi concentration camp; the lack of punctuation between thoughts suggests the deterioration of the speaker’s consciousness as he exposes the atrocities the crematorium has wreaked on those condemned to die. He also repeats incessantly, as if to suggest an urgent need to fill the void of death. Paul Celan’s parents both were murdered in a concentration camp; Celan himself was taken to a forced-labor camp. Throughout his life he was haunted by their deaths and, in a sense, by his own survival.

The first stanza is an exposition of the time, space, and place of the death camp. The poem’s narrator speaks for a collective and condemned “we” who dig graves from morning to night. The repetitiveness of time is revealed in the first two lines of the poem: “daybreak” is followed by “sundown,” which is followed respectively by “noon,” “morning,” and “night” again. Time has ceased to flow with distinction for these workers of the death factory. Meanwhile, the officer who is responsible for keeping the gravediggers in line is seen writing letters home to Germany. That he corresponds nightly with the motherland indicates that the camps are outside Germany.

Each subsequent stanza reveals the cruelly civic and barbaric nature of the camps. Every image presented is “answered” by an opposing one. The

golden hair of Margarete from Germany, for example, contrasts with the "ashen" hair of the Jew Shulamith. Daybreak soon becomes dusk or "sun-down"; the sound of the spades hitting dirt is juxtaposed against the sound of Jews forced to sing and dance as they dig; the "black milk of daybreak" that characterizes the sky under which the Jews dig is contrasted with the starry and brilliant night under which the officer writes home.

The sharp distinctions between the condemned Jews and the Germans in the opening stanzas emphasize the relationship between the victims and their oppressors. As the poem progresses, the relationship intensifies. The officer "calls out more darkly" and demands that the condemned "jab deeper into the earth." The swifter the commands, the more quickly the condemned must act in their movements toward death. In order to hasten their final annihilation, the officer steps out of his house and moves closer to the condemned; he stops and gives himself the necessary distance to fire his "leaden bullets" at any who disobey him. The rest will be gassed to death in the crematorium.

In the last stanza, the separation between the dead and those responsible for death is expressed in the even number of lines describing each. The first half of the stanza reiterates the scene of the gravediggers, while the second half cruelly crowns death as "a master from Germany." This phrase is repeated as the speaker faces the point of death (signified by the point of

the gun). The last lines shift back to contrasting the hair of Margarete with that of Shulamith; with the striking contrast of each with regard to life and death, this image expresses the final tendrils of death.

The musical structure, as well as the allusion to music within the poem, belies the anguish of death, particularly the mass deaths in the concentration camps. Some have objected to the poet's "aestheticizing" the death camps, charging Celan with the audacity to write lyric poetry after the Holocaust. Others perceive that the death of



Paul Celan. (© A. Van Mangoldt)

Celan's parents in Transnistria compelled the poet to transpose personal anguish into art, as this early poem suggests.

In fact, the systematic repetition and the musical aspects of the poem indicate that the condemned are no longer in control of life. Their activities are as mindless as their forced and mechanized behavior is soulless. They "speak" and "think" in run-on phrases, and the poem literally reflects their mental and physical deterioration. They dig graves and are forced to sing and dance even as they prepare for death; in the final coup de grâce, they beg for death so they can disappear into nothingness. Ironically, they sing for death in order to escape from death.

With the exception of stanzas 3 and 5 (which serve as the "counterpoint" in the musical fugue structure), the second half of each stanza shifts from the viewpoint of the condemned to the officer and what he represents—Nazi Germany. These sections reinforce the oppressiveness of the concentration camp. Each is as repetitive as the first section, but with a difference, since here, the officer acts as an agent of death. His power over the condemned can be seen in the variety of terrors he is capable of causing: "whistles his Jews," "commands us strike up for the dance," "grabs his iron," "plays with the serpents," "strikes you with leaden bullets," and "sets his pack on us." If the condemned have only one course available to them, it is the task of the officer to both hasten and torment them toward this end.

The poem's effect derives as much from the irony of the musical aspects as it does from the juxtaposition of extreme opposites. The first image, "black milk," is already suggestive of the deep taint of death. If the infant drinks of the mother's nourishment in its whiteness and purity, the condemned victims drink endlessly the dregs of their graves. They are doomed to the black smoke of the crematorium. Shulamith's "ashen hair" reinforces the results of cremation, while it contrasts with the "golden hair" of Margarete. The blond hair, as well as the officer's blue eyes, contrasts with the dark and black of the victims.

The shifts in opposing images, besides indicating the difference between the Germans and the Jews, also create the effect of heightened emotion and a sense of growing despair. The officer's perfunctory commands (reporting to Germany and keeping the prisoners in line) give way to increasingly cruel treatment and attitude.

In stanza 3, the speaker observes that the officer is noticeably more excited and animated. In stanza 5, "He calls out more sweetly play death death is a master from Germany," and he promises the condemned a space in the crematorium, "a grave you will have in the clouds."

In the next stanza, "he grants us a grave in the air" is a remark that

expresses a twisted gratitude. These images serve as a counterpoint, an answer to the main theme of the men digging their own graves. As the condemned grow more mechanical and hopeless, the officer expresses a malicious glee at the pain he inflicts. In the end, it is death—as signified by the Nazis—that reigns supreme.

"Death Fugue" exposes the savage cruelty of the concentration camps by plainly describing the conditions. Everything that is human and active (working, singing, dancing, writing) is directed toward death. Without being didactic, the poet expresses the unforgettable conditions of the camps. The very vividness of the poem's first-person narration, however, also points to an incongruity within the poem: The poem's speaker, along with the other people in the camp, may be assumed to have been killed. Celan uses this incongruity to remind readers how far they will always be from knowing the full truth of the death camps.

The musical structure distances the reader from the events as they are presented in the poem. Rather than elicit an aesthetically pleased response from the reader, the poem achieves an opposite effect by making each episode tell what happened as directly as possible but in language that also reflects the progression toward death. The poet drives each point home with the repetition of images, especially the ones that lead from digging the graves to the final end, represented by the rising smoke.

In addition to the musical association of the word "fugue" (which comes from the Latin word meaning "to flee"), there is a psychological meaning, a state in which a patient suffers from a pathological amnesiac condition and has no recollection of incidents that occurred during the illness. Viewed from this perspective, the poem could also express the devastating historical fact of the Holocaust. It is impossible to forget the millions who were condemned to die by the Nazis, even though the full extent of what happened may never be known. Those involved have tried to flee from taking responsibility for their crimes. At the Nuremberg Trials, for example, the Nazis frequently claimed that what happened at the death camps was the result of their merely following orders.

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—Cynthia Wong

THE DEPUTY

AUTHOR: Rolf Hochhuth (1931-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Der Stellvertreter: Ein Christliches Trauerspiel*, 1963 (first produced, 1963; English translation, 1963)

GENRE: Drama

SUBGENRE: Documentary drama

This controversial play addresses the failure of Western Christian civilization, as represented by Pope Pius XII, to act against one of the greatest crimes in human history—the Nazi extermination of six million innocent Jews. It ultimately warns what can happen when leaders fail to stand up against inhumanity.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Pius XII (1876-1958), controversial Roman Catholic pope during the years of Adolf Hitler's regime

Father Riccardo Fontana, a Jesuit priest in the foreign office of the Vatican

Kurt Gerstein, an officer in the Schutzstaffel (SS)

The Doctor, director of the death selections at Auschwitz

Jacobson, a Jewish prisoner

OVERVIEW

The Deputy begins in August, 1942, at the papal legation in Berlin. Riccardo Fontana, an idealistic Jesuit priest, pleads with the papal representative (the nuncio) of Germany to ask the pope to condemn publicly the Nazi extermination of the Jews of Europe. Kurt Gerstein, a German who joined the Schutzstaffel (SS) to gather information on the killings, and who has witnessed gassings of Jews in the Belzec extermination camp, presents his graphic eyewitness account of the gassings and cremations to the nuncio. This confirms Fontana's worst fears.

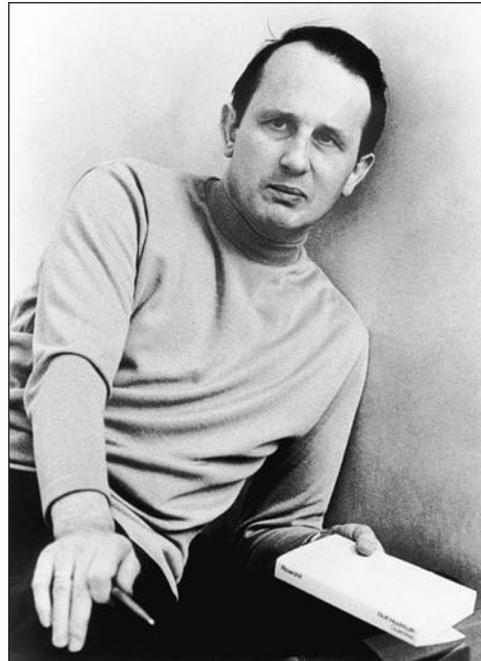
The nuncio tells Gerstein that he is not authorized to deal with German officers and directs him to leave. Father Riccardo, however, continues to listen with horror to Gerstein's account. Gerstein says that at the Belzec camp he saw 750 people crammed into each of four gas chambers, 3,000 people who were gassed in twenty-five minutes. Like Fontana, Gerstein

has visited the nuncio to urge him to tell the pope to speak out against the mass murders in his capacity as Christ's deputy on earth.

The action shifts to Berlin, where Adolf Eichmann, the bureaucrat in charge of the deportations to the extermination camps, is relaxing, socializing, and casually discussing the extermination of the Jews with top industrialists and government officials. Also present is the cynical Doctor, who is in charge of selections for the gas chambers and medical experiments at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Pleased that most Europeans are indifferent to the exterminations, they express their concerns about possible negative reactions from the pope. The Nazi view that the extermination of the Jews is an idealistic and scientific necessity is expounded upon.

The final scene of the first act is set in Gerstein's Berlin apartment, where he has hidden a Jew named Jacobson. Gerstein and Riccardo will help the Jew escape by providing him with a false passport. The camp Doctor later enters Gerstein's apartment and expresses his cynical pride that one can exterminate Jews and still be accepted as a Christian. He is intent on challenging all categories of meaning by exterminating innocent people day after day without limit. The scene ends when Father Riccardo tells Gerstein that he will do everything in his power as a true Christian to beg the pope personally to speak out on behalf of Jews, who are being murdered all over Europe.

Act 2 reveals the spectrum of the reaction of Roman Catholic officialdom to the Holocaust. Riccardo tells his own father (who is a trusted counsel to the Holy See) about the extermination of the Jews. The elder Fontana first is incredulous, then tells his son that it would be impolite for the pope to speak out against Germany, for this would violate his policy of neutrality. Riccardo replies that the Deputy of Christ would be derelict in his duty not to take a moral stand before all Christian humanity. The father retorts that his son must be obedient to the Vatican and must respect the inter-



Rolf Hochhuth. (DPA/Landov)

ests of the Church. An important cardinal then enters and reminds Riccardo that Nazi Germany is a bulwark against the anti-Christian threat of Soviet Russia. He reproaches Riccardo for his unrealistic idealism, while further suggesting that the Jews have brought their grim fate on themselves.

Act 3 deals with the brutal seizure of the baptized Jews of Rome by the SS. When Father Riccardo expresses his outrage that the Jews are being seized under the very windows of the Vatican, the cardinal replies that the churches and monasteries around Rome have hidden large numbers of Jews. Riccardo holds to his belief that only a public statement from the pope can present a chance of saving the rest of Europe's Jews from the gas chambers—that only the Deputy of Christ can face down Adolf Hitler, the anti-Christ. The act ends at the headquarters of the Gestapo in Rome. SS officers reveal their sadistic brutality as they round up the Jews of Rome; they also demonstrate their contempt for Christianity.

Suspense builds as the pope finally makes his appearance in a meeting with Father Riccardo. The fourth act is the shortest of the five, for Riccardo's confrontation with the pope is intense and to the point. The pope is a cold, remote, formal, diplomatic, politically cautious, and calculating figure. He is neutral at best, favorable to Germany at worst, and completely unwilling to take the moral public stand that Fontana urges him to take. In a final gesture of extreme protest, Father Riccardo pins the Jewish Star of David to his cassock in the name of brotherly love and in solidarity with Christ's blood relatives. The pope is outraged by this gesture.

Act 5 is set in Auschwitz. True to his beliefs, Father Riccardo has chosen to accompany the Jewish victims in a railroad cattle car to Auschwitz. He meets the Doctor, who calls himself the "lord of life and death." The Doctor expresses extreme satisfaction in conducting "the boldest experiment that mankind has ever seen." He proclaims that "Auschwitz refutes creator, creation, and the creature" and declares that many of the leaders of the SS came from good Catholic backgrounds. Riccardo is put to work in the crematoria but does not relinquish his Christian faith. When he witnesses the Doctor sadistically driving a woman prisoner mad, Riccardo acts. In a last desperate gesture in which he affirms his faith in man and God, Riccardo tries to shoot the Doctor but is himself mortally wounded by a guard. The play ends as a German document about the pope's failure to act is read by an unemotional announcer. The spectator is left with a feeling of utter futility as the announcer concludes that the gas chambers continued to do their work until the end of 1944, when the Russians liberated the prisoners of Auschwitz.

The published text of the play includes a sixty-five page appendix titled "Sidelights on History" in which Hochhuth seeks to document the events

dramatized. Hochhuth researched his topic for three years, and he provides a lengthy account of the policies of the Vatican during the Holocaust. He acknowledges that some characters, such as Father Riccardo, are fictional and that he conceived some scenes (such as Riccardo's confrontation with the pope) for dramatic effect. The main historical figures are real: Gerstein, the Doctor (modeled on the infamous Josef Mengele), and the pope were vital actors on the stage of history.

The Deputy is primarily a play about the failure of Western Christian civilization, centered in the person of the pope, to act against one of the greatest crimes in history—the Nazi extermination of six million innocent Jews for the crime of having been born. It is a drama about indifference and inaction, commitment and despair. During the Holocaust, Christians were perpetrators, bystanders, and victims. *The Deputy* is a Christian tragedy: Father Riccardo becomes the tragic hero by taking on the burden that should have belonged to the pope. In doing so, he is forced to be insubordinate to the pope and eventually to try to murder the viciously evil Doctor.

The Deputy is also a drama about the nature of evil and the choices that people must make in response to it. The SS officials and the Doctor have chosen to participate—to humiliate and to kill—while Father Riccardo and Kurt Gerstein choose to tell the civilized world about this evil. They strive to galvanize the pope into action and in the end give their lives for their Christian beliefs. According to Hochhuth, Pope Pius XII is particularly culpable, for he has chosen not to make a choice. He has therefore abdicated his role as the Deputy of Christ, which is to be a witness and sufferer for humanity and the truth. The play is also a reenactment of an extremely painful episode in modern history; its almost unbearable descriptions of life and death in the camps and its heartbreaking depictions of the suffering of innocent, abandoned people were intended to stir the conscience of the world.

The Deputy tries to answer the questions of why the pope kept silent, whether he should have kept silent, and what the consequences of his behavior were. Hochhuth attributes the pope's silence to his timid, cold personality, his sympathy for Germany, his fear of a schism in the Church, and above all his belief that the political, diplomatic, and financial interests of the Church had to be preserved at all costs. Some critics of the play, such as the future Pope Paul VI, believed the play to be an unfair attack on the pope. They argued that many church officials all over Europe tried to help Jews, while the pope himself approved of the hiding of Italian Jews and suffered great anguish over his inability to do more. Defenders of the play responded that the pope refused to recognize that the Nazis were really pagan apostates from Christianity. They pointed out that the pope did con-

demn the German invasion of neutral Belgium and Holland and condemned the Soviet aggression against Finland, while failing to take a public stand on an extermination campaign against innocent, helpless people. In addition, the pope failed to excommunicate top Nazis who were baptized Catholics and who never formally left the Church, such as Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, and Heinrich Himmler.

The last act deals not with the pope but with what the play calls the silence of God in Auschwitz. The play suggests that the answer to the meaningless universe of negation embodied in Auschwitz must come from humankind. In its view, Christianity failed in the person and institution of the papacy. Christian teachings must be lived and acted upon (as Riccardo and Gerstein act upon them) in order to be authentic.

The richness of dramatic devices, extreme length, overwhelming subject, and unusual appendix make this play difficult to categorize. It is a Christian tragedy, a drama of soaring heroism in the manner of Friedrich Schiller, an existentialist work on the struggle for meaning and human choices, and a historical docudrama with real characters. It is a polemic, a modern morality play, and a warning to the future. More than a play, it is a challenging book, a news story, a factual statement, and a philosophical tract. The original version of the play takes from six to eight hours to perform. Many shortened (three-hour) versions of *The Deputy* have been staged in Europe and the United States. All have failed to capture the complete texture of the original, for any serious cuts eliminate crucial episodes and therefore distort and trivialize the full meaning of the play.

In *The Deputy*, Hochhuth uses a wide variety of literary as well as dramatic devices. Each act is preceded by a few epigraphs and by a lengthy preface detailing its historical significance. In his preface to scene 2 of act 5, Hochhuth writes: "What took place in the interior of this underworld at the crematorium itself, exceeds imagination. There is no way of conveying it." Hochhuth was aware of the fact that the historical reality of the Holocaust threatens to exceed the imagination of the artist. However, he believed that it had to be dramatized to shock the spectator into an indignation that would lead to moral action.

The play is replete with irony. The pope is portrayed as a man who is shocked by the tactlessness of the Germans in carrying off the Jews of Rome within view of his windows, when he should be indignant about the murder of innocent people. He is also depicted as a man immersed in the trivia of religious observance instead of his moral duties as Christ's deputy. The supreme irony is that the evil Doctor, who mocks God and man, seems to triumph because the pope has not spoken out against him and the genocide he represents. Written in free verse, the play contains vivid narra-

tives of historical events, stirring dialogues, pithy aphorisms, and dramatic irony. It forces the spectator to confront an unbearable but crucial episode in history.

Because of the great length of the play and the importance of the events with which it deals, it should be performed in its original version or not at all. Further, because of its lengthy appendix, it should be read and studied as well as performed. This drama thus imposes unique demands on performers, readers, and spectators. It is history as drama, a drama that calls for a scale as vast as its challenging subject.

The Deputy has been characterized as one of the most controversial plays of its time, perhaps of its century. When it premiered, it inspired a wealth of reactions—some negative, many favorable. It touched off demonstrations and angry debate, with responses to the play—in the form of reviews, essays, letters, and news reports—numbering in the thousands. *The Deputy* was written at a time when the Holocaust was being confronted by the West. The way had been prepared by the publication of Anne Frank's *Het Achterhuis* (1947; *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 1952) and the dramatization of that work as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (pr. 1955), the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 and 1962, and films and novels that had begun to deal with the Holocaust. Together with these developments, *The Deputy* was instrumental in forcing a wider awareness of the Holocaust. By dramatically centering his drama on the person and institution of the papacy, Hochhuth was able to provoke a controversy and awareness that a generalized criticism of Western civilization could never have accomplished.

Despite its flaws, *The Deputy* was a courageous and timely dramatization of a period of history that graphically demonstrated the expanding possibilities of evil and reiterated the necessity of facing and fighting that evil. The drama is ultimately a warning of what can happen when leaders and role models fail to act against inhumanity. It also, however, presents an inspiring example of those few ordinary yet heroic people who made the choice to confront overpowering forces. As Albert Schweitzer notes in his preface to the published edition of the play, *The Deputy* is a warning regarding the inhumanity that exists in the modern era.

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—Leon Stein

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EUROPEAN JEWS

AUTHOR: Raul Hilberg (1926-2007)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1961

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Hilberg's determination to record every detail of the Holocaust accurately, his grim imperative to establish an orderly account of the greatest act of cruelty the world had ever known, results in a work of mesmerizing, often horrifying readability.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the commander of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and the main organizer of the Nazi concentration camps

Hans Frank (1900-1946), the governor-general of those parts of Poland not directly annexed to Germany

Odilo Globocnik (1904-1945), an Austrian Nazi who carried out plans that killed more than one million Jews in Poland

Bernhard Lösener, the doctor charged with formulating the specifications of who was and was not a Jew

Rudolf Höss, the commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland

OVERVIEW

The Destruction of the European Jews is a rare book in that it is both an objective account of history and a morality tale. The first history of the Holocaust to exert a thorough intellectual influence, Raul Hilberg's work immediately became the starting point for study and debate about the Nazi concentration camps and the policies that led up to them. Hilberg, however, could not place the book with a major press, and indeed it has never had a large New York publisher, even for the subsequent, expanded three-volume edition that appeared in 1985. Also, Hilberg, despite having a de-

gree in history from Columbia University, was able to secure an academic position only in another discipline, political science, at the University of Vermont, where he spent his entire career.

Hilberg's work has never been universally popular, even among the Jewish community. It has often been said that this is the case because Hilberg concentrates on the perpetrators, not the victims; *The Destruction of the European Jews* stays within the viewpoint of the people who set and carried out the policy of extermination. Hilberg's procedure is documentary; scrupulous observation is, for him, a form of testimony. Despite his belief in historical objectivity, Hilberg is more than willing to make judgments, such as when he contends that a group of people who do something to somebody else also do that thing to themselves. Indeed, Hilberg gives dignity to the victims of the Holocaust by dwelling with minute sharpness on the malignant deeds of the perpetrators. Hilberg's tone may seem neutral and affectless, but it also possesses a deadpan quality, a barbed sarcasm toward the Nazis, whose every action he damningly describes.

Hilberg may be compared with Hannah Arendt in their shared emphasis on the relation of bureaucracy and totalitarianism. Arendt acknowledges Hilberg's work in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), although, as Federico Finchelstein has noted, Arendt was an outside referee for Princeton University Press when the publisher originally turned down Hilberg's manuscript.

Perhaps the most controversial part of Hilberg's book is its initial argument that Nazi anti-Semitism drew on long-established European anti-Semitism. Hilberg asserts that modern technology enabled this literal application of anti-Semitic stereotypes. Others, however, have argued that, whatever the repugnance of traditional Christian anti-Semitism, modern totalitarian anti-Semitism was inspired by totalizing ideologies and was fundamentally different from its traditionalist predecessor in its thrust.

Every chapter of *The Destruction of the European Jews* describes a process whose enactment carries in its wake a historical destiny, intentional or unintentional. At first, the outcome of these processes is what the Nazis intend, and their own wishes seem to dovetail with historical inevitability. As World War II goes on and the totalitarian system convulses in defeat, however, the Nazis become the object of processes, not their agent. Their actions bring consequences, and Hilberg skillfully catalogs the reverberations of these consequences, such as postwar West Germany's agreeing to pay reparations to Israel. Hilberg has commented that his book has a musical structure, in which the deportations and killing-center operations are the central movement, flanked by the overtures of precedents, antecedents, expropriation, and concentration and followed by the successive

codas of reflections, consequences, and implications. This is corollary to his understanding of the entire plan to wipe out the Jews as a deliberately conceived action whose roots and reverberations constituted a vast canvas, a feat of audacious daring and scope that the Nazis were almost able to carry off, until they were foiled by the Allied victory.

Much of the history Hilberg explores in *The Destruction of the European Jews* is economic history. One of the principal means the Nazis employed to destroy the Jews was the appropriation of their fiscal assets, whether commercial property, real estate, or cash deposits. This proved effective in the short term, as the expropriated money swelled Nazi coffers, but in the long term this strategy helped to denude the economic base of the German-ruled lands. Similarly, in the “general government” of Nazi-occupied Poland, administered by Hans Frank, Polish Jews provided much of the occupied land’s skilled labor, and their conscription helped Nazi economic productivity. The persecution and killing of these people, as the ideological mandates of Nazi policy eventually demanded, substantially diminished the pool of labor available for the Nazis to exploit.

Hilberg also explores Nazi legal history. Bernhard Lösener formulated a law that defined individuals of half non-Jewish ancestry as *Mischlinge* and thus helped save many people who would otherwise have been killed. The *Mischlinge* constituted a third category, neither Jewish nor non-Jewish, that required a whole separate set of laws concerning their barely tolerated but nonetheless accepted status in Nazi society.

Step by step, Hilberg records the minutiae of Nazi regulations and their practical efforts. The Holocaust unfolds as microhistory, from detail to detail, and the accumulation of practical instances provides an anatomy of how the mammoth Nazi bureaucracy perpetrated appalling atrocity. Hilberg also describes the destruction process in Germany’s allies and satellites—France, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, and the two countries the Nazis conjured into existence during the war, Croatia and Slovakia. Some of these, such as Romania and Slovakia, tried to emulate the Nazis’ systematic persecutions of the Jews; others went along out of opportunism or the necessity of cooperating with the policy preferences of the dominant power in Europe. The use of the word “European” in the title is thus justified—the book is not just about German Jews. Indeed, Hilberg notes, with bitter humor, that the Nazis despised the Polish Jews because they had so little money for the Nazis to expropriate; even though the Nazis saw the German Jews as subhuman, the Polish Jews were even lower on the social scale.

In the final section of the book, titled “Implication,” Hilberg points out that even though postwar trends swung toward granting Jews full civil

rights in Western countries, the ability of modern states to destroy Jews was still a theoretical possibility, as the Nazi example was now indelibly available. Conversely, Hilberg points to the increasing enfranchisement of African Americans in the United States (incomplete when his book was first published) as an important side effect of the destruction of the European Jews; the experience in Europe forced many Americans to realize that racial discrimination was no longer tenable in the world's leading democracy.

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—Nicholas Birns

THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL

AUTHOR: Anne Frank (1929-1945)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Het Achterhuis*, 1947 (English translation, 1952)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Diary

This diary, with entries written in the form of letters to an imagined friend, details the two years Anne Frank's family and four others spent in hiding after the Nazi invasion of Holland. The book combines Anne's coming-of-age reflections with descriptions of an everyday life of deprivation and the struggles, fears, and hopes of the group.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Anne Frank (1929-1945), a Jewish girl in hiding

Otto Frank (1889-1980), Anne's father

Edith Frank (1900-1945), Anne's mother

Margot Frank (1926-1945), Anne's sister

OVERVIEW

Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* recounts the two years during which the Frank family, who were Jewish, lived in hiding in Nazi-occupied Holland. In the intimate voice of an articulate, sensitive young girl, the diary details the harrowing experiences of life in a hiding place as well as the tumultuous emotions of an adolescent who knew that outside the window, bombs were falling and Jews were being marched off to death camps.

Anne Frank began her diary at age thirteen, having received the blank book as a birthday gift. A typical teenager, she was delighted at the prospect of writing down her most personal thoughts. Although she wrote her first few entries in the usual form for a diary, she soon decided to write as though she were addressing an imaginary best friend, Kitty, describing her experiences, her small group, and her thoughts in letter form. Her imagined audience facilitated a natural voice and a reason for describing her life and for exploring all that was in her heart.

The diary begins in Amsterdam, where Anne and her family lived after moving from Frankfurt, Germany, seven years earlier to escape the dan-

gers of Nazi Germany. When the Nazis occupied the Netherlands in 1940, the same repression and fear that Jews had experienced in Germany became the reality. In June of 1942, Anne's sister, Margot, was ordered to report to the Dutch Nazi headquarters, and the family realized their lives were in imminent danger. One month after Anne began her diary, her family, along with her father's business associate, his wife, and their son Peter, moved into hiding. They were soon joined by a dentist, who took over Anne's bed; Anne had to sleep on a small divan extended by chairs. The group of eight occupied cramped, inconvenient rooms above a warehouse for a little more than two years before they were discovered.

Anne's diary testifies to her talent and potential as a writer as well as to her strength and character as a person. It reflects the strong family values and the personal qualities that enabled Anne to produce this moving and powerful document of the lives of her family members and the others in hiding as they experienced both terror and more mundane feelings of discomfort and boredom.

Before they went into hiding, the Franks had enjoyed a pleasant life, at least from the perspective of young person absorbed in school and friends. Although all German Jews endured increasing discrimination and restriction in the 1930's, the Frank family was able to maintain a comfortable, if anxious, lifestyle until they gave up and left the country. Anne recalled that for many years she and her sister enjoyed the benefits of an extended family, especially two uncles and two grandmothers, who doted on her and her sister.

While Anne's father, Otto Frank, a decorated veteran of World War I, chose to remain close to Germany, the other relatives emigrated to the United States and Switzerland. Otto Frank moved his family to Amsterdam in 1933 and established himself in business there. After the Nazi occupation of Holland, he maintained his business by representing company management through his Dutch business associates. He also prepared the secret space above the company's warehouse as a hiding place. His friends and business associates risked their lives providing the group with all their necessities and celebrating special occasions with them.

That the Frank family valued education is obvious in the diary. In Amsterdam, the young Anne and Margot attended Montessori schools until Jews were forced out, at which time they continued their studies at the Jewish lyceum. Anne was not the outstanding pupil Margot was, but she shone in other ways. Recognized by others and herself as a chatterbox, she was also a creative, enthusiastic organizer and leader. While she was in hiding, education became a preoccupation and a distraction from hunger, boredom, and anxiety. Otto Frank helped Margot, Anne, and Peter with



Anne Frank. (Library of Congress)

their lessons in their hiding place as they attempted to keep up with their peers in school. For Anne, her studies and writing—she wrote stories as well as her diary—provided the means to achieve her dream of becoming a writer, a goal that became dearer to her as her time in hiding grew longer.

The diary captures the details of life and Anne's personal reflections. It recounts the petty squabbles that often dominated the group's days in their cramped, deprived

living conditions. It also demonstrates Anne's efforts to come to terms with her life. Her descriptions of herself show her petulant, adolescent attitudes toward her mother and her fondness for her father. She eagerly distinguishes herself from her mother, proclaiming that she will never be satisfied with life only as a mother and wife. She admits her antagonisms and her willful pronouncements, acknowledging at times that her own behavior has been rude and unkind, and promises to improve. She describes her growing awareness of her sexuality and her attraction to Peter, for whom she develops physical and emotional feelings. Her relationship with Peter takes her to a new level of emotion, provoking her to explore two very different aspects of her personality: her outgoing self and her deeper, meditative self, which matures as she grows.

The group had a radio and were able to tune in to British broadcasts, so all were aware of both the death camps and the progress of the Allies. Although Anne tired of the adult talk of politics, she did reflect on the state of the world. In words that would later be much quoted, she wrote that she still believed in the goodness of the human spirit, despite the horror around her. She also asserted that Adolf Hitler and the Nazis were not the only ones responsible for this reign of terror—ordinary people were culpable in their complicity.

Anne's self-analysis and her writing gave her life meaning and order. She set down her hopes and dreams and recorded her steps to realize them, despite the trauma that filled so many days. She acknowledged her spiritual beliefs and faith in God. She called this faith a gift and held it close.

Life became a vale of soul making for this young girl as she willed for herself an optimistic spirit. Developing wisdom beyond her years, she asserted that each person is responsible for who she becomes. She determined to be courageous and cheerful, to dream and to hope, and to act in every way as if her dreams and hopes would one day be a reality.

The hiding place was discovered two days after the diary's last entry, August 1, 1944. Anne and her sister died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp near Belsen, Germany, of typhoid fever in March of 1945. Their father was the only one of the group to survive. When he returned to Amsterdam after the war, he found Anne's diary, which the Nazis had left behind after the raid.

Anne Frank's diary is considered a classic of Holocaust and coming-of-age literature. Many other diaries of the period have been recovered, but this one has become the touchstone of the era. Translated into more than thirty languages, widely included in school reading lists in the United States, serialized by a newspaper syndicate, and adapted into a Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play (*The Diary of Anne Frank*, by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, pr. 1955) as well as a film, the work fulfills Anne Frank's youthful longing to live on.

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—Bernadette Flynn Low

THE DOUBLE BOND

PRIMO LEVI—A BIOGRAPHY

AUTHOR: Carole Angier (1943-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2002

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Biography

This biography traces the life of Primo Levi through the memories of his friends, his writings, his experiences as an author and as a survivor of Auschwitz, and his career as a chemist.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Primo Levi (1919-1987), Italian writer and chemist who survived the Auschwitz death camp

Anna Maria Levi, Primo's sister

Lucia Morpurgo Levi, Primo's wife

Rina Luzzati Levi, Primo's mother

Cesare Levi, Primo's father

OVERVIEW

Primo Levi would seem a curious subject for a biography, considering how excessively reticent, almost secretive, he was about his personal life, but as Carole Angier notes in her preface, for her as a writer, reserve intrigues—and the extreme reserve exhibited by her subject intrigued her extremely. In spite of her intrigue, however, Angier had to overcome not only Levi's reticence but also his family's high wall of reserve and privacy—made even higher, she discovered, by the traditional diffidence of Turinese—and the tragedy of his death by suicide. As biographer, therefore, Angier found herself confronting a peculiar dilemma, hence the title of her book, which she borrowed from Levi's last, incomplete novel: *Il doppio legame*. In Italian, the phrase has a double meaning: the double bonding in chemistry and the double bind in psychology, "a crippling conflict between contradictory or unfulfillable requirements, which you can neither escape nor win." Angier appropriated both meanings in order to take her biography into the personal and inward sides of Primo Levi. To do

this, she structured her book on two levels: a rationally known, testable one and an irrational one, felt and imagined. In the end, Angier admits she does not know which turned out to be the more truthful and revealing of her subject, although finally the latter came to seem to her to be of greater significance.

Primo Levi was born on July 31, 1919, on the third floor at Corso de Umberto 75 in Turin, Italy, in a house owned by his mother and in which, except for a year in Milan and one in Auschwitz, he lived for all of his sixty-seven years. His father, Cesare, was an industrial engineer, and his mother, Rina, was a typical Italian housewife and mother. His sister, Anna Maria, was born a year and a half later. Although both sides of his family had been observant Jews, Primo's parents had ceased to be religious, as had most Italian Jews who were indebted to the Enlightenment ideas that had freed them to live in a predominantly Christian world. Nevertheless, Primo was bar mitzvahed, and for a brief period in his early teens he became intensely involved with his Jewishness; later in life, during the period of persecution by both the Italian and German fascists, he would again become acutely aware of his cultural and religious heritage.

Primo was a slight child, serious and shy, very unlike his sister, who was lively and outgoing. In spite of their differing personalities, she became his closest childhood companion. Primo's schooling started inauspiciously. During his primary years he was frequently absent because of various illnesses, which contributed to the impression that he was somewhat frail, an impression belied by his obvious strength of both body and will that allowed him to survive his experience at Auschwitz. As he progressed through the Italian educational system, he began to flourish, and by the time he attended the Gimnasio Liceo Massimo D'Azeglio, one of the best classical grammar schools in Turin, his intelligence and seriousness made him a model student. He also gradually overcame his shyness, enough at least to develop a number of lasting friendships among his schoolmates. At university, where he was allowed to indulge his passion for chemistry, he blossomed.

Levi's university experience allowed him to exploit his natural intellectual gifts, but Italy's anti-Jewish laws exerted enormous pressures. Jews could not fail a single examination, and they were forbidden to change their areas of interest, so when he grew disillusioned with chemistry and wanted to change to physics, he could not. As he was to write later, this restriction condemned him to a life as a technician rather than as a true research scientist. Angier demurs, suggesting that he chose not to pursue research, and that is what opened the world of letters for him. Levi secured a job as a chemist after graduation, largely because most of the non-Jewish

chemists were in the military. His first job was at the mines of Balangero, north of Turin, where he worked on the extraction of nickel. He moved to Milan in July, 1942, to work for a Swiss company, a job that ceased with the armistice in September, 1943, when Italy surrendered to the Allies.

The euphoria that followed the collapse of Mussolini's government was curtailed when the Germans invaded Italy and set up Il Duce as the puppet dictator of the Republic of Salo. The occupation of northern Italy placed Turin and its environs under Nazi control, and, unlike the Italian fascists, the Germans strictly enforced the racial laws. Levi, out of a job, joined the partisans—who had already attracted many Italian Jews, some of them his friends—in the Val D'Aosta, and throughout the fall of 1943 and into the new year he ran guns for the resistance. Then he was picked up by the Gestapo and transported to Fossoli, a central staging point for Italian Jews. The short time he spent in the Fossoli camp, still nominally under Italian control, was relatively benign. However, on February 16 it was taken over by the Germans, and on February 22 Levi and the rest of the Jews began their journey to the concentration camps north of the Alps. The year he would spend as a prisoner would be the single most important event of his life.

Primo Levi arrived at Auschwitz on February 26, 1944. In less than ten minutes he had survived the first selection, the culling of those who would be gassed immediately and those who would be allowed to live and work in the camp. Although he was exhausted and weighed only a little over one hundred pounds—he was slightly built and always thin—he was saved from a summary death by the quick thinking of one of his friends, who declared that he and two others, including Levi, were experienced industrial chemists, occupations the Germans needed. Like all the others entering the camp, the Italian Jews who survived the selection were stripped of their clothing, had all of their hair shaved off, were showered, sprayed with disinfectant, and given a striped suit and coat, a shirt, underpants, foot rags, and a pair of wooden clogs. None of it was sized to the individual. Then they were tattooed with their camp number; Levi was number 174517. The process was designed to destroy both their dignity and their human personality, or as he was later to describe it, the demolition of man.

In the camp all the best died and the worst—that is, the fittest—survived, he would write in his last book. Angier speculates that by “the best” Levi meant the most civilized, the most delicate, the most innocent. Angier asks, But who was more civilized than Primo Levi? Who was more likely to die of the nakedness, of the bestiality? Who more needed rationality, predictability, faith, and hope? How, then, did he survive? At first he did so through his friendships, by being helped by others in the camp, by fitting himself for starvation, and ultimately by a sheer act of will. He

looked on his experience as a chance to learn about human nature, and he treated the camp as a laboratory, a large biological and sociological experiment. Finally, by the end of 1943, when all able-bodied Germans were needed for the war machine, slave laborers became more valuable and the conditions in the camps improved slightly. These things kept him alive.

Auschwitz was abandoned by the Germans toward the end of January, 1944, and the prisoners, now free, were left to survive on their own until they were picked up by the invading Soviet Army, who moved many of them to a relocation camp at Katowicz, also in Poland. For the next nine months, Levi would undergo a journey both bizarre and comic that would take him as far north as Minsk, wending its way south to Romania and west through Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Germany before he eventually returned to Italy. He arrived back in Turin on October 19, 1945, to find that miraculously both his mother and sister were alive and living in the family home only slightly damaged by the Allied bombing.

Primo Levi returned from the camps a sick and blasted man. All the suffering, grief, and memories he had postponed surfaced and he became seriously depressed, but he also was impelled to talk about his experiences and began to write about them. In the process, he overcame his preoccupation with death and embraced life. First, however, he needed a job, and after months of searching he secured one in January, 1946, as the assistant head of the research laboratory of Duco Avigliana, a manufacturer of paint. For the next thirty years of his life, he worked as an industrial chemist until his retirement as the director general of the SIVA paint company in 1977. During these years, Primo Levi lived two lives: one as an organic chemist and the other as a writer. He also rejoined life in the role of husband when he married Lucia Morpurgo early in December, 1946, and he became a father with the birth of a daughter, Lisa, in 1948 and a son, Renzo, in 1957.

Levi always remarked that if it had not been for Auschwitz, he never would have become a writer. Angier demurs. He was already a writer before the war, but he might not have become a truly great one if his natural Piedmontese reserve had not been overcome by the moral duty he felt to testify to the outrages of the Holocaust. *Se questo è un uomo* (1947; *If This Is a Man*, 1959; revised as *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, 1961) and *La tregua* (1963; *The Reawakening*, 1965) were books about his Auschwitz experiences that allowed him to break out as a writer.

In the years immediately before and following his retirement, Levi became world-renowned as a poet, fiction writer, journalist, and translator. If before he had been a respected figure, Angier writes, now he became a famous one with all the accolades and demands that fame demands. He was asked to do interviews by both Italian and foreign journalists, he spoke at

schools and conferences, he gave lectures, and he received a growing number of prizes. Increasingly, he was also visited by periodic bouts of depression, and his health began to decline. Because he was now famous, he also became embroiled in various causes and controversies, which in turn increased his depression and depleted him physically. In spite of the demands made on him to travel, as Levi grew older he withdrew more and more into the safety of Corso de Umberto 75. On April 11, 1987, he was found dead at the bottom of the stairway there, having fallen from the third-floor landing above. The reasons for his death remain obscure: Was he murdered for his political views, was it an accident, or was it, as one Italian newspaper claimed, Auschwitz that claimed him forty years later? Angier believes it was suicide.

The critical reception of *The Double Bond* has been mixed. For example, Janet Maslin, reviewing the book for *The New York Times*, found Angier's literary analysis flimsy and her psychological insights mundane; on the other hand, Richard Eder, writing for *The New York Times Book Review*, described the biography as flawless and remarkable. However one finally judges the book, *The Double Bond* provides an extraordinary read. Although Levi's family refused its cooperation, Carole Angier interviewed an impressive number of those who knew him, many of them from his childhood, and these interviews helped her to construct the composite portrait of her subject. Furthermore, unlike many literary biographers, Angier devotes considerable space to analyzing the writings, often using them to fill in gaps in his life otherwise unavailable. In spite of its flaws, it is difficult to imagine a more challenging study of the life of Primo Levi being written anytime in the near future.

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THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED

AUTHOR: Primo Levi (1919-1987)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *I sommersi e i salvati*, 1986 (English translation, 1988)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; essays; meditation

In his last completed work, Levi provides a systematic analysis of the Nazi extermination camps in a series of vivid and meditative essays that display the author's penetrating insights and offer stunning conclusions.

OVERVIEW

Primo Levi died in Turin, Italy, on April 11, 1987, an apparent suicide. It was reported that he had been depressed following minor surgery. In reality, his suffering had been ever-present since the 1940's. His great works, beginning with *Se questo è un uomo* (1947; *If This Is a Man*, 1959; revised as *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, 1961) and culminating with *The Drowned and the Saved*, all dealt with the crucial task of analyzing and facing the Holocaust.

Levi was born in Turin in 1919. He was trained as a chemist, joined the antifascist resistance, and was captured. He was turned over to the Nazis when he identified himself as a Jew in a gesture of courageous, whimsical defiance. He was deported to Auschwitz in 1944. He owed his life to his training as a chemist, for he was put to work in one of the slave-labor industrial complexes in the camp. After liberation, he traversed Eastern Europe and wrote about his wanderings in his second book, *La tregua* (1963; *The Reawakening*, 1965). In 1977 he retired as the manager of a Turin chemical factory to devote himself to writing, a sign that he believed that the story and significance of the Holocaust could never be exhausted and that more than ever it had to be conveyed to a new generation far removed from the experience and even the memory of those events. His later works included *Il sistema periodico* (1975; *The Periodic Table*, 1985), *Se non ora, quando?* (1982; *If Not Now, When?*, 1985), and *These Moments of Reprieve* (1986). He was awarded Italy's highest literary prize. The fires of Auschwitz had transformed a talented chemist into one of the greatest writers and most astute observers of his century.

The Drowned and the Saved was Levi's last completed work. It represents the summation of his life's work and refers to many of his previous writings. It is not a novel but a series of vivid and meditative essays that are a systematic analysis of the extermination camps. These essays are replete with penetrating insights and stunning conclusions.

What seems to have motivated the writing of this great work was Levi's fear that the memories of the Holocaust—the greatest single crime in human history—would dim with time and would ultimately become a legend. Levi sees himself as Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, having to retell and to clarify the terrible tale for a new generation.

The Drowned and the Saved is divided into a preface, eight concise chapters, and a powerful conclusion. Its overwhelming concern is the need to remember for the sake of justice. Levi recounts the story of the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS) officers who told the Jewish concentration camp prisoners that no one would later believe their tales of horror because they were too horrible to be believed. This became one of the prisoners' worst nightmares.

In his second chapter, "The Gray Zone," Levi shows that there were degrees of evil in the camps, although the difference between the murderers and their victims was clear. The Nazis were guilty of murder, whereas the German bystanders were guilty of turning away and of refusing to help the victims. It is tragic, however, that some of the victims were forced to do things in the camps that they would never have done in normal life. For example, the *Sonderkommando*, or "Special Squad," those prisoners of Auschwitz who worked near the crematoria, were given more food and were kept alive for a short time so that they could do their horrendous work of disposing of the dead bodies. Also belonging to this "gray zone" were the functionaries of the Jewish councils appointed by the Nazis to administer the ghettos. Levi brilliantly characterizes Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the "Jewish elder" of the Łódź ghetto in Poland, as a man who was corrupted by power yet sought to save Jews.

Chapter 3 deals with the shame of the victims who survived. According to Levi, the prisoners who survived were privileged because of their skills, their knowledge of German, and their connections with the political underground. Many survivors felt guilty for having to look out for themselves and their close friends. Levi reminds the reader, however, that the greatest shame of all belongs to the murderers who planned the crime and to the civilized world that stood by.

Levi devotes a chapter to the importance of communication in human affairs. Those who understood some German in the camps might learn the skills of surviving. What could not be so easily grasped was the useless,

gratuitous violence that the Nazis practiced. The extermination of the Jews was preceded by savage and calculated violence and humiliation. The prisoners were tattooed, stripped, and humiliated specifically to destroy their humanity before they were killed.

The final chapters of *The Drowned and the Saved* are devoted to the exploration of stereotypes of the Holocaust in the present generation and to the analysis of letters to Levi by German readers of his works. One question that is particularly troubling is why inmates did not revolt against such treatment. Levi poses a crucial question for a later generation to illustrate the plight of the Jews on the eve of the Holocaust: Why are people not leaving Europe now under the threat of a possible nuclear holocaust?

The Drowned and the Saved shows Primo Levi to be one of the great masters of modern prose. His style and tone produced a stunning combination of cool, dispassionate description, uncompromising honesty, righteous indignation, extremely vivid imagery, and an uncanny ability to relate the past to the present.

Levi clearly belongs in the classical tradition. He writes with great clarity without oversimplifying the complexities of his forbidding subject. His prose is concise, balanced, carefully molded, yet extremely powerful. Like the great Greek and Roman historians, he combines narrative with reflection. He also reflects the influence of his medieval forerunner Dante, who wrote the *Inferno* (c. 1320), that epic on punishment for sins and the portrayal of degrees of guilt. In the *Inferno*, however, those who have sinned have been punished as a result of their actions. In the Holocaust the Jews were exterminated because they had been born, something Dante would have had trouble imagining. Levi also acknowledges the Italian Romantic writers of the nineteenth century who strove to make patriotism a humane value rather than a doctrine of superiority and who glorified the individual human being. Levi was also influenced by the early twentieth century realist Italo Svevo. Levi quotes Svevo's remark that a dying man is too busy to think about death. Levi sees this as a valid statement about the camps.

Above all, Primo Levi stands in the tradition of the Enlightenment. He is a true moralist following in the footsteps of Jonathan Swift. His book is aimed primarily at the human intelligence as he constantly struggles to bring the reader back to the reality of the Holocaust and its implications for the present and the future.

Although influenced by his friend Jean Améry, Levi could not agree with the passion of his friend, who would uncompromisingly return blow for blow with the enemy and who would permit his life to be consumed by the memory of the tortures and humiliations he suffered. Levi preferred to trust in the laws of civilized society (however imperfectly applied) and to

discourage feelings of revenge, as opposed to cheap forgiveness. The suicide of Améry seems to have haunted Levi, and a controlled anger smolders throughout this work and breaks out during key portions.

Levi's anger is directed primarily against those who would construct convenient truths about the terrible past, confuse the perpetrator with the victim, and oversimplify and stereotype reality. Like the ancient Greeks, Levi believes in the existence of the Furies, the ancient goddesses of the earth who would pursue tormentors and murderers and give them no rest. The sufferings of the Holocaust, however, gave the victims no peace. The only way to achieve any hope for justice is to cry out to anyone who would listen to the tales of injustice. Levi did this for forty years.

In the tradition of a true classic, *The Drowned and the Saved* is a treasure trove of unforgettable stories and eminently quotable, brilliant flashes of insight. Future editions of this work should be annotated in the manner of Dante's *Inferno* to identify the rich variety of literary and historical references.

At least three gripping stories are bound to remain with the reader. The first concerns an ordinary, but surrealistic, soccer game played by the Nazi SS and the special squad of prisoners they forced to tend the crematoria. What enabled such a game to happen at all was the bond of death—the mounds of dead bodies caused by the SS and disposed of by the special squad. Next comes a heartbreaking tale of a teenage girl found still alive after a mass killing in the gas chamber. She is no longer anonymous but a person. The prisoners try to save her, but the SS cannot let her live to tell her tale to the other inmates; the Third Reich was at war with memory itself. The third story shows how the memories of the Holocaust can be difficult to communicate to a later age. When Levi tried to tell the story of his life in the camp to a fifth-grade class, a boy drew a diagram to show how he would have escaped from the camp. Such is the difficulty of communicating the impossible situation faced by the Jews.

Levi had much less sympathy for a German who wrote to him saying that Adolf Hitler was a madman and a devil who misled the German people. Levi wrote back that no church gives indulgences to those who follow the devil. In addition, he noted that no one obliged the I. G. Farben Company to conscript thousands of slaves and work them to death and that no one forced the Topf Company of Wiesbaden to build the enormous multiple crematoria for Auschwitz. From where, he asks, did the average German think that the millions of children's clothes and shoes that flowed back to Germany during the war were coming?

Above all, Levi is most disturbed about the human frailties of self-deception and love of power. He finds that human beings today are dis-

trustful of grand truths but are disposed to accept small truths. This is much too dangerous in the light of what happened during the Holocaust. Levi's statements on power and human corruptibility are reminiscent of Plato and Thucydides. Like Plato, Levi asserts that all tyrants go mad because they lose touch with reality. This was particularly true for Hitler. The goals of the Third Reich went far beyond an attempt to gain living space or to protect itself; Hitler's Germany sought to achieve immortality by killing and humiliating millions of innocent people. Such a society was bound to destroy itself.

The corruptibility of man is epitomized for Levi in the figure of Rumkowski, the head of the Łódź ghetto. Rumkowski was an elderly failed industrialist. He hoped that he could save the Jews of Łódź by working for the German army, but he became drunk with power, coining his likeness on the money of the ghetto and exhorting poets and schoolchildren to praise him. In 1944 the ghetto was liquidated, and Rumkowski was sent on a special train to Auschwitz, where he perished. Levi concludes:

We are all mirrored in Rumkowski. . . . His fever is ours. . . . Willingly or not we come to terms with power, forgetting that we are all in the ghetto, that the ghetto is walled in, that outside the ghetto reign the lords of death and that close by the train is waiting.

Levi thus concludes that the human race is in the same boat, interdependent, vulnerable as ever.

As one of the tormented saved, Levi speaks for the drowned of his generation. It is hard to disagree with his findings and conclusions. He is not a professional historian or social scientist (although his reading is wide and his research accurate) but a supremely intelligent survivor and humanist. In his words, the camp "was a university. It taught us to look around and to measure man." More than many historians and social scientists, Levi has brilliantly captured and effectively communicated many of the crucial elements and implications of the human dimensions of the Holocaust.

If *This Is a Man* was Primo Levi's first work, and it remains one of the most perceptive eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust. Many fine works flowed from his pen in the course of the next forty years, but *The Drowned and the Saved* was his most condensed and powerful work. It distills the insights achieved during a lifetime of emotional struggle and intellectual reflection.

It is fitting and proper that Levi would set aside an important chapter for Jean Améry, his friend, fellow survivor, and creative thinker about Auschwitz. Améry's work *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne: Bewältigungsver-*

suche eines Überwältigen (1966; *At The Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*, 1980) is a useful counterpart to Levi's last work. Améry's work is much more introspective, intensely angry, and militantly rebellious in tone and much more concerned with the problem of Jewish existence. Despite their differences and their disappointments, however, Levi and Améry kept their faith in the struggle for enlightenment and human decency. For them this is the only possibility for the salvation of humankind. Nevertheless, Levi is the better writer of the two, for he writes with great economy and controlled passion.

Like many Holocaust survivors who went on to become great writers, Primo Levi and Jean Améry took their own lives. Why they did so is open to many explanations, but these great souls who had suffered beyond all measure had made it clear that they feared that the Holocaust would be forgotten, would be obscured with convenient truths, and would lose its crucial lessons for humankind. These morally indefatigable men devoted their lives to telling their civilization about the mortal threats that lurk within it.

Primo Levi was the Dante of the twentieth century, the indispensable guide to the hell that was created on Earth. To read his works, particularly *The Drowned and the Saved*, is to be given some hope for an escape from the suffering from which he was not saved.

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—Leon Stein

EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM

A REPORT ON THE BANALITY OF EVIL

AUTHOR: Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1963

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Journalism; history

In addition to reporting on Adolf Eichmann's 1961 trial in Jerusalem for crimes the Nazi bureaucrat was accused of committing during the Holocaust, this controversial work presents Arendt's thesis that average people cannot be expected to recognize that they are doing wrong when their actions, no matter how heinous, clearly conform to prevailing social norms and gain them general approval.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGE:

Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962), Nazi officer who was in charge of transporting Jews to concentration camps

OVERVIEW

On May 11, 1960, Adolf Eichmann, who had been masquerading in Argentina as factory worker Ricardo Klement, was captured by Israeli agents and brought to Jerusalem for trial. During World War II, Eichmann, an obedient Nazi bureaucrat, had risen to Obersturmbannführer (a rank equivalent to lieutenant colonel) in the Schutzstaffel (SS), a branch of the state secret police, or Gestapo, headed by Heinrich Himmler. Eichmann became the "Jewish expert" of the branch known as the Head Office for Reich Security. In accordance with Adolf Hitler's plan for a "final solution" for the Jewish people, Eichmann was put in charge of arranging the mass deportations to the killing centers, which were mainly in Poland. After Germany's defeat in May, 1945, Eichmann was captured by the Americans but hid his true identity and, with the aid of Nazi sympathizers, eventually escaped to Argentina. For ten years, reunited with his family, he lived a quiet life until his capture.

When the news of Eichmann's capture and forthcoming trial was broadcast, Hannah Arendt proposed herself as a trial reporter to William Shawn, editor of *The New Yorker* magazine. Shawn gladly accepted Arendt's offer,

as she had already earned a distinguished reputation as a political analyst through her work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Also, as a Jew and an early refugee from Nazi Germany (she had escaped in 1933), Arendt was uniquely qualified to cover the trial.

The trial began before the District Court of Jerusalem on April 11, 1961, and continued until August 14. The court announced its judgment on December 11, 1961, declaring Eichmann guilty of most of the crimes in the fifteen-count indictment (including "crimes against the Jewish people, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and memberships in hostile organizations"). He was condemned to death and, after the rejection of his legal appeals, was executed by hanging at midnight on May 31, 1962.

Hannah Arendt attended most of Eichmann's district court sessions and then went home to New York, where she gathered her impressions of the defendant and formulated her analytic theses. The essential form of the book, according to Arendt, is that of "a trial report, and its main source is the transcript of the trial proceedings which was distributed to the press in Jerusalem." Of the book's fifteen chapters, the first few include descriptions of the Jerusalem courtroom, the judges, the prosecutor, and the defendant. The second chapter contains a perceptive brief biography of Eichmann, his "normality" (according to the Israeli psychiatric examiners), and his military loyalty. Eichmann had been a poor student and an unsuccessful worker. His last job (from which he was fired) before joining the Nazi Party and the SS in 1932 had been that of traveling salesman. "Already a failure in the eyes of his social class, of his family, and hence in his own eyes as well," Eichmann could now "still make a career" in the Nazi bureaucracy. Thus, over the course of thirteen years, he rose eagerly from the status of unemployed nonentity to that of SS Obersturmbannführer.

Chapter 3 begins the detailing of how Eichmann became "an expert on the Jewish question." He volunteered in 1934 for the Security Service of the SS and was put to work in the Information Department. After a few months, Eichmann began to work in the new section concerned exclusively with Jews. He then read Theodor Herzl's Zionist classic *Der Judenstaat* (1896; *The Jewish State*, 1896), which earned for him an assignment as the official spy on German Zionist organizations. Consequently, by March, 1938, Eichmann was appointed organizer of the forced emigration of Jews from Austria. Unfortunately for the victimized Jews, however, entry into British-ruled Palestine was very difficult. In any case, with the beginning of World War II in September, 1939, emigration anywhere for significant numbers of Jews became impossible, so Eichmann began to look for new avenues of career advancement. The opportunity came when the primary responsibility of his office was shifted from forced emigration of the Jews



Hannah Arendt. (Library of Congress)

to their deportation to concentration camps for forced labor and death.

By late 1941, the “final solution”—the killing of the Jews in the German-occupied areas—had begun, and Eichmann assumed significant responsibility for deportation of Jews to the extermination camps. He did it with the same diligence that he had previously used in trying to find a foreign country to which the Jews could emigrate. Such faint stirrings of conscience as Eichmann still possessed seemed to pertain only to German Jews and not to their more numerous coreligionists in the countries east of Germany.

At the important conference about the logistics of the “final solution” held in Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin, in January, 1942, Eichmann noted that none of his superiors, among the most prominent people in the Third Reich, had any hesitancy in embracing the policy of mass killing. At his trial he stated, “At that moment, I sensed a kind of Pontius Pilate feeling, for I felt free of all guilt.” Buttressed by the approval of his social and military superiors, Eichmann became a master of the technique of appointing Jewish councils to fulfill his own ultimately murderous—but well-disguised—purposes. Thus, through deception and bureaucratic skill, he was often able to create a sense of administrative order out of the human chaos of forced deportation.

Helpful to Eichmann, according to his own testimony, was his version of the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, an eighteenth century German philosopher. Kant had maintained that a person should act as if the principle of his action were to become a universal law of nature. Eichmann seemed to follow a distortion of Kant’s universalizing principle: “Act in such a way that the Führer, if he knew your action, would approve it.” Eichmann clung tenaciously to this principle, even when the war was clearly lost and Heinrich Himmler had decided to put an end to the “final

solution" in the vain hope of negotiating a postwar and post-Hitler position.

Chapters 9 through 13 detail the process of the "final solution" in the various German-occupied areas. Generally, the fate of the Jews in each country depended on the attitudes of the local populations toward them.

In the final chapters, Arendt notes the disparity between the small resources of the defendant and the vast resources of the prosecution (a condition that had also existed, she notes, at the original Nazi war crimes trials in Nuremberg, Germany). She doubts the relevance and accuracy of many of the statements made by the prosecution's witnesses, sixteen or more years after the fact. Although not disagreeing with the death sentence, Arendt suggests that an international tribunal would have been a more appropriate courtroom, given that genocide is a "crime against humanity."

Because the book began as a report on Eichmann's trial written for *The New Yorker*, it includes, in that magazine's characteristic style, detailed descriptions—in this case, of the physical appearance and legal rituals of the "House of Justice" in Jerusalem. It also includes an analysis of Eichmann's statements, the strategies of the prosecution and defense, and the final judgment. The book provides background descriptions of the Nazi bureaucracy involved in the "final solution," the part Eichmann played in it, and much of the sad history of the deportation and extermination of the European Jews. These details are explicated not only for their historical and legal relevance but also as a basis for Arendt's analytic propositions.

The intellectual heart of Arendt's thesis can be found in her subtitle, *A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Her portrayal of Eichmann after his capture is contrary to the popular opinion of him as a fanatical, sadistic anti-Semite. Rather, she analyzes his character as that of a bureaucratic careerist, a "banal" mediocrity, content to function as an advancing cog in an orderly totalitarian system. Tracing Eichmann's undistinguished career prior to becoming a Nazi and contrasting it to the heightened self-esteem he felt in his newly achieved status, Arendt states that Eichmann "might still have preferred . . . to be hanged as Obersturmbannführer . . . rather than living out his life quietly and normally as a traveling salesman."

Court psychiatrists had certified Eichmann as "normal," thus the central societal problem, according to Arendt, is that so many are like Eichmann: "terribly and terrifyingly normal." Such average people cannot be expected to recognize that they are, in fact, doing wrong in circumstances where their actions, clearly conforming to the prevailing social norms, gain general social approval and career advancement. Only Germany's losing of the war, Arendt believes, seemed to provoke in a few people any admissions of guilty conscience.

A second thesis developed by Arendt—even more inflammatory to many of her readers—was that the victims had cooperated in the destruction of their own communities and of themselves. Eichmann and his staff typically appointed Jewish councils from among the leaders of the occupied Jewish communities. The Nazis then held the councils responsible for maintaining order in the newly created ghettos, distributing rations and work assignments, compiling lists of Jewish property (for easy confiscation), and—especially—identifying the required number of Jews for deportation and “resettlement” to the concentration camps (destinations usually unknown to the leaders of the councils). According to Arendt:

Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated . . . with the Nazis. The whole truth was that if the Jewish people had really been unorganized and leaderless, there would have been chaos and plenty of misery but the total number of victims would hardly have been between four and a half and six million people.

Depressed by her own analysis, Arendt notes, “To a Jew this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story.”

Many of the reviews of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* were actually polemics directed against Arendt’s style, her analytic tone and Olympian detachment from the dreadful events, her focus on the “aesthetics” rather than the moral depravity of Eichmann, and her obvious anti-Zionism. The most strident attacks focused on Arendt’s two major theses: the routinely “banal” dullness of Eichmann’s character and the collaborationist role of the Jewish leadership in occupied Europe. The varied positive and negative responses—often directed on a very personal level—were especially evident in the pages of *Partisan Review*, an influential intellectual quarterly.

Generally, the critics noted that Arendt accepts Eichmann’s own projection of himself at the trial as a dutiful, law-abiding nonentity. She fails to imagine that same person as he had been when he committed his crimes—in uniform and in power. She sees him only as a “little man” transformed by a totalitarian system into an organizer of the “final solution.” (Arendt’s supporters believed that she had achieved an insight into the omnipotence of the totalitarian state over the average person.) In fact, Arendt is so certain of Eichmann’s essential “banality” that when he is quoted as having told his men during the last days of the war, “I will jump into my grave laughing, because the fact that I have the death of five million Jews . . . on my conscience gives me extraordinary satisfaction,” she attributes it

merely to the lower-class vice of braggadocio rather than to any factual or legal reality.

Arendt's depiction of the Jewish councils as being treasonously destructive of the Jewish communities came under the most bitter attack. Critics noted that, among other historical omissions, Arendt does not address the killing of Jews in Russia. There, contrary to her thesis, Jewish councils were not appointed by the Nazis; mass killings were, nevertheless, carried out on the spot by firing squads. In addition, critics noted how few political and moral alternatives were really available to the Jewish leaders, how rational it seemed at first to cooperate, for the "civilized" Germans were not thought to be so illogical as to destroy a desperately needed labor force. (Mass resistance, after all, was impossible without outside support.) Reliable accounts exist of certain members of the councils who, having been informed of the destinations of the deportees, either committed suicide or refused to assist the Nazis further and were immediately killed.

Critics of Arendt's book also noted how the leaders of the Jewish councils begged the Allies to bomb the trains so that the deportees might have an opportunity to escape. Furthermore, they stressed that the most determinative factor in the saving or killing of the Jews was the attitude of the local population and the availability of a sanctuary—not the existence of a Jewish council. The death camps, for example, were established in Eastern Europe in the midst of hostile anti-Semitic populations, while virtually all the Jews of occupied Denmark were saved by the local citizens who ferried them in fishing boats to neutral Sweden.

The Eichmann trial, although conducted in Israel in the absence of any appropriate international tribunal, was actually a successor to the Nuremberg Trials, which had been organized during the years immediately following World War II. Eichmann had fled from judgment and so had not been available at Nuremberg. Sixteen years after the war's slaughter had ended, Arendt felt able to give a nonpartisan analysis of the procedures in Jerusalem and of the defendant's character and his crimes. She points out the Jerusalem court's failure, as well as that of the Nuremberg court, to resolve three fundamental issues: "the problem of impaired justice in the court of the victors; a valid definition of the 'crime against humanity'; and a clear recognition of the new criminal who commits this crime."

Arendt's "new criminal" is, as noted earlier, a "normal" individual who commits "administrative massacres" (the rationalized murder of entire populations) under circumstances that make it "impossible for him to know or to feel that he is doing wrong." This controversial insight is a direct application of Arendt's view of the state's power to shape the individual, expressed in her earlier *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. That is, in

Arendt's view, the Nazi genocide was not another chapter in the dismal history of anti-Semitism but rather a new kind of crime, an early chapter in the history of modern totalitarianism—"a system in which all men have become equally superfluous." The "banal, superfluous, average, normal" Eichmann was thus an efficient instrument for the Nazi totalitarian system.

Arendt's universalist views conflict with Zionism, a form of Jewish nationalism, so she is skeptical (unfairly so, according to her critics) of the validity of an Israeli (or any separate nation's) court's judgment of this new sort of crime committed by the modern totalitarian state, a "crime against humanity." Arendt's greatest contribution in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* lies in her demonstration of how a normal person can be brought, through a conditioned sense of duty, to serve the radically evil purposes of a totalitarian state.

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—Donald Gochberg

“ELEGY FOR N. N.”

AUTHOR: Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004)

FIRST PUBLISHED: “Elegia dla N. N.,” 1974, in *Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kędy zapada* (English translation collected in *The Collected Poems, 1931-1987*, 1988)

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRES: Elegy; meditation

Consisting of seven irregular verse-paragraphs on the general theme of human love, memory, and remorse, Miłosz’s elegy includes a meditation on images and events of World War II, with suggestions of Holocaust atrocities and of anti-German violence.

OVERVIEW

Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz, who witnessed the Nazi atrocities in Warsaw in his native Poland, became active as an anti-Nazi poet in the Resistance movement. In 1944, the Germans seized him and his wife as they attempted to leave Warsaw, but they were released after a brief detention in a makeshift camp. They spent the next few months wandering about as refugees until the Soviets’ Red Army completed its annihilation of the German forces and Poland was at last liberated after more than five years of Nazi rule. These experiences no doubt laid the groundwork for much of Miłosz’s later work, including “Elegy for N. N.”

Written in free verse, “Elegy for N. N.” consists of seven irregular verse-paragraphs that form an extended meditation on human love, remorse, and memory. It is addressed to “N. N.,” a woman who is not so much the subject of the poem as its audience and who shares with the poet certain memories of youth in Lithuania. Elegies are traditionally occasioned by a death, but here it is not a person but the poet’s sense of connection to his past that has been lost. The poem is composed in the first person, and the reader seems to be overhearing one side of a conversation between Miłosz and his friend on the subject of loss.

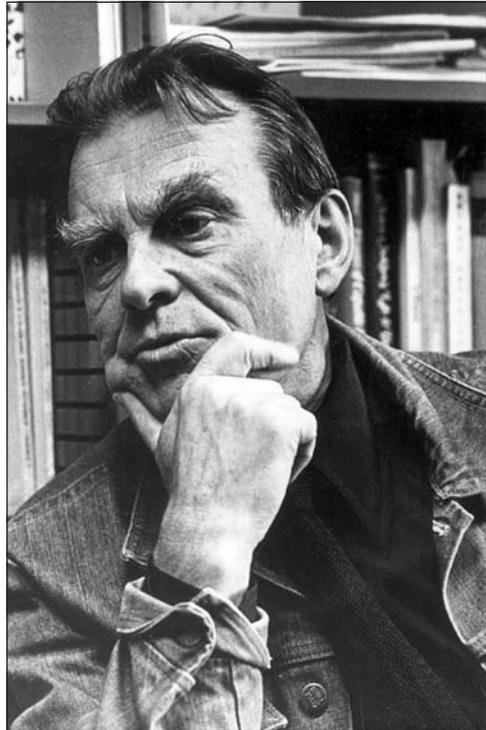
The poem begins with a considerate request regarding a journey: “Tell me if it is too far for you.” Immediately, the themes of distance and human limitation are presented. The poem will attempt to bridge a widening gap

between the poet and his addressee, an effort that, as Miłosz's hesitant, polite tone indicates, may prove insufficient. Miłosz proceeds to escort the reader on a flight of poetic imagination halfway around the globe, beginning at the Baltic Sea and swooping over Denmark, the Atlantic Ocean, Labrador, and the Sierra Mountains to arrive in California, where he waits in a eucalyptus grove. In his mind, Miłosz helps his listeners to make the same great journey that, in the course of his life, he had made himself. He had traversed whole continents on his path from Vilnius (also known as Vilna), Lithuania, his birthplace, to Berkeley, California, where he lived at the time of the composition of this poem.

In the second section, finding the distance enormous, Miłosz reverses direction, traveling "reluctantly" back through memory to the Lithuanian countryside where he knew "N. N." Yet the reality of that landscape, including its particular smells, contours, and features, has "changed forever into abstract crystal," oddly purified and idealized in the poet's mind.

He longs in the third section for such lost things "as they are in themselves" rather than for idealized images, but he finds that he "really can't say" how daily life there went on. He has lost touch with significant details, his "knowledge of fiery years"—perhaps the years of the Prussian and German occupations and the subsequent Soviet takeover—having scorched the elements of his pastoral and left him exiled and homeless.

The fourth and fifth sections recall images and events of World War II, with suggestions of Holocaust atrocities and of anti-German violence. Miłosz reflects on the impermanence of what he once believed to be immutable, on how "what could not be taken away/ is taken." He echoes the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, whose famous maxim that "one cannot step twice into the same river" is a depiction of restless change and eternal mutability.



Czesław Miłosz. (© The Nobel Foundation)

In the last two sections, Miłosz comes to terms with the failure of his sense of connection to his homeland through memory. He is cut off not because of physical distance, which he demonstrates can be bridged imaginatively in memory, but sadly because of his growing indifference to the world and to life around him.

At times, the poem uses a private vocabulary that contains certain personal “secrets.” Clearly, the elegy is addressed to a close friend with whom alone Miłosz shares some of his memories. Experiences and feelings are described to which an impersonal reader could not possibly have access, even if Miłosz were to supply notes or commentaries. The reader is given no exact idea, for that matter, of the identity of “N. N.” The features of the Lithuanian landscape and of Vilnius are given only in flashes—the bath cabin, the scent of leather, horses at the forge—without any overall picture emerging. This technique suggests fragmentation and discontinuity in the poet’s mind as well as discrepancies in the reader’s ability to read that mind. Some of those flashes use Germanic names, such as “Mama Fliegeltaub” and “Sachenhausen,” names foreign to the Lithuanian landscape and language that make no sense either to the reader or to natives of Vilnius without an explanation, although Miłosz offers none. Consequently, the reader must piece together his or her own (necessarily flawed) sense of person and place. Some important figures in the poem, such as “the German owner,” are unnamed, increasing their strangeness. Miłosz writes privately and exclusively in order to make the reader sense the opacity of distance and understand both Miłosz’s sense of separation from the past and the growing impenetrability and sterility of his memories.

In Polish, from which Miłosz himself translated this poem along with Lawrence Davis, the tone of the poem is more aggressive and personal than in English, and the opening imperative is much more direct and informal: “Powiedz czy to dla siebie za daleko.” Generally, Miłosz’s Polish has a more concise, direct, and condensed effect than can be captured in English. “Skrećić na ocean,” for example, must be rendered as “could have turned toward the ocean,” a much more unwieldy phrase. Generally, however, the translation captures the imagistic fervor and sensuality of the original.

Miłosz verges at times on surrealism, juxtaposing unexpected images in a kind of cinematic jump-cutting or montage. He sees a bath cabin, for example, transformed into “abstract crystal,” a metamorphosis that is difficult to imagine if one is limited by common sense. His peculiar vision and sensual counterpoint only increase the reader’s sense of being a stranger in his world, helplessly dislocated and unable to make clear sense of what is

seen and heard. Like Miłosz, the reader seems to be cut off from the comforts of stable knowledge and fulfilled expectations.

The poet laments not the death of "N. N."—which, if judged only from the content of the poem, may not even have occurred—but the loss of vitality in his imagination and memory. He mourns the failure of his spiritual connections both to an idyllic image of the past and to "things as they are in themselves," the self-sufficient world of creation around him. Miłosz's elegy, like many of his poems, deals with the loss of spiritual energy in the modern world and with his growing inability, as a poet and a human being, to remake the link between the spiritual and the physical in order to restore some sense of belonging and meaning to life. In the poem, Miłosz sees himself as indifferent and increasingly unwilling to make the effort to bridge the distances between the actual and the ideal through the medium of poetry.

Miłosz tries to come to terms with the insufficiency of poetic "greatness" and with the failure of his imagination to transcend the often trivial aspects of ordinary life. He finds, upon self-examination, that he has no "great secrets" to reveal. Indeed, this failure—which finds a correlative in the scorched, arid postwar landscape of his faraway homeland—becomes for Miłosz inevitable, fated, like a cancer growing within him from year to year "until it takes hold."

Miłosz is clearly pessimistic about the fate of humanity, and he condemns himself to gradual decline in the face of an inability to make sense of what he once thought were immutable values that "could not be taken away." Miłosz's thought, however, has been characterized—by various readers and critics as well as by himself—as an "ecstatic pessimism"; that is, in the midst of tribulation and decline, the poet is able to discover some ecstatic core, some essentially vital, energetic center on which he can draw for poetic inspiration. In this elegy, despite his apparent failure to connect to his homeland through memories, Miłosz can still imagine a sensuously dense landscape, rife with surprising juxtapositions and aesthetic promise. Though reluctant to face the possibility of failure again, Miłosz nevertheless undertakes his poetic work and, out of the scorched ashes of his memory, is able to make, if nothing else, a poignant tribute to his loss.

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—Kevin McNeilly

ENEMIES

A LOVE STORY

AUTHOR: Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-1991)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Sonim, de Geshichte fun a Liebe*, 1966 (English translation, 1972)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Domestic realism

In this work, set in the postwar, post-Holocaust period, Singer uses the experiences of one man, Herman Broder, as well as the experiences of the various women in Broder's life to show some of the ways in which those who survived the Holocaust dealt with their memories and built new lives.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Herman Broder, a young Jewish immigrant from Poland

Tamara Rachel Broder, his first wife

Yadwiga Pracz, his present wife

Masha Tortshiner, his mistress

Shifrah Puah Bloch, her mother

Rabbi Milton Lampert, Herman's wealthy employer

OVERVIEW

On a summer morning, Herman Broder stirs from his troubled dreams, wondering if he could be in Nazi-occupied Poland, perhaps in the hayloft where his parents' servant girl, Yadwiga, has concealed him to save his life. Then, fully awake, he realizes that he is in the apartment in Brooklyn that he shares with Yadwiga, whom he married after learning of the deaths of his wife and his children.

Herman tells Yadwiga that he must make another of his overnight train trips to sell books. Actually, he remains in New York City, spending the day in the office of Rabbi Milton Lampert, for whom Herman works as a ghostwriter, and the night at the apartment of his mistress, Masha Tortshiner, and her mother, Shifrah Puah Bloch, who are also Holocaust survivors. Although Masha knows that Herman is married, her mother does not. Shifrah Puah is determined to have Masha get a divorce from her hus-

band, Leon, so that she can marry Herman.

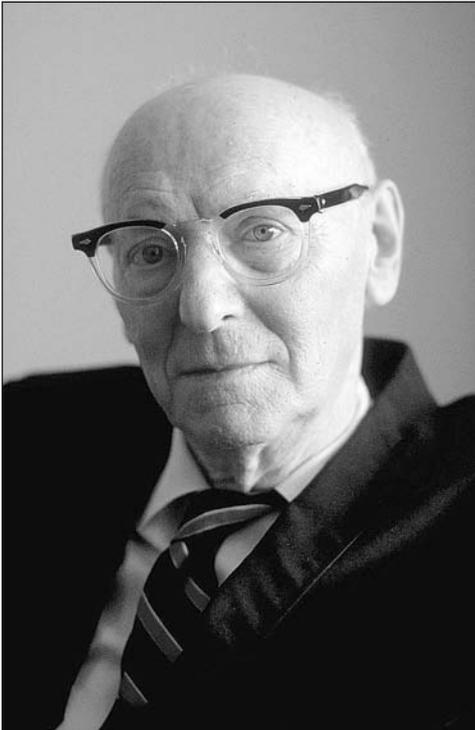
One day, Shifrah Puah calls Herman's attention to a notice in the newspaper that names him and asks him to telephone a certain number. When he makes the call, Herman finds himself speaking to the uncle of his first wife, Tamara, who, it seems, is alive and in New York. When Herman and Tamara are reunited, he is surprised to find her prettier than ever and considerably easier to get along with than she had been in the past. Although Herman knows that he must choose between his two wives, he has to admit that he would like to keep them both, and the volatile Masha as well.

Herman's trips to see Tamara arouse Masha's suspicions, but she does not guess that Herman's first wife has come back from the dead. Herman thinks that he might be able to reassure Masha about his feelings for her during a vacation in the Adirondacks that they have been planning. At first, they do relax and enjoy themselves on their trip, but then Masha tells Herman that she is pregnant. Taken by surprise, Herman rashly promises to marry Masha.

Blithely ignoring the fact that Herman is already married—his wife is, after all, only a mere Gentile—Masha works on getting a divorce. Mean-

while, Herman's other two relationships with women are becoming ever more complicated. On an outing in the Catskills, he and Tamara, who had been merely friends since their reunion, find themselves making love and enjoying it. Then, Yadviga decides that she can become closer to her husband if she converts to Judaism and gives him a Jewish child. Although Herman does not want to bring another child into a world so full of cruelty and suffering, he cannot refuse her.

Herman continues to manage to keep the three women apart, but he worries constantly about exposure, which he knows will cost him his job with the rabbi and might well



Isaac Bashevis Singer. (AP/Wide World Photos)

lead to his being imprisoned or deported. He has a little time to decide which of his present wives he will keep, because he married Yadwiga in all innocence, believing Tamara to be dead. However, he will have no excuse, moral or legal, for acquiring a third wife.

Quite unexpectedly, Leon Tortshiner offers Herman a way out. Leon meets with Herman to warn him that Masha is a promiscuous, deceitful woman. Leon tells Herman not only that Masha has been consistently unfaithful during their marriage but also that she has already betrayed Herman by sleeping with Leon as the price of obtaining her divorce. Herman's immediate response is to end his relationship with Masha, but she manages to convince him that Leon is lying, and the two are married after all.

By the time winter arrives, Herman is in serious financial trouble. Not only is Yadwiga expecting a baby, which means more bills in Brooklyn, but also Masha's pregnancy has turned out to be purely psychological. Masha has been left too depressed to work, and so Herman has to provide all the support for the Bronx household of Masha and her mother as well. As a new convert to Judaism, Yadwiga is also driving Herman crazy with her questions about a faith he no longer observes.

Finally, the inevitable happens. First, Tamara drops in at the Brooklyn apartment, and Yadwiga recognizes her. Then some neighbors bring a gossip man named Nathan Pesheles to meet Mrs. Broder, and, although Tamara pretends to be Herman's cousin, Pesheles takes a good look at Yadwiga. When Rabbi Lampert finds out that Herman has recently married, he visits Masha and invites the newlyweds to a party. One of the rabbi's other guests at the party is the observant Pesheles, who promptly informs Masha that he met a Tamara Broder at Herman's apartment in Brooklyn, thus tipping Masha off to the fact that the dead wife is not dead. Pesheles then goes on to tell everyone else, including the rabbi, that, in addition to Masha, Herman also has a pretty, pregnant wife named Yadwiga.

Before the evening is over, the kindly rabbi offers Masha a job and both Masha and her mother a place to live. Masha accepts, telling Herman that she never wants to see him again. Tamara comes to Herman's rescue, taking him in, giving him a job in her uncle's bookstore, and even helping Yadwiga in any way she can.

Then, just when things are going well, Masha comes back into Herman's life. Now she wants him again, and he agrees to run away with her. However, she is delayed, first by finding that her apartment has been burglarized and then by her mother's death. Herman and Masha consider a double suicide, but finally Herman decides to leave not only Masha, but everyone else. Masha does kill herself, and Yadwiga moves in with

Tamara, who runs the bookstore while Yadwiga takes care of their place and her baby girl, little Masha. No one ever finds out what happened to Herman.

Generally considered the most important Yiddish writer of the twentieth century, Isaac Bashevis Singer received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1978, in large part in recognition of his re-creation of a world that no longer exists. Singer often wrote about life in Polish Jewish villages before they and their inhabitants were destroyed by the Nazis. *Enemies*, however, is set in the postwar, post-Holocaust period. Its subject is serious: the ways in which those who survived the Holocaust dealt with their memories and built new lives.

Appropriately, *Enemies* begins with Herman Broder's reliving the past. Even though he is now safe, Herman has been forever changed by his experiences. He has lost his faith in God and in human life. While he has married again, Herman hedges his bets by also keeping a mistress and remaining open to other possibilities. He is adamantly opposed to having more children, for it is clear that one cannot count on a beneficent God to preserve them. In fact, all that Herman now believes in is lust, which existed even in the death camps, and deceit, which he believes is the only way one can make it through the world.

Singer also shows how his four major women characters have responded to the Holocaust. Shifrah Puah wears black to keep alive the memories of those who died and feels guilty because she is alive. However, Shifrah still believes in God and observes the Jewish rituals.

Masha hates God as much as her mother loves him. Now, the central reality in her life is the Holocaust. Masha finds sexual stimulation in telling stories of those days while she and Herman are making love. Masha is enchanted with death, and, indeed, she does finally commit suicide.

In a sense, Tamara did die in the Holocaust, for she has become a new person: more unselfish, more considerate, and far wiser than she was before the war. After she and Herman are reunited, Tamara asks nothing for herself, not even that he return to her. Ironically, it is Tamara who now becomes Herman's only real friend and confidant. Even when he tells her that he is running off with Masha, Tamara accepts his decision with grace, and it is she who will fill Herman's place at the bookstore and care for his wife and his child.

It is also ironic that it is a Polish Catholic, Yadwiga, who replaces Herman within the Jewish community. What begins as her attempt to please her husband by observing his rituals ends with her wholeheartedly accepting the faith in which he no longer believes. Although Herman would blame his Holocaust experience for his actions, Singer points out that

Herman's character was formed long before the Nazis came to power. It is appropriate that, at the end of the novel, the self-centered Herman, if not dead, is alone somewhere, while the generous Yadwiga is being cherished by her new community.

The tone of *Enemias* is not uniformly serious. Like the village storytellers from whom he drew his inspiration, Singer delights in the eccentricities of human behavior and in the capacity of human beings to make fools of themselves. Herman Broder's adventures in *Enemias* are essentially farcical, and Herman himself, though appealing, is devoid of common sense. After he has escaped from the Nazis by hiding from them and from God by denying him, Herman uses his new freedom to become the willing slave of lust, especially as it is embodied in the equally irrational Masha.

Of his three wives, Masha alone is as irrational and as self-destructive as Herman. While both Tamara and Yadwiga try to keep Herman out of trouble, Masha always encourages him to behave like a fool. She gets him to marry her at the risk of being imprisoned or deported, and eventually she causes him to lose his job. Then, after ending the relationship with him, she quits her job and persuades him to quit his so that they can run off together; she even agrees with him that, because of a slight hitch in their plans, they might as well commit suicide. Ironically, at that point Herman is saved by his own irrationality. When Masha confesses that she deceived him about sleeping with her husband, Herman fails to see the parallel with his lying about sleeping with his wife Tamara, and he decides not to kill himself after all. Like a thwarted child, he decides to quit the whole world.

As it is applied to Herman and Masha, Singer's subtitle, *A Love Story*, points to the accuracy of the title *Enemias*. Certainly these two lovers are each other's worst enemies. However, the epilogue suggests that love can be redemptive rather than destructive. Thus, after Herman has rejected their aid and turned his back on life, Yadwiga and Tamara find gratification in helping each other, in loving the child Herman left them, and in being a part of a community that, through this new Jewish child, will itself be renewed.

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—Rosemary M. Canfield Reisman

EUROPE CENTRAL

AUTHOR: William T. Vollmann (1959-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2005

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Historical fiction

In this novel, European political and military turmoil of the 1930's and 1940's is examined through the lives of several Germans and Russians.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Dimitri Dimintriyeovich Shostakovich (1906-1975), Russian composer

Nina Vasilyevna Shostakovich, Dimitri's wife, a physicist

Elena Evseyevna Konstantinovskaya, the love of Shostakovich's life

Roman Lazarevich Karmen, a Soviet filmmaker and one of Elena's husbands

Isaak Davidovich Glickman, Shostakovich's best friend

Kurt Gerstein, an officer in the Schutzstaffel (SS)

Friedrich Paulus, a German general

Andrei Vaslov, a Soviet general

Anna Andreyevna Akhmatova, a Russian poet

Käthe Kollwitz, a German lithographer

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924), Soviet leader

Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, Lenin's wife

Fanya Kaplan, a would-be assassin of Lenin

Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), Soviet leader

OVERVIEW

William T. Vollmann was born in Santa Monica, California, and educated at Deep Springs College and Cornell University, where he graduated summa cum laude. He has worked as a computer programmer and founded CoTangent Press, producing limited editions of his works and those of other writers. Vollmann received the Whiting Writers' Award in 1988 for *You Bright and Risen Angels: A Cartoon* and the Shiva Naipaul

Memorial Prize in 1989 for an excerpt from *Seven Dreams: A Book of North American Landscapes*.

William T. Vollmann's demanding, postmodern fiction has tackled a number of subjects, ranging from a war between insects and the inventors of electricity in *You Bright and Risen Angels: A Cartoon* (1987) to San Francisco prostitutes and drug addicts in *The Royal Family* (2000) to what Vollmann terms a "symbolic history" of North America in *Seven Dreams: A Book of North American Landscapes* (1990-2001). Vollmann offers another metahistorical fiction in *Europe Central*, a look at much of the twentieth century from German and Russian perspectives, with the emphasis on the events of World War II. A massive, ambitious, demanding work, *Europe Central* won the National Book Award but may put off some readers because of its bulk and its failure to adhere to a linear narrative. In addition to being a meditation on war and totalitarianism, *Europe Central* is also, through several sections dealing with artists, about the transforming nature of art: "Art does not so much derive from life as actually change the perception and appreciation of it, casting itself across existence like a shadow."

Vollmann has said that in his fiction he strives for a dreamlike effect. *Europe Central* resembles a slow-motion nightmare in which political conflict spins the lives of a large cast of characters out of control. Composed of thirty-seven stories, *Europe Central* looks at how artists, military leaders, and ordinary people struggle to understand the nature of evil. The central event, for which Vollmann has drawn a map, is Operation Barbarossa, the German advance into Russia in 1941, ending with the defeat of the invaders at Stalingrad. Vollmann employs both historical and fictional characters, all of whom exist at the petulant whims of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, who lurk in the background and occasionally make cameo appearances.

Europe Central is dedicated to Danilo Kiš, whose *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* (1978) has a similar structure with interrelated stories and for a 2001 edition of which Vollmann wrote an afterword. (Kiš is also cited within the novel.) Both books also deal with anti-Semitism and Stalin's purges within the Soviet Union. With one exception, the stories appear as contrasting pairs from German and Russian points of view.

The longest set of pairs, "Breakout" and "The Last Field-Marshal," presents Soviet General Andrei Vaslov's capture and formation of a Russian Liberation Army to oppose Stalin and the efforts of German General Friedrich Paulus to complete his initially successful invasion of the Soviet Union. Vaslov first fights against Paulus's forces, only to join with the enemy after his capture. Paulus is likewise captured and used for propa-

ganda purposes by his enemy. Both are good men doing what they must, and both their lives end badly. "Breakout" is the more effective story because Vollmann's Vaslov has greater psychological depth than does his Paulus. "The Last Field-Marshal" becomes bogged down a bit by the details of military maneuvering, one of several instances when Vollmann is seduced by his extensive research. He comes close to being a more literary version of James Michener who feels obligated to cram every bit of his research into the narrative.

One of the most affecting stories, "Clean Hands," tells of Kurt Gerstein's endeavors to alert the world to the horrors of the Holocaust. Beaten in 1936 and 1938 for opposing Nazi policies, Gerstein is a devout Christian whose beloved sister-in-law is killed by Nazis. Nevertheless, he becomes the Schutzstaffel (SS) officer responsible for supplying the toxic canisters used to exterminate Jews at Belzec and other concentration camps in Poland. He tries to sabotage his own efforts and get word to the Allies. While everyone around him, including his father, supports Hitler and hates Jews, Gerstein just grits his teeth. The less known about his true feelings, the more likely he will find some way to help his victims. Because he does not believe in what he is doing, Gerstein keeps telling himself that he has clean hands.

Most of Vollmann's characters are protagonists in only one story, but many also appear briefly or are mentioned in other stories, creating the sense that all the people and events in *Europe Central* are inextricably linked by their fates. One character haunted by Vaslov is Dimitri Dimintriyeich Shostakovich, the Russian composer who comes closest to being the novel's principal character, appearing in several stories. Like Vaslov and Gerstein, Shostakovich is a patriot shaken by his nation's policies. Vollmann devotes considerable attention to Soviet efforts, especially those of Stalin himself, to convince Shostakovich to join the Communist Party. The composer's refusal results in constant denunciations despite his increasing international fame.

The Shostakovich stories, however, center less on politics than on his complicated love life. In 1934-1935, the composer has a passionate affair with Elena Konstantinovskaya and remains obsessed with her through his unhappy marriage to the long-suffering Nina, two more marriages, and many affairs. Ironically, Shostakovich eventually becomes friends with Roman Karmen, Elena's first husband, and writes scores for his films. Despite his devotion to propaganda filmmaking, Karmen feels that his love for Elena "is the only thing that's genuine about me." In a note, "An Imaginary Love Triangle: Shostakovich, Karmen, Konstantinovskaya," Vollmann admits that he has fictionalized this trio's relationship because there is no evidence that Elena was the love of the composer's life.

If Shostakovich cannot be faithful to Nina, at least he is true to his musical genius, composing symphonies, quartets, and operas that party-controlled critics attack as belonging to "that secret world of chromatic dissonance which everybody called 'formalism.'" Vollmann strives to show how Shostakovich's music, the string quartet Opus 110 in particular, with its "swarm of sorrows," reflects his inner turmoil about his love life, the war, and the pressure to conform to a political ideology he abhors. The composer's love for Elena becomes a metaphor for his inability to resolve his demons, and Elena herself, as Vollmann says in his postscript, represents the unfathomable enigma that is Europe.

The volume's first story, "Steel in Motion," sets up the theme of the interconnectedness of things, of the search for the meaning of Europe. Events in Germany influence those in the Soviet Union, whose countermeasures lead to additional countermeasures, all affecting numerous other countries. The political climate of the twentieth century creates an almost perpetual climate of vagueness, uncertainty, and fear throughout the continent. Vollmann sees Europe less as a victim than a coconspirator, full of self-delusions: "Europe's never burned a witch or laid hands on a Jew!"

Vollmann not only tells several stories but also writes them in different styles, using relatively straightforward, chronological narratives, stream of consciousness, and a dense, postmodernist, often elliptical technique. Each story is divided into chapters of varying lengths; for instance, several chapters are sometimes strung together on a page, followed by a much longer one. Only a moderate amount of dialogue appears, and several sentences go on for more than one hundred words, often interrupted by lengthy parenthetical remarks. Vollmann seems to be doing everything he can to engage his readers in the same sort of struggle for understanding that his characters are experiencing as they face complex social, political, psychological, romantic, and moral quandaries for which simple solutions are impossible.

In the early stories, Vollmann also calls attention to style as the essence of his aesthetic by having Vladimir Ilyich Lenin proclaim about a dictionary, "The alphabetical arrangement of words creates such a refreshing sort of chaos." There are meditations, as well, on the meanings of letters, some of which take on almost human characteristics. Vollmann's self-conscious method becomes obvious when he writes, "Most literary critics agree that fiction cannot be reduced to mere falsehood . . . the pretense that life is what we want it to be may conceivably bring about the desired condition. . . . [I]f this story . . . crawls with reactionary supernaturalism, that might be because its author longs to see letters scuttling across ceilings, cautiously beginning to reify themselves into angels."

Although Vollmann provides fifty-four pages of notes from his research into the complex historical background of his novel, his narrators still resort to explanatory, often scholarly footnotes. Vollmann wanted to provide a chronology to help his readers sort out events, but his publisher made him "cut it, on account of the wartime paper shortage."

One of the most fascinating aspects of *Europe Central* is the identity of the narrator or narrators. A first-person narrator pops up periodically throughout the novel. The narrator of the Russian stories is a member of the secret service who arrests and interrogates some characters, while the German stories are told from the perspective of someone from the signal corps. While these two narrators might be said simply to be spokesmen for their national sensibilities, they are specific characters with families and foibles they readily admit.

The German narrator is berated by his wife in 1962: "We all suffered in the war, even me whom you left alone while you were off raping Polish girls and shooting Ukrainians in the ditches." The self-conscious Russian narrator begs the reader's pardon for a digression and promises to exit the story, only to announce paragraphs later his preference for André Previn's conducting of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony to Herbert von Karajan's and to confess his love for Elena. Vollmann himself seems to be the narrator at times: "I'm writing in the year 2002." Adding to the confusion is Vollmann's omission of quotation marks in his dialogue so that "I" has numerous identities. Vollmann employs his narrators, who often use "we" as well as "I," as unreliable interpreters who see events only from a political perspective.

The critical response to *Europe Central* was mixed. A surprising number of publications, including *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New Yorker*, and the daily *New York Times* did not even review it. Not doing so did not keep *USA Today* from labeling the novel the year's most overrated. Michael Wood, in *The New York Review of Books*, wrote, "The book is always lucid, even as it hovers between the obvious and the recondite, and the under- and over-examined." In the *Village Voice*, Brandon Stosuy praised the work as "a visionary textbook on human suffering" but complained about the slackness of Vollmann's "sentence-to-sentence care." Many sentences, passages, and entire chapters fail to add anything to the novel's overall effect and could easily have been excised. Then there is the occasional sloppiness, as with misuses of "hopefully."

Yet the large themes, vivid characters, and frequent brilliant writing of *Europe Central* overshadow such flaws. At their best, Vollmann's sinuous sentences evoke both the complexity of the world they describe as well as the human misery at its core: "First the screaming of the enemy's Katyusha

rockets, much shriller than the sirens of Wolf's Lair; then the explosions, followed after an interval by the crystal-clear cracklings of frozen rubble shivering to fragments, the cries of the survivors, each cry utterly sincere and wrapped up in itself, as if its own pain were the first pain which had ever come into this world."

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—Michael Adams

EXPLAINING HITLER

THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINS OF HIS EVIL

AUTHOR: Ron Rosenbaum (1946-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1998

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; psychology

Rosenbaum explores the diverse and conflicting theories that attempt to explain Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitism and his unleashing of the Holocaust.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGE:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

OVERVIEW

A writer named Milton Himmelfarb plays an important cameo role in Ron Rosenbaum's remarkable book *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil*. In March, 1984, Himmelfarb published "No Hitler, No Holocaust," an essay in which he contended that the decision to annihilate European Jewry was Adolf Hitler's alone, a view that has not been shared by every Holocaust scholar. Far from being impelled by historical, political, or cultural forces to murder the European Jews, Himmelfarb continued, Hitler wanted and chose to annihilate them.

More than anything else, links between Hitler (1889-1945) and the Holocaust explain why, as Rosenbaum says, "an enormous amount has been written" about him "but little has been *settled*." Persuaded by much of Himmelfarb's position, Rosenbaum keeps returning to it but also understands that, while Himmelfarb's position may explain a good deal about the Holocaust, it does not explain Hitler—at least not completely. How badly did Hitler want to destroy the Jews? When did he decide to do so? Even more basically, what made Hitler? Scholars have answered such questions differently, which makes the real Hitler elusive and the puzzles about him persistent.

Those questions and the diverse, even contradictory, responses to them persist partly because a photograph of Hitler was taken when he was probably less than two years old. Years later it was included in a Nazi book

called *The Hitler Nobody Knows* (1932). In that context and others, Rosenbaum notes, the baby picture was used to build a wholesome image of Hitler, a tactic that helped to mask Hitler's identity in ways that still haunt us. The same baby picture also appears on the title page of Rosenbaum's book, which is one of the most comprehensive and provocative account of the dominant attempts to "explain" Hitler. The title page design centers on baby Hitler's eyes. Unavoidably drawn to them, the reader can also see the words *Explaining Hitler* and the book's subtitle, *The Search for the Origins of His Evil*.

As Rosenbaum understands, his title and Hitler's baby picture collide. Somehow the infant in the photo became Nazi Germany's führer. That normal-looking child became the leader of a regime that unleashed not only World War II but also an unprecedented genocidal attack on the Jewish people and millions of other defenseless people who were caught in the Holocaust, or Shoah, as it is also known (from the Hebrew word for "catastrophe"), which is arguably the quintessential evil of all human history. Hitler's baby picture raises a thousand questions that words must try to answer but perhaps never can. Starting his book with that tension-filled juxtaposition, Rosenbaum ends on a related point more than four hundred pages later. His concluding acknowledgments express special gratitude to the scholars and writers who granted him interviews. Rosenbaum honors their courageous and dedicated pursuit of what he knowingly calls "the impossible challenge of explaining Hitler."

A seasoned scholar-journalist who turned his disciplined and determined research into grippingly crafted, page-turning prose, Rosenbaum showed his own courage and dedication in writing this book, which was more than ten years in the making. He tracked down people who knew Hitler and got members of that dwindling number to share what they remembered. He traveled to obscure archives and located long-forgotten files that shed new light on Hitler research. He journeyed to remote Austrian sites in search of details about Hitler's ancestry and youth. All the while, he read voraciously and interviewed dozens of the most influential biographers, historians, philosophers, and theologians who have faced the challenge of bridging the abyss between baby Adolf and Auschwitz Hitler.

Rosenbaum reports the findings of those interpreters, but how he does so makes his book much more than a summary of other people's views. Rosenbaum's meetings with the Hitler scholars are charged with his penetrating questions, his insightful observations that complicate matters for all the writers he encounters, and his skeptical refusal to be overly impressed by the authority of any of the experts he meets. More specifically, Rosenbaum became intrigued by what he identifies as the "wishes and

longings, the subtexts and agendas of Hitler explanations." When it comes to explaining Hitler, Rosenbaum asks, what do people want and why? How are the sometimes radical differences in interpretation best understood? What would it mean if Hitler could be explained definitively—or if he cannot?

Such questions concentrated Rosenbaum's attention as he met the major Hitler interpreters and then as he reflected deeply about what his investigations revealed. As the reader travels with him, Rosenbaum shows the strengths and weaknesses in the various Hitler "explanations." He finds the right questions to ask of each text he studies, every scholar he meets, and even any insight that more or less persuades him. While learning much about Hitler and the scholarship about him, the reader becomes a partner in Rosenbaum's inquiry, which entails coming to see that the challenge of "explaining" Hitler may be impossible. Even that conclusion, however, is driven home in Rosenbaum's distinctively inquisitive way. His reasons for thinking that it may be impossible to explain Hitler—and the implications that follow—are among the most important findings in this bold and instructive book.

At the outset, Rosenbaum pays tribute to largely forgotten German journalists who reported and opposed Hitler's rise to power. These anti-Hitler journalists—one named Fritz Gerlich receives Rosenbaum's special admiration—wrote for the *Munich Post* and *Der Gerade Weg* ("the right way" or "the straight path"). Before the Nazis brutally shut them down—Gerlich was sent to Dachau and then murdered in June, 1934—these courageous writers sensed Hitler's evil qualities and did their best, even in the early months after Hitler took power on January 30, 1933, to expose the blackmail and murder perpetrated by the Nazis. The German journalists planted seeds of suspicion about Hitler's sexual inclinations to subvert the deceptive wholesomeness of *The Hitler Nobody Knows*. They cast doubt on Hitler's ethnic origins and even his physical appearance to expose the irrationality of his racism and anti-Semitism. As soon as he could, Hitler ruthlessly crushed their dissent.

These anti-Hitler journalists wanted more to stop Hitler than to explain him, but Rosenbaum suggests that they set the stage for post-Holocaust explanations. Probing Hitler's background, they laid the groundwork for a key question in Hitler scholarship: Do Hitler's origins—psychological, familial, sociopolitical—explain him? Disclosing his corrupt and murderous deeds, they began to focus on whether Hitler was a cynical political opportunist or an "idealist" who thought that his policies, however deadly, were justified by the "right" and "good" ends they supposedly served. Emphasizing the virulence of his racism and anti-Semitism, the German journal-

ists paved the way for explorations of Hitler's intentionality toward the Jews and, in particular, of whether his intentions were genocidal before he came to power or only afterward. The early anti-Hitler journalists had little doubt that Hitler did evil deeds and even that he was an evil man. They thus initiated inquiry about how Hitler's evil ought to be understood: Should Hitler be counted as an "ordinary man" or as an exception, an embodiment of demoniacally destructive power?

Rosenbaum shows that advocates for all of these positions—and many more—can be found among the leading scholars who have tried to explain Hitler. Biographer Hugh Trevor-Roper, for example, thinks that Hitler, thoroughly misguided though he was, sincerely believed in his anti-Semitism and thought that the destruction of the Jews was the right thing to do. Alan Bullock, another biographer, and theologian Emil Fackenheim disagree with Trevor-Roper, finding Hitler to be a cynical political opportunist who used anti-Semitism for his own advancement. Philosopher Berel Lang thinks that neither of those views does justice to the magnitude of Hitler's evil. Lang believes that Hitler was aware of his criminality and even reveled in it. Rosenbaum, who sees Hitler as "a vicious, cold-blooded hater," finds Lang's analysis impressive, if not conclusive. The scope, planning, and sheer brutality of the Holocaust suggest to Lang that Hitler's evil involved what Rosenbaum calls an "art of evil," which required intention, invention, and imagination that relished suffering and destruction. Nevertheless, Rosenbaum stops short of saying that Lang is absolutely right. To say that about any explanation of Hitler would go further than the available evidence permits, for too much time may have passed for anyone to find the key that can unlock the door to Hitler's identity once and for all.

Rosenbaum's conviction is that the yearning to explain Hitler often divulges a need that should be resisted, namely, the desire for closure, comfort, and consolation. Wanting an account that explains everything, we seem to await discovery of what Rosenbaum calls "a long-neglected safe-deposit box" that will grant final, irrefutable answers to the disturbing questions that Hitler raises. Rosenbaum doubts the existence of such a definitive source. His investigations of Hitler explanations—Robert Waite's psychohistorical account, Rudolph Binion's speculation about the importance of the Jewish doctor who treated Hitler's mother unsuccessfully, or Daniel Goldhagen's emphasis on Hitler's use of a pervasive German "eliminationist anti-Semitism," to name just a few—always leave him skeptical that final and complete answers will be found. This outcome, however, does not mean that Rosenbaum accepts the view of Claude Lanzmann, the filmmaker who produced *Shoah* (1985), an epic Holocaust documentary. Rosenbaum found Lanzmann asserting that it is wrong to

seek explanation for Hitler and the Holocaust because answers lead to understanding, understanding leads to legitimation, and legitimation leads to exoneration. According to Lanzmann, one can confront the raw events of the Holocaust, but to “explain” how and why Hitler’s power led to Auschwitz would be tantamount to forgiving the unforgivable, an outcome more obscene than rational.

While recognizing that some explanations reduce Hitler’s responsibility by making him the pawn of social, political, or psychological determinants—a view that *Explaining Hitler* rejects—Rosenbaum disagrees with Lanzmann’s extreme position and concurs instead with historian Yehuda Bauer. Holding that, in principle, Hitler can be explained, Bauer does not think it follows that Hitler has been or ever will be explained. Nevertheless, ongoing effort to explain him remains important. To stop trying would mean that, in principle, Hitler is beyond explanation, an outcome that takes him out of history and thereby promotes problematic mystification.

Rosenbaum thinks that Hitler was certainly human but not ordinary, for ordinary people do not do what Hitler did. Hitler was human, but he was also exceptional in the sense that he can rightly be called an evil man, even an evil genius. Rosenbaum’s conclusions on these points—he says he holds them by “default” more than out of “a metaphysical conviction”—are influenced by Lucy Dawidowicz, author of *The War Against the Jews* (1975), who defended the thesis that Hitler formed his intention to destroy European Jewry as early as November, 1918. Coolly obsessed by that goal, Dawidowicz contended, Hitler orchestrated his opportunities until he could do what he wanted. Twenty-five years after Dawidowicz published her views, they are less accepted by scholars than those of Christopher R. Browning and others who place Hitler’s decision to launch the “final solution” in the late summer or early autumn of 1941. Rosenbaum urges that Dawidowicz’s position deserves renewed attention. Further inquiry will determine the scholarly status enjoyed by Dawidowicz and every other interpreter of Hitler, including Rosenbaum himself.

Explaining Hitler deals astutely with two of history’s most important questions: Who was Adolf Hitler? How and why did the Holocaust happen? Rosenbaum’s last word is that inquiry about those questions will be at its best to the extent that it involves resistance. Where Hitler and the Holocaust are concerned, explanatory inquiry should always resist temptations to misplace responsibility. Failure to resist “explanatory excuses” will grant Hitler “the posthumous victory of a last laugh.” Not “faceless abstractions, inexorable forces, or irresistible compulsions,” but Hitler’s choices, Rosenbaum correctly argues, must be at the center of the effort to explain Hitler.

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—John K. Roth

THE FALL OF FRANCE

THE NAZI INVASION OF 1940

AUTHOR: Julian Jackson (1954-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2003

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Contesting conventional wisdom that Nazi Germany's 1940 defeat of France was unavoidable, Jackson maps the military campaign, explores the reasons for French failure, and assesses the consequences.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Philippe Pétain (1856-1951), premier of the Vichy government in unoccupied France

Pierre Laval (1883-1945), successor to Pétain

OVERVIEW

On June 22, 1940, the French general Charles Huntziger sat opposite Adolf Hitler in a railway carriage in the forest of Compiègne. In 1918 that same French carriage and location had been the site of Germany's capitulation in World War I. Little more than two decades later, the tables were turned. The contrast, however, was not only that the Germans had supplanted the French as victors but also that the military conflict between these powers had been very different.

In the grim trench warfare of World War I, French and German forces had battled each other for four years. In 1940, the violence was often intense, but the fall of France came in six weeks. The sudden French defeat has been controversial ever since. Weighing in on that debate, historian Julian Jackson provides a detailed and lucid account that focuses on the May-June battle. He shows that the political and military circumstances were more complex than previous interpreters have said. That complexity, he urges, also helps to account for the multiple ways in which the 1940 defeat continues to mark French identity and culture.

World War II began with Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Having spent several months consolidating their gains in

Eastern Europe, German military forces made quick and successful strikes in the West. Following the invasions of Denmark and Norway in early April, 1940, the Germans attacked France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands on May 10. Just ten days later, German tanks had reached France's Atlantic coast. Only the massive sea evacuation of 340,000 British and French forces from Dunkirk at the end of the month prevented the Germans from destroying the main military forces that opposed them in the western parts of the European continent.

The Germans launched their final assault against France on June 5. Paris fell on June 14. Two days later, Marshal Philippe Pétain, the aging French hero of World War I, became head of the French government. He quickly asked for an armistice, which resulted in a two-zone division of the country. The Germans occupied the north, including Paris, and the western seaboard. Central and southern France, with governmental headquarters at the resort town of Vichy, remained unoccupied until November, 1942. Under these arrangements, the Germans allowed a collaborationist French government, led by Pétain and then by Pierre Laval, to remain in place in exchange for its cooperation, which included financial exploitation that benefited Germany, labor brigades sent to work in German industry, and punitive measures against Jews.

Meanwhile, Jackson reports, on June 17, 1940, the day after becoming prime minister, Pétain addressed the French people in a midday radio speech that praised the "magnificent resistance" of the French military "against an enemy superior in numbers and in arms." It was with "a heavy heart," he continued, "that I say to you today that it is necessary to cease fighting." Jackson does not deny that Pétain's judgments were widely shared in France, but he questions their factual status and unavoidability.

First, were the German forces overwhelmingly superior? To some extent they were but, Jackson argues, not necessarily in decisive ways. Although German tanks were bigger and faster than those commanded by the French, the French army still had its strengths, but they were compromised by more than German power alone. Jackson finds that French planning was inept, the execution of existing plans slow and uncoordinated, and there were failures to take advantage of exposed German lines as the enemy's Blitzkrieg tactics stretched its forces thin. With better leadership, more thorough troop preparation, swifter coordination of resources, and more aggressive plans, France need not have collapsed so suddenly. The unavoidability of France's defeat was not a foregone conclusion.

Furthermore, France's situation might have been much stronger if the Allied response to Hitler had been different, especially in regard to support for France. Jackson, however, does not press his counterfactual hy-

potheses too far. Instead, he sheds helpful light on the complexity of international relations at the time. European states had good reason to be fearful of renewed German power under Hitler, not least because the memory of World War I's devastation remained vivid.

France explored alliance possibilities with the Soviet Union and Italy as well as with Poland, but the viability of those prospects went from dim to nonexistent. The 1939 nonaggression pact between Hitler and Joseph Stalin enabled the partition of Poland between them. No help was available to France from Eastern Europe, nor was assistance from Italy in the cards, as Hitler and Benito Mussolini increasingly embraced each other.

Closer to home, the French counted on support from Belgium, but the French knew they faced problems when Belgium declared neutrality in 1936. Great Britain was France's best hope for a reliable ally, but relations between the two countries remained problematic after World War I and reached low points in the mid-1930's, when cooperation could have been extremely helpful. When the German onslaught came, France and Great Britain did not benefit each other as much as they could have. The Germans were not invincible when they invaded France, but strained relationships between Great Britain and France helped to give them the upper hand.

What about the "magnificent resistance" that Pétain emphasized in his June 17 radio address? By showing the situation's complexity, Jackson again sheds light on an important question. First, while memories of World War I did not make France a pacifistic nation, Jackson stresses that there was little enthusiasm for more military conflict. In the earlier war, 1.3 million Frenchmen had fallen; the bodies of 300,000 were never recovered or identified. More than a million veterans were invalids. War widows and orphans numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939, most of the French people hoped that armed conflict could be avoided and reconciliation with Germany could be achieved. At the same time, and especially after Hitler invaded Poland, the French understood, however reluctantly, that the nation must be prepared to defend itself. Already in the second half of the 1930's, French rearmament had advanced, but it was hampered by production lags and inefficiencies, some of them caused by disagreements among the nation's military leaders, whose strategy preferences clashed. Nevertheless, by 1940 the French were fairly well equipped to do battle against the Germans—only fairly well equipped, however, because Jackson argues convincingly that "the French army was not a monolithic organization."

The French-German border was heavily fortified by France's Maginot line, which was intended to ensure that, if war came, it would not be



A Frenchman weeps as German soldiers march into Paris on June 14, 1940. (NARA)

fought primarily on French soil. Instead, even after the Belgians declared neutrality, the French anticipated that a German invasion would take place through Belgium. That judgment proved correct, but the French miscalculated by thinking that the German attack would repeat the strategy of 1914 by coming through central Belgium. Instead, the primary German offensive went farther south, taking routes through the Ardennes forest. It was evident to both sides that a thrust through the Ardennes was risky for the Germans, but the French did not overlook the possibility that the German advance would emerge from the forest. The French, however, did not regard that route as the most likely. Given that some French units were better equipped than others, the French generals committed the best forces to central and northern Belgium, leaving the weakest to cover the Ardennes.

Led by generals Heinz Guderian and Erwin Rommel, the Germans penetrated the Ardennes and then crossed the Meuse River on May 13, overcoming French resistance and establishing the bridgeheads that enabled German armor to flow into the breach. Prompt reinforcement could have slowed, if not stopped, the German advance, but that response did not materialize. Within days, it was too late for the French to recover. Civilians took flight to the south, while French forces found themselves increasingly

on the losing side. Jackson reports that German losses in the battle against France “were remarkably light—27,074 killed, 111,034 wounded, 18,384 missing.” He contends that the high number of French casualties, including between fifty thousand and ninety thousand dead, disproves charges that the French failed to fight. Although Jackson acknowledges that 1.5 million French prisoners of war might qualify that assessment, he notes mitigating circumstances by observing that half of the French troops “were captured in the six days between Pétain’s 17 June broadcast, announcing that the government would be seeking an armistice, and the actual signing of the armistice itself on 22 June.”

Pétain’s claim that France resisted Nazi Germany magnificently in 1940 does not stand scrutiny. On the contrary, that French resistance, heroic though it was at times, proved insufficient to prevent what Jackson identifies as “the most humiliating military disaster in French history.” Jackson also agrees with those who regard the fall of France as a pivotal point in twentieth century history. The French capitulation, which came earlier than necessary and at a relatively low cost to Nazi Germany thanks to the collaborationist policies of Pétain and his followers, turned a European conflict into a global war. Stiffer Allied and French resistance in 1940, Jackson thinks, might have resulted in “some kind of negotiated peace” with Germany. Nothing ensures that such a vague and counterfactual outcome would have been preferable to the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany in May, 1945, but the fall of France remains a contender if one seeks to identify the twentieth century’s most crucial events.

As for the French themselves, Jackson’s summary is sound: “If 1940 figures less prominently in France’s memory wars than one might expect,” he writes, “this may be because it was an event too painful to contemplate.” France’s defeat led to the demoralizing experiences of occupation, collaboration, and deportation, including the destruction of eighty thousand Jews, mostly immigrants and refugees, who perished in Nazi death camps after being rounded up by French police who did the Germans’ bidding. According to Jackson, Pétain and his Vichy regime enjoyed “moral authority” for a time because their “language of rootedness and authority, family and security, resonated with a nation traumatized by its recent experience of upheaval and dislocation.” In retrospect, however, the Vichy regime gave France no reason for pride and joy.

After the war, when Pétain and Laval were convicted of treason and condemned to death, those actions were necessary to restore French honor but not enough to remove the stains of collaboration with the Nazis. When French sensibilities required Charles de Gaulle to commute Pétain’s sentence to life imprisonment, that result inadvertently created a symbol for

one legacy of the fall of France: A French hero from World War I, later compromised through defeat by and collaboration with Nazi Germany, became imprisoned for life by those events from World War II.

Jackson thinks that France deserves, and to a large measure has obtained, a better fate than that. What strikes him most about France in the second half of the twentieth century is "its capacity for survival and reinvention, its resilience, the continuing attraction of its culture." Nevertheless, debate about the fall of France and its consequences may never achieve closure. Even with the twenty-first century's arrival, Jackson concludes, it is too early to tell.

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—John K. Roth

FATELESS

AUTHOR: Imre Kertész (1929-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Sorstalanság*, 1975 (English translation, 1992)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Autobiographical fiction; philosophical realism

Based on Kertész's personal experiences, this book explores the meaning of the Holocaust through a detailed account of a crucial year in the life of a Hungarian Jewish adolescent, including his deportation from Hungary, his hard labor in the concentration camps, his near death, and his return home.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

George Koves, the narrator, a fourteen-year-old Hungarian Jew and concentration camp prisoner

Bandi Citrom, a fellow prisoner of George, a Hungarian Jew in his twenties

OVERVIEW

Imre Kertész's novel *Fateless* documents the episodes that make up the life of the young George Koves during a yearlong period in 1944-1945. The narrative proceeds in a linear way, but the account methodically builds to a larger, comprehensive meaning, eventually arriving at a complex philosophical perspective.

George's story begins in his home in Budapest, Hungary, where, added to the upset of his parents' recent divorce, a rapidly changing political situation requires his father, as a Jew, to give up his business and relocate to a Nazi labor camp. When George's uncle tells him that he must accept with forbearance a Jewish fate that includes such instances of persecution, George reacts with skepticism. Similarly, he reduces a playmate to tears by insisting that his identity as a Jew is cultural and not biological—biology, he explains, cannot determine his fate.

Despite George's resistance to what friends and family suggest is his fate as a Jew, it is as a Jew that he is forced into laboring at an oil refinery outside of Budapest. Soon, he is arrested and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp in southern Poland. While going through the practical

steps involved in this process, George finds that the dispassionate, self-contained, and watchful mode of consciousness he had already developed in Budapest protects him emotionally and provides him with the ability to see the big picture—namely, that everything that is happening to him is the predictable outcome of the totalitarian premises of Nazi Germany. He notes the efficiency and professionalism of the German soldiers, whose expectations of compliance are such that their prisoners can find no alternative but that of cooperation; when he finds shoes arranged and waiting for them in Auschwitz, it occurs to him that every detail has been taken into consideration. He realizes that people in leadership positions must have put their heads together in meetings to engineer everything in the camp, from the flower beds to the showers to the gas chambers, and that what is happening to him is the consequence of a powerful, sophisticated organization.

After brief stays at the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps, George is transferred to Zeitz, a work camp, where he is put to hard labor at a quarry. Despite the hardships of the camps, George understands that he and his fellow prisoners still retain the freedom to dissent from the Nazi perspective, and he documents a number of different forms of resistance—or, as he calls it, stubbornness. His cool, detached perspective, for instance, becomes an important way of refusing to acquiesce to the Nazi juggernaut. The prisoners also do their best to help one another—for instance, a fellow prisoner makes sure the young George does not have his food ration purloined, and a fellow Hungarian, a resilient man in his twenties named Bandi Citrom, takes George under his wing and teaches him various important survival strategies. Additionally, George finds that his imagination remains free even while he is in captivity and that he can travel in his mind backward in time to a safe haven or forward to future happiness. In fact, he holds on to the recognition that the future can always bring new possibilities and alternatives that could change everything.

By the time George is imprisoned at Zeitz, the other adolescent boys with whom he was arrested have dispersed. They have long since lost the youthful sense of adventure with which they began their life in the camps, and they have either died or become prematurely aged. As time goes on, food rations become scarce, and the feeble and emaciated George is further weakened by a leg wound, his health deteriorating to such an extent that he lingers near death. Even in this condition, however, he realizes that the Nazis cannot take away his wish to live or his appreciation for the value of life. On the verge of being sent to the crematorium, George is instead removed to the infirmary, where a male nurse helps him to regain his health and another attendant brings him extra food. Added to this near-



Imre Kertész. (AP/Wide World Photos)

miraculous change in George's fortunes is the sudden collapse of the Nazi regime, which had seemed unassailable; American soldiers will soon liberate the camp.

George's return home following his liberation, however, is not jubilant. He fears that the good and admirable Bandi may not have survived, and he is vexed by an encounter with an unnamed journalist who is shocked when George tells him that what he feels after a year in the camps is simply hatred, of everything and everyone. Even more shocking to the journalist is the way George uses the word "naturally" to describe his experience, because to the journalist it seems far from natural. George has realized, however, that the concentration camps were the natural, logical outcome of the Nazi system and that the journalist himself, by refusing to understand this, demonstrates the kind of false consciousness that unwittingly allowed the camps to come about.

No longer the child he was a year earlier, George cannot return to life as usual. The story culminates in a confrontation between George and two of his uncles, who, having remained safely in Budapest, fail to comprehend the meaning of the camps or the level of suffering George has undergone in them. He tries to explain to his uncles that what happened was not a horrible deviation from normal life or a bit of bad luck; rather, it was an expression of a systemic disorder in European society. He also suggests to his un-

cles that the camps were a continuation of a system of which they were all a part and that, as with the journalist, their lack of understanding means they cannot appreciate the terrible meaning of George's experience there.

George especially brings up the issue of fate, pointing out that his "fate" was in fact the product of an intentional institutional malevolence. As he works out his ideas of fate and freedom for his uncles, he concludes that if there is freedom, there is no fate. As he suspected before his experience in the camps, George affirms that he is free and, ultimately, fateless. Noting that nothing had to be the way it was, George nevertheless will honestly face what happened to him and make it a part of his own journey; he will never forget, and he will make his experience in the camps the core of his own developing view of the world and his own identity.

In one way, George's identity was taken from him when he became simply a number in the camps; in this same period, however, his identity as a Jew became paramount. Coming from a family of nonbelievers, George did not speak Yiddish or Hebrew and knew no prayers when he became a prisoner, but although being a Jew meant nothing to him, his identity as a Jew was the reason he became part of the Nazis' systematic persecution. He concludes, however, that only he himself can choose to be a Jew; the Nazis did not make that choice for him—he made it for himself.

George's conversation with his uncles is a victory of sorts; the camps were not able to take his soul, his free spirit. Despite his liberation from the camps and his return home, however, he maintains a skeptical distance from his family and a bitter distance from the rest of his society. Ironically, he finds himself remembering intense moments of happiness he experienced back in the camps with prisoners with whom he was in solidarity and whose basic humanity and decency he shared. It was also within the awful circumstances of the camps that he was able to affirm the beauty and value of life itself. This refusal to surrender to despair will become a source of strength for George as he faces the future.

Kertész is a unique and important contributor to the literature of the Holocaust. His writing is comparable to the work of such major authors as Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel both in terms of high literary merit and in terms of the authority that derives from his having suffered and survived the experience of the Nazi concentration camps. Although aspects of *Fateless* suggest a memoir, Kertész's choice of fiction points to a type of Holocaust literature that is regarded as having received true recognition only with the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Kertész in 2002.

Kertész also inferentially extends his examination of the effects of the Nazi worldview beyond World War II; this speaks to his ideas about the evil tendencies of the modern state in general and about the importance of

maintaining the conditions of freedom. Because of these ideas, Kertész was virtually ignored for nearly his entire writing life by the Hungarian literary establishment under Communism; it was not until the 1990's that his work was discovered and acclaimed in Germany, France, and Scandinavia. With the collapse of Communism, *Fateless* found recognition in Hungary and in the rest of the world as well. A new English translation of the novel was published in 2004 under the title *Fatelessness*.

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THE FIFTH SON

AUTHOR: Elie Wiesel (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Le Cinquième Fils*, 1983 (English translation, 1985)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Historical fiction; psychological realism

This novel employs strong imagery and terse language in presenting a sympathetic treatment of a sensitive subject: the feelings of the children of Holocaust survivors. Wiesel also provides a valuable portrayal of the survivors themselves, whose experiences often isolate them from the rest of society.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

The narrator, the Brooklyn-born son of Holocaust survivors

Reuven Tamiroff, the narrator's father

Simha-the-Dark, a Holocaust survivor and Reuven's companion in philosophical discussions

Bontchek, another survivor, excluded from the discussions

Lisa, the narrator's girlfriend

The Angel, a sadistic Nazi officer

Ariel, an older Tamiroff son, who is killed by The Angel

OVERVIEW

The Fifth Son describes a journey into the past, a pilgrimage that leads the narrator, the son of Holocaust survivors, to an understanding of his father. Although written from the narrator's point of view, the novel has three other voices: Reuven Tamiroff, the narrator's father, whose reminiscences and letters provide glimpses of a tortured man; Bontchek, another survivor, whose recollections reveal more about Reuven; and Simha-the-Dark, also a survivor, who finally unlocks Reuven's past.

The novel begins with the narrator's dream; in Reshastadt, he sees his father, who tells him that the trip to Germany is a mistake. The dream fades, and the narrator begins to piece together twenty years of reminiscences about his attempts to understand his father's silence.

As the narrator assembles the vignettes about his life, he remembers his father as silent and his mother as an unhappy woman who withdrew into a

private world when he was only six. He is reminded of a Passover during which Simha demanded that Reuven remember his duty to the living. Simha then told the folktale about the four sons and The Question. The first son knows and assumes The Question, the second knows and rejects it, the third is indifferent to it, and the fourth is ignorant of it. The fifth son, not mentioned in the tale, is gone.

Few vignettes involve Reuven's descriptions of his own life, but the narrator recalls that Bontchek "brought to life . . . an entire society with its heroes and villains, its giants and its dwarfs." He particularly remembered the sadistic Nazi called The Angel and recalled The Angel's murder of fifty men, an act that the survivors protested by going on strike. In retaliation, The Angel executed half of the Jewish Council, sparing Simha and Reuven. Intermittently, the narrator analyzes his relationship with Lisa, a banker's daughter whom he met in a philosophy class. He recounts his seduction by Lisa, his obsession with her sensuality, her frenetic existence, and her political activism. Simha completes Reuven's story by remembering the shooting of more than two hundred people (among them, Simha's wife, Hanna) for defying The Angel's orders that they pray in public so that he could prove that God did not hear them. Several men swore that if they survived the war, they would execute The Angel.

Throughout *The Fifth Son* are Reuven's secret letters to an absent son named Ariel. In them, Reuven questions God and existence and reveals his remorse at the deaths of his fellow councillors. (He admits that he feels responsible because he supported the strike.) Finally, he tells Ariel that he and several others found The Angel after the war and killed him. Reuven confides that he and Simha are still disturbed by their action; revenge is the sole topic of their monthly discussions. He wonders how he would have acted in different circumstances.

The narrator eventually remembers his discovery of the Ariel letters, his reading of the letter in which Reuven relived Ariel's last day. The letter contained Reuven's cry to Ariel: "That night you left us, you were six years old; you are still six years old." Ariel, son of Reuven and Regina, was tortured to death by The Angel. Obsessed with Ariel, the narrator attempted to learn everything about The Angel and finally discovered that The Angel, still alive, became Wolfgang Berger, a businessman and a respected citizen of Reshastadt. In his own attempt at revenge, the narrator traveled to Reshastadt, but the encounter between former Nazi and survivors' son was anticlimactic: The narrator could only tell Berger who he was and threaten Berger with the curse of the dead. Assassination was impossible.

Years later, the narrator ends his quest with a meditation on his life. He has assimilated his father's lost years and Ariel's lost life into his own exis-

tence; he has finally connected with his father. His life has purpose and form but no meaning: "When," he asks, "yes, when, shall I finally begin to live my life, my own?"

Although the narrator provides brief physical descriptions of the other characters, he himself remains indistinct, exhibiting the same absence from life that he deplors in his father. Content to watch rather than to experience life, the narrator spends his childhood and adolescence as his father's assistant, instead of participating in games with his peers. In college, he drifts into philosophy, again demonstrating his preference for abstractions. With Lisa, he is passive, allowing her to initiate him into new experiences. Despite (or maybe because of) the barriers he has erected between himself and life, he is attracted to those who are his opposites—Lisa and Bontchek—perhaps hoping to discover life through them.

Trained in economy of emotion, the narrator reveals his capacity for passion only in his persistent attempts to know his father. Convinced that his father's history has the answers to his questions, he searches for information about his parents and their life before him. Later, having exhausted Bontchek's and Simha's store of recollections and having heard his father's vague tales, the narrator turns to libraries for information that will substantiate his family history.

Reuven Tamiroff shares himself only minimally with his son, slightly more with Simha. Reuven lives a narrow life defined by two concerns: his act of revenge and his attempt to write a commentary on the work of Paritus.

The other major characters are little more than substantial shadows. Simha-the-Dark and Bontchek are figures from Reuven's past, survivors of The Angel's regime. Bontchek is more talkative, more practical; he inhabits the world of action rather than the world of discussion. While in the ghetto, he traveled secretly, smuggling Jews to friendly countries. Bontchek's stories reveal the events that shaped the brooding man that Reuven has become. It is significant that the narrator provides a vivid description of this garrulous man: "a mixture of martyr and hedonist. A black . . . face as though covered with soot, flattened nose, powerful neck, square chest." Simha is "a nocturnal character attracted by darkness and its ghosts. . . . He buys and sells shadows." A shadow himself, Simha lives alone and spends his free hours calculating the time that separates the Jews from messianic deliverance. He and Reuven spend hours together in philosophical debates, from which they exclude Bontchek.

At one point, the narrator remembers Simha's explanation of his occupation as a merchant of shadows: "Most people think that shadows follow, precede, or surround beings or objects; the truth is that they also surround

words, ideas, desires, deeds, impulses, and memories." *The Fifth Son* is about shadows: shadows of the Holocaust, of Ariel and of others who died at The Angel's orders. The characters are all shadows, their lives outlined by the past. Reuven, in particular, cannot separate himself from the past, and he passes on his preoccupations to his son.

Two concerns inform the novel. First is the narrator's story; second is the question of revenge. The two concerns intersect and parallel, often forming one narrative thread. As he becomes acquainted with his father's past, the narrator learns that Reuven is obsessed with revenge because he is guilty of it. Overcome with the enormity of his action, Reuven engages in endless discussions with Simha, always on the same question: Is revenge ever justified? The theme of revenge comes full circle when, discovering that The Angel is not dead, the narrator decides to finish what his father started.

Although Ariel clearly is the "fifth son" of both folktale and novel, Simha's reminder to Reuven of his duty to the living indicates that the narrator is also a "fifth son." Indeed, in the epilogue, the narrator reveals that his name is Ariel; he represents both the dead and the living.

The Fifth Son has elicited mixed commentary. Critics generally agree that the work is almost a poem, with its strong imagery, its terseness, and its carefully handled language. Praised for its sympathetic treatment of a sensitive subject—the feelings of children born to Holocaust survivors—Elie Wiesel's novel has also been hailed for its ambition of purpose, its poetry, its spare characterization, its brilliant use of novelistic techniques, and its masterly construction.

It is ironic that *The Fifth Son* has also been strongly criticized for those qualities often singled out as its strengths, but there are elements of truth in the criticism. To a certain extent, the structure is ill conceived, the characters are almost faceless, and the novel's ambition goes largely unrealized. Occasionally, the novel is overwhelmed by its own technique. Oddest of all is the suspenseful unveiling of Ariel's identity and fate. Reuven's letters to Ariel slowly become more specific, slowly provide more information about who Ariel is; yet the final revelation is only a vague reference to the execution of a child.

Flaws of construction aside, what Elie Wiesel has produced in *The Fifth Son* is a thoughtful study of the least-known Holocaust victims: the children of survivors. How accurate that study is, only those children can say. Wiesel's book, however, is valuable because it makes all readers "children" of the Holocaust through its sympathetic portrayal of the feelings that isolate the survivors from the rest of society.

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—Edelma Huntley

FRIEDRICH

AUTHOR: Hans Peter Richter (1925-1993)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Damals war es Friedrich*, 1961 (English translation, 1970)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Historical fiction; young adult literature

Fritz, a German born in 1925, objectively recounts his close friendship and experiences with Friedrich Schneider, a Jewish boy, from the time they are both four years old until 1942, when all Jews still in German concentration camps are to be transferred to the Auschwitz extermination camp.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Fritz, the narrator of the story, a German boy whose upstairs neighbor and closest friend is the Jewish protagonist

Friedrich Schneider, the Jewish boy through whose experiences Fritz learns what it means to be a Jew during the Holocaust

Fritz's parents, who sympathize somewhat with the plight of Jews but join the Nazi Party primarily to secure better living conditions and secondarily for fear of possible reprisals

Herr and Frau Schneider, Friedrich's educated but naïve parents, who do not heed warnings to leave Germany

Herr Johann Resch, the malevolent and sadistic apartment landlord, who is also warden of the local air-raid shelter

Herr Neudorf, the sympathetic teacher, who explains why Friedrich may no longer attend school

OVERVIEW

In *Friedrich*, Fritz, the adult German narrator, describes the experiences he shared with his Jewish best friend and upstairs neighbor, Friedrich Schneider, from their births in 1925 until 1942. The plot is shown through the eyes of the innocent, youthful narrator, who offers only objective descriptions of dialogue and of events that culminate in the "final solution" in Nazi Germany. Although they have lived in the same apartment building for more than four years, from 1925 until 1929, Fritz's parents scarcely know the Schneiders. Yet, as Fritz narrates, the boys become friends when

one day Mrs. Schneider must go to the city hall and asks if she can leave her son with Fritz's mother. In spite of her father's violent anti-Semitism, Fritz's mother welcomes the four-year-old Friedrich but makes a point of his Jewishness. As time passes, Fritz learns about Jewish customs, and Herr Schneider, a post office official, in small ways aids Fritz's family, whose only income since Fritz's father became unemployed is support from the retired grandfather and what Fritz's mother earns washing clothes.

Times are hard when Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of the Third Reich in 1933, and the boys witness the beginnings of overt hostility toward Jews, exemplified by the appearance of swastikas and by boycotts against Fritz's Jewish doctor and the local stationer. Friedrich, not understanding why his father forbids him to attend the Jungvolk with Fritz, sneaks in with his friend but leaves alone, humiliated after he is forced to recite, "The Jews are our affliction."

Although the Schneiders are frightened when their landlord, Herr Resch, orders the family to move from his building and Friedrich's father is fired from the post office, the family is temporarily relieved when a judge decrees that the family may remain in their apartment and Herr Schneider is hired as department manager in a Jewish merchant's store. Nevertheless, ominous warnings escalate as Fritz's father encourages his son's participation in the Jungvolk, Herr Neudorf explains to the class why Friedrich may no longer attend school, and the Schneiders' cleaning lady is intimidated into quitting.

In 1936, Fritz's father, in a rare conversation with Herr Schneider, explains why as a German he joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi Party), and he warns the Jew to leave Germany immediately. Blinded by his naïve faith in civilization and strong German chauvinism, and inured to threats by memories of two thousand years of anti-Semitic persecution, Herr Schneider chooses to ignore the warning but begs Fritz's father to care for Friedrich and Frau Schneider should it become necessary. In spite of their fervent handshake sealing an unspoken promise, Fritz's father does nothing when the time for action arrives.

Violent pogroms envelop German Jews in 1938, and even Fritz participates in a destructive rampage once, as if it were a game. The Schneiders' apartment is destroyed, and Frau Schneider dies. Friedrich and his father barely manage to obtain a little food through doing odd jobs and leave their apartment only under cover. Yet one night in 1941 when Friedrich is away, Herr Resch discovers that the Schneiders are harboring an aged rabbi, and he informs the Gestapo, who arrive and drag the men off into the night.

Friedrich goes into hiding until one evening in 1941, when he furtively visits Fritz to obtain a picture of his parents. When bombing begins, Herr

Resch tells Friedrich to remain in the apartment and not even attempt to enter the bomb shelter. Terrified, Friedrich bangs on the door of the shelter and begs to come in. Herr Resch refuses, despite the pleas of those inside. After the raid, Friedrich is found dead, and in ironic truth Herr Resch proclaims, "His luck that he died this way."

Purpose and theme mesh in *Friedrich* as readers must search their own identities and clarify their own personal values in reading this book. Richter's recounting of the events leading to the Holocaust leaves the ultimate universal question, one that has been asked repeatedly but cannot be answered: How could educated, "civilized" adults have tolerated, accepted, and even participated in, much less created, such barbarism? William Golding proposed the same theme in his fiction, but he made the question even more basic by using sheltered, innocent children in *Lord of the Flies* (1954) to question the validity of "civilization."

The book also explores what can be done to prevent the senseless hatred that causes and the complacency that permits continuing barbarism that may ultimately threaten the very existence of humankind. Although the answers may never be found, the importance of dealing with these themes is paramount. What Richter does point out, in his innocent but chilling narrative, is that there can be no tolerance of governmental or personal hatred directed toward any member of a group simply because he or she is a member of that group. He indicates that tolerating even the first simple inroads of general bigotry without speaking out and destroying it immediately can lead to utter debasement of personal and governmental character and self-respect.

Friedrich is, in Hans Richter's own words, a "somewhat autobiographical," painfully accurate chronological documentation of the events in Germany leading to Hitler's "final solution"—the extermination of Jews during the Holocaust. Beginning in 1925, when nonviolent but deep and historically ubiquitous anti-Semitism boiled below the surface throughout Europe, the archetypal hatred appeared as a physical outlet against the economic depression in Germany and enabled Hitler to vent his own personal hatreds and create a focus for uniting the German people.

Most of the characters in *Friedrich* are rounded, and they represent a realistic cross section of the German populace, through whose actions and words the German people's involvement with the genocide of World War II can be explained. Herr Resch is the recognizable prototype of the realistic absolute archvillain that exists in all societies. His ability to control a sizable group of law-abiding citizens through intimidation is representative of the many villains recorded in all literature. Without corresponding prototypical heroes willing to act and ready to sacrifice themselves, evil

can rule. Because arch villains were present, and because not enough heroes appeared, a minority of activists were able to urge groups, already primed from infancy to dislike Jews, to perform acts together that, as individuals, might be unthinkable. The reader sees even young Fritz, who has had only positive experiences with Jews, join mob rule and senselessly destroy Jewish property.

The succeeding tragedies endured by the Schneiders follow the actual dates of laws, decrees, and regulations dealing with Jews, and the reader can begin to recognize how basically "good" non-Jews were induced to conform. Fritz's father joins the party primarily to help his family financially, and later, when he realizes fully all that joining the party entails, even though he disagrees with the "rules," he believes that he must continue his loyalty to ensure his family's safety. Additionally, he rationalizes the inhumanity that he witnesses by saying that no government can be perfect, and one must go along with what provides the greatest benefits.

Friedrich is painful but important reading. It won two German prizes, one in 1961, when it was first published, and another in 1964. It was also awarded the Mildred L. Batchelder Award of the American Library Association in 1972. It is a tribute to Richter's sensitivity that both German and American professionals and readers have responded with similar praise to this treatment of the Holocaust, as witnessed by an author, who, ironically, fought in the German army from 1942 to 1945 and won medals for bravery during that time.

With discussion, this book can provide young readers with much-needed information about the Holocaust, a period of history that should not be forgotten so that it will not be repeated. If the voids created by the objective, unemotional narrative style can evoke empathetic understanding of Fritz and Friedrich and their families, answers to the past and prescriptions for the future may become possible.

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—June H. Schlessinger

THE GATES OF THE FOREST

AUTHOR: Elie Wiesel (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Les Portes de la forêt*, 1964 (English translation, 1966)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Psychological realism

Wiesel's fourth novel tells the story of Gregor, who loses his family in the Holocaust, survives the genocide, and experiences the suffering and guilt common to many Holocaust survivors. Because these experiences parallel Wiesel's own, the novel seems to be more than a work of fiction, and its characters seem more than figures from the author's imagination.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Gregor, whose real name is Gavriel, a young Hungarian Jew who has escaped the Holocaust

Gavriel, a mysterious, unnamed Jew who borrows Gregor's real name and sacrifices himself for Gregor

Maria, a former servant in the home of Gregor's family

Leib the Lion, the leader of the Jewish partisans

Clara, Leib's lover and, after his death, Gregor's wife

OVERVIEW

Beginning with spring and ending with winter, *The Gates of the Forest* is divided into four parts, each standing for a season in its natural order. The first and last parts concentrate on the inner self and the middle two on action. The novel first introduces Gregor, a Hungarian Jew in his late teens who, without his family, has escaped the Holocaust. While Gregor hides from the Nazis in a village forest, another Jew, a mysterious man of about thirty, happens onto his hiding place. As this stranger has no name, Gregor gives him his own name, Gavriel, which Gregor had abandoned because it was too conspicuously Jewish. The two Jews hide in a cave whose entrance is concealed by a large boulder. There, they pass many days together, sharing their beliefs and stories with each other. From Gavriel, Gregor learns of the hideous facts of the war, especially information about the cruelties of the Nazis against the Jews. Gavriel comes to be seen as a

lunatic philosopher-saint who sometimes reacts to the Holocaust with insane laughter.

The search by the Nazis intensifies outside the hideout; getting away from them seems impossible to the two men. Just as the Nazis are upon the site, Gavriel gives himself up. The Nazis have no reason to believe that there is more than one Jew in the forest area, and so they are satisfied. The sacrifice of Gavriel leaves Gregor with a moral obligation to which he totally commits himself.

In a nearby village, he finds refuge in the home of Maria, a Christian and an old servant of his family. She has him pretend to be a deaf-mute and the son of her sister Ileana, who has departed the village, leaving behind a reputation for looseness. Unaware of Gregor's pretense, the village folk take him into their confidences, many of the men confessing to illicit relations with Ileana. The parish priest, "against sin, but not against crime," confesses to having betrayed a Jew because the Jew refused to accept Christianity as a condition of refuge. What is for Elie Wiesel a thematic analogy between the Crucifixion of Jesus and the annihilation of the Jews is brought out dramatically. Against Maria's protests, Gregor is cast as Judas in a school play about the Passion of Christ. Becoming caught up in the drama as it is performed, members of the cast and the audience, also, verbally and then physically attack Gregor. He stuns them to temporary inaction by declaring, first, that he is not Judas and second, that he is not the son of Ileana. When at last he tells them that he is not Gregor, that he is a Jew whose name is Gavriel, the villagers are prepared to cut out his tongue. They despise him because he is a Jew and fear him because he knows their secrets. The mayor of the town, Petruskanu, who suspects that he may have fathered Gregor, rescues him and helps him make contact with Jewish partisans in the forest.

As Gavriel had informed Gregor about the concentration camps and the crematoria, Gregor now tells the partisans. They are led by Leib the Lion, who was a boyhood friend of Gregor; at ten years of age, the two stood up against Christian bullies. Hearing from Gregor of Gavriel's imprisonment, Leib says that the prisoner must be set free in order for him to communicate what he has seen as a victim of the Holocaust. The plan to get Gavriel out of prison backfires, however, and Leib is captured by the Nazis. Once more, Gregor, who was the central figure in the escape plan, believes that he has betrayed another. The partisans, suspicious of him, put him through an intense grilling that ends only when Clara, Leib's lover, intervenes.

Yehuda, a young partisan, now befriends Gregor. Putting aside his feeling that his own death is imminent, Yehuda tells Gregor that he should make known to Clara the obvious truth that he loves her. In an inhumane

world, Yehuda declares, love is a protection against solitude. It is the great reward, the greatest victory. Gregor admits to Yehuda that indeed he does love Clara. A few days later, Yehuda is stabbed to death, the partisans shoot his killer, and Gregor tells Clara that he loves her.

After a chance meeting in Paris following the war, Gregor and Clara are married. The marriage is a failure, however, because Clara, haunted by a past of death and destruction, acts as if Gregor is Leib, her dead lover. Just when Gregor is about to give up on his marriage and leave Clara, he is drawn into a relationship with a rebbe who helps him rediscover his Jewish past. A man who may or may not be Gavriel appears at the rebbe's synagogue. After a long conversation with this mysterious man, Gregor comes to realize that he cannot, after all, leave Clara. To do so would be to return to solitude and thus betray her as he has, at least by omission, betrayed others. Once more, Gregor assumes the name of Gavriel. Asked by a young boy to serve as the tenth man necessary to say morning prayers, Gregor consents. While reciting the prayer for the dead, he turns the moment into an occasion to pray for the soul of Leib and to ask God to arrange an end to the suffering of those who loved, and still love, the dead hero.

The central character, Gavriel, changes his name to Gregor and then, at the end of the novel, back to Gavriel. Furthermore, he uses the name Judas temporarily, if only for the purpose of a play. For Wiesel, the name choices and name exchanges in his novel clearly serve as devices that underscore the themes of sacrifice and suffering. An angel, Gabriel, comes to earth in the person of the mysterious Gavriel, who risks his life for Gregor. Gregor, in turn, takes on the suffering of all the Jews of history by becoming Judas. Other biblical names—notably, Maria and Petruskanu (Peter)—are given to characters who, although Christian, take great risks for the Jews.

Elie Wiesel himself is very much a part of his story. Like his protagonist, he lost his family in the Holocaust, and, like Gregor, he survived it and experienced the suffering and guilt that many Holocaust survivors have felt. Wiesel's story allows him, a witness to Nazi crimes, to be a messenger to the world; *The Gates of the Forest* thus seems more than a mere work of fiction, and its characters seem more than figures from the author's imagination.

The Gates of the Forest begins with a Jewish tale, essentially an epigraph, illustrating the vitality of storytelling. The facts of the Holocaust, all the horrors, must be told as many times and in as many ways as are necessary to make the story known; Wiesel's novel is another attempt to convey that story so that readers will be as haunted by it, as unable to forget it as he himself has been. Leib the Lion, as the last line of the novel indicates, is a messenger to heaven just as, in Wiesel's *Le Jour* (1961; *The Accident*, 1962),

Eliezer is a living messenger from the dead. A central theme of *The Gates of the Forest* is that the Jews, although deserted by God during the Holocaust, have no alternative but to tell their tragic story and to recover their faith. "After what has happened, how believe in God?" is answered by "After what has happened, how not believe in God?"

Along with the theme of faith is that of friendship, oneness, and community. If the Messiah has not come to the Jews, the novel says, then let every Jew, every individual, be the Messiah to everyone else. Christians must do their part to bring humanity together; one way is to end their persecution of Jews as descendants of Judas, to cease making Jews take the place of Christ on the Cross.

Like Eliezer in *The Accident*, Clara in *The Gates of the Forest* is immobilized by the dead, by the past. She gives her love to Gregor only when she pretends that he is Leib the Lion, the lover she has lost to the Holocaust. Symbolically, Leib not only defends Gregor but also sacrifices himself for him, as Gavriel does at the beginning of the novel. Sacrifice, or courageous and unselfish risk taking such as that of Maria or Petruskanu, is a recurring theme of great substance in this novel. Guilt—both in the survivor and in the recipient of another's sacrifice—is still another controlling and pervasive theme. Instead of living with guilt, Gregor learns to love, to affirm the present and put the past behind. He even learns to change places with another, which is something like returning one's life to both the giver and the receiver. To love the living is not to forget the dead; to pay homage to the dead is not to lay aside an obligation to the living.

The Gates of the Forest, Wiesel's fourth novel, should be read after his *L'Aube* (1960; *Dawn*, 1961), *The Accident*, and *La Ville de la chance* (1962; *The Town Beyond the Wall*, 1964) and before *Le Mendiant de Jerusalem* (1968; *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, 1970). This order is important because of the thematic development in Wiesel's first five novels—from annihilation to affirmation, from solitude to community. Having lost his entire family and many other loved ones in the monstrous Holocaust, Wiesel came to know that there are countless ways to record or interpret such an event. Each of Wiesel's novels may be seen, then, as a circle that shares a center with the other novels; that center is the Holocaust. Along with other writers—notably, Primo Levi, Nelly Sachs, Robert Donat, Paul Celan, Ernst Weichert, Vladka Meed, Pierre Gascar, André Schwarz-Bart, and Tadeusz Borowski—Wiesel is a sensitive and bold interpreter of the Jewish experience. With his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, Wiesel enhanced an already considerable reputation worldwide. He has given his life to creating a literature assuring his readers that victims of inhumanity, both living and dead, will never be forgotten.

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—David Powell

GHETTO

AUTHOR: Joshua Sobol (1939-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Geto*, 1984 (first produced, 1984; English translation, 1986)

GENRE: Drama

SUBGENRE: Documentary drama

Sobol's controversial play depicts the events surrounding the production of a drama staged by Jews in the ethnic ghetto of Vilna during the time the Nazis occupied Lithuania during World War II.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Srulik, a puppeteer and singer

Srulik's dummy, a puppet who utters subversive sentiments that the principals in the play dare not utter

Hans Kittel, a Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS) officer, an Austrian native, and commandant of the Vilna ghetto

Jakob Gens, a Jew, the Nazi-appointed head of the ghetto

Weiskopf, the manager of a tailoring factory in the ghetto

Chaya, a singer

Herman Kruk, head of the library and keeper of a diary

OVERVIEW

Controversial though it is, Joshua Sobol's *Ghetto* is a remarkable documentary about the actual staging of a play within the Jewish ghetto of Vilna (spelled "Wilna" in Sobol's text), Lithuania, in the period 1941-1943. This production is mounted with the full consent and support of Hans Kittel, the Nazi commandant who oversees the ghetto with the cooperation—many would say collaboration—of Jakob Gens, a former police officer and a Jew whom the Nazis have appointed to be head of the ghetto. Both of these characters, like many others in the play, were actual people who, during the Nazi occupation, served in the capacities in which Sobol casts them.

Gens has been forced to select many of his fellow Jews within the ghetto to be deported and to face certain execution in nearby Ponar, where five

thousand Jews were killed on a single Sunday in 1943, or in one of the other Nazi death camps. The play opened in the ghetto on June 18, 1942, some four months after Vilna's Jews were consigned to the ghetto and only two months after the annihilation of more than fifty thousand of the seventy thousand Jews whom the Nazis rounded up. The play subsequently was performed in the ghetto 111 times. Some 34,804 tickets were sold, mostly to Jews who, even on the eve of their deportation, dressed in their finery to attend the performances.

Gens, who can legitimately be considered a traitor to his people, justifies his actions by saying, "If the Germans want a thousand Jews from me, they get them. Because if we don't do it their way, they'll march in here and take a thousand Tuesday, a thousand Thursday. And a thousand Saturday. And ten thousand next week." Gens is buying time for himself and for many other Jews in the ghetto by cooperating with the Nazis, settling for what little he can get from them in order at least to minimize their blood-thirsty demands.

Sobol depicts a ghetto where most of the people confined there face certain death at the hands of their captors. Still, a clear social structure exists within the ghetto, and life goes on. The Nazi regime reigns supreme but is criticized through the comments of Srulik's puppet, who utters sentiments that, if uttered openly by any of the inmates, would lead to their immediate deportation to death camps. Much of the background of Jews in Lithuania is presented in the many ballads, sung by a Jewish chanteuse named Chaya, that are integral to the play.

Kittel has an amicable relationship with those who run the ghetto, although he is capable of doing swift about-faces, making it evident that he cannot be trusted. Gens, with the help and financial support of Weiskopf (the Jewish owner of a tailoring factory who is growing rich on refurbishing uniforms for the Nazi troops), has a working relationship with Kittel. Gens seeks permission from Kittel to expand Weiskopf's factory and to turn it into a training facility for textile workers, a ploy that he devises in order to spare the lives of many Jews by persuading the Nazis that their labor is vital to the Nazi cause.

Gens and Weiskopf host a lavish party for the Nazis, providing them with food, liquor, and prostitutes. Weiskopf participates primarily to increase his business, which has turned him into a millionaire, while Gens participates in the hope of saving himself and sparing as many Jewish lives as his proposed training program can justify.

Ghetto, which opened in Haifa, Israel, in the spring of 1984 and soon was translated into both English and German, won Israel's David Harp Award for best play in 1984. In its German translation, it won the Theatre Heute

Award for the best play and best production of 1984. The Nicholas Hytner production at the Royal National Theatre in London won the Evening Standard and London Critics Award for best play in 1989 and was also a finalist for the Olivier Award in that year.

The play was subsequently translated into more than twenty languages and presented in some thirty countries throughout the world. One play in what Sobol conceived of as a triptych, *Ghetto* was followed by *Adam*, produced in 1989, and *Underground*, produced in 1991. Of Sobol's many plays, *Ghetto* is certainly the best known and most frequently performed.

The critical reception of the play was varied. Some critics (including Hans Sahl) complained about the depiction of the Jews who helped run the ghetto as manipulative and self-seeking. Others objected that the dialogue is turgid and that the musical selections—a fundamental part of the play's production—are not placed advantageously within the play's framework. Certainly it is evident that Sobol's script contains many soliloquies that sometimes border on the didactic. Nevertheless, the serious subject matter of the play, which lends itself to didacticism, is lightened by the frequent irreverent critical comments of the puppet, who serves a function somewhat like that of the fool in medieval literature or the chorus in ancient Greek plays.

Ghetto was particularly popular in Germany, where audiences often were not fully aware of the atrocities that were perpetrated during World War II by the Nazi government and probably, in many cases, by their ancestors. Critic Henry Kamm wrote about a performance of *Ghetto* at the Volkstheater in Vienna, Austria, in 1985, reminding his readers that Hans Kittel—the Schutzstaffel (SS) commandant who in actuality used his machine gun to murder hundreds of Jews in the ghetto over which he presided—was an Austrian and that Austrians voted almost unanimously to join forces with Adolf Hitler in 1938. Kamm noted that young Austrians had not been exposed to the sad history of the Holocaust in their schools. The Volkstheater, founded in 1889, has considered its major objective through the years to instruct through drama. It was with this objective in mind that the Volkstheater production of *Ghetto* was approved, although even some forty years after the end of World War II, a reliable survey of Austrians revealed that 85 percent of them admitted to being somewhat anti-Semitic, and 7 percent admitted to being strongly anti-Semitic.

Many of the details relating to the production of a play within the Vilna ghetto were provided by some of the few survivors. Most significant in piecing together what took place there, however, was the discovery of a diary kept by Herman Kruk, the ghetto librarian who did not survive but whose journal was hidden and later uncovered.

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—R. Baird Shuman

GOD'S PRESENCE IN HISTORY

JEWISH AFFIRMATIONS AND PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

AUTHOR: Emil L. Fackenheim (1916-2003)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1970

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Ethics; philosophy; religion and spirituality

Fackenheim uses Jewish resources to interpret non-Jewish philosophy and Western techniques on Jewish texts and history. He defines an authentic Jewish philosopher—and an authentic Jew—as one who has opened the self to the historical uniqueness of the Holocaust and one who actively supports the building of the State of Israel as past, present, and future home for the Jews.

OVERVIEW

The text of *God's Presence in History* is a revision of three lectures delivered by Emil L. Fackenheim as the Charles F. Deems Lectures at New York University in 1968; the volume addresses how world historical Jewish events such as the Holocaust and the establishment of the modern State of Israel categorically entail concrete responses by Jews to ensure Jewish survival. The event that directly precipitated this work was the 1967 surprise attack by the Arab states surrounding Israel (the Six-Day War) and the total lack of support for Israel by any other nation in the world. An additional impetus was Fackenheim's assertion that responses to the Holocaust, such as the "death of God" movement of the 1960's and the rise of secular and nonobservant Jews, were threatening the future existence of the Jewish people as a whole. However, it could easily be argued that Fackenheim was working toward just such an apologetic response his entire life.

Fackenheim begins his text by dedicating it to Holocaust survivor and activist Elie Wiesel, to whom he credits his use of a midrashic method in exploring the faith-commitment of Jews post-Holocaust and their support of the modern State of Israel. His opening, a Midrashic interpretation of a scriptural passage, provides the cornerstone of his argument that post-Holocaust Jews have the right and duty to judge others because they survived the attack on their ongoing existence as a people. Hence Fackenheim begins with his telling of an "ancient Midrash [that] affirms God's presence

in history" and demonstrates how that presence becomes historically effective through Jewish witness. However, modernity challenges such testimony in two ways: First, the modern scientist has to expel God from nature because of a lack of verifiable proof, and the modern historian expels God from history because of the incompatibility of the supernatural with natural history. Second, and consequently, modern Jewish and Christian theologians can only affirm a provident God who uses nature and humans but is absent from history. Adding to the modern rejections, Fackenheim challenges a commitment of faith by asking: After Auschwitz and Hiroshima, who can still believe in a God who manifests himself as a superintending providence, or in an ideal kind of progress based on the promises of modern, enlightened technological advances?

In wake of the Holocaust, the Jewish people must still believe because they have a unique status based on the phenomenon of collective survival, a claim that serves as the key term for understanding Fackenheim's entire thought. Fackenheim argues that this collective survival has significance for both Jewish people and the rest of humanity because the God of Israel is not a mere tribal god but is someone who is Creator of the world and is concerned for universal humanity. However, Fackenheim's conception of God is nonetheless of one who does not have a presence-in-general but is, rather, present to particular people in particular situations. For Fackenheim, these "implications, however, are manifest only in the particular; and they make of the men to whom they are manifest, not universalistic philosophers who rise above their situations, but rather witnesses, in, through, and because of their particularity to the nations." He then asks, How is the modern Jew today, after Auschwitz, able to be a witness to the world?

His answer is that Jews can continue to draw on their foundational root experiences, that is, the historical events of Exodus and Sinai that ensure continuity in how they are relived in rituals. Accordingly, Fackenheim contends that the past is able to be relived in the present; the root experience is a public event in which there is a transformation of the earth and which decisively affects all future Jewish generations. Later generations have access to the founding event and can and do reenact them as present reality.

Fackenheim links philosophy to his religious heritage via the congruence of starting points that he establishes between the religious experience and the philosophical experience of the world, principally the historical concept of wonder. For Fackenheim, the religious experience is an astonishing experience of an event that enters the system of cause and effect and becomes transparent, thus allowing a glimpse of the sole power at work

that is not limited by any other. Moreover, he draws on Martin Buber to support his claim that, like the philosophical experience of wonder, the religious experience is an "event which can be fully included in the objective, scientific nexus of nature and history" with the proviso that it includes a "vital meaning" that, "for the person to whom it occurs, destroys the security of the whole nexus of knowledge for him, and explodes the fixity of the fields of experience named 'Nature' and 'History.'"

Based on such historical effectiveness, for example, the believer in and practitioner of ritual relates to the Red Sea event during the Jewish ritual of Passover. By reenacting the event, practitioners reenact the abiding astonishment and make, thereby, the historical event their own, which results in a continuation of the sole power that is God. Hence, memory enacted becomes living faith and hope, and the root experience is able to legislate from the past to the present and future.

Questions arise, however, about the nature of God as one that is on the one hand transcendent and on the other involved. In short, the question of human control of the earth leads to judgments of the nature and relationship of an historically effective God to such an earth. If God were present at that particular moment of the Exodus and exercised power on behalf of the Jewish people, as sole power, God necessarily should be able to fight oppressive evil once again, demonstrating God's status as Creator and as absolute sovereign of the world. Fackenheim accepts this paradox and responds with a recourse to traditional Jewish thought that God does act and is involved in history and is not merely the consummation or transfiguration of history; that is, God does not stand over the entirety of the historical continuum.

Such a present God is the object of messianic faith where the believing Jew responds to historical instances of evil and threats to existence by pointing to the future where evil will ultimately be vanquished and human freedom and divine freedom are reconciled. Furthermore, such a future is anticipated in a reenacted past, that is, the reenactment of the root experiences through ritual. Such reenactment is what Fackenheim understands as the Midrashic experience, which he argues is "consciously fragmentary" and "yet destined to an ultimate resolution."

As Fackenheim relates at the end of the first part of the work, two of the strongest criticisms of God's presence in history have to do with the Holocaust. Given the actuality of God's presence as it is affirmed in Judaism and Christianity, to still believe in God post-Holocaust entails that Auschwitz is punishment for Jewish sins, which slanders a million innocent children in an abortive defense of God, and that any God connected with Auschwitz must have decreed Auschwitz, and such a God must be dead.

Fackenheim takes these criticisms seriously and spends the next two parts of his text in elaborating his rejection. In his analysis, the metaphysical foundations for such a rejection are based on how the Jewish people are rooted in the actuality of history. Because of their dialectical balance and playing out of the oppositions of the particular and the universal facets of their own lives, they are concretely situated within the overarching temporal framework of past, present, and future relations with other nations and their God.

Specifically, Fackenheim confronts a series of philosophical challenges, the greatest coming from modern positivists such as Auguste Comte, who reject God as a hypothesis that is empirically unverifiable. Fackenheim rejects the reduction of religious experience to scientific explanation and the positivist's assertion that a resort to absolutes is a mere logical mistake by contending that such a reduction eliminates wonder and ongoing historical effectiveness of abiding astonishment. The alternative is to replace that wonder with mere scientific or historical curiosity. What Fackenheim argues is that faith and modern secularism are irreconcilable because they are mutually irrefutable and that in order for historians, secular and Jewish, to exercise genuine impartiality, they should be required to suspend judgment between faith and secularism, resulting in a more nuanced philosophical stance of "criticism of criticism."

Fackenheim criticizes those who spoke out against the Jews, including German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, because of his predilection for Hellenic aristocracy and aestheticism, and the Marxists who, based on a kind of Jewish messianic expectation, nonetheless preached that Jews had a universal duty to assimilate into general humanity. Philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach taught that Jews are nothing more than egoists projecting an idea of God to themselves as an instance of self-worship. Karl Marx, for the sake of ideological consistency, claimed that Jews are merely self-interested hucksters who worship money and are dialectically false because they are so bound up with capitalism.

Fackenheim reserves his final critique for Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope. He tempers his critique with a generally sympathetic reading of Bloch because of his affirmative acceptance of the survival of the Jewish people. The problem, however, is that Bloch relocates his version of messianism to Moscow, not Palestine, thus committing a very old Jewish act, namely, premature messianism.

Finally, the shortfall of all modern philosophers is their iterations of various versions of the "death of God" theme. Consequently, Fackenheim ends part 2 of the work by referring approvingly of philosopher Martin Buber's conceptualization of an eclipse of God rather than the death of

God, viewing it as an authentic messianic response to the unique challenge of Auschwitz and the abiding human experience of horror.

The culmination of Fackenheim's own dialectic is fueled by his Jewish faith, as quintessential good, which is confronted by Adolf Hitler, as quintessential evil. Fackenheim asks, post-Auschwitz: Although Hitler failed to kill all the Jews, did he ultimately succeed postmortem by destroying Jewish faith? Fackenheim responds: "Yet we protest against a negative answer, for we protest against allowing Hitler to dictate the terms of our religious life. If not martyrdom, there can be a faithfulness resembling it, when a man has no choice between life and death but only between faith and despair."

After Auschwitz, Jews are left with existential fragments related to the problems of being uniquely targeted for destruction and yet, as part of their destiny with God, are demanded to survive. Moreover, such survival must be existentially grounded and faith-committed. After Auschwitz, he argues, the defiant success of the Jews to survive despite many challenges, especially the ultimate challenge of extermination, testifies to their endurance. Mere survival is not enough, however, and in order to avoid madness, Jews desire to endure precisely because of the testimony to the voices of the prophets of their heritage with the living presence of God in history. Hence Jews must continue to pray, after Auschwitz, as proof against madness in defiant particularity and as witnesses.

Fackenheim's analysis of modern philosophical and psychological perspectives and certain forms of social theory continues to provide powerful arguments that other philosophers of religion have continued to debate. Fackenheim continued to publish refined versions of his argument, eventually resulting in his most philosophically systematic work, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought* (1982). However, even this text carries on the basic insights about the Holocaust, the State of Israel, and the failure of philosophy that Fackenheim initially presented in *God's Presence in History*. According to Fackenheim, the reason for the surprising success of the Israeli defense forces against the attack by the surrounding Arab states in 1967 was that the Israelis responded with "a new song of defiance in the midst of hopelessness—the song of the Warsaw Ghetto Jewish Underground." For many Jews, both inside and outside Israel, Fackenheim provides a voice for their general concerns regarding the inexplicable horror of the Holocaust. Indeed, his call for a renewed defense of Israel was in tune with a general move not only by Jews the world over to resist further attacks on Israel but also especially by the initiation of the support of the U.S. government, which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century as a strong and faithful ally of Israel.

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—Julius J. Simon

GONE TO SOLDIERS

AUTHOR: Marge Piercy (1936-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1987

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Psychological fiction; war fiction

To tell this story of women's experiences during World War II and beyond, Piercy uses ten different voices in a decentered format that weaves multiple threads of human existence into a unified whole. Through her characters, Piercy explores the answers to Albert Einstein's question "Why war?"

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Louise Kahan, a popular writer of women's fiction

Daniel Balaban, the child of immigrant Jewish parents living in the Bronx

Jacqueline Lévy-Monot, a woman known by her Jewish name of Yakova, as Jacqueline Porell in order to disguise her heritage, and as Gingembre, her nom de guerre

Abra, a graduate student at Columbia University and the lover of Oscar Kahan, Louise's former husband

Naomi Siegal, Jacqueline's sister, a twelve-year-old at the beginning of the novel

Bernice Coates, an unmarried woman who joins the Army Air Corps as a pilot

Jeff Coates, the artistic brother of Bernice and a member of the Jewish Resistance in France

Ruthie Siegel, a woman who works in a plant and attends school at night

Duvey Siegel, the brother of Ruthie

Murray Feldstein, a Marine who comes home to marry Ruthie

OVERVIEW

Gone to Soldiers offers an answer to the question that Albert Einstein asked in a July 30, 1932, letter to Sigmund Freud regarding the topic "Why war?" As the lives of ten major characters are played out against the back-

drop of World War II, "man's inhumanity to man" is revealed in the horrors of prejudice against Jews and women. War, whether against an oppressive society or within oneself, is fought and won only against overwhelming odds.

Dedicated to Marge Piercy's grandmother, Hannah, *Gone to Soldiers* memorializes her as a storyteller who has a "gift for making the past walk through the present." The importance of memory in preserving the lessons of the past makes Jacqueline Lévy-Monot's mission a religious one as she affirms her identity as a woman and as a Jew.

Jacqueline, whose stories are told in the form of a diary, is not the only character in the novel who is a teller of tales. Louise Kahan, the war correspondent, and Abra, in a series of interviews, mark their own quests for identity in the stories they tell. Recounting the experience of her bleak childhood, Louise recalls being raped and having an abortion at the age of fifteen. Later, mired in dull wifedom, she finds it hard to juggle the demands of her daughter and philandering husband. When Louise divorces Oscar and strives to live as a single mother in a war-torn society, she learns that women in that society have no military status, no privileges, no protection, and no insurance. It is only at the end of the novel that Louise learns that the lessons of the past enable her to reunite with Oscar and be healed. In one of the book's more important passages, Louise comes to several realizations:

Miracles came seldom and rebirth more rarely yet and for countless and uncountable and never to be counted women like herself, her age, her body type, death had come from a machine gun, from blows of the butt end of a rifle, from poison gas, from poison injections, from starvation and typhus and neglect, from all the nasty ways to die warped minds in a violent and relentless system could devise. They had died of a lack of common respect and common love. They cried out to her, take him back and go live in peace as husband and wife and as Jews. Go make a home again and give thanks. Life is the first gift, love is the second, and understanding the third.

Abra, on the other hand, has to give up the role of mistress and separate from Oscar in order to find herself and to learn that a relationship of equals brings fulfillment rather than subservient dependency. This is a hard lesson to learn—for men as well as for women. After the United States has dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Abra's beloved Daniel tells her, "I feel as if I looked out through a vast eye and saw the future of the world in a plain of ashes, of sand turned to glass, flesh vaporized, time itself burned up." When asked what can be done, Daniel replies, "First, put our

opinions in the report if we can." *Gone to Soldiers* is the report and the answer to the question "Why war?" as each character reveals her or his own experiences of intolerance, misunderstanding, failures of communication, powerlessness, subjugation, and abuse.

In an interview published in the anthology *Ways of Knowing* (edited by Sue Walker and Eugenie Hamner, 1991), Piercy stated that, among all her works up to that time, *Gone to Soldiers* was the novel that caused her the most problems as she was writing it. Because the book uses ten viewpoints and moves regularly from one to another, Piercy noted, she views it as a cantata. Each character has her or his own social world, history, milieu, loved ones, and problems, and as Piercy moves in the work from the world of one character to another, the reader is also moved forcefully. The novel is separated into segments as first one and then another character appears, disappears, and comes back again in various sections. The disjointed result is part of the author's technique. Piercy rejects the Aristotelian notion of plot as progressive movement from beginning to middle to end; instead, she selects a decentering format that weaves multiple threads of human existence into a unified whole. Men as well as women redefine their attitudes and adjust their ways of functioning in order to heal the abuses of the past. The novel is not intended to invoke comfort or ease; it is designed to disrupt the reader's inner and outer worlds as the characters challenge and fight over ideals and value systems.

As a major feminist writer, Piercy often espouses the causes of women; she is also perhaps the leading female Jewish novelist in the United States. The great-granddaughter of a rabbi, Piercy recounts in *Gone to Soldiers* the horrors of anti-Semitism, so that, in Daniel's words, "No one will ever again call us dirty Jews. No one will make laws against us, ever again." The wars that take place in the novel extend beyond World War II; they are fought on American as well as foreign soil and concern the misuse of women, by society in general and by men in particular. Louise undergoes an abortion that almost kills her. Naomi is raped by Leib, her friend Trudi's husband—a soldier who was shipped home because he lost a foot in the war—and finds herself pregnant. Bernice is told by her father that grown women do not run around in airports and that "real" women should not want to fly planes. "Real" women get married and exist to please their men; they do not pursue higher degrees. They want to bring babies into the world. Jacqueline comments that "a family is an accidental construct, a group of people brought together by chance and forced to cohabit in insufficient space." Even being Jewish is a matter of accident. "I was born Jewish," Jacqueline says, "but what does that mean?" She is unable to communicate with her Polish refugee aunt, uncle, and cousins—even about

things as simple as tables and chairs, let alone her aspirations, feelings, and dreams.

The novel notes both the treatment of women in a prison camp—where they are forced to march and are clubbed to death if they stumble from exhaustion, where they are fed only soup every other day and take on the appearance of genderless, starved specters rather than human beings—and the routine subjugation of women in a society that lacks tolerance of lesbians, blacks, and Jews, and where women are deprived of employment and pay equal to those available to men. This insidious misuse of females results in women at war with themselves as they struggle to find their identity and sense of self-worth, not only in war-torn France or bombed London but also in Detroit and Alabama and throughout the United States, where prejudices make people victims and deny them their human rights.

Einstein's question "Why war?" has a multitude of answers that are as complex as the lives of Louise, Daniel, Jacqueline, Abra, Naomi, Bernice, Jeff, Ruthie, Duvey, Murray, and the other characters in *Gone to Soldiers*. These characters' experiences, both separate and intertwined, touch on the issues of women's rights, the psychology of mother-daughter and father-daughter relationships, and the need to claim one's past on individual, local, and global scales. Through an anatomy of war, Piercy shows that what Einstein called humanity's "lust for hatred and destruction" can be overcome only when men and women learn to heal, to have relationships of equals instead of victimizing one another, whether on the level of nation, country, religion, class, or law. Through storytelling, perhaps, this lesson may be learned. As Naomi goes off to bear Leib's daughter, joy is brought back into the world, along with hope. Misfortune can be instructive, even though the end of one set of troubles is but the beginning of another.

Piercy examines the situations of women in relation to marriage, education, work, and wealth, especially in terms of gender divisions of labor in employment, authority, leadership, and ethnic issues of race and religion. At the beginning of *Gone to Soldiers*, Louise begins the chronicle of issues that oppress women, and Jacqueline laments the fact that people bring babies into the world so casually that often a birth is celebrated when it should be mourned.

Throughout her fiction, Piercy raises the question of what it is to be a "real" woman. In *Gone to Soldiers*, as in Piercy's earlier work *Small Changes* (1973), men insist that a real woman directs her energy to, and derives her identity from, a relationship with a man. A real woman should not want to pursue higher education; a real woman should not want to fly airplanes. Rather, a woman's duty is to stay at home and care for her family members. The repression and abuse of women in *Gone to Soldiers* exist in many

places, not only in the concentration camp. Women suffer within the family, in the workplace, and in interpersonal relationships. Women in the military can be dishonorably discharged for being lesbians, and Bernice finds herself forced to adopt a masculine identity in order to find a job in which she can support herself and live with her beloved, Flo.

Piercy shows that a "real" woman is one who can take control of her life and wrest it from any man who believes he needs to subjugate her for his own selfish desires. Being real means being able to form a relationship with whomever one loves without fear of losing a job or being court-martialed. It means that a woman can feel secure within herself and be assured of her own individual worth without having to do things she dislikes in order to keep a man. Real women can earn higher degrees and pay equal to that earned by men; they can obtain positions of influence regardless of race and religion.

Piercy's feminist stance extends into a mission to affirm her Jewish heritage. *Gone to Soldiers* engages the place of memory in keeping the past alive as a deterrent to future abuse. As Jacqueline promises, "I will live and tell the world about this. I will live and make them pay." Piercy's concerns enjoin social, ethical, and political wrongs in regard to the treatment of women and envision a society characterized by wholeness, without barriers created by sex, race, religion, age, or class.

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—Sue Brannan Walker

THE HIDING PLACE

AUTHORS: Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983), with John and Elizabeth Sherrill

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1971

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Autobiography

This autobiography details Ten Boom's upbringing, her trials in a concentration camp during World War II, and the Christian beliefs that helped her survive. Her subsequent work and her willingness not only to forgive but also to embrace her enemies stand as one of the twentieth century's great testimonies to the power of faith.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983), a Christian Dutch watchmaker whose family hid Jews from the Nazis

Betsie ten Boom, Corrie's older sister

OVERVIEW

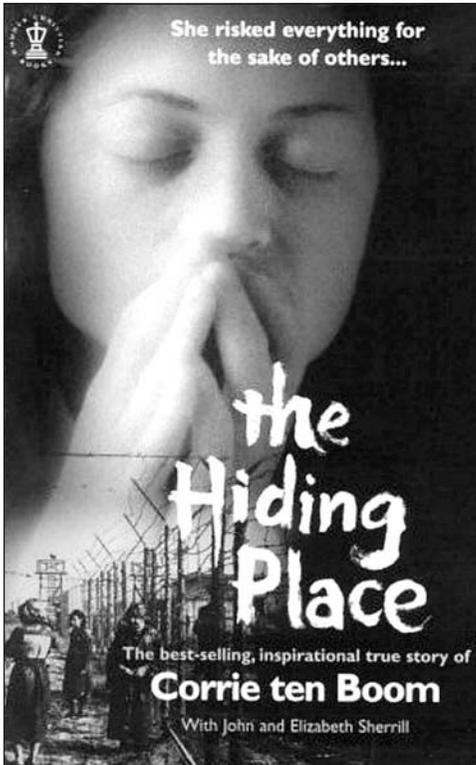
Corrie (Cornelia) ten Boom first published her heart-wrenching memoir, *A Prisoner and Yet . . .*, in 1954. John and Elizabeth Sherrill, editors of *Guideposts*, a religious magazine, read the book, heard Corrie recount her experiences in Nazi concentration camps, and assisted her in writing the Christian spiritual classic *The Hiding Place*, knowing that Corrie had a bigger story to tell. The "hiding place" refers to two places: a Bible passage calling on God as a protector and shield from danger, and the Ten Booms' secret room, where Jews were hidden from the Nazis.

Corrie begins her autobiography with the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary, in 1937, of the Ten Booms' watch shop and home at 19 Barteljorisstraat, Haarlem, Holland, known as the Beje. Corrie, the first female watchmaker in Holland, is single and lives above the shop with her older, attractive sister, Betsie, also unmarried, and their father, Casper. Brother Willem's and sister Nollie's families live nearby. Casper is a devout Christian who twice daily prays and reads the Bible. He loves and respects the Jewish people, considering them to be God's chosen people. The women of the Ten Boom family took care of German orphans during

World War I and have cared for Haarlem's sick and poor. Their home is a virtual social service agency, where Jews are welcomed and their holidays celebrated. With Adolf Hitler's rise to power as German chancellor, anti-Semitism is increasing in Germany, and the nursing home in Hilversum that is run by Willem ten Boom, a Dutch Reformed minister, is overflowing with Jewish refugees. German Jewish suppliers of watchmaking parts are disappearing.

During World War II, the Germans invade Holland and harass Jews. Everybody must have ration cards to buy food. In November, 1941, German soldiers rob Corrie's neighbor's store and throw the neighbor into the street. At night, Corrie's nephew takes the neighbor into hiding. Casper declares that it is an honor to risk one's life to save Jews. Consequently, Jews, resistance workers, and men trying to avoid Nazi forced labor come to the Ten Booms for help. Resistance workers build a tiny, secret room in Corrie's third-floor bedroom and install an alarm system. Fearful of Gestapo raids, the Ten Booms conduct drills to get Jews to the hiding place. Corrie obtains food cards and safe hiding places for Jews outside the Beje from people whom her family has previously helped, and she coordinates a network of underground workers.

On February 28, 1944, a Dutchman comes asking for help. Corrie agrees to help him, and the Nazis raid the Beje. The Ten Booms' guests who are in the secret room are not caught, but Corrie, Casper, Willem, Nollie, and Betsie are hauled away in a wagon drawn by black horses. They are interrogated and sent to Scheveningen, a Dutch prison. Ten days later, Casper dies. All the Ten Booms but Betsie and Corrie are released. A nurse gives Corrie a copy of the Gospels, which help sustain her spirit while she is being held in solitary confinement. Then, Betsie and Corrie are sent to Ravensbrück, one of the worst



death camps. Corrie is able to smuggle her Bible and vitamin drops into Ravensbrück. Betsie's unflinching trust in Jesus and the sisters' hope that, one day, their story of joy in suffering will turn people to Jesus sustain them. Saintly Betsie consistently insists that Corrie be thankful for their trials and tribulations and pray for their abusers and forgive them. In the midst of all the horrors of the camp, God provides for Corrie and Betsie. They share the vitamin drops, and miraculously the bottle does not go dry. The fleas in the barracks keep the guards from confiscating their Bible. The prisoners suffer humiliation, overwork, freezing cold, starvation, beatings, the leering guards' eyes when they shower, lack of space and sanitation, odors of burning flesh, black lice, and death; in response, they become belligerent and selfish. The Ten Booms change the women in their barracks through intercessory prayer and Bible readings; they encourage the women to pray for their captors.

Corrie is forced to see her beloved Betsie suffer and finally die, joyfully and peacefully, at age fifty-nine, after revealing three visions and telling Corrie that they will be out of the camp before New Year's Day. A clerical error leads to Corrie's release from Ravensbrück, but she cannot leave the camp because she has edema. Hospitalized, she hears Betsie remind her that God's will is a "hiding place." Despite her status as a patient and disregarding her swollen feet, Corrie takes bedpans to the other women who are ill. When she finally leaves the camp, all the women her age or older have been killed. Later, at a Berlin train station, a starving Corrie realizes that she was discharged and thus liberated on New Year's Day, 1945, just as Betsie had envisioned. After an exhausting trip to Holland and care at a Dutch hospital, Corrie reunites with her family. Her joy is tempered with sadness, however: Willem is dying from a crippling spinal tuberculosis contracted in Scheveningen.

Now age fifty-three, Corrie is unhappy with watchmaking, and she decides to spend the rest of her life fulfilling Betsie's visions. The Beje eventually becomes a home for the healing of Holland's most hated people, the Dutch people who collaborated with the Nazis. Betsie's first vision comes to fruition when a wealthy Dutch woman gives Corrie a mansion at Bloemendaal, which Corrie, with the help of volunteers, transforms into a rehabilitation center where she teaches refugees, former prisoners of concentration camps, and people who were in hiding to forgive and love their enemies. Betsie's second vision becomes a reality when Corrie turns Darmstadt, a former Nazi concentration camp, into a home for the reconciliation and healing of Germans. Corrie fulfills Betsie's third vision when she travels the world telling audiences that Jesus became the victor in the concentration camps. On a speaking tour, Corrie meets one of the cruelest former

Ravensbrück camp guards and immediately feels hate for him; she begs God to help her forgive him, and instantly she is able to forgive him. Corrie has never known God's love so intensely as she does at that moment. She also forgives the man who betrayed her family and other camp personnel she meets.

Ten Boom's storytelling skills made her a reluctant celebrity who humbly insisted that Jesus, not she, was responsible for her accomplishments. She wrote thirty-two books and remained in demand as a speaker until paralysis stopped her in 1978. She died on April 15, 1983, her birthday, at the age of ninety-one. The proceeds from her books continue to finance missionaries.

The Ten Booms' Calvinist beliefs in God's love, the Bible, positive affirmations, charitable acts, and willingness to risk their safety for that of their neighbors fill this story. The Ten Booms' trust in and love of Jesus is evident throughout the narrative not only in their words but also in their actions. Corrie's parents set the example for their children, practicing the Golden Rule and passing that belief and practice on to Betsie and Corrie as well as their siblings. As a Christian evangelist, Corrie traveled to more than sixty nations preaching and bringing people to Jesus. She refused donations, preferring to avoid influence, depending totally on God's goodness and the kindness of strangers for her shelter, food, and daily needs. Corrie's faith in God never failed her. She not only preached but also lived love and forgiveness, gratitude for trials, and joy in suffering. Her example stands in stark contrast to many in modern society, whose stony indifference to human suffering—whether that of a neighbor or that of an enemy—is humanity's most fatal disease. Her message is that of Jesus: To forgive one's enemies is to free the prisoner, you.

The Hiding Place is one of the best-selling true Holocaust stories, a testimony that serves as a warning for future generations not to deny the Holocaust and never to allow such persecution to occur again. Frequently used in schools for teaching students about the Holocaust and character education, it was made into a successful film (released by World Wide Pictures in 1975) and continues to provide hope and inspiration. Corrie ten Boom has been honored in Israel with a tree planted near that of Oskar Schindler, another Holocaust hero, along the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles near Jerusalem.

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—Margaret T. Sacco

THE HISTORY OF LOVE

AUTHOR: Nicole Krauss (1975-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2005

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Psychological fiction

Krauss's sophomore novel concerns survivors of the Holocaust and the impact of a book about true love on the lives of people connected beyond time and space.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Leopold Gursky, a retired locksmith and reclusive octogenarian writer, survivor of the Holocaust

Alma Mereminski-Moritz, Leopold's love since childhood, mother of two sons, one of whom is Leopold's

Isaac Moritz, Leo and Alma's son, a renowned writer

Alma Singer, a teenage girl named after Alma as Leo wrote about her in *The History of Love*

Charlotte Singer, a widowed translator, young Alma's mother

Bird Singer, Charlotte's seven-year-old son, who believes he may be a messiah

Zvi Litvinoff, Leo's childhood friend, exiled in Chile, who published Leo's manuscript as his own

OVERVIEW

Nicole Krauss, an acclaimed poet who has worked on her verses with Joseph Brodsky, negotiated a six-figure deal to write two books after her first novel, *A Man Walks into a Room* (2002), garnered rave reviews. An excerpt from *The History of Love*, called "The Last Words on Earth," was published in *The New Yorker* in February, 2004; subsequently, Krauss sold the book rights to *The History of Love* in almost twenty countries and the film rights to Warner Bros. studios.

The History of Love is the title of a book within a book. Some people's lives have been wrapped by the book, which has shaped their destinies. The reader enters that magical world, and it opens views to other worlds. The novel is about reading and writing, the way a book can change lives,

love, and loss. Witty and emotional, it is also about nostalgia for the places one cannot revisit because they are lost forever. In the end, however, it is about living and survival, often creatively accomplished.

This ambitious and remarkable work depicts unconventional life journeys; its themes include love lost but never forgotten, human destiny charted by the atrocities of war, and loneliness of the "invisible" people. Leopold Gursky survives the massacre of the Jews in his native village of Slonim, in Poland, by hiding in the woods for more than three years. His girlfriend Alma Mereminski, the love of his life, escapes to the United States. Leo follows and finds her, but he arrives too late. Because his letters did not reach her, she thought he was dead, like many others. Now she is married, with two sons. One is Leo's.

A locksmith and a writer, Leo lives in Manhattan, not far from Alma and her family but without any physical contact with them. After having lost his parents, his native land, his only love, his son, and the book he wrote while a young man—inspired by his first and only love—he is now retired. The book opens with him at eighty years old, brooding over his wasted life and approaching death. He often wonders who will be the last to see him alive. He makes a point of being "seen" and sits as a model in a nude drawing class. Most of the time, however, he is alone and philosophizing: "Put even a fool in front of a window and you'll get a Spinoza."

Leo and Alma's son, Isaac Moritz, a famous writer, dies at age sixty from Hodgkin's disease. Until Isaac's death, Leo wonders if Isaac knew who his own father was. Once, in order to attend his son's book reading, Leo had obtained tickets months in advance. He joined Isaac's fans in lining up to meet the writer. Once face-to-face with Isaac, however, he could not say a word. Isaac was kind and patient, but a security guard firmly grasped Leo's elbow and escorted him out. Only after Isaac's death does Leo find himself in his son's home, touching and sniffing his clothes, trying on his shoes, which are larger than his own.

There are two major, and several minor, life stories flowing, like blood, through this book. Unknown to one another, and Leo, the characters all meet in the heart, symbolized by his book. Leo had given his old manuscript to his childhood friend, Zvi Litvinoff, in Minsk. Since then, Litvinoff has lived a refugee's life in Chile. A young woman, Rosa, falls in love with him and marries "her dark crow." He reads the manuscript to her, and she helps him translate it into Spanish, assuming it is his. After it is published, the book takes on its own life, touching people with its powerful energy of love. Litvinoff gains notoriety, which improves his life. He lives with his secret, never finding a suitable moment to tell Rosa, unaware that she had

found out and deliberately destroyed the evidence. She had even informed Gursky that the manuscript had been lost when their home flooded.

In addition to Leo's first-person, earthy, eccentrically witty narration, there is another voice, that of another Alma, the teenage Alma Singer, named after the book's heroine. Her voice is counterpointed with Leo's, bringing with it youthful imagination, curiosity, and wonder with life. Her journal successfully portrays the lives of all her family members. The book *History of Love* has great significance for the Singer family: Her father gave it to her mother at the time of their courting. Now he is dead, her mother a widow faithfully dedicated to his memory. She is stacking books and dictionaries between her and the outside world. Unexpectedly, she receives a commission from a Jacob Markus, wanting her to translate *The History of Love* from Spanish.

With the book to aid in her secret quest, young Alma Singer looks for a man who could change her mother's solitary life. Alma also helps her dreamy, out-of-touch mother in raising Bird, Alma's younger brother, another dreamer. He believes he is a Lamed-Vovnik—that is, one of the Lamed Vov, who are, according to Jewish tradition, the thirty-six righteous individuals in the world—and that he can fly. He jumps from the second floor (at age six), breaking his arm and earning his nickname. In keeping with Jewish tradition, he avoids writing God's name and spells it G-d. He believes he just may be a messiah. Secretly, he reads his sister's writing and gets into the mystery of the lost book, unknowingly adding to its resolution. While recording the "real" but awkward exchange of kisses with her first love, Misha, Alma is secretly but strongly dedicated to finding out more about her namesake.

Numerous supporting characters are lush and picturesque: Bruno, born out of Leo's loneliness and undying love; Litvinoff's wife, Rosa; Alma's Uncle Julian (with his lopsided smile and a passion for Alberto Giacometti). All of them are intelligent and unusual but vibrantly true to life. Just as one sympathizes with Leo Tolstoy's character Anna Karenina in spite of her transgression, one cannot harshly judge Litwinoff and Rosa for stealing Leo's book. The circumstances of their lives make it understandable. Love is brimming in the book as a motivating force behind human actions, spilling into the world through the readers.

In an interview, Krauss admitted she had decided to write a book based on her knowledge, not research. She enjoyed writing it and therefore expected that readers would enjoy it too. Krauss pays homage to many of her favorite writers within the work, such as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Pablo Neruda, Miguel de Cervantes, Jorge Luis Borges, and Franz Kafka. She also honors composers, painters, and numerous others among the great,

gifted, and famous. The creative spirit, with the message, resonates in the reader.

Through her devoted, passionate search, young Alma finds out that Jacob Markus is only a character from the book her mother is translating. The real man behind the commission is Isaac Moritz, son of the original Alma. It is too late to meet Alma or Isaac in person, Alma soon finds; instead, she connects with Leo. His years of longing end when the two of them meet. Ready to join his loved ones, Leo sees young Alma as the embodiment of his long-awaited love, young and beautiful as he has always remembered her from their blissful youth. Their separate voices now unite in a powerful duet in an ode to joy of life and love (*Amor omnia vincit*). It is a happy ending that life gives, as a well-deserved gift, to Leo, gentle and touching as a mother's lullaby or a last kiss.

The History of Love defies a thorough summary. The work examines the place of love in human lives, the invisible golden thread connecting all people through the most powerful energy in the universe. It celebrates the magic of life and love through some extraordinary episodes in the lives of remarkable people. Perhaps all people are remarkable when their most intimate stories are known. Of these, most often the words not spoken—although there are words for everything in life, Krauss tells the reader through Leo.

At almost fifteen, Alma seems to embody what is known about the young Nicole Krauss, yet the character confesses feeling more comfortable expressing Leo's point of view. Dedicated to Krauss's grandparents, who taught her "the opposite of disappearing," this novel is an immigrant story, teaching empathy with the "invisible" people around the world and around the corner—one's neighbors, one's sisters and brothers.

It is worth noting the author's diction: almost scientific precision coupled with sensitivity, emotion, and gentleness. Her sense of wonder turns her story into a roller-coaster ride of excitement, revealing the unknown sides of human lives. She uses many stories within the novel and many characters of all ages, from an earthy old man or a dreamy middle-aged widow to her idiosyncratic son and curious, level-headed teenage daughter. Krauss employs letters, journals, diagrams, different languages and orthographies, even the words that stay unsaid, with images and almost-blank pages that speak louder than the busy ones.

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—Mira N. Mataric

HISTORY ON TRIAL

MY DAY IN COURT WITH DAVID IRVING

AUTHOR: Deborah E. Lipstadt (1947-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2005

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; current affairs

Lipstadt presents a compelling firsthand account of the libel case that prominent British historian David Irving brought against her and her publisher, Penguin Books, when Lipstadt, in an earlier book, accused Irving of being a Holocaust denier. The trial addressed the issues of intellectual honesty in historical scholarship, the reality of the Holocaust, and the significance of the Holocaust denial movement for the rise of neofascism.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Deborah E. Lipstadt (b. 1947), an author and professor of Jewish Studies at Emory University

David Irving (b. 1938), a British World War II historian

Anthony Julius, a literary scholar and Lipstadt's solicitor

Richard Rampton, a barrister selected by Penguin Books to present Lipstadt's case

Charles Gray, the judge at Lipstadt's trial

Robert Jan van Pelt, an architectural historian who appeared as an expert witness for the defense

Richard Evans, a historian who served as chief historical adviser to Penguin Books and appeared as an expert witness for the defense

Hajo Funke, a German professor of politics who appeared as an expert witness for the defense

OVERVIEW

History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving is Deborah E. Lipstadt's very personal account of her legal battle with the prominent British historian David Irving in 2000 and the behind-the-scenes events associated with the trial and the key persons involved. When her previous book, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, was pub-

lished by Penguin Books in 1993, Lipstadt never expected that Irving would sue her and her publisher for libel. In that comprehensive history of the Holocaust denial movement, Lipstadt accused Irving of being a dangerous Holocaust denier who distorted historical evidence to support his biased conclusions.

Few believed the libel case would go to trial—Irving probably expected that Lipstadt would apologize and retract her criticism of him, as fighting a libel suit in England, where the trial would take place, is a difficult and costly business. The burden of proof in English law is on the defendant—Lipstadt would have to prove the truth of her statements. Often called “the Irving trial,” the case was actually the Penguin/Lipstadt trial, given that Irving was the plaintiff. Lipstadt’s right to free speech, not Irving’s, was the core of the case.

Because she believed Holocaust denial to be a growing danger and thought that Irving would gain increased credibility if she did not contest the lawsuit, Lipstadt responded vigorously. She raised \$1.5 million for the defense (Irving claimed there was a global conspiracy to destroy him, funded by Jewish financiers). To the credit of Penguin Books—given that the trial would cost millions of pounds—Lipstadt’s publisher stood by her. The defense assembled a formidable legal team that included Anthony Julius (Lipstadt’s solicitor) and Richard Rampton (a leading barrister). Irving represented himself. It was agreed that the proceedings would not be a jury trial, because the quantity of original source material to be presented would be too much for a jury to examine.

In 2000, Justice Charles Gray presided over the sensational trial, which lasted ten weeks. Auschwitz survivors and Nazi sympathizers were among those in the packed courtroom. Much to Irving’s chagrin, the defense team refused to call Lipstadt to testify in her own behalf. They also refused to call eyewitnesses, both to spare them the unpleasant experience of cross-examination and, more important, to keep the focus on Irving. The defense’s strategy was to emphasize Irving’s methodology and his association with right-wing radical groups. Rampton sought to prove Irving a liar and a bigot who had deliberately distorted and falsified history to serve his anti-Semitic agenda. Julius had asked the court to require Irving to disclose a vast quantity of materials relevant to the case, and the defense engaged a number of respected historians to research Irving’s work and write expert reports. Their preparations took four years. At the trial, the defense experts provided documentation supporting Lipstadt’s assertions that Irving had not been objective, had connections with extremist political groups, and had falsified the historical record.

Central to the trial was the issue of the function of the Nazi concentra-

tion camp at Auschwitz, where more than one million people, mostly Jews, were alleged to have died in gas chambers. Irving tried to create doubts about the gas chambers at Auschwitz because Auschwitz has become almost a synonym for the Holocaust. While conceding there were mass murders by gassing at other camps, he said that Auschwitz was “baloney” and a “legend.” He claimed the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau were used for gassing objects and cadavers. Irving’s conclusions were influenced by a report by Fred Leuchter, an American execution specialist, who found higher residue of hydrogen cyanide gas in the delousing rooms at Auschwitz than in the gas chambers and assumed that humans were not killed in the gas chambers. (He did not know that humans are less resistant to cyanide than vermin are.)

Rampton questioned why a room for gassing objects would have a spy hole in the door, with a heavy metal grill on the inside. He also questioned why the chutes for sliding bodies to the morgue were replaced with steps when the crematoria buildings at Auschwitz were transformed in 1942 to gas chambers. Irving claimed that the gas chambers were air-raid shelters—although this meant that the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS) personnel would have to run more than a mile from their barracks to the supposed



Deborah E. Lipstadt celebrates outside London’s High Court after winning the case brought against her and her publisher, Penguin Books, by British historian David Irving. (AP/Wide World Photos)

shelters—and asserted there was not enough fuel at Auschwitz to incinerate all of the alleged victims. He challenged the authenticity of a letter from the head of Auschwitz's building program that indicated the potential incineration capacity was more than sufficient. Robert Jan van Pelt, an architectural historian, prepared a seven-hundred-page expert report for the court that documented the evidence for the existence of an extermination camp at Auschwitz; he successfully defended his findings under cross-examination by Irving.

In *Denying the Holocaust*, Lipstadt had asserted that Irving was an admirer of Adolf Hitler and an apologist for the Nazi leader's actions. Irving claimed that Hitler never ordered the murder of Jews, was unaware of their extermination until late 1943, and tried to mitigate the anti-Semitic actions of his subordinates. Richard Evans, a Cambridge historian who produced an expert report more than seven hundred pages long that was critical of Irving's methodology, maintained that Irving deliberately misinterpreted and distorted documents, suppressing evidence at will. For example, Evans made it clear that the diary of Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, and other documents proved that Hitler authorized the "demonstrations" of Kristallnacht—the "night of broken glass" in Germany, when Jews were attacked and killed, their homes and shops were vandalized, and synagogues were set on fire. Irving maintained that Hitler was ignorant of the pogrom and tried to stop "the madness." Hajo Funke, a German professor, presented videos of Irving's speeches to far-right extremists to show Irving's associations with neo-Nazis and leading Holocaust deniers.

Rampton argued that Irving's "mistakes"—more than twenty had been raised in the trial—could not be inadvertent given that they all led to excusing Hitler and denying the Holocaust. Justice Gray agreed. In a ruling for Penguin Books and Lipstadt, he declared Irving to be a right-wing pro-Nazi polemicist and a racist anti-Semite who had deliberately falsified history in order to excuse Hitler and disseminate anti-Semitic propaganda. Irving was required to pay the defendants' legal expenses.

Although the Irving trial produced other books by well-known authors, Lipstadt's firsthand account is significant because it presents the most comprehensive narrative of the trial. It deals with the emotional and personal cost of the trial for Lipstadt as well as with the moral issues that were at stake and the trial's significance for Holocaust survivors and Jews worldwide.

It is doubtful that Lipstadt's criticisms seriously damaged Irving's career, but the trial cost Irving his reputation as a serious scholar. The kind of scrutiny to which his work was subjected during the trial created a fear of

editorial in Britain's *Daily Telegraph* stated, the trial had "done for the new century what the Nuremberg tribunals or the Eichmann trial did for earlier generations." The trial made it clear that sufficient historical data exist to demonstrate that the Holocaust really happened and was not invented by politically motivated Jews, that the gas chambers at Auschwitz were a reality, and that Hitler, even if he was not directly responsible, had been aware of what was happening.

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—Edna B. Quinn

HITLER

AUTHOR: Ian Kershaw (1943-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, 1998; *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis*, 2000

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Biography; history

Kershaw's two-volume biography explains why despairing and angry Germans turned to Adolf Hitler to restore their nation's order and pride, why conservative nationalists and the army thought they could manipulate Hitler, and what responsibility Hitler bore for the Holocaust.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Ernst Röhm (1887-1934), the head of the Nazi Sturm Abteilung (SA, or storm troopers)

Rudolf Hess (1894-1987), one of Hitler's earliest followers, ineffective head of the Nazi Party until 1941

Hermann Göring (1893-1946), the most powerful figure in Hitler's inner circle, 1936-1938, later merely the head of the German air force

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), the Nazi propaganda minister who served as Hitler's spokesman to the world

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the head of the Schutzstaffel (SS)

Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946), Germany's foreign minister and one of the foremost advocates for war

OVERVIEW

In his two-volume biography of Adolf Hitler, Ian Kershaw takes on the biographer's ultimate questions: What makes a man become what he is? Does an individual control events, or is he a prisoner of his times? Previous biographers have struggled with Hitler, sifting the records relating to him and his times to try to make sense of the events of his life. The myths have been so strong, however, and the evidence so contradictory that not until a half century after Hitler's death was it possible for Kershaw to collect the scattered information on the man and analyze it calmly, if not dispassion-

*Adolf Hitler reviews a parade
of SA troops. (Charles
Russell Collection,
NARA)*



ately. It seems that nobody can remain emotionally detached from the times and career of Adolf Hitler.

In his first volume, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris*, Kershaw offers a conventional portrait of the young Adolf—the future führer was an unhappy boy, an unremarkable youth, and a frustrated young artist. He grew up in Austria, on the German border, in a somewhat dysfunctional family, then spent his inheritance in Vienna, pretending to be an art student. His drawings were good enough for him to make a modest living, but he preferred talking to drawing, and he seemed destined to die in some obscure flop-house in a multicultural city he detested except for its architecture and its productions of Richard Wagner’s operas. There was nothing particularly notable about any of this, Kershaw observes. Many boys are unhappy, and every city has drifters and bums.

Anti-Semitism and racism were present at all levels of European society, but especially in Vienna, where Jews had opportunities to advance as far as their talents permitted. Hitler was little different from others in his attitudes, but his indolence and indecision could turn suddenly to anger and impulsive action. It was World War I, Kershaw notes, or rather Germany’s loss of the war, that made Hitler’s rise possible. None of these observations is new, but Kershaw presents new confirmation of these judgments from people who had been reluctant to talk earlier, and he devotes

more pages to Hitler's early years than have most other historians and biographers.

Kershaw illustrates how Hitler became an effective demagogue and propagandist, attracting crowds of political cranks and malcontents to his speeches in Munich, filling beer halls and employing toughs to keep order. He had no original ideas; rather, he reflected popular stereotypes and prejudices about the Versailles treaty, Jews, and communists. As postwar inflation wrecked the German economy, radical movements appeared from the political Right as well as the Left. The National Socialists (Nazis) constituted a small party and would have remained obscure except for the bizarre event in 1923 known as the Beer Hall Putsch. It was a total fiasco, but Hitler was willing to take the entire blame on himself. Kershaw posits that this gave him national publicity as well as the thanks of those who escaped justice. He received an extremely light sentence for his role in the failed coup, and his brief incarceration in the Landsberg Prison gave him the opportunity to dictate *Mein Kampf* (1925-1926; English translation, 1939), a mendacious account of his life and struggles that laid the basis for the future Hitler myth.

Little is known about Hitler's private life, probably because there was little to know. Kershaw reports that he had simple tastes and little if any sex life, did not drink alcohol or eat meat, read only to reinforce his own beliefs, and relaxed only by watching movies or by listening to recordings of Wagner's music. He changed moods almost instantaneously, politeness turning to fury, then back again. He considered himself an expert on everything worth knowing about—art, music, the military—and had a good memory for details.

Kershaw explains why Hitler attracted the men whose names would become almost as familiar as his—Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, and Ernst Röhm—and made his political rivals underestimate him. Although his Sturm Abteilung (SA), or storm troopers, were useful for street and alley fights against communists and socialists, there seemed little future for the Nazis until political feuds and posturing, along with an economic crisis of catastrophic proportions, paralyzed the Weimar Republic.

Kershaw asserts that Hitler was greatly helped by important groups in Germany that hated democracy. The Left had always favored a Soviet model, and the Right wanted a return to a monarchy or rule by the military. Hitler was useful to the Right in countering the Left, but he was despised by the Right's leaders—and underestimated.

As the Left came to believe that Hitler was merely a tool of capitalists, industrialists, landowners, and the army, the members of those very

groups came to the same conclusion. Both were mistaken. Hitler wanted only power. He had no detailed program, but he could speak with passion for hours, swaying audiences that were ready to believe that capitalism and the Jews were the sources of their troubles and that national unity was the solution. The situation was critical—the Weimar Republic was despised and essentially dead, the Right had already introduced government by decree, and the Left anticipated picking up the pieces after everything fell apart.

Without the political machinations of the Right, Kershaw observes, Hitler would never have come to power or, once in office, could not have established himself as dictator. Once in control, his storm troopers and the Nazi-dominated police ruthlessly smashed all organized opposition, killing some, driving others into exile, and imprisoning many in hastily erected concentration camps. Social organizations were dissolved or incorporated into Nazi equivalents. Only one political party remained—Hitler's.

That party, however, was still divided. Röhm had his own plans—more radical and violent than Hitler's—which caused conservatives and the army to insist that Hitler bring his party under control. Hitler delayed and dithered—as was his practice in all matters—then acted impulsively and decisively. In mid-1934, in the "Night of the Long Knives," he personally led the raid that captured Röhm, then ordered his execution along with other troublemakers, potential rivals, and political enemies. It seemed, briefly, that Nazism was evolving into a more moderate movement.

With Germany at last stable, businessmen could proceed without worrying about strikes or leftist legislation, but rearmament was soaking up government income, and unemployment remained serious. Hitler was able to say without contradiction that the situation was improving, but only because nobody dared disagree; the economy continued to lag, with high unemployment and low wages. Hitler's response was political—in 1935 and 1936 he moved to abolish the terms of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and sent troops into the Rhineland, which had been a demilitarized zone. Britain and France, which had refused to aid the Weimar Republic, capitulated to Hitler's bullying. Germany passed laws that called for the sterilization of mental incompetents as well as laws that prohibited marriages between Jews and Germans. In 1936, the Olympic Games were held in Berlin, and Hitler took this opportunity to show his country to the world as a place of peace, prosperity, and national renewal.

There was nothing organized about the Hitler regime, Kershaw argues. Hitler was the leader, but he gave few orders, and he allowed neither party nor bureaucracy to provide stability and give clear guidelines for imple-

menting policies. At the bottom, petty bullying and corruption flourished. At the top, chaos and indecision were followed by swift and unexpected action, with Hitler then declaring that the crisis had been overcome.

The first volume of Kershaw's biography closes with Hitler having restored a sense of pride and national purpose in Germany. He had been so successful that he came to believe he could never make a mistake. The second volume of the work illustrates how wrong Hitler was, and why he failed to see it.

Hitler began to treat neighboring nations as brutally as he had his domestic opposition, and as successfully. Kershaw posits that Hitler's hypochondria made him believe that he was aging quickly and that he had to act while his physical powers were still good and before the corruption and incompetence of his regime caused a public reaction. Also, the internal dynamism of fascism required ever swifter forward momentum. To stand still was to die.

Hitler's intuition in seizing the right moment, his contempt for his opponents, and the public's reluctance to believe that anyone could want another war made his well-advertised program of aggression possible. Hitler did want a war—and soon. Göring's moderation at Munich, where Hitler intimidated France and Britain, led to his replacement by other henchmen, who vied with one another in proposing ever more radical steps against Jews and for war. Hitler, who felt that the Munich Agreement had prevented his making a triumphal march into Prague, was determined never to be frustrated again. The German occupation of the Czech lands was followed by demands on Poland.

From this point on, Kershaw's story is familiar—Hitler used threats, blackmail, and bribery (most important was his pact with Joseph Stalin), only to discover that he could not shake Polish and British resolve. Frustrated and angry, he slept little, ranted, and demanded immediate action; his henchmen scurried to respond. Even his most random comments were now taken as commands for action. Joachim von Ribbentrop was the most enthusiastic, but no one held back, not even the army.

While the German army smashed through Poland, Britain and France massed forces on the western front but did nothing. All the initiative was Hitler's—victory in Poland, the occupation of Denmark and Norway, then the swift conquest of France. Kershaw does not credit the invasion of Yugoslavia with having a significant effect on the Russian campaign, and he notes that Germany's conquest of Greece had been long planned to keep British bombers far from the Romanian oil fields.

The Nazis' euthanasia program, the roundup of Jews and their murder, and other programs required no action by Hitler, whose attention was in

any case totally given to the war. Also, military decisions once attributed to Hitler—such as stopping the armored columns short of Dunkirk—were made by the professionals. Hitler had set up, or allowed to come into being, a state that ran without central direction, a state that would collapse if it did not have a crisis to confront.

The attack on Russia was based on geopolitical judgments, especially Hitler's perception that Germany needed land in the east. He now despised Bolshevism more than he feared it—the Soviet Union would be an easy victim, his commanders assured him. Afterward, Britain would come to terms.

Kershaw notes that Hitler's well-known interference in the Russian campaign did take place, but it was later exaggerated by military commanders eager to excuse their failures. Moreover, his order to troops to stand fast against the Soviet winter offensive of 1941 proved so sound that he became even more persuaded of his infallibility. Hitler's public support decreased sharply after the Battle of Stalingrad (1942-1943), but no one saw a way of escaping the foreseeable disaster. Only Hitler remained optimistic, living in a fantasy world. He viewed all setbacks as the results of either betrayals or weakness, but he believed that everything would be well in the end—something would come to his rescue, either his secret weapons or a falling out among the Allies.

By 1944, Hitler was a sick man—Parkinson's disease, pills and injections, and exhaustion took their toll. After a nearly fatal assassination attempt on July 20, Hitler tightened the screws on his perceived enemies, on the army, and on the entire German society. Nothing helped for long, and with Hitler's belief that the only choices were victory or death, it was clear which was coming. He ignored military advice, overruled his henchmen's efforts to make peace, and in general lost touch with reality. The end was coming both for him and Germany.

In spite of everything, Hitler held on to power. His generals or his associates could have assassinated him and seized power, but they were held back by his myth of infallible judgment, their memory of his having pulled victory out of apparent defeats, their jealousy of one another, and their fear of sudden and horrible death. As hope vanished, Hitler's henchmen and true believers awaited their fate. Some followed him in suicide, some fled, and some surrendered. For the German public, the shame and humiliation of losing the war were profound, made bearable only by the pressing need to dig out of the physical ruins and find some way to survive. Fifty million persons, however, did not live to see the end of the war. Stalin's troops occupied half of Germany; the Western powers took charge of the rest.

In these volumes on Hitler's life, Kershaw presents both more and less

than other biographers have done. He draws on new sources and surpasses previous scholars in his use of old sources and in his analysis. He also discards much of the earlier speculation around Hitler, dismissing inaccurate stories and implausible explanations. Kershaw's scholarship is impeccable, his analysis persuasive, and his style compelling.

As Kershaw notes, never in history before Hitler was so much ruination associated with one name. A beer-hall demagogue, bigot, and racist led a once-great country with a historically great culture to destruction, and much of Europe with it. Hitler's only positive contribution was that he demonstrated the consequences of hypernationalism, racism, and ambitions for world power. Kershaw's work is essential reading for those who seek to understand the Nazi version of totalitarianism—how ambitious and jealous underlings sought to advance themselves by proposing ever more radical policies to a leader who rarely gave direct orders but approved those that fit best into his own nationalist/racial views and the political possibilities of the moment. When war removed all restraints, the unthinkable—the Holocaust—became reality.

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—William L. Urban

THE HITLER OF HISTORY

AUTHOR: John Lukacs (1924-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1997

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; biography

In this long bibliographical essay, Lukacs examines how historians have interpreted various aspects of the life and career of Adolf Hitler.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Martin Broszat,

Sebastian Haffner,

Helmut Heiber,

Andreas Hillgruber,

Eberhard Jaeckel,

Werner Maser,

Ernst Nolte,

Gerhard Schreiber, and

Ranier Zitelmann, German historians and biographers of Hitler

Joachim Fest and

Konrad Heiden, German journalists and biographers of Hitler

Alan Bullock,

William Carr,

David Irving,

Ian Kershaw, and

Robert C. L. Waite, English historians and biographers of Hitler

Harold Gordon, Jr.,

Bradley F. Smith, and

John Toland, American historians and biographers of Hitler

OVERVIEW

In *The Hitler of History*, John Lukacs surveys the most important works that have appeared in German and English concerning several aspects of the life and career of Adolf Hitler, offering critiques of the works and his

own interpretations. A consistent theme that runs throughout the book is a plea for the "historicization" of Hitler. By "historicization," Lukacs refers to the tendency of many historians who have written about Hitler to demonize him, to portray him as something other than a man, as something completely outside human experience. Lukacs calls for objective research into the life of Hitler that examines the Nazi leader's virtues as well as his faults. Lukacs carefully points out that he is not calling for a "rehabilitation" of Hitler and that the essentially evil nature of the man and his regime must always be noted. (Here the author shows that he is not immune to the tendency of modern historians to make Hitler the scapegoat for most of the ills of the twentieth century.)

An introductory chapter examines most of the important biographies of Hitler as well as many monographs on aspects of his life and career. The authors of those works include German historians and journalists Martin Broszat, Joachim Fest, Sebastian Haffner, Helmut Heiber, Konrad Heiden, Andreas Hillgruber, Eberhard Jaeckel, Werner Maser, Ernst Nolte, Gerhard Schreiber, and Ranier Zitelmann; British historians and journalists Alan Bullock, William Carr, David Irving, Ian Kershaw, and Robert C. L. Waite; and American historians and journalists Harold Gordon, Jr., Bradley F. Smith, and John Toland. Lukacs finds nits to pick with all these authors, but he reserves his most critical remarks for British historian David Irving and American historian and journalist John Toland.

Lukacs accuses Irving of being a secret admirer of Hitler who tries to rehabilitate him through destroying the reputations of his three most implacable foes: Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin. Lukacs also casts serious doubts on Irving's reliability as an historian, pointing out that many of Irving's references are either misrepresented or nonexistent. Lukacs dismisses Irving's contention in *Hitler's War* (1977) that Hitler did not order the mass murder of the Jews and did not learn of it until 1943-1944 as fantasy. Lukacs also indicts Toland as an admirer of Hitler, dismisses his research as the efforts of a "popular" historian, and insists that there exists no evidence for several of the anecdotes Toland relates about Hitler. Exactly why Lukacs concludes that Toland "admires" Hitler never becomes entirely clear.

The introductory chapter also notes a number of controversies in Hitler studies swirling at the time of the book's publication, such as the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians' quarrel) in Germany. Exactly what the issues in the *Historikerstreit* are, Lukacs never makes entirely clear, which is not surprising given that many of the historians involved seem unsure of those issues. He also notes the "intentionalist"/"functionalist" debate (whether Hitler intended the murder of the Jews from the beginning of his assump-

tion of power or whether the murders were the result of the functioning of a huge bureaucracy run amok). He also examines the many problems associated with any attempt to get at the “real” Hitler, such as the dearth of written documents he left and the highly emotionalized and sensationalized accounts of most people who knew him.

Lukacs addresses a problem apparently dear to his own heart in chapter 2: whether Hitler’s ideas crystallized in Vienna—as Hitler himself said in *Mein Kampf* (1925-1927) and as most historians have uncritically accepted—or whether they actually solidified in Munich, as Lukacs believes. He examines all the relevant works in English and German to arrive at the conclusion that Hitler’s *Weltanschauung* (worldview) did not form fully until after he returned to Munich after World War I. The chapter also explores what Lukacs calls the turning points of Hitler’s life. The author again critiques most of the major biographies of Hitler to arrive at the conclusion that there were four, possibly five, such points: Hitler’s arrival in Vienna in 1908, his move to Munich in 1919, his release from prison in 1924, and his obsession with the idea that he did not have long to live that he developed in 1937-1938. Lukacs thinks that the fifth turning point may have been in November, 1941, when he realized he could no longer win the war on his own terms. Lukacs believes that it was at this point that Hitler decided on the mass murder of Jews.

Lukacs raises the question in chapter 3 of whether Hitler was a reactionary, as some historians have concluded, or a revolutionary, as other biographers have argued. After a thorough examination of the literature on the subject, Lukacs concludes that Hitler was a “populist revolutionary” who led a party made up of representatives from all classes of society, all religious persuasions, and all regions of Germany (a true *volkspartei*). He also argues that Hitler had a demonstrable genius for politics and an instinctive genius for economics that led to the economic miracle in Germany between 1933 and 1938, and that Hitler’s programs were modern, looking toward the future rather than the past. Lukacs makes the curious observation in this chapter that Hitler used anti-Marxist rhetoric in his speeches without actually being an anti-Marxist, rejecting the contentions of Ernst Nolte that, reduced to its essentials, Nazism was nothing more or less than militant opposition to Marxism.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore Hitler’s relationship to the state and the people of the Third Reich and Hitler’s abilities as a statesman and as a military commander, again through an examination of the historical literature on the subjects and Hitler biographies. In these chapters, Lukacs comes to several unorthodox conclusions, such as that Hitler never intended to exercise dictatorial/totalitarian power but wanted to rule with the consent of his

people, that Hitler was *not* a racist but an extreme nationalist, and that Hitler's aim was to unify the German people into one Reich that would become the greatest power in Europe, not, as some historians have maintained, to conquer the world. The author also unoriginally identifies the drive for *lebensraum* (living space) and judeophobia as the most consistent parts of Hitler's policies. (Lukacs does not explain how one can be a judeophobe without being a racist.) Almost alone of all the historians whose works he surveys, Lukacs praises Hitler's skills as a military commander, identifying him as an instinctual strategist. Lukacs apparently attributes Hitler's military setbacks to bad luck and the actions of his generals.

In chapter 5, Lukacs argues that Hitler underwent a psychological and physiological transformation in 1937-1938, when he became convinced that his health was deteriorating and that he did not have many years left to live. Lukacs observes that Hitler became obsessed with accomplishing his foreign policy objectives quickly, risking war if necessary, but never actually *wanting* war. In this chapter, Lukacs indulges in much speculation about Hitler's diplomatic and military strategy based on very limited evidence.

Chapter 6 ruminates (again through the prism of what other historians have written about the subject) on Hitler's strange obsession with the "Jewish problem." After noting that the subject remains highly emotional, Lukacs proceeds to try to get at the reasons for this obsession. After examining the voluminous literature that has attempted to psychoanalyze Hitler (in particular Waite's *The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler*, 1977), Lukacs concludes that the true reasons for the obsession may never be known but that they had their roots in Hitler's autodidactic education and the huge gaps in his knowledge of the world. Lukacs maintains convincingly that Hitler was not intent on murdering the Jews from the beginning of his regime; rather, the mass murders resulted from military reverses on the eastern front. According to this interpretation, the "final solution" to the Jewish problem was the deportation of all Jews living in German-occupied Europe to regions conquered from the Soviet Union. There the Jews would become either tenant farmers, on estates overseen by Germans, or small craftsmen and skilled laborers in the villages and cities. The process of rounding up Jews and transporting them to transit camps in Poland had already begun when the war turned against Germany during the winter of 1941-1942. As more and more Jews poured into these transit camps, which were unequipped to feed them or see to their medical and physical needs, Germans began their systematic program of mass murder. Lukacs also argues that Hitler must have ordered the mass murders either in writing or

by verbal instructions, regardless of the lack of a paper trail leading directly to him.

Lukacs tackles the contentious problem in chapter 7 of whether Hitler and the Third Reich represent the logical outcome of previous German history or whether they were in fact aberrations made possible by a very special set of circumstances. After examining most of the relevant literature on the subject, Lukacs concludes that Hitler was not the *sole* logical outcome of previous German history, but one possibility out of many. Lukacs acknowledges that Hitler could never have come to power without the widespread resentment engendered in Germans by the Treaty of Versailles and the recurrent economic dislocations in German society caused by such calamities as the great inflation of 1922-1924 and the Great Depression.

Lukacs devotes chapter 8 to condemning admirers and defenders (open and secret) of Hitler. He surveys the literature produced by those he perceives to be Hitler apologists such as David Irving, John Toland, and Ernst Nolte (how Nolte could possibly fit into this category is not at all clear), finding this literature unconvincing in its entirety though not in some of its particulars. Lukacs seems prepared to acknowledge that Hitler was a human with virtues as well as faults, but he nevertheless insists on the underlying evil of Hitler's nature.

In the final chapter, Lukacs speculates on Hitler's place in history. Was Hitler a "great" man? Here Lukacs argues that one's answer to that question will depend on one's definition of "greatness." The author points out that Hitler's many accomplishments must be weighed against the results of his rule—the almost total destruction of Germany and the permanent scar left on the psyches of people everywhere that resulted from the revelation of Auschwitz. Lukacs concludes that the observation that if "great" should be applied to men who had an abiding influence on the society of their time, then Hitler surely must be called great. If by "great," however, is meant a man who has had a *beneficial* influence on his society and his time, then Hitler is surely the antithesis of great.

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—Paul Madden

HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS

ORDINARY GERMANS AND THE HOLOCAUST

AUTHOR: Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (1959-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1996

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Touting his book as a much-needed revision of Holocaust scholarship, Goldhagen argues that German anti-Semitism was the central cause that induced thousands of "ordinary Germans" to slaughter European Jewry while millions more of them actively collaborated in the Holocaust or at least gave their compliant approval for that genocide.

OVERVIEW

Begin with a young Harvard professor of government who is as bright as he is brash and whose ways with words are as pretentious as they are perplexing. Take his doctoral dissertation and turn it into a book whose methodology, tone, and content intentionally collide with judgments of the major scholars in the field. Promote the book in ways that propel it to international best-seller status and hurl its largely unknown author into the media spotlight. Such ingredients are bound to cause a stir. Focus them on a topic charged with intense feeling and profound implications—the Holocaust, the annihilation of the European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators—and the resulting controversy will come to a boil. So it has been with Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*.

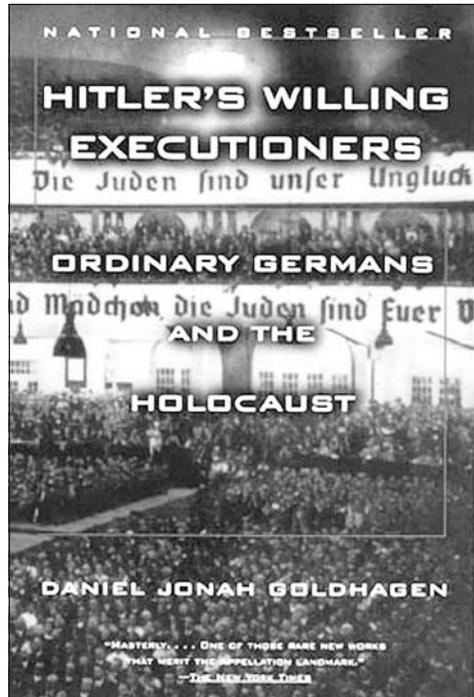
Even when they are about immensely important subjects such as the Holocaust, six-hundred-page history books rarely get the attention that Goldhagen's has received. Repeatedly finding his research at odds with their own, most Holocaust scholars in the United States, Europe, and Israel do not give Goldhagen marks to match the high sales figures that his book has enjoyed. For mainly good reasons, the leading scholars whom Goldhagen vies to supplant take his methodology to be suspect, the tone of his writing to be arrogant and disdainful of even the best work in Holocaust studies, and his research results to be either far less original than Gold-

hagen claims or perniciously incorrect to the point of being destructive because they reignite undeserved prejudices against Germans and Jews alike.

What did Goldhagen say—and how did he say it—to provoke such critical reactions, which, ironically, call even greater attention to his book? Note, first, that *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was preceded, even scooped, by the work of Christopher R. Browning, a distinguished historian who published a 1992 work that has achieved classic status in Holocaust studies. Browning called his book *Ordinary Men*. It analyzed the postwar judicial interrogations of 210 members of Reserve Police Battalion 101, a 500-man killing squadron of the German Order Police that was responsible for 83,000 Jewish deaths in Poland during the so-called final solution.

Goldhagen targeted Browning's book when he chose *Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* as the subtitle for *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Having probed the same archival material about Reserve Police Battalion 101 that Browning had investigated, Goldhagen believed that Browning mishandled and misinterpreted the data. Specifically, Goldhagen contended that Browning underestimated the extent and depth of anti-Semitism in Germany and played down its tenacious grip and deadly influence on the German people. Furthermore, Goldhagen charged that Browning wrongly advanced a universalistic perspective about the Holocaust. In Goldhagen's judgment, that outlook inadequately explained the killing behavior of the men in Reserve Police Battalion 101 by taking conformity to peer pressure, blind acceptance of current political norms, and careerism to be among its chief motivational causes.

Browning's interpretation did stress that the reserve policemen, German though they were and anti-Semitic though they may have been, were of special significance because they were also very ordinary human beings. He maintained that the story of Reserve Police Battalion 101 should cause,



at the very least, discomfort for men and women everywhere. For as post-Holocaust history shows, people in other times and places—people like *us*—are also capable of complicity in genocide. Goldhagen was not impressed, let alone persuaded. He found fault with Browning's book because it missed what he regarded as the essential point about the Holocaust: Only the deep-seated racist anti-Semitism that infested the German people could motivate, and thus account for, the behavior of particular Germans who committed the atrocities that advanced the "final solution."

Making his case, however, obliged Goldhagen to do more than disagree with Browning's interpretation of the archival records about Reserve Police Battalion 101. He would have to show, first, that "Germans' anti-Semitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust," a claim that required him not only to trace the history of German anti-Semitism but also to document how that history involved authority and power fatal enough to account for the Holocaust's vast destruction. In addition, Goldhagen's case would hinge on demonstrating that "ordinary Germans"—not just rabidly anti-Semitic Nazis who had the political power to define social reality and to dominate a German population that might be more ambivalent about the so-called Jewish question—either willingly engaged in the slaughter or were so willing to let it go forward that they would have become active killers if called on to do so. In short, Goldhagen had to show that the Holocaust, contrary to Browning's "ordinary men" hypothesis, was essentially the willful act of "ordinary Germans," who were much more lethally anti-Semitic than previous scholarship admitted.

To establish these positions, Goldhagen's book argues in two directions that govern its organization. Beginning with the history of German anti-Semitism, Goldhagen aims to show how, in particular, a potentially lethal anti-Jewish racism had a powerful influence in pre-Nazi Germany. Then he focuses on the actual German perpetrators of the Holocaust, studying specifically the personnel and work of killing squadrons such as Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the parts played by other "ordinary Germans" in the huge system of concentration, labor, and death camps that was, as he correctly puts it, "the emblematic institution of Germany during its Nazi period." To these perspectives, he adds detail, as hideous as it is valuable, about a lesser-known aspect of the Holocaust, namely, the brutal "death marches" that took place from late 1939 until the end of World War II.

As it moves in both of these directions—one looking toward a Holocaust that had not yet taken place, the other looking back from the "final solution" to determine how it happened—Goldhagen's basic argument can be summarized in two syllogisms. They reason as follows: First, ordi-

nary Germans were anti-Semitic. Their anti-Semitism entailed elimination of the Jews. Therefore, ordinary Germans were prepared to be willing executioners. Second, far from being reluctant murderers, some Germans actually became willing executioners of the European Jews. Typically, those same Germans were a representative cross section of the German population. Therefore, with exceptions that only prove the rule, ordinary Germans stand indicted for the destruction of the European Jews.

Goldhagen's evidence for these claims derives initially from an appraisal of the history of anti-Semitism in Germany. According to his reading of that history, venomous forms of cultural and racist anti-Semitism became normative in Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, well before Hitler and the Nazi Party gained power in 1933. Such anti-Semitism called for the elimination of Jews and Jewish influence in Germany. In one way or another, then, the vast majority of the German populace was prepared to destroy Jews.

When the Nazis came to power, they advocated an overtly *exterminationist* anti-Semitism. Crucial to Goldhagen's argument is his claim that this exterminationist ideology was only a variation on the already *eliminationist* anti-Semitism that had existed in Germany for some time. During the Nazi period, 1933-1945, German perpetrators of the Holocaust willingly persecuted and destroyed Jews because they basically shared the Nazis' anti-Semitic perspective. This perspective held that the annihilation of the Jews was necessary and just because they were an unremitting pestilence threatening the racial superiority and political prerogatives that properly belonged to Germans.

Given legitimacy by the Nazi regime, the German killers, according to Goldhagen, were not an extraordinary minority. Instead, they were representative of the German populace. Goldhagen's logic entails this relationship to mean that the vast majority of Germans were not only willing to let the Holocaust happen but also would have participated directly in the killing if the need enjoined them to do so.

Goldhagen's reading of the pre-Holocaust history of German anti-Semitism musters his evidence that ordinary Germans were possible perpetrators and accomplices in a potential but not yet real "final solution." This part of his account makes it no surprise, however, that the potential elimination of German Jews became the actual destruction of the European Jews. While recognizing that this movement from potential to actual annihilation has many dimensions and multiple causes, Goldhagen holds that too many scholars have agonized needlessly, often to the point of confusion, in their misguided efforts to show why and how the Holocaust happened.

Ever confident of the superiority of his own judgment, Goldhagen thinks that few puzzles remain about the Holocaust's causes. Although explaining how the Holocaust happened remains a long story, he believes that there is no need to dwell on most of the complexities that so much causal analysis of the Holocaust has produced. As Goldhagen sees it, the Holocaust had one cause that outweighed the others. Direct and straightforward, it involved the motivation without which the Holocaust was unthinkable, namely, the Germans' anti-Semitic beliefs about Jews. Remove that factor and the Holocaust that actually happened would not have taken place. On the other hand, to realize the "final solution," the anti-Semitism of Goldhagen's ordinary Germans did need the catalyst that Hitler and the Nazi Party provided. Nevertheless, by themselves Hitler and the Nazi Party alone could not have made the Holocaust happen as it did. The actual Holocaust required willing, ordinary Germans to effect it.

Fanatically anti-Semitic as they were, Goldhagen suggests, Hitler and the Nazi Party had a reciprocal relationship with ordinary Germans when it came to the Jewish question. In Hitler and the Nazi Party, ordinary Germans got the organization, determination, and legitimation to carry out their latent, if not active, will to destroy European Jewry. In ordinary Germans, Hitler and the Nazi Party found a people who were well prepared to carry out the plan for a Third Reich that would be *judenrein* ("cleansed of Jews"). Thus, when Goldhagen reckons with the actuality of the Holocaust, his book becomes much more than an explanation of how he thinks the Holocaust took place. With his view that the Germans' anti-Semitic motivation was the most crucial condition—necessary though not alone sufficient—for the Holocaust, Goldhagen indicts "ordinary Germans," a category as broad as it is indiscriminating, and renders a sweeping verdict of collective German guilt.

Goldhagen's book has its merits. They exist primarily in his expansion of some details about the "final solution," but not in the book's specious promise to achieve a groundbreaking analysis that meets a need—more imagined than real—for "radical revision" of nearly all previous scholarship on the Holocaust. Nowhere is this appraisal of his book more apt than in regard to his claim that "German's antisemitic beliefs about Jews were the central causal agent of the Holocaust."

Goldhagen is wrong when he implies that scholars such as Raul Hilberg, Yehuda Bauer, and Christopher Browning have "denied or obscured" the importance of German anti-Semitism. What they and other leading Holocaust scholars have done, however, is to avoid the oversimplifications that make and break Goldhagen's book. Anti-semitism, for example, was a major current in pre-Nazi times. Nevertheless, while Goldhagen's work fills

in empirical details about that ugly picture, pre-Nazi anti-Semitism in Germany was not primarily the essentially lethal variety that Goldhagen requires to make his claims hold. Conveniently dismissing any evidence to the contrary as insufficient or inadequate, failing to do the comparative work that ought to modify his extreme views about German anti-Semitism by placing it in a larger European context, Goldhagen relies too much on an assumed German uniformity to buttress his case.

At times Goldhagen emphasizes that his "ordinary Germans" must not be caricatured as a slavish, order-obeying people and that their freedom of choice should be recognized as crucial if they are to be held responsible for their Holocaust-related actions. To cite one of Christopher Browning's succinct rebuttals, however, Goldhagen ignores his own principles by describing ordinary Germans as basically "undifferentiated, unchanging, possessed by a single, monolithic cognitive outlook," especially as far as Jews were concerned before and during the Holocaust.

How will Goldhagen's work stand the test of time? Will it be more than a 1996 international book sensation? In deliberately provocative ways, Goldhagen has raised issues about Germans, Jews, anti-Semitism, and Holocaust scholarship that will not be taken lightly by any of the parties involved. At least for a time, his book will continue to be the subject of impassioned debate. In the long run, however, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is likely to be much less than it was hyped to be. More than anything else, it will be remembered in the history of Holocaust studies as a phenomenon that did more harm than good.

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—John K. Roth

THE HOLOCAUST IN AMERICAN LIFE

AUTHOR: Peter Novick (1934-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1999

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; current affairs

Analyzing the importance given to the Holocaust in the United States at the end of the twentieth century, Novick assesses the policies of American Jewish leaders, disputes the Holocaust's usefulness as a source of moral lessons, and questions the wisdom of the American emphasis on the Holocaust.

OVERVIEW

The Holocaust, Nazi Germany's destruction of the European Jews, took place far away from the United States where the Jewish population—about 3 percent—is a relatively small part of the total. By the 1990's, however, this event loomed large in American life. Curious about that prominence and skeptical about its desirability, Peter Novick, an American Jewish scholar who is a prizewinning historian at the University of Chicago, went to work on *The Holocaust in American Life*. As contentious and controversial as it is diligently researched and lucidly written, Novick's unrelenting arguments debunk conventional wisdom about Holocaust memorialization in the United States. Persistently provocative, Novick's polemical book makes enough unpopular claims to guarantee that debate about it will not end any time soon.

"Why now?" Novick asks about Americans' growing consciousness of the Holocaust. Right off, his response advances an arguable proposition: Shortly after they occur, historical events are usually talked about the most; then they gradually recede from the spotlight. The Holocaust, he thinks, defies that trend. For twenty years after World War II, the Holocaust was barely named as such, let alone discussed much in the United States. From the 1970's on, however, it became "ever more central in American public discourse." A key reason for the Holocaust's relatively late impact on the American scene, Novick contends, is that reference to "the Holocaust" as a distinct event is "largely a retrospective construction."

Novick does not deny that the Holocaust happened. To the contrary, he

stresses the reality of Nazi Germany's genocidal attack on European Jewry. Therefore, he distinguishes between "the *historicity* of events" and "collective memory" about them. Awareness of the former, Novick explains, entails understanding historical events in their "messy complexity," which involves "circumstances different from those that now obtain." Following the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, Novick claims that collective memory, which he finds dominating Holocaust remembrance, may be "ahistorical, even anti-historical," for it tends to simplify and mythologize history as "present concerns determine what of the past we remember and how we remember it."

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Americans of all kinds memorialize the Holocaust, but when Germans were actually shooting and gassing Europe's Jews en masse, American attention was understandably occupied by the overall course of World War II and especially the war against Japan in the Pacific. In government circles, let alone the public mind, nothing like contemporary awareness of the Holocaust existed. According to Novick, only in the late 1960's, after the 1961 Israeli trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann increased Holocaust news, did many Americans consider the Holocaust as "a distinct—and distinctively Jewish—entity." Even this American awareness was far removed from what the power of collective memory would make of the Holocaust during the next thirty years.

Unsatisfied, Novick's curiosity relates one question, "Why now?" to another, "Why here?" How did awareness of the Holocaust, an event so distant from most American experience, take root in the United States at all? Novick responds that Holocaust consciousness in the United States would not have caught on apart from American Jewry's self-interested choices. Far from a Jewish conspiracy to impose Holocaust consciousness on the United States, these choices, "shaped and constrained by circumstances," were primarily about American Jewry's "collective self-understanding and self-representation." Nevertheless, despite the relatively small number of people who advanced them, those decisions became sufficiently powerful to affect a much larger American public.

Rejecting the often-repeated theory that the Holocaust's trauma was so severe that testimony about it was repressed for years, Novick stresses that postwar attention to the Holocaust grew in the United States only when Jewish interests dictated that it should. Until the late 1960's, the American "market" for Holocaust interests was small. True, American sympathy for the plight of Holocaust survivors helped to support the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, but, on the whole, American Jewish leadership saw no advantage in promoting widespread attention to the Holocaust's horror.

Doing so would underwrite an image of the Jew as victim, an outcome sure to create unwanted dissonance with the postwar American optimism shared by most Jewish Americans. Jewish promotion of Holocaust consciousness also would have conflicted with the American need to rehabilitate West Germany as a Cold War buttress against the Soviet Union. It followed that most of the recently arrived Holocaust survivors in the United States—Novick estimates that they numbered about 100,000—accepted the message that American Jewry would get along best if they kept their Holocaust experiences to themselves, put the past behind them, and got on with their new American lives.

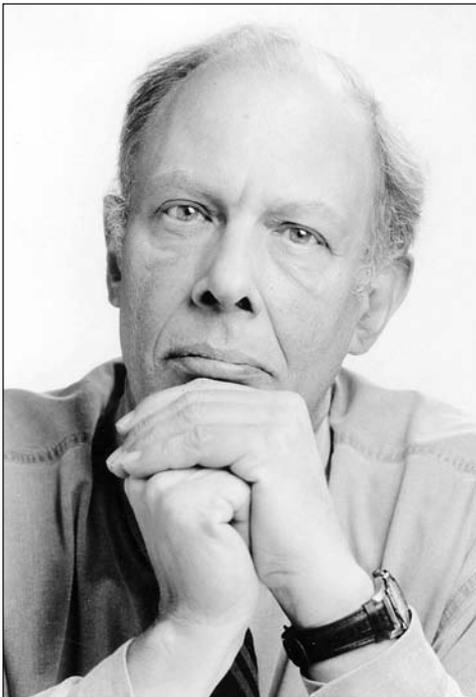
Still underscoring that American Jewry's interests led the way, Novick's account continues by arguing that decisive changes in Americans' Holocaust consciousness emerged not only from two Israeli wars—the 1967 Six-Day War and especially the Yom Kippur War of 1973—but also from domestic developments. Although the Israelis prevailed in both wars, a threatened Israel, isolated in the Middle East, produced renewed Holocaust fears as well as efforts to ensure that memory of the Holocaust would not fade, a movement accompanied, Novick thinks, by a real but unwarranted suspicion that American Jews themselves faced the isolating effects of renewed anti-Semitism in the United States.

Holding the debatable position that there was not much to hold Jewish identity together in the increasingly secular American culture, where intermarriage and other assimilationist forces were also at work, Novick contends that the Jewish leadership in the United States increasingly linked Jewish identity to Holocaust memory and memorialization. As changing perceptions of Jewish need caused the Holocaust to be remembered anew, the chosen approach reversed earlier trends by stressing that even American Jews were potentially, if not actually, victims of processes that would dilute, diminish, and perhaps destroy the vitality of Jewish life. Novick adds that these Holocaust-related appeals were bolstered by complementary cultural changes in American life that highlighted the diversity of ethnic identities in the United States by acknowledging and even celebrating the victimization that various minority groups had experienced in their histories. All these factors combined to stimulate an intensified Jewish accent on the "sacralization" and uniqueness of the Holocaust. This burgeoning emphasis on the Holocaust, Novick suggests, then spread into the American mainstream largely because American Jewry's "influential role in Hollywood, the television industry, and the newspaper, magazine, and book publishing worlds" worked in that direction.

Although Novick stresses again that no "Jewish conspiracy" governed these developments, he focuses on an expanding Jewish awareness that

"Americans could be made more sympathetic to Israel, or to American Jews, through awareness of the Holocaust." NBC's four-part, nine and one-half hour *Holocaust* miniseries provided evidence to support that belief by drawing an audience of almost one hundred million American viewers when it aired in 1978, the same year in which President Jimmy Carter established the President's Commission of the Holocaust to explore the creation of a national Holocaust memorial. The result of this initiative eventually included the observance of "Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust" (ceremonies are held annually in the Capitol rotunda) and the building of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Since it opened in 1993, the same year in which filmgoers jammed theaters to see Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-winning adaptation of Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's List* (1983; first published in 1982 as *Schindler's Ark*), the museum has received millions of American visitors—most of them Gentiles—every year.

As the twenty-first century begins, Novick observes that the Holocaust has entered American life to such a degree that it has become, "except for hermits, inescapable." He finds this outcome more harmful than beneficial. American Jewish identity, he claims, has become too Holocaust-



Peter Novick. (© Fredric Stein)

dependent, a lightning-rod thesis that has drawn reaction both supportive and critical. Novick also believes that the Holocaust's impact on Americans' consciousness has been less than many people think, an evaluation that produces more clashing rejoinders, especially when Novick finds it dubious that attention to the Holocaust teaches moral lessons.

Empty, unnecessary, irrelevant, ineffective—these are only some of the faultfinding barbs that Novick hurls at "lessons of the Holocaust." Convinced both that the Holocaust was so extreme that it has little connection to ordinary life and that the Holo-

caust could be no more nor less a source of “lessons” than, say, the Irish potato famine—views subject to criticism for trivializing the Holocaust—Novick thinks that the Holocaust’s supposedly “universal” lessons (for example, society must not be indifferent to evil) are so obvious as to be clichés, so general as to be empty, and too vague to be relevant or effective. Although Novick admits that visits to Holocaust museums and courses about the Holocaust may “sensitize” people about other atrocities, he doubts that this payoff actually occurs. For most Americans, he complains, “contemplating the Holocaust is virtually cost-free: a few cheap tears.” In his judgment, however, the price of such contemplation is very high indeed, for he suspects that it promotes “*evasion* of moral and historical responsibility.” Although Novick provides no empirical evidence to support these allegations, he vigorously presses his indictments nonetheless.

Novick protests too much. Insisting that he is “skeptical about the so-called lessons of history,” Novick obviously thinks it is good to study historical events, especially when they are confronted in all their complexity and contradictions. His reasoning implies, moreover, that such work is fundamentally ethical, and he compares it to that of a medical researcher who studies diseases knowing that expressions of moral outrage or clinging to unexamined preconceptions will not be very helpful in achieving the goal of checking, if not eliminating them. If Novick takes his medical research analogy seriously, then his historical work, which emphasizes the Holocaust, surely involves an analogous goal—namely, to limit, if not to cure, the genocidal ills that afflict humanity. Insights about progress in that direction, if they can be found, are not going to be of Novick’s straw-man variety—ones that fit on bumper stickers or that shape and shade the past so that inspiring lessons emerge. Nevertheless, his chosen analogy does not suggest that historical study is an end in itself. People study disease—and, at least in part, the Holocaust—for the sake of future prevention and cure. In the case of the Holocaust, to do otherwise would be tantamount to indifference to the awe and horror that Novick finds always appropriate when one confronts the Holocaust.

Apparently Novick loathes lessons. Nevertheless, ironically if not inconsistently, he prescribes one Holocaust-related lesson after another. His lessons are virtually imperatives: Focus on the historicity of the Holocaust. Approach collective memory of the Holocaust with skepticism. Do not link Jewish identity too closely to the Holocaust. Be cautious in assuming that the Holocaust’s impact on Gentile Americans is as deep as it is broad. Novick rejects some “lessons of the Holocaust” only to advance his own versions of them.

Novick’s long list of Holocaust-related lessons contains one of special

importance: Americans—Gentiles and Jews—should be realistic about the future of the Holocaust in American life. Holocaust consciousness has grown immensely in the United States, but without much regret Novick argues that current trends in American culture, and in American Jewish life particularly, are unlikely to sustain the dubious centrality that the Holocaust achieved at the twentieth century's end. Many will disagree, but he affirms that expanded emphasis on the Holocaust is no longer needed to defend Israel, to check anti-Semitism, to fortify Jewish religious and cultural identity, or even to combat the dangers of Holocaust denial.

According to Novick, American Jewish interests can now live optimistically, flourishing in a post-Holocaust age whose times will include the demystifying effect that the passing of the last survivors will entail and a reduction of Holocaust-related news as the event recedes further into the past. Novick neither hopes nor believes, however, that the Holocaust will be forgotten. He offers reassurance that commemoration and memory of the Holocaust have been successfully institutionalized. Professionalized Holocaust scholarship and teaching will continue to ensure the Holocaust's presence in American culture. If the outcome is a more moderate Holocaust presence in the United States, Novick suggests, that result is one that Americans—Jews in particular—should embrace, because, among other things, it will deny Hitler the posthumous victory that would be his if Jews make Holocaust victimhood “the emblematic Jewish experience.”

At times misguidedly contentious, *The Holocaust in American Life* deserves a place among the noteworthy books of 1999 because it raises so many fundamental challenges about how the Holocaust should be remembered in the United States. Novick's basic argument is that it would be better for American Jewry, more honest for Americans generally, and more respectful for the Holocaust itself if that event had a less hyped and a more modest part in American culture. In a book full of ironies, however, the final one may turn out to be that Novick's work will have the opposite effect.

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—*John K. Roth*

HOLOCAUST POLITICS

AUTHOR: John K. Roth (1940-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2001

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; religion and spirituality

This work asserts that we must teach, study, learn, “own,” and commemorate the Holocaust if we are to prevent the recurrence of such genocide and become more deeply empathic and sensitive humans, responsible for our own actions and their effects on others. Roth notes that, although the Catholic Church’s anti-Jewish teachings helped create the environment for the Holocaust, Christians and Jews are positively interconnected.

OVERVIEW

In his prologue, “What Is Holocaust Politics?” John K. Roth recognizes our lack of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual closure over the Holocaust, the torture and killings of Jews and others by the Nazi regime in the 1930’s and 1940’s during World War II. We will never comprehend the “how” or “why” of this atrocity because the depth and breadth of its evil defy all of our assumptions about civilized human behavior. Holocaust politics involves such issues as Holocaust denial, memorializing, and financial restitution to survivors. In arguing that ethics needs to be an integral part of Holocaust politics, Roth insists that Holocaust study should be done not as an end in itself but solely as a means to an end: human betterment.

In chapter 1, “Who Owns the Holocaust?” Roth points out how difficult it is to provide restitution for survivors when such debts are incalculable. Do Jews “own” the Holocaust, or does it belong to the Germans or others (Gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses) who were slaughtered? Roth concludes that all humanity “owns” the burdens, lessons, and responsibilities of the Holocaust as well as the necessity to become more deeply caring and loving humans.

In chapter 2, “What Can and Cannot Be Said About the Holocaust?” Roth debates whether the Holocaust (the conscious, systematic annihilation of an innocent people) is unique and exceeds the bounds of historical

comparison. It is a chilling irony that German chancellor Adolf Hitler was *Time* magazine's Man of the Year in 1938, and was considered for Man of the Century in 1999. Although historians have researched details of Hitler's life and the Holocaust, we will never fully understand or explain the man or the genocide; clearly, we must study both with deep commitment to truth.

In chapter 3, "How Is the Holocaust Best Remembered?" Roth explains our obligation to study and teach the particularity of the Holocaust, since eventually no living witness will remain. We must also study what happened before the Holocaust—such as Pope Pius XI's failure in 1938 to condemn Nazi racism—and after it: Only 12 of 142 defendants found guilty were actually executed, despite the best efforts of the Nuremberg tribunal.

In chapter 4, "How Is the Holocaust a Warning?" Roth insists that the Holocaust warns us to reevaluate all human knowledge, philosophy, and assumptions about values. Holocaust politics exhorts us not to take our freedom or dreams for granted and not to practice a xenophobic "us" versus "them" mentality. Indeed, we must remember Holocaust researcher Gitta Sereny's caveat that we are responsible for ourselves as well as others because of "the fatal interdependence of all human actions."

In chapter 5, "Holocaust Politics and Post-Holocaust Christianity," Roth explains that the Papal Concert to Commemorate the Holocaust in 1994 did not go far enough to acknowledge Catholic anti-Semitism before and during the Holocaust; however, during Pope John Paul II's 2000 visit to Israel, he prayed for God's "forgiveness for Jewish suffering caused by Christians." Christian anti-Jewish teachings throughout history created "dry kindling" that facilitated the conflagration of the Holocaust; Hitler had but to "light" the fateful "match." Absent Christian dissent to Nazi sadism, the flames of hate incinerated six million Jews. After Auschwitz, Christians need to focus on the "good news" that God's grace allows and live "full of Grace and Truth."

In chapter 6, "Ethics After Auschwitz," Roth avers that some historians feel that nothing is to be learned from the Holocaust, since all that we thought we knew of morality and ethics evaporates in such immeasurable hate. For example, destruction of the handicapped and other "undesirables" led quickly to the extermination of an "inferior race": Jews. None of this could have occurred, however, without the Catholic Church's demonizing of the Jews. By contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses, whose allegiance was only to God, were destroyed by the Nazis in part because they opposed Jewish persecution. Moreover, the good Christians of the French village Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, inspired by their pastor, André Trocmé, and his wife, Magda, successfully practiced active nonviolent resistance by shel-

tering some five thousand Jews and others from Nazi destruction. To counteract post-Holocaust ethical despair, we must look to God, demand human rights worldwide, and celebrate those rescuers and resisters who oppose the treachery of the perpetrators and bystanders.

In his epilogue, "Where Does Holocaust Politics Lead?" Roth concludes that there is more to be learned and remembered from the Holocaust than the historical event itself. Teachers of the Holocaust believe that a humane future world depends on the power of ethical education. We must keep our memory of the Holocaust potent, focused, moral, detailed, and unclouded so that we may speak out loudly and clearly to condemn the destructiveness of racism, to celebrate those who did good and remained human in the midst of sociopathy and inhumanity, and to assert the inherent dignity of each human.

In playwright Arthur Miller's 1980 teleplay adaptation of Fania Fénelon's Holocaust memoir *Sursis pour l'orchestre*, 1976 (*Playing for Time*, 1981), Fénelon, just before liberation from Auschwitz, says, "We have changed . . . we know a little something about the human race that we didn't know before. And it's not good news." While Roth does not disagree, he counters that even after the Holocaust, there is "good news": "The Word became Flesh and lived among us, full of Grace and Truth" (John 1:14). Roth argues that there would be no Christianity without Judaism. Sadly, the Church has historically betrayed Jews by pronouncing them killers of Christ, sacrilegious, and descendants of Satan. While the Church did not implement the Holocaust, its false and defamatory teachings facilitated Hitler's "final solution to the Jewish question." While some Christians bravely imperiled their own and their families' safety by rescuing Jews, too many stood by or participated in the destruction.

However, Roth finds hope in the controversial Gospel of John, which has often been cited to justify anti-Semitism. In historical context, Roth argues that this Gospel, written during the bifurcation of traditional Jews and Jewish Christians, should never have created an adversarial relationship between Christians and Jews: In John 15:12, Jesus exhorts us to "love one another as I have loved you." Christians and Jews are clearly interrelated, as is clear in John 4:22 when Jesus says, "Salvation is from the Jews."

So brilliant and warming is God's light that, Roth writes, "in spite of the Holocaust, God abides." In the Gospel of John, Jesus' healing, feeding, and protecting of the sick, poor, and vulnerable—along with his resurrection—prove "that evil, despair, suffering and death do not have the last word." Grace is a gift from God. God's Hebrew name, "Yahweh," was translated into Greek as "I Am." In the Gospel of John, Jesus, too, "embodied God" when he said, "I am the light of the world," meaning that, like God, Jesus

“does not permit darkness to prevail.” Therefore Jesus, full of grace, the “good news” in a post-Holocaust world, should be a model of and conduit for compassion, love, and godly behavior.

By contrast with the godless lie emblazoned over the gates of Auschwitz, “Arbeit Macht Frei” (“Work Makes You Free”), Roth counters with the godliness of John 8:32, “The Truth will make you free.” Le Chambon’s pastor André Trocmé understood God’s grace and truth and “the Word made Flesh”; the admonition “Love One Another” appeared at the entrance to his church.

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—Howard A. Kerner

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONIES

THE RUINS OF MEMORY

AUTHOR: Lawrence L. Langer (1929-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1991

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; oral history

Utilizing the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, Langer explores the oral histories of former victims of the Holocaust and shows how their testimonies affect understanding of that disaster.

OVERVIEW

Elie Wiesel survived Auschwitz, became a distinguished author, and, in 1986, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In April, 1977, Wiesel gave an address at Northwestern University titled “The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration.” Although he and other noted writers have made that disaster a fundamental dimension of their work, Wiesel contended that his talk’s title contained a contradiction. His point was that the Holocaust, Nazi Germany’s planned total destruction of the Jewish people and the actual murder of nearly six million of them, outstrips, overwhelms, and negates “literary inspiration.” What happened then to Jewish children, women, and men—and to millions of non-Jewish victims who also were caught in the Holocaust—eludes complete expression, to say nothing of full comprehension, now.

Such claims involve no mystification. Nor do they deny that the Holocaust is an explicable historical event that was unleashed by human beings for human reasons. Yet, as disclosed by the testimony of those who survived it, the Holocaust remains at the depths of personal experience a disaster that no description can equal. Tempting though silence may be, it provides no refuge from this condition. Words to cry out of those depths must be found. Therefore, Wiesel’s address at Northwestern underscored how significant it was that there were writers in every ghetto, witnesses in every camp, who did their best to testify.

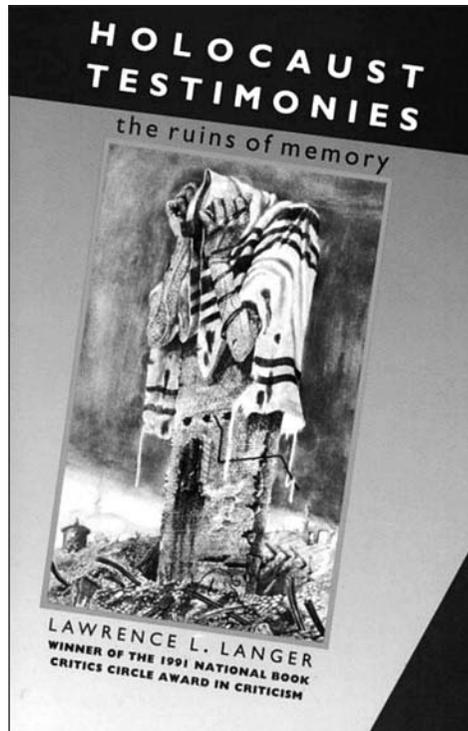
In particular, Wiesel called attention to the diaries of Zalman Gradowski, Leib Langfuss, and Yankiel Wiernik. Trapped by what Lawrence L.

Langer calls “choice-less choices,” those *Sonderkommando* members were condemned to burn the bodies of their Jewish brothers and sisters at Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka. Listen, Wiesel urged, and then he read their words to his audience. Listen, listen—at one point, gripped by his own listening, Wiesel interrupted himself. “You must listen more,” he insisted, “you must listen to more. I repeat, if Wiernik had the courage to write, you must listen.” And then he read on.

No one has listened more or better than Lawrence Langer, a professor of English at Simmons College in Boston who had long been a leading interpreter of literature about the Holocaust. The proof is his *Holocaust Testimonies*. Profoundly, this book takes its readers into a region that Langer’s subtitle aptly identifies as “the ruins of memory.” Langer borrowed that phrase from another powerful writer, Ida Fink, whose personal Holocaust experiences led her to speak not about time “measured in months and years” but about time measured in scraps—separations, selections, silences—that forever fragment life and thwart its wholeness.

Langer’s book results from years of painstaking excavation in the ruins of memory at the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, established at Yale University in 1982. Its holdings—more than forty-three hundred testimonies that range in length from thirty minutes to more than four hours—are available for viewing. *Holocaust Testimonies* compels one to witness these moving accounts.

Langer himself conducted many of the archive’s interviews with Holocaust survivors or “former victims,” as he prefers to call them. But Langer’s exceptional accomplishment goes much further than that. Few people, if any, have witnessed more Holocaust testimonies. Nor has anyone observed so many of them so carefully. Definitely no one has written about these testimonies with more intensity, honesty, and telling impact.



A governing theme in Langer's findings comes from Maurice Blanchot, the author of *L'Écriture du désastre* (1980; *The Writing of the Disaster*, 1986), a study that helped to inform Langer's listening. "The disaster ruins everything," Blanchot's first sentence says, "all the while leaving everything intact." Like nature's changing seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, apparently life goes on for the Holocaust's former victims. Many testify, for example, how they married after liberation from the German camps, built homes in new surroundings, reared children, and advanced careers. Apparently their survival led to living lives that left everything intact.

Only apparently, however, because the disaster leaves everything intact in another, far more devastating, sense. Leaving the survivors alone, it removes—takes the former victims away from—the stability and coherence that normal life assumes. Thus, for those who stayed alive after Auschwitz, life does anything but just go on. For the Holocaust's former victims, the disaster that came upon them so often pivoted around disorienting/orienting scraps of time, crucial moments involving what Blanchot calls the "sovereignty of the accidental," a tyranny that ruled and destroyed life with systematic capriciousness. Its disruptive impact makes the Holocaust a past ever present and always to be reencountered in the future.

Only one of the many testimonies that Langer sensitively weaves into his account, Philip K.'s epitomizes how "the disaster ruins everything." Resisting the reassurance of people "who pretend or seem to be marveling at the fact that I seem to be so normal, so unperturbed and so capable of functioning," Philip K. concludes *Holocaust Testimonies* by denying that "the Holocaust passed over and it's done with." No, he stresses, "it's my skin. This is not a coat. You can't take it off. And it's there, and it will be there until I die."

Ghettoized, starved, deported, tattooed, beaten, raped, gassed, burned, callously scattered to the winds, but some of it left permanently scarred to live—Holocaust skin both covers and recovers what Langer calls "an anatomy of melancholy." Physically rooted in the disaster, that anatomy is much more than skin-deep. Often buried deeply but incompletely by an impossible necessity to forget, the memory resurrected—but not triumphantly—by the anatomy of melancholy is laden with what another former victim, Charlotte Delbo, calls "useless knowledge." Dissenting from the conventional wisdom that knowledge is always useful, Delbo's phrase is another that echoes in Langer's listening, for *Holocaust Testimonies* shows how survival in Auschwitz did little to unify, edify, or dignify the lives of former victims. It divided, besieged, and diminished them instead.

Langer's account, it must be emphasized, protests against any impulse

that would judge and find wanting what the former victims did in their conditions of Holocaust extremity. On the contrary, the entire book is an expression of esteem and admiration “to all the hundreds of men and women who told their stories before the camera.” Judgment, to be sure, does speak in these pages—it seethes in quiet rage between the lines as one hears silently Langer’s writing of the disaster—but that judgment is properly reserved for the German policies that systematized the Holocaust’s choiceless choices and the perpetrators who administered them. The disaster that came upon the Holocaust’s victims was designed to make evident what Nazi ideology proclaimed, namely, that Jews were subhuman or even nonhuman, and its plan for doing so was to create conditions of domination so extreme that normal human life could not go on within them. That plan did not succeed entirely, but in the Nazi camps, as Leon H. puts it, “human life was like a fly.” Hunger, to mention but one of the Holocaust’s hells, was not only “devastating to the human body,” as George S. testifies, but also “devastating to the human spirit, . . . and you didn’t know how to function.”

The victims of *l’univers concentrationnaire* did what they had to do—“This wasn’t good and that wasn’t good,” remembers Hannah F., “so what choice did we have?” Sidney L. adds to that realization when his testimony begins with the fact that he was one of nine children. The Holocaust’s desolation left him as his family’s lone survivor. One glimpses how far life under German domination was removed from usual human expectations about choice and responsibility when, with disarming simplicity, he recalls, “I was never asked ‘Do you want to do such and such?’” The glimpse, however, remains incomplete—“Well, how shall I describe to you how Auschwitz was?” puzzles Edith P. Her question, which is asked in one way or another by many of the Holocaust witnesses Langer heard, seems addressed to herself as much as to her audience.

Speaking from his own experience, Langer rightly insists that listening to these testimonies requires extraordinary effort. They can easily be distorted and falsified by the imposition of moral, philosophical, psychological, or religious categories—including what Langer calls “the grammar of heroism and martyrdom”—that are inappropriate because they belong to a universe of normal discourse that the Holocaust eclipsed. After Auschwitz, the human mind would naturally like to reduce the dissonance that Holocaust testimonies introduce, heal the heartbreak left intact in their wake. The yearning runs deep—especially as one reads *Holocaust Testimonies*—for justice to prevail, wholeness to be restored, moral expectation to be vindicated, and the human spirit to be triumphant. But that yearning collides with Langer’s convincing insistence that the anatomy of melan-

choly does not forecast a high probability in favor of those hopes. The reader is split by Langer's book. In the ruins of memory, expectation diminishes and yearning intensifies at once. As those feelings, conflicted and conflicting, resound in the testimony he has heard, Langer moves his reader to encounter them and to let the resulting tension remain as it must: unreconciled and unreconciling.

The stark bleakness of Langer's anatomy of melancholy calls for coming to terms, if one can, with a condition that recalls Blanchot once more. As though he had heard Helen K.'s lament ("I can't believe what my eyes have seen") and pondered the question posed by Edith P. and so many others ("Do you understand what I'm trying to tell you?"), Blanchot invites meditation on circumstances in which "there is a question and yet no doubt; there is a question, but no desire for an answer; there is a question, and nothing that can be said, but just this nothing, to say. This is a query, a probe that surpasses the very possibility of questions."

Optimism is scarce in the ruins of memory, but what Langer does find and carefully guard is "unshielded truth," an honesty that underscores what must be faced: "How overwhelming, and perhaps insurmountable," as he puts it, "is the task of reversing [the Holocaust's] legacy." That legacy dwells in memory that is deep, anguished, humiliated, tainted, and unheroic. Correspondingly, that memory disturbingly uncovers selves who are buried, divided, besieged, impromptu, and diminished. Such is the taxonomy that Langer's anatomy of melancholy requires.

Often with greater penetration than written narratives by former victims, Langer is convinced, their oral testimony divulges the disruptions within these dimensions of the Holocaust's legacy. Written words can be polished, edited, and revised; they can become art in ways that oral testimonies cannot. Langer wants both oral and written testimony to have the respect each kind deserves. So he stresses that written accounts by former victims typically have a narrative quality—beginning, middle, and end—that eludes their oral counterparts even when the latter move from pre-Holocaust events to those that occurred after liberation. Importantly, and thanks to the camera's eye, the oral testimonies that Langer heard are also visual. Spoken and unspoken, they communicate significantly through body language. In their hands and faces, especially eyes, have much to say. Such expressions, like the spoken thoughts they help to convey, are less controlled and controllable than written words.

Thus, even oral testimonies that start as chronological narratives are usually interrupted and disrupted by memories buried deep within—such as the one that constrains Edith P. to wonder, "Is there such a thing as love?" So harshly different from the world outside the ghettos and camps,

such deep remembrances expose selves divided by the anguish they contain. "I talk to you," Isabella L. tells her interviewer, "and I am not only here, but I see Mengele [she lived in a barrack from which he chose women, including her sister, for his experiments] and I see the crematorium and I see all of that. . . . I am not like you. You have one vision of life and I have two. I—you know—I lived on two planets. . . . We have these . . . these double lives. We can't cancel out. It just won't go away. . . . It's very hard."

Within such anguish may be recollections of humiliation that besiege—"I left [my brother] there," laments Viktor C., "and I survived [prolonged weeping]. If I forget anything, this I will never forget." Even the present's recovered moral sensibility can taint memory by disapproving the impromptu acts one had to improvise—or failed to improvise—in the past: "How can you, how can you *enjoy* yourself?" Leo G. questions himself. The vulnerability that remains is intensified by recognition that Holocaust survival is less a heroic victory than a matter of chance. At times, Helen K. grieves, "I don't know if it was worth it."

These strains are not the only ones Langer heard. Some of the former victims tell about their determination to survive; they "knew" they would come out alive. Others accent their defiance against German brutality. There are also many who emphasize how important it has been for them to make their lives worthwhile and to retain some hope after Auschwitz. Philip K. speaks for many of his fellow survivors when he affirms, "We lost. . . . And yet we won, we're going on." Langer concludes that "several currents flow at differing depths in Holocaust testimonies." All of them, he adds, are "telling a version of the truth."

It would have been an immense contribution if Langer had only let those multiple truths be told. But the work he has done with such distinction—and it goes without saying how deeply he wishes history had not placed the task before him—required more. He met that demand by refusing the consolation that "a vocabulary of chronology and conjunction" could provide if it were permitted to transcend "a lexicon of disruption, absence, and irreversible loss." Declining that consolation, *Holocaust Testimonies* may make possible a greater sharing of the burden that goes with Langer's refusal. As this superb book helps its readers to understand, such sharing is awesome because it must contain all that Elie Wiesel meant when he testified that "the Holocaust demands interrogation and calls everything into question. Traditional ideas and acquired values, philosophical systems and social theories—all must be revised in the shadow of Birkenau."

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—John K. Roth

HOUSE OF DOLLS

AUTHOR: Ka-tzetnik 135633 (Yehiel Feiner, also known as Yehiel Dinur or Yehiel De-Nur; 1909-2001)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Bet ha-bubot*, 1953 (English translation, 1955)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Psychological realism

This important work by a Holocaust survivor follows the lives of a Jewish sister and brother in Poland from the Kraków ghetto through their time in a Nazi concentration camp. Although bleak, the novel is ultimately uplifting.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Daniella Preleschnik, a Polish teenager

Harrick Preleschnik, known as Harry, Daniella's older brother

Fella, Daniella's flirtatious friend

Vevke, a Jewish cobbler and technical supervisor of the shoe factory in the Kraków ghetto

Tedek, Vevke's son, who loves Daniella

Schultze, the chief German supervisor of the shoe factory

Elsa, the overseer of the brothel called the House of Dolls

OVERVIEW

House of Dolls is the second of a quintet of Holocaust novels published by Ka-tzetnik 135633. Born Yehiel Feiner and later known as Yehiel Dinur or De-Nur (from the word for "fire" in Hebrew), the writer took his pseudonym from his inmate number while he was captive at Auschwitz and a slang version of the German word *Konzentrationslager*, meaning concentration camp prisoner. Reviewing *House of Dolls* in *The New York Times Book Review*, Meyer Levin acclaimed it as the most important Holocaust story published up to that time. Ka-tzetnik's only book to achieve fame outside Israel, it has been translated into more than twenty languages and has sold more than five million copies. Its vivid, poetic treatment of horrific events led Israeli writer Gershon Shofman to call *House of Dolls* a holy book, and it has been required reading in Israeli schools. The Israeli Ministry of Education issued a special edition of the novel in 1994.

The novel begins in 1942, with teenage Daniella Preleschnik working in the rag room at Camp Breslau in Poland, repairing clothing that has been taken from Jews sent to the Nazi concentration camps. The rag room establishes the novel's theme of chance or fate: The workers have to take whatever clothing is on top of the pile, and the lucky ones find concealed coins. Likewise, it is all a matter of chance who gets sent to what camp for what duties and what destiny.

Other workers at Breslau are jealous of the blond, beautiful Daniella, suspecting that Vevke, the supervisor of the shoe factory, is looking after her. Vevke's main goal, however, is to try to protect all the workers by seeing that they do not commit offenses that would get them transported to Auschwitz. Daniella feels responsibility toward Vevke because his son, Tedek, has been arrested while trying to find an escape route to the Slovakian border. Tedek is in love with Daniella and wants to take her to Palestine. Vevke rescues Daniella from the Jewish militia and from being sent to another camp by promising to replace the leather soles on a militiaman's shoes. Working at the shoe factory is seen as highly desirable because having a labor card saves a worker from worse fates. Vevke is considered a savior for rescuing doctors, lawyers, rabbis, and others who have no skills as laborers. His antagonist is the German supervisor, Schultze, who delights in sending inferior workers to Auschwitz.

House of Dolls alternates between the story of Daniella and that of her older brother Harrick, known as Harry, the autobiographical hero of Ka-tzetnik's first novel, *Salamandra* (1946; *Sunrise over Hell*, 1977). At Camp Niederwalden, Harry, who had begun studying medicine before the war, is designated a physician. Having a sick bay in a concentration camp is one of dozens of bitter ironies found in Ka-tzetnik's work. The camp commander maintains the sick bay only so he can brag about it to other commanders. Harry's true duty is not to care for the ill but to oversee mass burials.

Daniella, who is reportedly based on the writer's sister, is eventually sent to this labor camp but is spared the normal duties because of her beauty. She and her flirtatious friend Fella join the ironically named Joy Division, becoming prostitutes for German soldiers on leave. (The novel is the source of the name of the 1970's British rock group Joy Division.) The brothel, known as the House of Dolls, is overseen by the brutal "Master-Kalefactress" Elsa, who resents the young women for their beauty. Daniella keeps a secret record of her experiences, hoping that her notebook will help the rest of the world understand what has happened in the Jewish ghettos and the camps. Fella maneuvers her way into becoming a servant in the commander's quarters, praying she can use her influence to protect her friends.

Some have criticized *House of Dolls* as an exploitative, even pornographic, novel, but the work is in fact a catalog of Holocaust horrors presented in a surprisingly objective manner, with little melodrama. Ka-tzetnik depicts the crowded living conditions in the Kraków ghetto, with the Jews burning not only their furniture but also their beloved books for heat. When she arrives in the camp, Daniella cannot at first determine whether the people she sees are fellow prisoners or corpses, so emaciated are they. When women prisoners undergo "Sin Purgation," the others are forced to watch their flogging. Cruel medical experiments are conducted at the Institute for Hygiene and Scientific Research. Seeing a truck loaded with corpses, Harry desperately tries to identify the bodies, hoping his friends are not among the dead. The camp prisoners have no true identities any longer; they are only Jews.

Ka-tzetnik includes many ironies in the novel. For example, one of the most prized commodities in the ghetto canteen is cyanide. A woman thinks that her oven would be an ideal place to hide from the Germans. Flowers cultivated by the Blossom Platoon give the labor camp an idyllic appearance that masks its harsh reality. The camp commander's mistress thinks that Harry looks like Christ, underscoring the novel's theme of sacrifice for the greater good.

The characters feel they are living borrowed lives. One minute there is the illusion of limited freedom, the next minute the death camps. Ka-tzetnik writes in an impressionistic style, with occasional stream of consciousness, creating a hypnotic, slow-motion effect that accentuates the dreamlike quality of Daniella's experience—a nightmare from which no one awakes. Characters constantly ask themselves and others whether the entire experience is a dream. As camp physician, Harry feels as if he is dreaming of a dream. Seeing a friend being taken away, Daniella thinks that everything is happening under water.

Ka-tzetnik's style includes long passages of sentence fragments, not just in keeping with modernist literary techniques but especially fitting for his subject. Bombarded by loss and deprivation, his characters struggle to maintain complete thoughts. The fragmented narrative conveys their chaotic existences. Ka-tzetnik was a poet before the war, and *House of Dolls* is more self-consciously literary than most autobiographical Holocaust writings (with the notable exception of the works of Elie Wiesel).

Because the characters are reduced to the basics, Ka-tzetnik frequently uses sensual imagery. The inhabitants of the ghetto and the camps cannot make sense of what is happening to them, but they can still respond to heat and cold, sight and sound, smell and taste. A particularly beautiful description of the moonlight outside Daniella's window contrasts the nor-

mality of her previous existence with this new world, where glimmers of light teasingly try to draw her away from the darkness that is her fate.

Harry identifies with a sapling growing beside the camp wall. It becomes a symbol of stunted possibilities, of his confinement, struggling for breath, for freedom. For all its bleakness, *House of Dolls* is also an uplifting tale of survival. Ka-tzetnik's goal is to show how his characters maintain their sanity and dignity, as well as their commitment to family and friends, against great odds. At the end, Fella abandons her plans for revenge. After what she has seen, she can hate no more. As Omer Bartov has observed, Ka-tzetnik's fiction represents a struggle to understand Jewish faith and fate.

The true identity of Ka-tzetnik 135633 was not publicly known until the author testified in the 1961 Israeli trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. Ka-tzetnik, who emigrated to Palestine after the war, and his wife, Nina Asherman De-Nur, also a writer, worked to promote understanding between Israelis and Palestinians, the subject of the final novel about Harry, *Ke-hol me-efer* (1966; *Phoenix over the Galilee*, 1969; published again as *House of Love*, 1971).

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—Michael Adams

I WILL BEAR WITNESS

A DIARY OF THE NAZI YEARS, 1942-1945

AUTHOR: Victor Klemperer (1881-1960)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933-1945* von Victor Klemperer, 1995 (English translation, 2000)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Diary

The second volume of Klemperer's diary depicts the Jewish scholar's increasingly precarious wartime life in Nazi Germany as he experiences intensified persecution and narrowly escapes death when he and his Gentile wife, Eva, reach Allied lines after the bombing of Dresden destroys their home city in February, 1945.

OVERVIEW

The first volume of *I Will Bear Witness*, Victor Klemperer's diary about his life as an endangered Jew in Nazi Germany, ends with the New Year's Eve observation that 1941 was the most dreadful year that he and Eva, his non-Jewish wife, had experienced. On Klemperer's mind were the ever more constrained and dangerous conditions that the intensification of war and Nazi anti-Semitism inflicted on them. In late June, the Germans had invaded the Soviet Union. That autumn, German Jews were ordered to wear the "yellow star," and the Nazis halted all Jewish emigration from Germany and German-occupied territory. Klemperer was among the 163,000 remaining German Jews who were trapped in a regime that was rapidly moving to implement its murderous "final solution."

At the time, dependent as he was on rumors and secondhand reports from foreign news broadcasts, Klemperer could not have known the details of those developments. They included Chełmno, the Nazi death camp that became operational on December 8, and construction projects at Belzec and Auschwitz-Birkenau, two other Polish sites where millions of Jews would be gassed to death. Klemperer's last words for 1941 refer to murder and deportations—often he speaks of "evacuation" instead—but as his diary's second volume reveals, it took time for Klemperer to realize that the worst was yet to come.

The Holocaust destroyed about 2.7 million Jews in 1942, making that

year the most lethal in Jewish history. Primarily because of his "mixed" marriage, which gave him fragile privileges as the Jewish spouse of an "Aryan" woman, Klemperer remained alive. Unbeknownst to him, while Klemperer dealt with his personal dilemmas in Dresden's severe winter cold, the fate of Jews in such marriages was being discussed during an important meeting in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee on January 20, 1942. There, under the leadership of Reinhard Heydrich, the Schutzstaffel (SS) lieutenant general who was also chief of the Reich security main office, fifteen government and SS officials, many with doctorates from German universities, convened at a comfortable lakeside villa to coordinate the "final solution." One proposal at the Wannsee Conference was to dissolve mixed marriages so that the Jewish spouses could be targeted more easily, but at that time no further action was taken on the matter.

While the Wannsee Conference took place, Klemperer's diary entry indicates that he was spending time with Paul Kreidl, a Jewish resident in the special Dresden Jews' house where the Klemperers were also forced to live. A week earlier, Kreidl had shared a disturbing rumor: Jews sent from Germany to Riga, Latvia, had been shot. The rumor was true. On January 21, Kreidl was one of 224 Dresden Jews deported to the Riga ghetto, a victim caught in a power struggle between Nazis who were willing to postpone Jewish death while Jews did labor in key wartime industries and those who wanted to make Germany *judenrein* (free of Jews) immediately.

Klemperer's reflections reveal the forlorn mixture of anxiety and ambiguity, gossiped information and nonsensical incongruity, and immediate need and tentative hope that makes his diary compelling because of the desperate plight it conveys. On March 16, 1942, he writes about the Hitler jokes he heard during a morning work break, the hearsay about the military situation at the eastern front, a report about lenient anti-Jewish policies in Hungary, a new ban in Germany that prohibited Jews from buying flowers, and the growing scarcity of food and fuel. In his eclectic list of experiences mentioned on this date, Klemperer writes that he has also heard of a place called Auschwitz, which was described to him as "the most dreadful concentration camp." How dreadful Auschwitz was he could not know, but within days of his Auschwitz reference, while he notes the latest rations reductions in Dresden, gas chambers are put into operation in a renovated farmhouse at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the main killing center in the Auschwitz complex, with Polish Jews as the victims.

Six months later, on September 19, Klemperer observes that the decree requiring German Jews to wear the yellow star is one year old. "What indescribable misery has descended upon us during this year," he writes. "Everything that preceded it appears petty by comparison." Two days later,

on Yom Kippur, the sacred Day of Atonement, he describes visits to the Pinkowitzes and Neumanns, who will soon be deported. "Going into a beyond," as Klemperer puts it, his friends' situation is grim, and yet the diarist resists the direst conclusion, for the available reports have been "no more than supposition." By this time, however, with the turning-point Battle of Stalingrad under way but far from decided against Nazi Germany, more than 250,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto had been murdered in the gas chambers at Treblinka.

On New Year's Eve, Klemperer again takes stock. The year 1942, he notes, has been the worst of the ten years he has experienced under Nazi rule. Apart from some reading, he has not been able to do any of the scholarly work that means so much to him. The people with whom the Klemperers spent last New Year's Eve have all been "blotted out by murder, suicide, and evacuation." With no end in sight, he constantly feels in "mortal danger." As the year draws to its close, Klemperer can only conclude that 1942 has been the worst year "thus far." For him and many other European Jews, he expects that the terror will increase, and it does. Consider, for example, what took place on February 27, 1943.

That morning, Jews remaining in Germany, even those in armaments industries, were rounded up at their workplaces and assembled for deportation. Even mixed marriages seemed to provide protection no longer, but then something remarkable happened in Berlin. At the Rosenstrasse Jewish community center, where several hundred Jewish men were interned, their non-Jewish wives appeared and protested publicly against the impending deportation. Ordered to disperse, threatened with violence if they did not, the women persisted. Uneasy about the unrest that might spread, the Nazi officials relented and released the Jewish men in mixed marriages. The next day Klemperer makes no comment about the Rosenstrasse protest—probably no news of it reached him—but he does record that "the current action did *not* concern the mixed marriages."

Although no further action against Jews in mixed marriages would be taken until the war's final months, Klemperer saw that his safety was ever more precarious. On February 28, 1943, he recalls that his wife recently heard a German woman's account of a postcard message sent by her son from the eastern front. "I'm still alive"—repeated three times—is all it said. "That is also how far my feelings go," writes Klemperer, "depending on my mood, and changing from hour to hour, the emphasis is now on 'alive,' now on 'still.'" About four months later, on June 12, Klemperer estimates that only a handful of Jews remain in Dresden. He hears contradictory rumors: Mixed marriages will be broken up; mixed marriages will still be safe havens. His mood, he says, keeps shifting "between fear, hope, indif-

ference." Still, as the Klemperers hold out, the reader becomes increasingly aware that despite the threats of despair and death, the husband-and-wife team are expanding and deepening the meaning of "resistance."

Back on May 27, 1942—it was the same day that Czech resistance fighters fatally wounded Heydrich in Prague—Klemperer noted once again how hunger exhausted him. Although he had fought for Germany during World War I, armed resistance against the Third Reich was scarcely a wartime option for a Jew in Dresden. Writing would be Klemperer's chosen form of resistance instead. "I will bear witness," he vows, "precise witness!" Although he could not know that his diary would achieve best-seller status more than fifty years later, there are moments when he senses that he may be writing for history, that it is crucial to record his everyday existence because that detail will be essential to document what Nazi Germany did to the world and to the Jews in particular.

On June 8, 1942, Klemperer mentions that he has heard about Heydrich's death, but the diarist's personal situation remains the focus. The result is that his diary becomes an extended lamentation for the Jews of Dresden, an anguished indictment of the Germany he still loves in spite of its Nazi ways, and a sustained record of the efforts that he and his wife make to endure, to preserve the semblance of a decent life in inhuman circumstances, and to survive for better times. Whether those times will be theirs remains unclear, for in addition to his jeopardized existence as a Jew under Nazi rule, German civilians are endangered as the war is brought close to home by the Allies' air raids, which intensify in 1942 and reach devastating proportions by the end of 1943. The end of that year finds Klemperer observing that Dresden has not yet been hit; nevertheless, it is a place of fear for all the city's inhabitants, not only its very few Jews.

Six months later, Klemperer's wife brings him news that the Allies' D-day invasion at Normandy is under way, but on that day, June 6, 1944, he is "no longer or not yet able to hope." His ambivalence was not misplaced, for even though the war had definitely turned against Nazi Germany, the Holocaust still raged in 1944. On March 19, for example, while Klemperer did air-raid duty, German troops occupied the territory of their faltering Hungarian ally, and the last large group of European Jews came under the Nazis' genocidal control. By July 9, when Klemperer wrote that he could "no longer imagine myself transformed back into a human being," some 437,000 Hungarian Jews had been deported to Auschwitz, where most of them were gassed. On September 3, as Klemperer reports that Dresden's Hitler Youth is marching and singing, another diarist, a young Jewish woman named Anne Frank, is deported to Auschwitz from the Netherlands with her family and hundreds of other Dutch Jews. Klemperer

knows nothing of her, but his September 1 judgment—written on the fifth anniversary of World War II's beginning—sums up the situation: “no safety anywhere.” The year ends with air-raid alerts in Dresden, with the numbed feeling that the war will end “perhaps in a couple of months, perhaps in a couple of years.”

On February 12, 1945, the last of the Dresden Jews learn that they must report for special labor duty. No illusions remain; the orders are a death sentence. Klemperer is not included in the first groups, but he carries the orders to others and expects no mixed-marriage reprieve. Then, on the night of February 13, the situation changes. The Allied air raids begin. The resulting firestorm reduces Dresden to rubble, enabling the city's surviving Jews to destroy the documents and yellow stars that identify them and perhaps eventually to rebuild their lives in the Third Reich's ruins. The Klemperers managed to do so.

Of all the documents from World War II and the Holocaust, Klemperer's diary is among the most unusual. Few others chart day-to-day life in Nazi Germany from the Third Reich's start to finish. From a German Jew's perspective, none does so as thoroughly. Bearing precise witness, Klemperer not only recalls how much was lost but also warns that human beings forget at tremendous peril.

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—John K. Roth

IN KINDLING FLAME

THE STORY OF HANNAH SENESH, 1921-1944

AUTHOR: Linda Atkinson (1941-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1985

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Biography; young adult literature

Through her account of the life and death of the young Jewish freedom fighter Senesh, Atkinson personalizes the Holocaust for young readers.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Hannah Senesh (1921-1944), a young Hungarian Jew who emigrates to Palestine and returns to Hungary to help rescue other Jews

Catherine Senesh, Hannah's mother, who remains in Budapest throughout the war and is imprisoned with her captured daughter
George Senesh, Hannah's brother, who leaves Hungary for France and, later, Palestine

Reuven Dafne, a young Yugoslav member of the parachute rescue team from Palestine that includes Hannah

Yoel Palgi, a member of the rescue team who, like Hannah, is captured and imprisoned in Budapest

Miryam, Hannah's roommate and best friend at the agricultural school in Palestine

Margit Dayka, a Hungarian actress and friend of Catherine Senesh

Captain Simon, the judge advocate at Hannah's trial, who sentences and executes her

OVERVIEW

Linda Atkinson's *In Kindling Flame: The Story of Hannah Senesh, 1921-1944* recounts the cycle of a young Hungarian Jewish woman's life against the backdrop of the events of the mid-1930's through the end of World War II known as the Holocaust. Senesh is an insightful, talented, yet unsure young woman whose desire to become a writer is altered by the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the resurgence of anti-Semitism in her native Hungary and throughout Europe. The account documents her deci-

sion to embrace Zionism and to emigrate to Palestine. Senesh ultimately asks to take part in a rescue mission that will allow her to return to her homeland in order to help Jews escape and to rescue her mother and bring her to Palestine. Upon her return to Hungary via Yugoslavia, Senesh is captured and executed.

Atkinson organizes the book chronologically into three main parts. The first is 1935 to 1944, the period of Senesh's adolescence in Budapest, emigration to Palestine, and training for a return to Adolf Hitler's Europe to help organize resistance. The second is 1944, the year of Senesh's return to Yugoslavia and Hungary as a member of a parachute team to collect intelligence, establish escape routes, and rescue Jews, culminating in her capture and execution. The third section is 1945 and after, which contains a brief history of those Jews, both victims and survivors, who resisted or bore witness to the Holocaust. Throughout the biography, Atkinson conveys to the young adult reader the larger historical record of Jewish resistance by interspersing specific events, such as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, with the personal experiences of her subject, Hannah Senesh.

In its description of a young woman's search to understand herself and her place in the world, and the circular nature of her life's journey from Budapest to Palestine to Hungary, *In Kindling Flame* imparts the quality of the classic quest or hero tale to Senesh's life. Atkinson portrays that life through the use of excerpts from Senesh's diary and correspondence and of the recollections of her mother, her brother, and members of her rescue team. Atkinson carefully places this individual life in the broader contexts of a Europe dominated by anti-Semitism that would culminate in the Holocaust and the creation of Israel, the Jewish homeland in Palestine. She does not, however, permit the setting to overwhelm the sensitively drawn picture of a young woman's emerging maturity and search for the meaning in her life. The use of photographs, some of which depict Senesh's personal life in Budapest and Palestine and others of which show the atrocities visited upon the Jewish population of Europe, visually complements the author's presentation.

It is clear that Atkinson's motivation in writing *In Kindling Flame* and the nature of the content itself are both highly emotionally charged. As she indicates in her acknowledgments, writing the biography of Senesh followed the example of those European Jews who resisted and recorded the events of the Holocaust. One of Atkinson's primary goals in the book is to dispel the misconception that European Jews were unresisting and submissive to the policies and actions directed against them. By portraying a young woman who grows up in a world hostile to Jews and whose final years embody opposition to Hitler's plans to make Europe *Judenfrei* (free of



Hannah Senesh.

Jews), Atkinson is able to personalize the record of Jewish resistance within the framework of the complex political and military events underlying the Holocaust.

Senesh's own perception of her life's work, and that adopted by Atkinson, is conveyed in the line of Senesh's poetry from which the title of the biography is taken: "Blessed is the match consumed/ in kindling flame." Atkinson's unifying focus is the gradual development of Senesh's search for the meaning of her life, which culminates in her single-minded commitment to return to

Hungary to rescue Jews. The strength of the author's portrayal lies in the use of Senesh's own diary as a primary source; the introspective entries and poems help the reader to follow Senesh's search for self. There are striking parallels between Senesh's description of her own adolescent development and that provided by Anne Frank in her diary, *Het Achterhuis* (1947; *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 1952). Senesh's own perceptions are broadened by the views of her mother, her brother, and members of her rescue team, rendering a well-rounded portrait. Despite the obvious empathy of the author for her subject, Atkinson is fair in her portrayal of Senesh. While clearly conveying to the reader that Senesh achieved her desire "to be a great soul," Atkinson addresses her subject's adolescent self-doubts, difficulties in adjusting to kibbutz life in Palestine, and impatience and unwillingness to submit to good advice and authority during training.

In the process of interweaving an individual life with the sociopolitical events of a significant historical period, it is important that the biographer achieve a balance between these two factors that will not sacrifice the subject to the events or use her simply as a vehicle for historical commentary. Atkinson handles this balance well; she is able to maintain a focus on Senesh while providing the reader with pertinent information about the larger context in which she lived and died. This information, primarily concerned with Jewish resistance to the German process of extermination,

strengthens Atkinson's description of Senesh's decision to return to Europe to rescue Jews. In the final section of the book, Atkinson deals specifically with the misconception that European Jews submitted to the policy of extermination. She accurately portrays the many acts of Jewish resistance, ranging from failing to comply with German directives regulating daily life to armed rebellion. For many victims, the act of resistance was to produce a written record of their suffering.

In this section, Atkinson also condemns the failure of the rest of the world to come to the aid of European Jewry, with harshest criticism reserved for Allied governments. She does not, however, cite the numerous acts of personal courage by individuals across Europe who committed themselves to save Jews from the Holocaust. While such an examination is not the focus of her book, its inclusion would have been helpful to balance the historical record.

In Kindling Flame is one of a significant body of works for young adults—biography, autobiography, historical fiction, and information books—that address the issue of the Holocaust. These books collectively bear witness to one of the most cataclysmic events of human history and seek to ensure that, through knowledge and understanding provided in the written record, such events can never happen again. Senesh's life story, as recorded in Atkinson's biography, is a singular example of European Jewry's resistance to the policy of genocide. It is in Senesh's response to the particular circumstances of her adolescence, shaped by her Jewishness and the rise of anti-Semitism, that her life becomes a transcendent experience to be shared with young adult readers. This biography fills the need for adolescents to learn about individuals who have the capacity for believing in something and acting on that belief.

It was in the act of having her life extinguished by the Holocaust (a term that originally referred to an offering to God consumed by fire) that Senesh became one of those individuals whom she herself described as "people whose brilliance continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living." Atkinson's work is a testament to the good in the face of evil that a single life can offer.

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—John J. Carney

“IN THE BLUE DISTANCE”

AUTHOR: Nelly Sachs (1891-1970)

FIRST PUBLISHED: “In der blauen Ferne,” 1957, in *Und niemand weiss weiter*
(English translation collected in *O the Chimneys*, 1967)

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRES: Lyric poetry; meditation

Sachs addresses the theme of the Holocaust in this poem through earthy images presented in sure, quiet steps. The transformation depicted signifies that out of suffering, upheaval, and even death can come a spiritual insistence on life and beauty.

OVERVIEW

“In the Blue Distance” is a haunting meditative lyric poem that presents intense images in free verse. Like most of Nelly Sachs’s painfully beautiful poems, it is a variation on the basic theme of the Holocaust. This poem searches for a way to go on afterward, reflecting the theme revealed in the title of the collection in which it first appeared, *Und niemand weiss weiter*, which translates as “and no one knows how to go on.” The poem’s travelers look toward “the blue distance,” where “longing is distilled” or where one can recognize and find deliverance from longing. Exactly what one longs for (peace, forgiveness, love, death?) is not specified in the poem, but the mood of the work is one of acceptance. The mood of quiet reconciliation in the last stanza offers the possibility of transcendence from hate and bitterness. That offer is perhaps made with reference to the suffering of the Holocaust, if only implicitly.

The first stanza presents a vista—a metaphorical view from a valley. Those who live below can see far away a row of apple trees with “rooted feet climbing the sky.” In this image, the juxtaposition of “rooted” and “climbing” suggests a tension between two longings, perhaps. One is to remain earthbound, and the other looks toward the blue distance, skyward. In Sachs’s vocabulary, flying—one way to interpret “climbing the sky”—often signifies transcendence or re-creation. “Those who live in the valley” might feel some comfort knowing that a higher realm exists.

The apple trees in one sense signify the hope and abundance of such a spiritual place. Perhaps it can be as simple as those on earth wishing to see

heaven, or simply to know one exists. The poem in stanza 1 thus seems to consider another way (among all the ways in Sachs's poetry) for those hurt by the insanity of the war to expiate their terrors and to relieve longings intensified by the losses they suffered.

"Rooted" and "climbing" may also allude to the magic of organic growth—the magic that all plants possess. Such organic growth, or regeneration, would mean, in human terms, spiritual healing. Apple trees also are heavily laden with mythology: Apples have long been equated with the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, but apple trees also bring blossoms in spring, and thus hope. Stanza 1 thus suggests the necessity for those who are suffering from their pasts to find some way to regenerate their spiritual balance and inner peace, the way plants grow anew after they have been cut back. There seems to be a yearning for some way to grow toward the sky, out of the low valley.

The image of "the sun, lying by the roadside" in stanza 2 is, on one hand, a simple description of the sun lying low on the horizon, at sunset; on the other hand, this image may be seen as frightening: If the sun really lay by the roadside, like some suffering or ambushed traveler, such eerie displacement would suggest the worst kind of chaos. The "magic wands" mentioned in this stanza could suggest that this sun is an impostor, a prankster, or a sorcerer. If this is so, perhaps the travelers are being deceived; perhaps even nature is not to be trusted in a world so prone to chaos and pain.

In a lighter and more positive interpretation, these magic wands could simply suggest the regenerative magic of the natural world, of which the sun is a part. It provides light, so basic to life, and, in a figurative sense, knowledge. Perhaps the stanza reflects the wrenching uncertainty of life during the Holocaust—the command "to halt" could come at any time, from any quarter. Life during the Holocaust had become so unpredictable, so unnatural, one might not be surprised to see the sun collapse and become earthbound.

In stanza 3, the travelers have halted, although they seem alone "in the glassy nightmare." One cannot be sure why or for whom they have stopped. This lack of certainty compounds the eeriness that arose in the second stanza. "Glassy" lends an apt sense of distortion and again, uncertainty, to the poem's increasingly nightmarish atmosphere.

An image from the natural world characteristically rescues people from the nightmare and barely breaks the silence of this poem. A cricket "scratches softly at the invisible"—a beautiful and redeeming, although practically inexplicable, image. The mystical quality of Sachs's work is exemplified here in that the relief this profound image bestows on the reader

must be felt rather than understood. No easy explanation exists for "the invisible" (eternity? the unknown? the deity?), and any attempt at explanation dilutes the power of the image itself, which is effective primarily in its emotional impact.

The poem ends with a second such image, which, again characteristic of Sachs's poetry, relies on emotion to complete what it communicates. "Stone" and "dust" reverberate in their earthboundness back to the tension in stanza 1 between being rooted and "climbing the sky." In Sachs's poetry, images of earth, dust, and sand often signify the past—specifically, here, the human suffering of years past. In the transcendent spirit-filled final lines of this poem, the stone does fly—it dances and "changes its dust to music." The transformation signifies that out of suffering, upheaval, or even death can come a spiritual insistence on life and beauty, only two ideas that "music" might suggest here. The stone thus dances a dance of renewal and life, not of death.

"In the Blue Distance" is highly imagistic. Its impact comes from the visual intensity of its metaphors as well as from their eerie, mystical reverberations. In this sense it is similar to most of Sachs's work.

Known for its enigmatic quality, Sachs's poetry is not "easy" to read. Whatever difficulty the reader confronts, however, is not attributable to the technical devices of the poems. They are not written in encoded language, nor are they riddles to be solved. Readers may experience difficulty laying aside their demands to have the "meaning" of "In the Blue Distance" made easily comprehensible. Sachs's concentrated and emotional language, its allusions and metaphors, unfold only slowly, and the reader must be prepared not to rely on a need for explicit meaning but to experience the mystery of the poem. That is, as with the cricket image, one feels Sachs's poetry better than one can hope to understand it in the analytic sense.

Sachs uses masterful craftsmanship in her poetry. The earthy images in "In the Blue Distance" manage to root the poem as though in good warm soil. The poem's movement from section to section seems almost, again inexplicably, like natural growth. Each stanza has an image central to its movement and to the "narrative" movement of the poem. The climbing apple trees, the "lying" sun, the cricket scratching, and the dancing stone are simple pictures, yet they are profoundly intriguing and suggestive. These images, one to a stanza, move the poem forward with sure, quiet steps, as if the delicate thread of emotion spun stronger by each new line is being handed carefully along.

Sachs also employs personification; it lends an eerie yet somehow friendly quality to otherwise mysterious images—the cricket scratching "at the invisible" and the stone dancing. As the stanzas are not regular in

number of lines or line length, the images that reside within the poem provide its form. The interplay among the images unifies the poem.

Sachs speaks in simple language, and the rhythm of "In the Blue Distance" is relaxed and unassuming. In fact, the low-key, conversational tone of the poem is amazing given the otherworldly intensity of the images. That the work breaks down into three relatively simple sentences shows Sachs's ability to comb away the wool surrounding an emotion she wishes to convey and to find a beautifully simple correlation in the imagery. The poem's concrete images are the key to this fertile simplicity.

"Death gave me my language," Sachs said. "My metaphors are my wounds." Such a statement implies an intensely private poetry, and there is perhaps a sort of arrogant folly in searching for "meanings" in images whose very strength comes from their wildly errant suggestiveness. Sachs's images suggest many directions, many meanings, but her statement also simplifies a discussion of meaning. The poet's basic theme, the Holocaust, leads her to explore all avenues of thought and emotion in terms of the great mystery, death.

One may read "In the Blue Distance" as a meditation on arriving at the edge of death. The stillness, approaching silence, at the heart of this poem certainly suggests that the travelers teeter between worlds—where language becomes unnecessary. The momentary yet strong break in movement after stanza 2 ("The sun . . . commands the travelers to halt") suggests an interface between the worlds of life and death. In the "glassy nightmare," the travelers are fairly on the edge of a world. The "invisible" at which the cricket scratches suggests an entrance point, if one follows this theme, into the next world.

Death, however, is neither fearsome nor terrible in this poem. In a sense, it has already happened, for there is no escape from the sun. The poem is really a reckoning, an acceptance of the inevitable event of death, which seems to approach almost tenderly—as softly as the cricket scratches at the door. Sachs wrote a number of harshly accusatory poems about the Holocaust, but this is not one of them. Her work has been called forgiving, and the calm lyricism of this poem certainly demonstrates that quality. In it, even death seems forgiving. The stone is cold and hard, but "dancing," transforming dust, and the past with all its anguish, to music.

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—JoAnn Balingit

INCIDENT AT VICHY

AUTHOR: Arthur Miller (1915-2005)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1965 (first produced, 1964)

GENRE: Drama

SUBGENRE: Social realism

Miller's play questions the tendency of human beings to evade complexity and elude confrontations with evil and thus to avoid responsibility for that complexity and evil. The words and actions of each character in the work reveal some aspect of this moral dilemma.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Lebeau, a painter

Bayard, an electrician

Marchand, a businessman

Monceau, an actor

Leduc, a psychoanalyst

Von Berg, an Austrian prince

OVERVIEW

Incident at Vichy is a one-act play that takes place in a detention room in Vichy, France, during the German occupation. When the curtain opens, the stage reveals a grim setting with little furniture except for a long bench on which sit six men and a young boy. In the playwright's words, these characters are "frozen there like members of a small orchestra at the moment before they begin to play." In the course of the drama, each man anticipates and experiences a dreaded event: his being called into the office of the Nazi captain who is conducting an interrogation and checking identification papers to determine whether the detainee is Jewish. Before each summons, the characters demonstrate their mounting terror, fearful that the interrogation will result in their slaughter.

During the tense moments between interrogations, the detainees discuss their fears, their disbelief that their countrymen are detaining them, their alternating desire to flee and inability to escape for fear of being killed in the process. Each character reveals his own value system, from Mar-

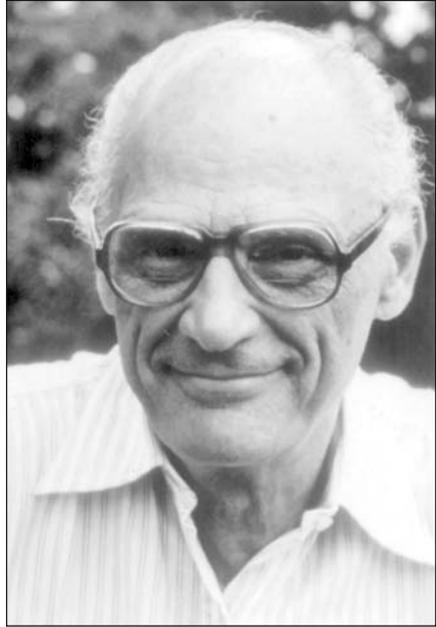
chand and his capitalistic businessman's attitude to Prince Von Berg, who had fled Austria and rejected Nazism because of its vulgarity. Marchand's and Von Berg's summonses produce the same result: a white pass that means freedom. The reasons for the passes and the uses of those passes, however, are radically different.

Marchand's words and actions suggest that, just as he had lived by a mercenary, heartless value system, so he was able to save his life by resorting to that same system and purchasing his freedom. When he leaves the place of detention, displaying his white pass, he leaves behind detainees who, except for Von Berg, can neither buy their freedom nor talk their way out of their eventual destruction.

Von Berg, a nobleman who had been detained because of his accent, is different from Marchand and also from the other captives. He is neither a heartless individual nor a Jew; he is a person who is struggling with the question of guilt and responsibility. He is troubled by the comments of the psychiatrist Leduc, who challenges him to assume responsibility for the atrocities being perpetrated by the Nazis. Von Berg insists that he has never said a word against the Jewish people, but Leduc asserts that it is not only verbal abuse that leads to culpability; the very human condition, according to Leduc, requires all people to assume responsibility for human brutality.

When Von Berg emerges from his interrogation with a white pass in his hand, he gives the doctor his pass, thus sacrificing himself to free the psychiatrist. As he leaves, Leduc's gestures reveal that he is aware of his own guilt, indicating that both he and Von Berg recognize that human beings share responsibility and guilt for their actions and the actions of other human beings. In the last moment of the play, a new group of detainees arrives to occupy the bench and observe Von Berg silently staring into the eyes of his Nazi captor and murderer.

Incident at Vichy is a morality play that questions the tendency among human beings to evade complexity and elude confrontations with evil and



Arthur Miller. (Inge Morath/Magnum)

thus to avoid responsibility for that complexity and evil. The words and actions of each character reveal some aspect of this moral dilemma.

The businessman Marchand views the process of detention and interrogation not as a prelude to human destruction but as a simple procedure for identifying people with false papers. The painter Lebeau announces that the measuring of people's noses on the streets has to do with a labor shortage: The Occupied Forces need people to carry stones. The actor Monceau explains that trains carrying Jews are simply transporting volunteers to work in Germany. Even Prince Von Berg, who recognizes the vulgarity and brutality of the Nazis, does not see his cousin Baron Kessler as the person whom Leduc knows—a Nazi who helped remove all the Jewish doctors from a medical school. Collectively, the detainees represent those human beings who, for various reasons, refuse to see evil and destruction in the world around them and therefore avoid responsibility for that evil and destruction.

Blinded to this reality, the characters participate in a victimizer/victim syndrome in which the entrapped victim seeks out another person to entrap and victimize. Thus, two nameless characters—the Gypsy and the Old Jew—are victimized by their fellow detainees, and the Major who is guarding the detainees speaks of his own entrapment. Holding a revolver to the head of Leduc, the Major speaks to the loss of humanity when all people are simultaneously victims and victimizers: "Tell me how . . . how there can be persons any more. I have you at the end of this revolver—*indicates the Professor*—he has me—and somebody has him—and somebody has somebody else."

Part of the difficulty in destroying this syndrome of victim becoming victimizer is that the characters rely too heavily on logic and rationality in their efforts to understand the nature of the syndrome and the presence of evil. Two characters whose professions force them to deal with intuition and the unconscious—the painter Lebeau and the psychiatrist Leduc—speak often of the need to recognize the absurd illogic of suffering and the limitations of reason and intellect. Lebeau compares the meaninglessness of suffering to the lack of logical meaning in his painting. Instead of asking what his paintings mean, he says, people should look at them. In other words, instead of seeking neat, reasonable explanations, they should see with the mind's eye that not all paintings have meanings, not all problems have solutions. Similarly, Leduc comments that logic can be immobilizing and warns his fellow detainees of that paralysis: "You cannot wager your life on a purely rational analysis of this situation. Listen to your feelings: you must certainly *feel* the danger here."

Prince Von Berg ultimately feels the danger and acts with nobility and

idealism when he sacrifices his life for Leduc's. He announces his belief in ideals before he goes into the interrogation. He asserts this belief angrily: "There are people who would find it easier to die than stain one finger with this murder. They exist. I swear it to you. People for whom everything is *not* permitted, foolish people and ineffectual, but they do exist and will not dishonor their tradition."

Von Berg does not dishonor his tradition. He courageously identifies the need for idealism and the fact that this idealism is, in a tragic sense, both noble and "ineffectual." The nobility is clear: One man sacrifices his life for another. This sacrifice has no effect, however, on the perpetual victim/victimizer syndrome that is dramatically represented by the final moments of *Incident at Vichy*. One man is saved through the sacrifice of another, but another line of detainees arrives, none of whom will likely have a Prince Von Berg who will die for them. Thus, this morality play both affirms and questions idealism, leaving its audience with sacrificial gain and sacrificial loss, with hope for a human race that produces a Prince Von Berg but despair over human beings who detain and destroy one another.

Incident at Vichy is a modern morality play. Like a medieval morality play, Arthur Miller's drama has characters who are allegorical, embodying abstract virtues and vices. Thus, when Dr. Leduc acknowledges that he and his fellow detainees are "symbols," he is speaking about the qualities they embody and represent. This representation is presented most dramatically when the curtain falls, and good and evil, in the characters of the idealistic prince and the brutal Nazi, are staring at each other, symbolizing the confrontational duality of humankind.

In addition to these two characters—and others—who represent virtues and vices, *Incident at Vichy* includes the symbolic use of objects, not all of which have single explanations. The Gypsy and the Old Jew, themselves symbols of universal victims, refuse to divest themselves of, respectively, a pot and a bundle when they are called in for interrogation. Each object seems to be representative of a value that these oppressed detainees cherish: The Gypsy has fixed the pot, and so it is his, and the Old Jew has likely plucked the feathers from his own chickens, and so the bundle of feathers is similarly his. In a universe in which characters are displaced from their property and distanced from their family and friends, these objects represent futile efforts to cling to the familiar and the beloved. The pot is broken and the bundle of feathers is torn open by a Nazi, in one more demonstration of the destructive power of human force.

Incident at Vichy follows the pattern Arthur Miller established in his earlier and greatest play, *Death of a Salesman* (pr., pb. 1949), and developed in subsequent dramas such as *The Crucible* (pr., pb. 1953) and *A View from the*

Bridge (pr., pb. 1955). In these plays, Miller takes up the theme of individual guilt and commitment within the tradition of Greek tragedy. Concerned with creating tragic drama in an age that appears to have no classical tragic heroes, Miller explored the possibilities of bourgeois tragedy. In an essay titled "Tragedy and the Common Man," he argued that the modern age called for a new kind of tragic drama, which he aimed to produce.

While *Incident at Vichy* may not be considered his best example of such modern tragedy, it is an excellent demonstration of Miller's ongoing attempt to redefine the classical genre in terms of contemporary issues. Thus, his effort to examine Nazi genocide through the actions of his tragic heroes and villains has an important place in his artistic canon.

Miller's plays and essays continually call attention to the moral dilemmas facing contemporary society. His essay "On Social Plays," his introduction to the 1955 version of *A View from the Bridge*, and his introduction to his *Collected Plays* (1957) all give voice to the clarion call to view drama as a public way to raise questions at the heart of twentieth century civilization.

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—Marjorie Smelstor

AN INTERRUPTED LIFE

THE DIARIES OF ETTY HILLESUM, 1941-1943

AUTHOR: Etty Hillesum (1914-1943)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Het verstoorde leven: Dagboek van Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943*, 1981 (English translation, 1983)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Diary; letters

These diaries, written by a young Jewish woman who would not survive the Holocaust, are directed from an unbearable present to the hope of a better future. The author knew that she would not live to tell her story, and she left her writings behind to share with others the solutions she had found for the problems of her own life.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Etty Hillesum (1914-1943), a student of philosophy and law and a teacher of Russian who died in the Auschwitz concentration camp

Julius Spier, Etty's psychotherapist and lover

Han Wegerif, Etty's lover, a widower of sixty-two

Maria Tuinzing, Etty's friend, who saved her diaries

Mischa Hillesum, Etty's brother, a pianist

Jaap Hillesum, Etty's brother, a scientist

OVERVIEW

On November 30, 1943, a twenty-nine-year-old Dutch Jewish woman named Etty Hillesum died in Auschwitz. Hillesum had known that she would not survive and had asked her friend Maria Tuinzing to save her diaries and give them to Klaas Smelik, a writer and a member of the Dutch Resistance. The diaries, which filled eight exercise books and came to more than four hundred pages, were rediscovered almost forty years later. J. G. Gaarlandt edited the diaries for publication and wrote an informative introduction to them.

Etty Hillesum was born in 1914 into a cultivated and assimilated Dutch Jewish family. Her father was a classical scholar and headmaster of a college-preparatory secondary school. One of her brothers, Mischa, was an

accomplished pianist, and other brother, Jaap, was an outstanding scientist. A brilliant student herself, Hillesum took a degree in law and went on to study Slavic languages, philosophy, and psychology. The entire Hillesum family perished at the hands of the Nazis, a fact underscoring not only the overwhelming human tragedy of the Holocaust but also the inestimable loss of countless talented and decent individuals.

The diaries begin on March 9, 1941, in Amsterdam and end on December 11, 1942. The letters from Westerbork collection camp cover the period from July 3 to August 24, 1943. The last two years of Hillesum's life as revealed in the diaries were a time of intense personal growth. She underwent a transformation from an intelligent but somewhat hedonistic protégé to an independent woman who faced her fate with courage.

It is no accident that the diaries begin at a point when Hillesum sought spiritual and psychological direction. She had begun psychoanalysis with Julius Spier, a German Jewish refugee and the founder of psychochirology (the study and classification of palm prints). Spier had trained under the distinguished psychologist Carl Jung and was almost twenty years older than Hillesum. She fell in love with Spier while she was involved with Han Wegerif, a widower of sixty-two. Her circle of friends included a variety of interesting people who were active in the Resistance.

While Hillesum was seeking her identity and the meaning of her life, the German occupation of the Netherlands was closing in on the Dutch Jews. In 1942, the Jews were subjected to increasing restrictions and humiliations. They were not permitted to ride bicycles, play the piano, shop for food during the day, or travel on the streetcars.

Hillesum chose to record her struggles by writing in her diaries. The entries begin with a statement acknowledging that she is taking the momentous step of describing her innermost feelings about herself and about the horror that is surrounding her. Her diaries discuss her lovers, her friends and family, her search for God, and her renewed sense of Jewishness.

In 1942, Hillesum became a typist for the Jewish Council of Amsterdam, but she refused to be hidden or to be granted exemptions. She decided to accompany a group of Jews to Westerbork. During this time Spier died; Hillesum was now completely on her own.

The final portion of *An Interrupted Life* contains a number of heartbreaking letters from Westerbork, letters written in Hillesum's last months. These letters reveal what Gaarlandt calls Hillesum's "radical altruism," her devotion to the wretched prisoners, particularly the children, who were facing extinction.

The book ends with a letter of September 7, 1943, written by Hillesum's friend Jopie Vleeschower, who witnessed her departure for Auschwitz.

This letter serves as an epitaph for the courage of Etty Hillesum and others like her. After her departure for Auschwitz, Dutch farmers found a postcard she had thrown out of the train. Her final message was that the Jews had left Westerbork singing.

The diaries of Etty Hillesum reveal an intense struggle for personal independence against the backdrop of unprecedented threats from without. Writing was Hillesum's outlet, and it became the vehicle her spiritual liberation. By the end of 1941, the issues of life and death had taken precedence over all else. Rumors reached the Netherlands that the Jews were being sent to concentration camps in Poland. In her entry of November 10, 1941, Hillesum confesses "mortal fear in every fibre" and the collapse of her self-confidence. Yet as the diaries unfold, she continues to struggle for personal liberation as a woman, a Jew, and a human being. She rejects the resignation of her father, a scholar who withdrew into the rarefied world of pure ideas. She also begins to reject the pleasures of life as the main way to happiness. She is inspired by the works of the German lyric poet Rainer Maria Rilke and the novels of the Russian author Fyodor Dostoevski. By the spring of 1942 she discovers her destiny: the courageous acceptance of her fate. She will rebel against radical evil with moral indignation but without feelings of indiscriminate hatred and revenge, and she will draw on the sources of her faith in God and her faith in humankind.

Hillesum's evocation of the details and the atmosphere of the times is remarkable throughout the diaries. For example, she describes listening to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach with the accompaniment of noise from an air raid. As the situation around her grows more desperate, Hillesum becomes intensely aware of the small comforts of life: a cup of coffee, a few good friends, a vase of freshly cut flowers on her desk. As the diaries progress, her writing begins to acquire a near-mystical intensity; every word is essential.

In April of 1942, the Dutch Jews were forced by the Nazis to wear the yellow star. Hillesum responds with a sense of pride in her Jewish identity. In a remarkable entry dated July 3, 1942, she accepts a "new certainty," that the Germans were now intent on the total destruction of the Jewish people. Hillesum's premonition is all the more amazing because the destruction of the Dutch Jews took a more subtle form than the open reign of terror carried out by the Nazis in faraway Poland. Although confronted with this vision of her own extinction, Hillesum affirms her struggle for a meaningful life. Above all, she vows to persevere and to remain productive. Like so many victims of the Holocaust, she strove to keep her inner dignity intact: "I have already died a thousand deaths in a thousand concentration camps. And yet I find life beautiful and meaningful."

Her descriptions of the details of everyday life under the Nazi occupation are so vivid that the reader is made to see the value of each moment of her remaining days. Hillesum's entries also convey the fragility of the human body in the face of the Nazi assault. When the Nazis prohibit the Jews from traveling on streetcars, she develops blisters on her feet from the constant walking. Hillesum reports the range of human behavior during this time. She describes the rare kindness of a German soldier and tells of a Dutch civilian who viciously asked her whether as a Jew she was allowed to purchase toothpaste in a pharmacy. She resolves to wield her fountain pen as a weapon and to bear witness for the sake of the future.

By the summer of 1942, rumors began to circulate that the Germans were exterminating the Jews by gas. Hillesum refused, however, to go into hiding. She turned to the Psalms and prayed to be able to help God, to safeguard what was left of God in man. Indeed, she composed new psalms appropriate for the times. Meanwhile, her health was undermined by the reduction in food rations. In a powerful passage, she likens her heart to a sparrow caught in a vise. Despite the interdependence of mind and body, Hillesum's spirit refuses to be destroyed. She believes that the crushed sparrow that is her heart will take wing as she writes. Like other victims of the Holocaust, Hillesum believed that she would have to find a new language to convey the horrors of her experiences. Her diary closes with an affirmation of her mature philosophy: "We should be willing to act as a balm for all wounds."

Etty Hillesum's closing letters from Westerbork document her confrontation with death. Like Primo Levi, an Italian writer and a survivor of Auschwitz, she remarks that one would need a new language to describe the hell that she has witnessed. Her portrait of the camp commandant who professes sympathy with a smirk while he sends people off to die is unforgettable, as is her description of the starving children who tell her of their suffering. Hillesum's quiet heroism prevailed at the end, as she joined her family in a wagon bound for Auschwitz. Survivors of Westerbork would later marvel that Etty Hillesum had kept her humanity and courage to the end.

Above all, the focus of *An Interrupted Life* is directed from an unbearable present to the hope of a better future. Etty Hillesum knew that she would not live to tell her story. She wanted to leave her writings behind for future generations to share with others the solutions she had found for the problems of her own life. Herein lies the ultimate gift of Hillesum's interrupted life. Her eloquent words and deeds reflect and reinforce one another.

An Interrupted Life takes its place alongside such classics of Holocaust literature as Anne Frank's *Het Achterhuis* (1947; *The Diary of a Young Girl*,

1952), Primo Levi's *Se questo è un uomo* (1947; *If This Is a Man*, 1959; revised as *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, 1961), and Elie Wiesel's *Un di Velt hot geshvoign* (1956; *Night*, 1960). Like Anne Frank, Hillesum retained her faith in God and man throughout her struggle. Because of Hillesum's age and education, her work addresses the subjects of identity, femininity, religion, and personal fulfillment. Unlike the narratives of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, which unforgettably re-create the atmosphere of Auschwitz, Hillesum's diaries emphasize the difficulty of living and loving while in the shadow of the most merciless system of destruction conceived by man.

The diaries of Etty Hillesum represent the coming-of-age of a sensitive young adult caught between the culture and charms of Amsterdam on one hand and the horrors of Auschwitz on the other. Her courageous and creative response to her suffering is portrayed with awe-inspiring eloquence. *An Interrupted Life* is a testimony to the great inner resources of the human spirit. Also available in English translation is Hillesum's *Letters from Westerbork* (1986), a full volume of the letters from which a few examples were chosen to supplement the diaries in *An Interrupted Life*.

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—Leon Stein

INTO THAT DARKNESS

FROM MERCY KILLING TO MASS MURDER

AUTHOR: Gitta Sereny (1921-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1974

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Biography; history

Sereny's work provides a thoroughly documented glimpse into the mind of Franz Stangl, the man who commanded the largest of the five Nazi death camps during World War II.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Franz Stangl (1908-1971), commandant of the Nazi execution camp
Treblinka, 1942-1943

Theresa Stangl, Franz's wife

Franz Suchomel, a Schutzstaffel (SS) officer who worked alongside
Stangl

Richard Glazar, a survivor of Treblinka

Dieter Allers, a lawyer and unrepentant Nazi

OVERVIEW

Although Gitta Sereny's *Into that Darkness: From Mercy Killing to Mass Murder* is an insightful book, it has been overshadowed by Hannah Arendt's much more famous *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). That this is the case is unfortunate, because apart from a few surface similarities, the two books ultimately reach very different conclusions about how ordinary humans can commit the most enormously evil acts.

A political philosopher, Arendt had been hired to cover the 1961 war crimes trial of Adolf Eichmann, a leading Nazi who oversaw the transportation of millions to death camps during World War II (1939-1945). The trial drew worldwide attention, in part because of the dramatic story of how Eichmann had been kidnapped from Argentina and taken to Jerusalem and in part because Eichmann repudiated any characterization of himself as a Nazi true believer, instead arguing that he was simply a bureau-

crat, a nondescript little man. Accepting this self-characterization at face value, Arendt subsequently coined the famous proposition of the “banality of evil”: Modern evil is frequently committed by ordinary people dutifully following monstrous laws. The uncomfortable implication is that almost anyone could become Eichmann given similar contexts. Since 1963, criticism of Arendt’s book has centered on the claim that Arendt ignored ample evidence that Eichmann was, indeed, a devoted Nazi who understood the moral dimensions of what he was doing.

In contrast, *Into That Darkness* tells the story of an opportunistic and self-righteous man who cooperated with the dark events of his time. It offers the perspective that Franz Stangl was responsible for his choices, but we all are responsible for social conditions that encourage the development of conscience and the repudiation of evil.

Told in six parts, *Into That Darkness* focuses on a “gradual process of . . . corruption” that began in the mid-1930’s. Various sections of the book examine Stangl’s increasing responsibility for mass murder, as he administered a Nazi euthanasia facility as well as two execution camps. Interspersed in the narrative are sections that cross-check Stangl’s versions of events and offer perspective on his actions; these sections usually draw from interviews with Stangl’s wife, with an accomplice of Stangl, or with one of the survivors of the extermination camps. Other sections of the book argue that various Roman Catholic officials—especially Pope Pius XII—should have spoken out more forcefully against the Holocaust.

Born and raised in Austria, Stangl developed an authoritarian mind-set and a sense of entitlement early on. Unhappy in his first career because it gave him limited economic opportunity, Stangl became a police officer. Medals and promotions soon followed as Stangl found himself increasingly busy investigating political crimes. In Austria during the mid-1930’s, German agitators were importing National Socialist (Nazi) ideology, particularly spreading the idea that all German-speaking peoples should be part of a larger Germanic state. Tasked with investigating Nazi infiltration, Stangl found their authoritarianism to his taste and may have joined the Nazi Party while it was still illegal in Austria. This was his first step toward corruption.

Certainly, by the time of the Anschluss—the 1938 annexation of Austria by Germany—Stangl was a card-carrying member of the Nazi Party. At first, he said that he joined the party to protect himself and his young family against revenge for his previous police work, but those closest to Stangl believed that he joined the party because it afforded him greater privilege and increased opportunities. In actuality, his joining the party drove a wedge between Stangl and his wife. In separate chapters of *Into That Dark-*

ness, both describe a bitter argument over the steps he was willing to take to demonstrate his loyalty to the party. By 1939, Stangl had signed a document rejecting his loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church, in which he had been raised and to which his wife was still loyal. This was his second step toward corruption.

Mass murder has to begin somewhere. For Nazi Germany, it began with the decision to murder the mentally ill and developmentally delayed. In the early to mid-twentieth century, many Western nations were considering legislation that would promote the health of the human species through various medical and social interventions. In Germany, such eugenics measures included forced sterilization and the killing of “unfit” persons. Hidden from the general public and even denied as unconstitutional by the Nazi Ministry of Justice, the euthanasia program in Germany was, Sereny states, nothing less than “legalized murder, undertaken for starkly economic—and later political—reasons.” There was no concern for mercy: Victims of the euthanasia program were sent to institutes and murdered in batches with poison gas, often within hours of their arrival.

Taking an administrative position in the Nazi euthanasia program was the final step in Stangl’s corruption. From the late 1930’s to the end of his life, Stangl would avoid moral reflection and would instead focus on efficiency. As he described it, he was seduced into the euthanasia program with the promise that his was merely a security position and that doctors had the responsibility for examining and killing the unwanted. Stangl argued that other leaders within the community, including priests and ministers, supported euthanasia. Sereny notes that, to the contrary, the Roman Catholic Church was vociferous in opposition to this early Nazi program.

Able to rationalize his own actions, Stangl worked with such efficiency that he was asked in 1942 to administer one of the new extermination camps being built in Poland. In administering the camp, Stangl worked not just with efficiency but also with imagination. Much of *Into That Darkness* describes how large groups of unwitting victims would arrive by train and it would be the job of men like Stangl to keep the new arrivals mildly anxious but not agitated, ready to move when ordered and unaware that most of them were about to die. Stangl did this by building a pretty railway station in Treblinka with false timetables displayed that listed numbers for trains going to various locations. The timetables were intended to reassure new arrivals that Treblinka was only a way station and not a place of execution. Camp survivors interviewed for *Into That Darkness* told of the quiet but confident Schutzstaffel (SS) officer, in a white uniform and carrying a riding crop, who calmly watched thousands being “processed.”

Like other Nazis, Stangl engaged in actions in 1945 that demonstrated

his awareness of the criminality of his actions and his eagerness to escape justice. Those German military men who believed that they were innocent kept their identities and returned home following the war. Stangl, in contrast, according to his own account, wandered through Italy until he made contact with various relief workers, including a Catholic bishop, who helped him obtain a Red Cross passport for the Middle East. From 1946 to 1967, Stangl and his family lived abroad, in Syria and in Brazil. Almost twenty years after the war ended, Stangl was finally extradited to West Germany, where he was tried and convicted of murdering approximately 900,000 people.

At one point in *Into That Darkness*, Sereny relates the remarks of a young guard at the prison where Sereny interviewed Stangl; the man wonders how a person could know of the murders being committed—let alone be responsible for them—and yet “consent to remain alive.” Near the end of her book, Sereny suggests that as a result of their series of interviews, Stangl reached the end of his obfuscations and rationalizations and grudgingly accepted responsibility before he died of a heart attack.

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—Michael R. Meyers

JEWIS

THE ESSENCE AND CHARACTER OF A PEOPLE

AUTHORS: Arthur Hertzberg (1921-2006) and Aron Hirt-Manheimer
(1948-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1998

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; religion and spirituality

This history of the Jewish people examines the uniqueness and perseverance of Jews and Jewish culture around the world despite the pressures of assimilation and persecution.

OVERVIEW

Arthur Hertzberg was Bronfman Visiting Professor of the Humanities at New York University and Professor Emeritus of Religion at Dartmouth. He also had served as president of the American Jewish Policy Foundation and the American Jewish Congress. In addition to *Jews: the Essence and Character of a People*, he wrote several other books on Judaism, including *The Zionist Idea* (1959) and *Being Jewish in America* (1987). Aron Hirt-Manheimer has served as editor of *Reform Judaism* magazine and was the 1988 recipient of the Anne Frank Medal. In the preface to *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People*, Hirt-Manheimer explains that Hertzberg dictated the entire first draft of the manuscript to him, which Hirt-Manheimer then “rendered into a workable text.” Hertzberg and Hirt-Manheimer accomplished further revision and editing of the work together. Therefore, the book is defined by Hertzberg’s “viewpoint and scholarship.”

Hertzberg attempts a difficult task, even a provocative one, in his search for the defining characteristics of the Jewish people. His stated aim is to provide a means to embrace all types of Jews, rather than taking a position that narrowly defines Jewishness. Hertzberg himself was descended from Hasidic scholars and rabbis, yet he considered himself to have grown up in the mainstream of Jewish experience. His father, the rabbi of the Hasidic community in Baltimore, Maryland, hosted Jews from varied sects and viewpoints in his home, and the young Hertzberg experienced firsthand the endless discussion and debate of Jewish scholars. He believed that this

experience allowed him to be particularly accepting of all brands of Judaism.

In *Jews*, Hertzberg poses the question, What is a Jew? The simplest answer would be a religious one: that a Jew is someone who believes in the one God of Abraham, the God of the Hebrews. This is too simple, however. In the first chapter, "The Chosen," Hertzberg proposes the psychological consequences of being a chosen people. He does not believe that Jews invented the concept of chosenness, but he asserts that they have clung to it in their fierce determination to remain distinct from other peoples. They are different because they believe that God has required them to be different, to stand apart from other peoples and at the same time to serve as a moral beacon to the world.

In chapter 3, "The Outsider," Hertzberg examines a second characteristic, that of "otherness." The insistence of Jews in maintaining their culture and beliefs throughout the history of the Diaspora, or Jewish exile from the Holy Land, has caused them to remain outside the dominant cultures of their geographic homes. In chapter 4, "The Wild Streak," Hertzberg identifies a facet of the Jewish character, most often expressed as martyrdom, that causes them to rise up in the face of persecution. Jews fought back in Masada in 73 B.C.E., slaughtering themselves and their families rather than submit to the Romans, and fought back in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, when the Nazis were exterminating Jews. Hertzberg mentions many other examples of this "wild streak" in this chapter and throughout the book.

Having stated these three major points in his analysis of Jewish character, Hertzberg goes on to provide a detailed history of Judaism and the Jewish people. He uses the biographies of individual scholars and influential Jews to illustrate how these characteristics had impacts on the experiences of all Jews as they left Israel and spread throughout the world.

In chapter 5, "The Synagogue of Satan," Hertzberg examines the relationship of the Catholic Church and Protestantism to the Jews. He finds in the writings of Jules Isaac an answer to the anti-Semitism expressed so violently in the Holocaust, or Shoah. Isaac revealed that the Church had taught contempt for the Jews from its beginnings, and the Church's subsequent influence in Europe rooted this hatred in all European Christian cultures. Hertzberg acknowledges the role that Isaac's writings have played in moving the Catholic Church toward a reconciliation of this prejudice, beginning with the reforms of the mid-1960's.

The history of the Jews in Spain is discussed in chapter 6, "The Terrible Choice." A large and prosperous community of Jews had existed in Spain during the Middle Ages and had prospered under Muslim rule. They

"had achieved prominence in every sphere of society, from the affairs of state and commerce to art and science." It was a complete shock, then, when in 1492 the Jews were given an ultimatum: They had four months to convert to Christianity, or they were to leave the country forever, leaving all of their property and possessions behind. Certainly, Jews had been persecuted since the return of Spain to Christian rule between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. There had been other choices to make between conversion and death, but this complete exile proved that Jews were not safe anywhere. The population was evenly divided, with half choosing exile, half converting. Among the converts, however, were many who converted in name only and sought to continue their unique worship in secret; these were known as crypto-Jews. Hertzberg examines the nature of Jewish worship, study of the Torah and the Talmud, as being the ultimate goal of Jewish life. Examination of the Word is a never-ceasing task that Jews will perform until the "end of days." Following the period of the Spanish expulsion, a new study began of the Kabbala, an apocalyptic message that taught that the end of the world was near, when Jews would return to Zion (Israel). The focus of the new Kabbalists was to use supernatural means to bring about the end times and the redemption of the world.

The phenomenon of messianic leaders is examined in "Messianic Mania." Hertzberg recounts the story from the 1660's of Shabbetai Zvi, who was touted as the Messiah returned to lead his people to freedom and usher in the last days. Half the Jewish world chose to believe in Shabbetai Zvi, but when the would-be Messiah announced a specific date of redemption, he was arrested by the Turks and forced to convert to Islam or die. Shabbetai chose conversion. Hertzberg speaks of other messianic pretenders arising in nearly every generation, finding ready followers eager to believe that the redemption of the Jews is at hand.

In "The Age of Dissent," Hertzberg discusses the rise of Protestantism and the renewed attempts on the part of these new sects of Christianity to convert the Jews. Martin Luther, especially, reacted viciously when his overtures were rejected. Hertzberg believes that Luther's condemnation of the Jews had a lasting effect, both in Protestant Christianity and in German culture. Hertzberg also discusses the subject of money and the jealousies of the majority culture regarding the financial success of the Jews. This effect of Jewish success can be traced back to the Spanish experience and forward to Germany of the 1930's. Hertzberg looks at many reformers, including Baruch Spinoza, who was excommunicated by the Jewish community in Amsterdam for his heresies. Skeptical Spinoza identified all religious texts as having human origin and, therefore, human error; he chose to identify

reason as superior to faith. Spinoza himself redefined the concept of chosenness as reserved for those who lead virtuous lives.

During this time, many Jews were assimilating, but Jewish culture, tradition, and worship continued. Hertzberg does not abandon his examination of character in these historical snapshots; he relates the lives of these influential Jews and shows how chosenness, otherness, and the wild streak play a part. Even Jews who assimilated found that they were not accepted fully into the majority society; despite all of their efforts to renounce their Jewishness, they were still perceived as "other." Spinoza wrongly asserted, according to Hertzberg, that Jews "continued to exist by a defiant act of will." Hertzberg claims that it was not the doctrine of chosenness that influenced Abraham but the act of defiance in breaking the idols of his father, and thus choosing God, that continues to operate even in Spinoza, who criticized Western society.

Chapter 10 contains a history of the Hasidic movement. Although Hertzberg was reared in this tradition, he notes that he is uncomfortable with the "partisan and usually polemical usurpation" of the Hasidim. Hertzberg relates a personal anecdote of his meeting, at the age of twenty-eight, with Martin Buber, an important and culturally celebrated Jewish philosopher. Buber's stories about the Hasidim, including some of Hertzberg's ancestors, did not strike Hertzberg as accurate portrayals of the descriptions handed down to him. Hertzberg challenged Buber's claim to be a Hasid, which affronted the philosopher. Hertzberg believes that Buber failed to notice the "profound and absolute obedience of the Hasidim to the religious practices and laws in the Talmud." Hertzberg goes on to link the Hasidic movement with an increased interest in returning to Zion and leaving the life of the Diaspora behind.

A chapter titled "Unrequited Love" deals with the yearning of some Jews to assimilate into the dominant culture, mainly through conversion to the majority faith. Hertzberg roots this desire in self-contempt brought on by widespread and persistent anti-Semitism in the age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. Jewish educational reform often meant an abandonment of Torah and Talmud for study of the language and literature of the dominant European cultures. A call to universal morality, which meant for Jews a conversion to Christianity, gained adherents but failed to destroy the community of Jewish believers. Karl Marx, son of a German rabbi who had become a Deist (a believer in reason over faith), attacked the Jews as parasites, as representatives of the bourgeois merchant class who lived off the labor of the workers.

In chapter 12, "Reinventing Jewishness," Hertzberg examines the experience of Jews in the United States. Jews found a more open society than

they ever had, without the exclusionary laws that Jews had been forced to live under in European societies. Although anti-Semitism was still present, Jews were able to prosper and to live freely as Jews. This led to a lessening of the messianic message and even to a loss of interest in the return to Zion. Hertzberg traces the rise of the three main branches of Judaism in existence at the end of the twentieth century: Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative. He seeks to show how, even in their differences, these movements retain the essential identification of Jews as a unique people.

Hertzberg examines Jews who do not believe in God and decides that the character traits of the Jews still operate within them and move them to act as moral examples to the world. He addresses the crisis of faith that many Jews experienced as a result of the Holocaust. He explains that to the Orthodox, the Holocaust was no surprise, because they "had never doubted that Jews were other." It did not matter to the Nazis that any Jews had converted; the Nazis were bent on exterminating anyone who could be identified as Jewish by blood. Hertzberg calls for a full self-examination of all nations that were complicit in the slaughter and plunder of the Jews before these nations can be at peace. Hertzberg shows how, paradoxically, the Holocaust served to stimulate renewed pride in Jewish identity and a beginning to Jewish studies programs in colleges and universities.

Hertzberg concludes with a look at the future, specifically, the future of the State of Israel. He decries the actions of those on the religious right who have impeded peace efforts and cautions against the "wild streak" that has brought destruction on the Jews before. He admonishes the Israelis to continue to be examples of morality by learning to live with and to accept their Palestinian Arab neighbors. He provides a "Chronology of Jewish History," along with notes to the text.

As the Jews and the Palestinians in Israel continue to move toward a peaceful solution to their decades-long conflict, this book provides insight into the fierce Jewish will to endure as a people and the historical experiences that have shaped the desire for a Jewish homeland. As Hertzberg shows, historically Jews have not been safe anywhere in the world from persecution or expulsion. He writes longingly of the "port of Haifa and Ben-Gurion airport near Tel Aviv" as places where "the young women and men in uniform who are inspecting passports will never say that Israel already has too many Jews." Through centuries of exile from their homeland, Jews have looked forward to the day when they did not have to live under the rule of an alien culture. Hertzberg's assertion that Jews exist to provide a moral guide to the rest of the world is a worthy goal of an admirable people. Not everyone, however, will agree that there is a definable Jewish character.

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—Patricia Masserman

THE JOURNEY BACK

AUTHOR: Johanna Reiss (1932-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1976

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Autobiography; young adult literature

In a sequel to her first autobiography, Reiss chronicles her family members' attempts to rebuild their interrupted lives after they emerge from hiding at the end of World War II.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Annie de Leeuw (later Johanna Reiss; b. 1932), the youngest member of the reunited family

Sini de Leeuw, Annie's sister who has been in hiding with her

Rachel de Leeuw, Annie's oldest sister

Ies de Leeuw, Annie's father, a Winterswijk cattle dealer

Magda Vos, the widowed neighbor who becomes Annie's stepmother

Johan Oosterveld, the Usselo farmer who hid Annie and Sini during the war

Dientje Oosterveld, Johan's wife

Opoë Oosterveld, Johan's elderly mother

OVERVIEW

In the foreword to *The Journey Back*, Johanna Reiss (who had grown up with the name Annie de Leeuw) explains that her second book is the sequel to the earlier *The Upstairs Room* (1972), which describes how she and her sister Sini were hidden for three years by a simple farm family while Adolf Hitler's armies rounded up European Jews for deportation and death. So that the sequel is not dependent on the first book, Reiss begins the story of her journey back by describing what the three years of hiding were like for her, her sister, and the Oostervelds, who sheltered them. In the first and briefest of four parts, Reiss recalls the tedium of her days in hiding, the paralyzing monotony broken only by the warm presence of the Oostervelds each night. Then, in the spring of 1945, the war in Europe ended and Annie and Sini began the journey back to their Winterswijk home.

In part 2 (Summer) and part 3 (Fall and Winter), Reiss tells of the reunited de Leeuws' attempts to become a family again. They began their new life without their mother, who had died a few weeks after the younger girls went into hiding. Because their father was consumed with rebuilding his business in the aftermath of the war, Rachel tried to play the role of parent for her younger sisters. Yet Sini wanted only freedom after three years of confinement, and Annie was increasingly left alone with a changed Rachel. No longer the carefree oldest sister content to entertain the family's youngest, Rachel was preoccupied with remaking the home ravaged by war and caught up in the conversion to Christianity that she had experienced in hiding. With their father away much of the time, and with Sini and Rachel no longer the same people that they were, a confused Annie found comfort only in a visit back to the Oostervelds in Usselo. Like the rest of her family, she was caught between two worlds, unable to live fully in either.

As summer turned to fall, the older members of the family began to make decisions, choosing the new worlds in which they wished to live and leaving Annie even more isolated. Sini left home to begin a nursing course in a nearby town. Mr. de Leeuw unexpectedly announced his intention to remarry, choosing for his second wife Magda Vos, a Winterswijk Jew widowed by the Germans. Before the wedding, Rachel returned to the family that had hidden her during the war. Annie also found herself once again stepping into a new world. Fall and winter were dominated by Annie's attempts to please her perfectionist stepmother, to take the place of Magda's daughter, Nel, who was away at boarding school, and to reconcile the presence of a refined but cold Magda with the memory of the simple but loving Oostervelds.

After a year of struggling with emotional scars that healed more slowly than physical ones, Annie revisited the Oostervelds in the spring of 1946 and found her first sense of direction. Like the Oostervelds and like the other members of her family, she began to understand that life means change. "Me, too. Move on, go places, see things," she told herself, reaching out to what was ahead. Thus, for Annie, the hope of spring overcame the cold of winter.

Like *The Upstairs Room*, *The Journey Back* is an autobiographical memoir, chronicling the impact of World War II and its aftermath on Reiss and her family. As in the earlier book, Reiss tells her story in a highly personal style that lends a journal-like quality to her writing. Especially in part 1, describing the months and years of hiding, she moves freely from actual event to personal impression, from organized thought to dreamlike imaginings. It is an effective stylistic choice, conveying how the life of the mind contin-

ued even as Annie herself sat noiselessly in the darkened upstairs room of the Oosterveld farmhouse day after endless day. When Annie left her hiding place and returned to Winterswijk, she resumed a more active life, and Reiss's style shifts to a traditional first-person narration of events in parts 2 and 3. In part 4, with Annie emerging from a winter of confusion into a springtime of hope, imagination again interweaves with reality as she begins to look toward the future and what it might hold.

While *The Upstairs Room* centers on the most visible losses incurred by Jewish victims of the war—the loss of freedom, home, and family—*The Journey Back* explores even deeper losses. Annie learned that time lost cannot be reclaimed. Her family was irrevocably changed by the years apart. Annie returned from hiding a different person, reuniting with family members who had become different people. Even Annie's place in the community was changed. The Winterswijk Jewish community had been decimated, only a handful of survivors straggling back from Hitler's concentration camps. Among the many Gentile children, Annie had become an oddity. While they were spurred by curiosity to question her about the years in hiding, Annie remained outside the friendships forged during her absence. Isolated at home and in the community, Annie felt a sense of belonging only with the Oostervelds in Usselo, and yet she knew that she could not stay there, that she must reclaim something of her Winterswijk life.

In reflecting on the war years and their aftermath, Reiss relies on metaphor. In the same way that her legs were left weak and crooked from the years of confinement, Annie's spirit was also weakened. Her joy in being alive was obscured by uncertainty and confusion. Like the legs too weak to carry her far, Annie's sense of hope was so circumscribed by her experience that she could not look to the future with confidence. Her crooked legs became a metaphor for the convoluted life to which she returned. Physical disability mirrored Annie's inability to relate to those around her. Yet crooked legs straighten, weakened spirits strengthen, disjointed lives find direction, and winter's cold gives way to the hope of spring.

By reliving the memories of her days in hiding in part 1, Reiss creates a sequel that continues the story of *The Upstairs Room* effectively but also stands alone for the reader who comes to the second book without having read the first. After experiencing the tedium of Annie's years in hiding, the reader can sense her anxiety at leaving the Oostervelds' upstairs room, stepping out onto the streets of Usselo after three years and returning to war-ravaged Winterswijk. Within the context of that anxiety, the reader can understand—with or without having read *The Upstairs Room*—the emotional turmoil that Annie encountered during her first year back in Winterswijk. Thus Reiss achieves a criterion essential for an effective sequel.

By writing a sequel to the earlier account of her war years, Reiss explores aspects of war's consequences that are largely untouched in literature for children and young adults. While *The Upstairs Room* joins many World War II memoirs, *The Journey Back* stands virtually alone as an account of the war's aftermath. In writing of her motivation for telling this story, Reiss stated that "there was still something I wanted to say, something that was as meaningful to me as the story I had told in the first book. . . . From a political point of view, the war was over, but in another sense it has not really ended."

Reiss's second book thus not only complements her first but also provides in itself a unique contribution to autobiographical accounts of war and war's aftermath, especially as experienced by children. As such, this autobiography carries an important message, reminding its young readers that the wounds of war extend beyond the battlefield, beyond the prisoner-of-war compounds and refugee camps, and beyond the hiding places of the persecuted. Reiss reflects that "wars leave emotional scars that take a long time to heal, generations perhaps. I know this to be true of myself, and of others." By sharing her own struggle to overcome those emotional scars, Reiss provides another valuable contribution to the world of young adult biography.

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—Diane L. Chapman

“JOURNEY THROUGH THE NIGHT”

AUTHOR: Jakov Lind (1927-2007)

FIRST PUBLISHED: “Reise durch die Nacht,” 1962 (English translation, 1964)

GENRE: Short fiction

SUBGENRES: Psychological realism; parable

Lind’s brief story, which never mentions the Holocaust directly or indirectly, develops the morbid interplay of victimizer and intended victim through the motif of cannibalism. Given the fact that the author was a survivor of Nazi persecution, many have interpreted this story as a Holocaust parable.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

An unnamed traveler

His fellow passenger

OVERVIEW

Between three and four o’clock in the morning, on a train traveling between Nice and Paris, two Austrians are seated opposite each other in a locked compartment, to which the narrator’s fellow passenger has somehow obtained a key. Describing his unexpected companion, the narrator uneasily likens him to a seal and wonders why he does not show his tusks. This partly comical, partly anxious description grows menacing when he pictures the contents of the other’s small black suitcase. He correctly conjectures that it contains carpenter’s tools—a hammer, saw, chisel, and drill. What he has guessed earlier has now become undeniable: The owner of the black bag is a cannibal, intent on murdering and eating him.

Although the friendly cannibal appears sure that he will accomplish his aim, the protagonist expresses his determination to thwart him. Having gotten fair warning, he insists that he will remain awake through the night’s journey. The cannibal persists in his confidence, however, and matter-of-factly describes how he will dismember and consume his fellow traveler. The narrator’s resistance yields to curiosity, and he asks if the ears can be digested or if they have bones in them. Soon convinced that his life truly is endangered, he attempts to ward off the threat by maintaining a

steady stream of conversation. This leads to a detailed account of dismemberment by the cannibal as he opens his black bag.

The narrator slowly succumbs to his companion's perverse logic and mentally accepts the inevitability, even the reasonableness, of the violent end that awaits him. Only hesitantly and feebly does he manage to express his will to live, asking that he be spared long enough to go for a walk in Paris. The cannibal asserts himself still more sardonically and reopens his bag of tools. The narrator instinctively leaps to his feet and pulls the emergency cord. The train screeches to a halt, and the cannibal speedily disembarks, bitterly chiding his intended prey for the foolishness that will now cost him a huge fine. As several upset passengers crowd into the compartment, the cannibal disappears into the darkness, still shouting invectives.

"Journey Through the Night" is the second of seven stories in Jakob Lind's debut book *Eine Seele aus Holz* (1962; *Soul of Wood, and Other Stories*, 1964). Although only three stories deal directly with the Holocaust, the collection immediately gained its Austrian-born author international fame as a savagely inventive, often grotesquely humorous portrayer of the Nazi extermination of the Jews. Given the atmosphere of horror that pervades the book, along with Lind's biography as a survivor of Nazi persecution, a sweeping view of his early stories as Holocaust parables was widely espoused, and "Journey Through the Night" has often been cited as such a parable. Lind himself appeared to suggest reading the story in this vein. Writing on the annihilation of the Jews in his native Vienna as a result of Nazi racism, he expressly linked the central motif of the story with the Jewish catastrophe. "Vienna died," he said, "when it destroyed its [Jewish] spirit in an act of autocannibalism."

An analogy with the Holocaust will, however, appear less evident to readers unacquainted with Lind's larger work and the forces that motivated it. If the Nazi universe of industrialized genocide can be imagined at all, it is only in terms of its own singular realities. These, however, were so enormous as to defy both objective historical portrayal and literary representation through metaphor or symbol. However Lind may have intended his decidedly elusive tale, it is bare of any reference to the Holocaust. The reader may thus legitimately view its central theme in more universal terms: as humanity's endless capacity for evil or, alternately, as the insanity of a world in which evil has seemingly become normal. Lind's success in conveying his theme depends, in turn, on the psychological plausibility of the story's uneventful plot, the morbid interplay of victimizer and intended victim as developed through the motif of cannibalism.

Within the locked train compartment, Lind's narrator discovers that the social codes that regulate interpersonal behavior and guard human society

from physical assault have been suspended. His fellow passenger claims the right to commit the unthinkable—to murder, dissect, and consume him. His Paris vacation trip, which promised some degree of civilized enjoyment, turns into a nightmare of brutality. At first disbelieving his would-be killer, or perhaps in order to shield himself against believing him, the narrator attempts to dismiss the man's evil intent jokingly. This can be accepted as the normal, if anxious, response of a person educated to respect the sanctity of human life and thereby to expect the safety of his own.

When the cannibal tauntingly opens his black bag, the mere sight of the tools seems to convince the narrator that he is hopelessly trapped. He capitulates intellectually to the immorality of brute power and, without prompting by his captor, begins to accept his impending gruesome death as reasonable: "Every animal eats every other just to stay alive, men eat men, what's so unnatural about that?" Although comically distorted, this sympathy on the part of the victim with the aims of his tormentor validly reflects a psychological phenomenon well documented in the literature on captivity and imprisonment. Only at the last second, when the cannibal wields his mallet, does the succumbing narrator almost miraculously spring to his feet and pull the emergency cord.

In his autobiographical writing, Lind has spoken of his own deep shame at the helplessness and, as he saw it, the passivity of the Jews as they were rounded up by the Germans and deported to their deaths. Possibly he wished, in "Journey Through the Night," to provide a moral corrective to the depravity that holds sway in the train compartment by having the narrator overcome his psychological torpor and save his own life. Nevertheless, it is the embodiment of evil, the cannibal, who has the last word in the story. Although his murderous hand was stayed, his potential to wreak evil remains undiminished, and the irate passengers who crowd into the compartment—among them, as representatives of public order, a conductor and a police officer—will hardly believe the narrator's unlikely tale. As the cannibal charges as he scurries off, his intended victim has made a fool of himself for life.

Lind's story is slightly more than six pages long. Narrated in the first person by the protagonist, it consists primarily of his thoughts and descriptions and the dialogue between him and his fellow passenger. To the extent that the story can claim a plot, in the sense of a series of connected events rising to a climax, the plot is skeletal. It consists entirely of a few key actions and gestures: the cannibal's opening of his black bag to reveal its contents, his wielding of the mallet, the protagonist's last-second tug on the emergency cord, and the appearance of other travelers as the cannibal

escapes. Lind has reduced the setting and time of his story to the barest minimum. Such drastic reduction places the burden of artistic success on the persuasiveness of the psychological conflict that unfolds between the two characters within a single hour and a space whose sole attribute is its seemingly inescapable confinement.

It is a tribute to Lind's artistry that he has rendered believable a situation so utterly bizarre as the one around which his story is constructed. In large part this results from the subtly disquieting atmosphere that he creates at the very outset. The eerie bluish light of the train compartment, the view into a darkness relieved only by a few scattered lights of unclear origin, the nocturnal hour between half wakefulness and deep sleep, and the unidentified hovering voice of the first lines dissolve reality and allow the presence of a cannibal to become plausible. What remains problematic, however, is the narrator's quick acceptance of his doom. Rather than motivating this submission through a genuine contest of wits between the two characters, with its own clear and compelling logic, Lind relies for narrative effect on the grotesque humor of the dialogue and what soon appears to be savagery for its own sake. As a result, the message of the story becomes muddy. The reader is left unsure of the significance inherent in the narrator's finally awakened will to live, while—despite momentary defeat—the murderous immorality of the cannibal appears to triumph.

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—Sidney Rosenfeld

THE LAST OF THE JUST

AUTHOR: André Schwarz-Bart (1928-2006)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Le Dernier des Justes*, 1959 (English translation, 1960)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Bildungsroman; Magical Realism

This novel contrasts light and shadow, interpenetration of dream and reality, and violence and rescue to convey a vision of a world of ambiguity and anguish. The author's message is clear: Jewish suffering through the ages is the responsibility of a Christianity that turns the cross upside down, wielding it as a sword against innocent victims.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

The narrator, who presents himself as a friend of Ernie

Ernie Levy, one of the thirty-six Just Men

Mordecai Levy, Ernie's grandfather

Mother Judith, Ernie's grandmother

Golda Engelbaum, Ernie's fiancé

OVERVIEW

Although the bulk of *The Last of the Just* deals with Ernie Levy, it begins with a brief episodic history of his family from 1185 to 1792, for tradition held that God had granted the Levy family, in each generation, one Lamed-Vovnik—a member of the Lamed Vov, the thirty-six Just Men who absorb the world's suffering: "If just one of them were lacking, the sufferings of mankind would poison even the souls of the newborn, and humanity would suffocate with a single cry."

Through the centuries, the Levys wandered and suffered as did all the Jews. A Levy finally settles in Zemyock, a small and isolated Polish town. When, soon after World War I, the town is captured by White Guard Cosacks, the refugee Levys find a place in Stillenstadt, Germany. The patriarch, Mordecai, and his wife, Mother Judith, are supported by their son Benjamin's tailor shop. Then, the almost unreal, idyllic charm of Stillenstadt is shattered by Nazi violence. Benjamin's second son, Ernie, experiences this tragedy with particular intensity; after concluding that he is a Lamed-Vovnik, he attempts suicide.

The Levys become refugees again, managing to find a niche in Paris. While Ernie enlists in the army, the Vichy government rounds up Jews; the Levy family, except for Ernie, is interned and then sent to their deaths. For a time, Ernie sinks into—indeed wallows in—a deliberately unhuman life focused on food and lust, but when a sympathetic Christian refers to his “Jewish eyes,” he once again becomes capable of feeling. The twenty-year-old Ernie returns to the Jews left in Paris and falls in love with Golda Engelbaum. When she is taken to the internment camp at Drancy, he follows her. He rides with her and a group of frightened children in the box-car to Auschwitz. Having comforted and calmed them, as the door of the gas chamber closes, “he knew that he could do nothing more for anyone in the world. . . .”

Although the novel focuses on Ernie, several other characters are also developed in detail. Ernie’s grandfather, Mordecai, is large and tough as well as traditionally learned and pious; when Nazis come to burn Torah scrolls, Mordecai charges at them, swinging an iron bar. He is an archetype, the Patriarch, as Judith is the archetype of Mother. Lesser characters, such as Benjamin Levy, are finely crafted, their essential personalities explicated in their idiosyncratic approaches to life. Even Golda, whose late appearance in the novel gives her only scant space, is a fully developed character; the swift and mutual love between her and Ernie has no aspect of literary contrivance. Myriad other minor characters are etched with a sure hand in taut and beautiful prose.

From his birth, Ernie is distinctive: Second to his older brother in size and courage as well as age, smaller even than his younger brother, he has flashes of insight into others’ souls, a magical concept of the world. Preoccupied with his destiny as a Lamed-Vovnik, he fantasizes about protecting all the Jews; only after his family’s deportation does he attempt to escape his role by means of a Rabelaisian but despairing lifestyle. His return to humanity and the Jews of Paris signals a return to life and love and the working out of his destiny as a Just Man.

André Schwarz-Bart uses various distancing devices to detach the reader from an immediate emotional identification with the characters. The narrator himself speaks with a detached and often ironic tone. Frequently he refers to or apparently quotes from historical records and witnesses. Interspersed with vague chronological references are specific names, places, and dates. The calm and objective narrative is broken only by flashes of irony, but the detachment begins to thin as the narrator approaches the twentieth century. The Levy Just Men become more and more fully developed characters to whom the reader responds, and the novelistic detail intensifies.

Zemyock, where the Levys had originally come to rest, is in almost magical isolation from the brutal realities of the world. Its atmosphere is to be re-created by the author, from time to time, in each of the later places inhabited by the Levys, from Berlin to Auschwitz. This vision is projected often for Stillenstadt, "Quiet City," where Ernie grows up. The pervasive charm of the town provides the magical background for Ernie's discovery of himself as a Lamed-Vovnik and for his attempted suicide as well. Later, in Paris, the charm of a spring day in a park is set against the certainty of the deaths of Ernie and Golda, just as the internment camp rises amid the suburban tranquillity of Drancy. The final reality of Auschwitz seems itself unreal, with an orchestra playing on the route the prisoners take to the gas chambers. Ernie's tears of blood seem merely an acceptable response.

The narrator or a child is usually the medium by which these Magical Realist episodes are described. Stillness, the contrasts of light and shadow, the interpenetration of dream and reality, violence and rescue, all produce not only a narrative but also, and more incisively, a vision of a world of ambiguity and anguish. Schwarz-Bart's prose is never bitter, but his thesis is clear: Jewish suffering through the ages is the responsibility of a Christianity that turns the cross upside down, wielding it as a sword against innocent victims.

Although the thrust of the novel is clear, the author's stance is sometimes ambiguous. Ernie is the last Just Man, yet he dies in Auschwitz. Earlier, there have been ironic comments, such as Mother Judith's "What a great God is ours, . . . and how oddly he runs the world!" There has also been Benjamin Levy's cry, "If God did not exist . . . where does all the suffering go?" In addition, the novel concludes with an anguished prayer interspersed with the names of concentration camps: "And praised. Auschwitz. Be. Maidanek. The Lord. Treblinka. And praised. Buchenwald. Be. . . ." The last word, however, is less ambiguous:

Yes, at times one's heart could break in sorrow. But often too, preferably in the evening, I can't help thinking that Ernie Levy, dead six million times, is still alive somewhere, I don't know where. . . . Yesterday, as I stood in the street trembling in despair, rooted to the spot, a drop of pity fell from above upon my face. But there was no breeze in the air, no cloud in the sky. . . . There was only a presence.

It is probable that the self-educated Schwarz-Bart was influenced in the 1950's by the work of Jorge Luis Borges, and it is possible also that during that same period Gabriel García Márquez was influenced either by Schwarz-Bart or by similar literary tendencies, which have characterized

much modern Latin American literature as well as its European counterpart.

Upon its publication, *The Last of the Just*, while provoking a teapot tempest of criticism, garnered the prestigious Prix Goncourt and major critical acclaim. Thereafter, it fell from notice. It was viewed as outside the French literary mainstream; as Holocaust literature, it was frequently considered in critical categories other than the literary.

Schwarz-Bart later published, with his wife, two novels following *The Last of the Just: Un Plat de porc aux bananes vertes* (1967; a plate of pork with green bananas) and *La Mulatresse Solitude* (1972; *A Woman Named Solitude*, 1973), each with a black woman as protagonist. These works bridge the centuries of Jewish agony and the Holocaust, and the centuries of black enslavement, with an explication and a perception of humanity's sufferings. *The Last of the Just* stands not merely as the first of a trilogy, however, but as a major work on its own merits, a work of French literature, of Jewish and Holocaust literature, and of modern Magical Realism.

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—Marsha Kass Marks

LEST INNOCENT BLOOD BE SHED

THE STORY OF THE VILLAGE OF LE CHAMBON, AND
HOW GOODNESS HAPPENED THERE

AUTHOR: Philip P. Hallie (1922-1994)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1979

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Ethics; history; philosophy

In one of the most important books published on Holocaust rescuers and altruism, Hallie relates in intimate detail the lives and actions of the people of a village in southern France who, despite horrific peril, saved more than twenty-five hundred Jews from the Holocaust.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

André Trocmé, the pastor of Le Chambon

Magda Trocmé, André Trocmé's wife

Édouard Theis, the assistant pastor of Le Chambon

OVERVIEW

As a youthful victim of violent anti-Semitism and as a soldier ordered to kill in World War II, Wesleyan University philosophy professor Philip P. Hallie was inexorably drawn to an inspiring true story of positive ethics in which great human goodness triumphed over evil nonviolently. Hallie's deeply moving and uplifting book *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, appropriately subtitled *The Story of the Village of Le Chambon, and How Goodness Happened There*, documents the too-seldom-recognized human capacity for nobility, conscience, and generous goodness even under the most horrific conditions—specifically, the human-created evil of the Holocaust.

In 1940, the Nazis conquered France and divided it into two zones: the north, which was ruled by the Nazis, and the south (Vichy), which was ruled by Nazi collaborator Marshal Philippe Pétain. Le Chambon-sur-Lignon was a small village in southern France, its population of about twenty-seven hundred made up mostly of Huguenots, Protestants who had been persecuted by the Catholics dating back to the sixteenth century.

Perhaps their own anguished persecution primed the Chambonnais to shelter and save the latest victims of undeserved hate: Jews.

To illustrate the dynamic of goodness in Le Chambon, Hallie begins with the frightening night of February 13, 1943, when two Vichy police arrived at the home of the Reverend André Trocmé, the conscience and “soul” of Le Chambon, who had inspired his parishioners to resist Nazi evil, not with guns but with the “weapons of the spirit.” Trocmé was out visiting the leaders of his Bible study group, and when his wife, Magda—the steadfast, intelligent, hardworking “heart” of Le Chambon—heard the knock, she quickly hid the Jews her family was sheltering and invited the policemen in to wait. André returned for dinner, and Magda invited the policemen to join them. (When asked later how she could feed men who had come to arrest, even kill, her husband, she replied, “What are you talking about? It was dinnertime. We were all hungry; the food was ready.”) After dinner, many parishioners came by to give gifts to Pastor Trocmé before the police took him away; they surrounded the policemen’s car, singing the Lutheran hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

Next the car picked up Édouard Theis, assistant pastor of Le Chambon and administrator of the school that Trocmé and Theis had founded in 1938, the Collège Lycée International Cévenol. Hallie describes Theis as the “rock” of Le Chambon; his ferocious belief in the dignity and equality of all people matched Trocmé’s. Third to be arrested was Roger Darcissac, administrator of Le Chambon’s public school and a staunch ally of Trocmé and Theis. These embodiments of goodness and grace, after having their noses measured to determine their “Jewishness,” were placed in a concentration camp near Limoges. The other prisoners resisted the three men at first but soon joined them in Bible study and prayer.

One month later, Trocmé, Theis, and Darcissac were summoned to see the camp director, who demanded that they sign loyalty oaths to Pétain. Darcissac had already signed such an oath as a condition of his employment and was released, but the other two refused to commit themselves to an immoral government that was ordering Jewish deportation. They had their noses remeasured and were remanded back to the camp. The next day, Trocmé and Theis were mysteriously set free while all remaining inmates were sent to their deaths in Poland. Trocmé returned home to continue to lead his village in goodness.

What was the genesis of this dynamic, moral leader, self-described as “a violent man conquered by God”? Born in northeastern France, André Trocmé learned about the preciousness and fragility of life at ten years old, when his mother died in a tragic car accident. As a student at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, he met Italian student Magda Grilli in

1925. "I shall be a Protestant pastor . . . and live a life of poverty," he told her in his marriage proposal. They married, moved to France, and started a family.

In Le Chambon in 1938, Trocmé and fellow pacifist Édouard Theis organized the Collège Lycée International Cévenol, and both of their wives became teachers at the school. By the late 1930's, increasing numbers of refugees were fleeing Adolf Hitler's hate and some found Le Chambon, where Trocmé gave powerful sermons on the irreplaceable value of all human life and the necessity of resisting evil nonviolently. Above the entrance to his church was emblazoned the admonition "Love One Another." Those who simply stand by in the face of overwhelming evil, Trocmé believed, are "the most dangerous people in the world."

In 1941, the Nazi deportation of Jews to death camps was accelerated. In resistance, Trocmé, Theis, and Darcissac began what Hallie terms an "intimate, unglamorous kitchen struggle" to assert conscience over blind obedience. Their organized nonviolent resistance started with refusal to salute the flag; they then refused to sign loyalty oaths to the state, and, in 1941, they refused to ring the church bell to "celebrate" one year of Pétain's power.

Le Chambon's communitywide undertaking to save Jews had humble beginnings but quickly grew. Magda Trocmé, who said, "I do not hunt to find people to help. But I never close my door," answered a knock one night to face a terrified German Jew who was in danger and sought refuge in Le Chambon. "Naturally, come in, come in," was Magda's reply. As more and more refugees arrived, countless Le Chambon townspeople and rural farmers provided safe shelter. False identity papers and ration cards, essential for the protection of Jews, appeared anonymously. Soon phone calls mysteriously came to the Trocmés, providing accurate warnings of imminent Nazi roundups. Hallie reports that one Jewish refugee was stunned when a Le Chambon woman gathered her family to announce, "Look! We have in our house a representative of the chosen people."

During two summer afternoons in 1942, some twenty-eight thousand Jews in Paris were rounded up and deported to Auschwitz; none of the more than four thousand children among them survived. By late fall of 1942, the Nazis were sending buses to Le Chambon to arrest all Jews. Trocmé's network of local young people spread the word and quickly effected, in his words, "the disappearance of the Jews" into the thick woods surrounding the town. Although the police scoured countless homes and farms, no Jews were ever betrayed.

As the war dragged on, the Nazis fought even more desperately, using murder and intimidation to eliminate all Jews and their protectors, while

the Chambonnais fought even harder with faith and steadfast determination, the “weapons of the spirit,” to save every Jew in their charge. Often threatened with arrest, Trocmé moved from home to home to conceal his whereabouts, barely escaping capture—but he never relented.

Trocmé’s beloved cousin Daniel was deported to and murdered in the Majdanek death camp near Lublin, Poland, because the Nazis assumed that anyone who spoke sympathetically of the Jews must be one. Until the very end of the war, the Chambonnais sheltered Jews and shepherded some to Switzerland. In addition to the more than twenty-five hundred Jews saved by the Chambonnais, Hallie concludes, the inspiration of the townspeople’s actions “saved” him too.

The residents of Le Chambon saw no difference between Jews and non-Jews. Just as theologian Martin Buber taught in his 1923 book *Ich und Du* (*I and Thou*, 1937), they didn’t relate to others coldly and condescendingly as “I” and “It,” but rather with warm respect and appreciation for “I” and “Thou.” When a local prefect came to search for Jews hiding in Le Chambon, Trocmé asserted, “We do not know what a Jew is. We know only men.”

Critical reception for Hallie’s beautiful testimony to the powerful “contagion of caring” was uniformly enthusiastic. By 1979, when *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* was published, virtually entire libraries had been published about what Hallie terms the “glamour of wartime events,” the evil perpetrated by Hitler and his henchmen. Very little, however, had been written about the “unglamorous” bright light of human goodness in the midst of the darkness. After the publication of Hallie’s vital, passionate, life-giving study on Le Chambon, however, other superlative books about courage, rescue, and altruism during the Holocaust appeared.

One small incident that took place thirty years after World War II ended encapsulates the quintessence of Le Chambon. Hallie and Édouard Theis were leaving a church together in Le Chambon when Hallie witnessed many parishioners as well as Theis putting large monetary contributions into the church’s donation box. When Hallie asked whom the money would help, Theis replied, “Oh, I don’t know. They’re people.”

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—Howard A. Kerner

LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON

AUTHOR: Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Widerstand und Ergebung: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft*, 1951 (English translation, 1953)

GENRES: Nonfiction; poetry

SUBGENRES: Letters; lyric poetry; meditation

This collection of poems, papers, and letters to friends and relatives preserves some of Bonhoeffer's thoughts during the period when he was imprisoned and awaiting death at the hands of the Nazis.

OVERVIEW

The son of a psychiatrist teaching at Berlin University, Dietrich Bonhoeffer decided early to study theology. He served as pastor, lecturer, and theology professor in Spain, America, and England as well as Germany. Bonhoeffer became an outspoken critic of the Nazi government and an active member of the resistance movement. In 1943, he was arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo and two years later was hanged. His other important works include *Schöpfung und Fall* (1933; *Creation and Fall*, 1959), *Nachfolge* (1937; *The Cost of Discipleship*, 1948), *Gemeinsames Leben* (1939; *Life Together*, 1954), and *Ethik* (1943; *Ethics*, 1955).

Letters and Papers from Prison is not specifically focused on the Holocaust, and the book is not intended to present a systematic set of ideas; rather, it posits questions and suggestive answers, or suggestive lines along which one may look for answers. As Bonhoeffer himself says, "I am led on more by an instinctive feeling for the questions which are bound to crop up rather than by any conclusions I have reached already." However, one gets the feeling when reading this material that there was a book brewing in his mind. Just as one may think of Bonhoeffer's previous work as a book on the theme of Christ as Lord of the Church, one could think of *Letters and Papers from Prison* as a work dealing with the theme of Christ as Lord of the world—for it is Christ and the world in the twentieth century and how one can be a disciple of Christ that seem to have been occupying Bonhoeffer's mind. One of Bonhoeffer's questions raised here, for exam-



Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (Deutsche Presse Agentur/ Archive Photos)

ple, and one that would greatly influence later theology, is “How do we speak . . . in secular fashion of God?”

It is the secularization of the world in the twentieth century that seems to preoccupy Bonhoeffer. He sees the world with its science and technology as having “come of age,” and the world and human beings as having become autonomous. We do not need God as the answer to problems as we once did. This he takes to be a fact with which theology must deal, but he also does not take it to be a bad one. When humanity can resolve its problems itself, to force human beings to rely on God is merely to force them back into adolescence. In the light of this, he calls for a “religionless Christianity,” one that does not rest on some a priori religious need for God. “The time when men could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or pious,” he tells us, “is over and so is the time of inwardness and conscience, which is to say the time of religion as such.”

A religionless Christianity stands in contrast to a Christianity that maintains that humanity has problems that only religion can answer. Of religion, Bonhoeffer writes:

Religious people speak of God when human perception is (often just from laziness) at an end, or human resources fail: it is always a *deus ex machina* they call to their aid, either for the so called solving of insoluble problems or as

support in human failure—always, that is to say, helping our human weakness or on the borders of human existence.

This is precisely the role for God that Bonhoeffer takes humanity's "coming-of-age" to have rejected. It is the kind of situation, also, that we find reflected in Paul Tillich's method of correlation, which maintains that human reason raises questions that it cannot answer and that these questions find their answer in Christianity. This is to base Christianity on a false religious premise. In reference to Tillich's attempt, Bonhoeffer remarks that Tillich "sought to understand the world better than it understood itself, but it felt entirely *misunderstood* and rejected the imputation." If the disciples of Christ are to be messengers, as was called for in Bonhoeffer's previous work, then they must know how to be messengers to humanity "come of age"; otherwise, Christ cannot fulfill his role as Lord of the world.

In positing a "religionless Christianity" in a secular age, Bonhoeffer essentially shifts responsibility from an external, dogmatic godhead to an internal God, resident within the human soul and requiring religious institutions that work in the world. Two things that Bonhoeffer thinks the Church must take seriously if it is to speak to humanity "come of age" are, first, that

God is teaching us that we must live as men who can get along very well without him. . . . God is weak and powerless in the world, that is exactly the way, the only way, in which he can help us. Matthew 8:17 makes it crystal-clear that it is not by his omnipotence that Christ helps us, but by his weakness and suffering. . . . This must be the starting point for our "worldly" interpretations.

The second thing the Church must take seriously is its place in the world: The Christian Church must see itself as belonging to the world, but as powerless in the world, like its Christ, and existing for humanity: The Church "must take part in the social life of the world, not lording over men, but helping and serving them."

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—Bowman L. Clarke

HOLOCAUST
LITERATURE

MAGILL'S CHOICE

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

Volume 2

Life with a Star -
A World at Arms

Appendixes

Indexes

Edited by

John K. Roth

Claremont McKenna College

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NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

This partial list of Nazi concentration camps shows the location and the estimated number of deaths that occurred at each.

<i>Camp</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Estimated Deaths</i>
Amersfoort	Amersfoort, Netherlands	1,000
Auschwitz-Birkenau	Oświęcim, Poland	1,100,000
Belżec	Belżec, Poland	435,000 to 600,000
Bergen-Belsen	Near Celle, Germany	35,000
Buchenwald	Near Weimar, Germany	56,000
Chełmno	Chełmno, Poland	152,000 to 320,000
Dachau	Dachau, Germany	28,000 to 32,000
Flossenbürg	Near Nuremberg, Germany	30,000
Gross-Rosen	Gross-Rosen, Germany (now in Poland)	40,000
Janowska	L'viv, Poland (now in Ukraine)	At least 40,000
Jasenovac	Jasenovac, Croatia	700,000
Koldichevo	Baranovichi, Belarus	20,000
Majdanek	Lublin, Poland	360,000
Mauthausen	Mauthausen, Austria	119,000
Mittelbau/Dora	Near Nordhausen, Germany	20,000
Natzweiler-Struthof	Natzweiler, France	At least 17,000
Neuengamme	Near Hamburg, Germany	At least 50,000
Płaszów	Kraków, Poland	At least 9,000
Ravensbrück	Near Berlin, Germany	90,000
Risiera di San Sabba	Near Trieste, Italy	5000
Sachsenhausen	Near Berlin, Germany	At least 30,000
Sobibór	Sobibór, Poland	167,000 to 250,000
Soldau	Działdowo, Poland	13,000
Stutthof	Sztutowo, Poland	At least 60,000
Theresienstadt	Terezín, Czechoslovakia	33,000
Treblinka	Treblinka, Poland	870,000 to 925,000
Warsaw	Warsaw, Poland	200,000

HOLOCAUST CHRONOLOGY

1933

- Jan. 30 Adolf Hitler is appointed chancellor of Germany by German president Paul von Hindenburg.
- Feb. 3 Hitler presents his *Lebensraum* program, in which he argues that Germany needs more “living room” and should find it in the East.
- Feb. 27 The Reichstag (German parliament) building is set on fire.
- Mar. 20 The first concentration camp is established at Dachau, near Munich, Germany. The camp opens in June.
- Mar. 23 The Enabling Act is adopted, giving Hitler the legislative authority to assume dictatorial powers.
- Apr. 1 The Sturm Abteilung (SA), the paramilitary organization of the Nazi Party, begins a boycott of all Jewish businesses, physicians, and attorneys. Jews in Germany are barred from attending universities.
- Apr. 7 A law is adopted that prevents Jews from holding civil service jobs, except for veterans who fought on the front lines in World War I. This is the first of about four hundred anti-Semitic laws that will be enacted in Nazi Germany.
- Apr. 11 Laws defining “Aryans” and “non-Aryans” are adopted. “Non-Aryans” include anyone descended from non-Aryans, especially from Jewish parents or grandparents.
- Apr. 26 The Gestapo, the Nazi secret police organization, is established.
- May 10 After Nazis declare that books containing material that is “subversive” to German thought and the German people shall be destroyed, a massive book-burning campaign begins. Many of the books burned are those written by Jews as well as by opponents of the Nazis.
- July 14 Opposition political parties are banned, allowing the Nazis to be the only political party in Germany. Laws are adopted whose primary purpose is to revoke naturalization and cancel German citizenship for Jews from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Croatia, and other eastern territories.
- July 20 The Nazi Party and the Vatican sign a concordat.
- July 21 In Nuremberg, Germany, the SA arrests hundreds of Jews and parades them through the streets for hours.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Sept. 22 The Reich Chamber of Culture Law is created to control literature, the press, radio, theater, music, and art, with these efforts to be directed by the Ministry of Propaganda under Joseph Goebbels.
- Oct. 4 The Editor Law is adopted, regulating the role of newspaper and magazine editors and restricting Jews from working as editors.
- Oct. 14 Germany quits the League of Nations, releasing the country from the international controls over rearmament that had been accepted by the Weimar Republic.
- Oct. 23 Martin Buber and fifty-one other Jewish educators are fired from their university jobs.
- Oct. 24 A law against "habitual and dangerous criminals" is adopted to justify the confinement of the homeless, alcoholics, and the unemployed in concentration camps.
- Dec. 18 A law is adopted barring Jews from working as journalists and in associated professions.
- 1934**
- Jan. 24 Jews are banned from the German Labor Front, the Nazi Party's organization of trade unions.
- Jan. 26 Germany and Poland sign a ten-year nonaggression pact.
- May 17 Jews are prohibited from obtaining health insurance.
- June 29-30 The Nazis murder Hitler's rivals in the SA, including SA head Ernst Röhm. This purge is kept secret until July 13, when Hitler publicly announces what he calls "the Night of the Long Knives."
- July 20 The Schutzstaffel (SS), the Nazi Party's military and security organization, which had been controlled by the police, becomes an independent organization. Heinrich Himmler is appointed chief of the SS.
- Aug. 2 President Hindenburg dies, and the positions of chancellor and president are combined, with Hitler assuming both offices. Hitler also becomes commander in chief of the armed forces.
- Oct. 1 Hitler defies the Treaty of Versailles by expanding the German army and navy and creating an air force.
- Oct. 7 Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany declare their political neutrality and vow to defy Nazi restrictions on the practice of their religion.
- 1935**
- Mar. 16 Germany begins military conscription.

Holocaust Chronology

- Apr. 1 Jehovah's Witnesses are banned in Germany because members of the group will not declare allegiance to the Third Reich.
- May 21 A defense law is adopted that requires Aryan heritage as a prerequisite of German military duty.
- June 28 The German criminal code is revised to criminalize all acts of male homosexuality.
- Sept. 15 In a special session, the German parliament adopts the Nuremberg Laws, which comprise the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor and the Reich Citizenship Law. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor prohibits marriage and sexual relations outside of marriage between Jews and Germans. The Reich Citizenship Law deprives Jews of German citizenship.
- Nov. 14 In the first decree issued under the Reich Citizenship Law, Jews are barred from voting and holding public office, and all Jews are fired from their civil service jobs, including World War I frontline veterans. In the first decree issued under the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, Jews are prohibited from marrying non-Jews, Jews are prohibited from working in all but a few professions, and Jewish children are prohibited from using the same playgrounds and locker rooms as non-Jewish children.
- 1936**
- Mar. 7 German troops occupy the Rhineland.
- July 12 Construction begins at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, located near Berlin.
- Aug. 1 The Olympic Games open in Berlin. During the two weeks of the games, anti-Semitic posters are temporarily taken down and the Nazis downplay their militarism and anti-Semitic agenda.
- 1937**
- July 16 The Buchenwald concentration camp opens near Weimar, Germany.
- Autumn The Nazis begin systematically to take over Jewish property. Jews also are forced to sell their businesses, usually at prices far below their value.
- 1938**
- Mar. 13 Germany annexes Austria and begins to persecute Austrian Jews.
- Apr. 22 Jews are required to declare all property worth more than 5,000 reichsmarks (\$1,190).
- June 9 The synagogue in Munich, Germany, is destroyed.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- June 14 Jews are required to register and identify all of their industrial enterprises. Lists of wealthy Jews are created at treasury offices and police districts.
- June 15 About 1,500 Jews who were previously convicted of crimes, including traffic violations, are arrested and scheduled to be sent to concentration camps.
- July 21 Jews begin to receive identity cards. All Jews are required to have these cards by November, 1939.
- July 28 Medical certification is canceled for all Jewish physicians, effective September 30. After that date, Jewish physicians can work only as nurses for Jewish patients.
- Aug. 10 The synagogue in Nuremberg, Germany, is destroyed.
- Aug. 17 All Jews are mandated to add either "Israel" or "Sara" to their names, effective November, 1939.
- Sept. 12 Jews are prohibited from attending public cultural events.
- Sept. 27 The licenses of all Jewish lawyers are canceled, effective November 30.
- Sept. 29 The Munich Agreement is adopted, in which Britain and France accept Germany's plan to annex the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia.
- Oct. 1 German troops enter the Sudetenland.
- Oct. 5 A passport decree is issued requiring the confiscation of all passports held by Jews. Passport reissuance is made more complicated, and all passports newly issued to Jews must be stamped "J" to identify the holders as Jews.
- Oct. 15 German troops occupy the Sudetenland.
- Oct. 28 Between 15,000 and 17,000 Jews of Polish origin are expelled to Zbąszyń on the Polish border.
- Nov. 9-10 Kristallnacht, a Nazi-organized pogrom against Jews in Germany, results in the murder of at least 91 Jews, the destruction of 191 synagogues, and the looting of 7,500 shops. More than 26,000 Jewish men are arrested and scheduled to be sent to the Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps.
- Nov. 12 The Nazis issue decrees mandating Jews to pay for all damages caused during Kristallnacht. German Jews also are required to make "atonement payments" of one billion marks, are eliminated from involvement in the German economy and are prohibited from attending movies, concerts, and other cultural performances.
- Nov. 15 Jewish children are expelled from German schools.

Holocaust Chronology

Nov. 25 About fifty male concentration camp prisoners are transferred to Ravensbrück, near Berlin. The prisoners will build the Ravensbrück concentration camp, which will be the primary camp for women prisoners in Germany.

1939

Jan. 17 A decree mandates the expiration of permits for Jewish dentists, pharmacists, and veterinarians.

Feb. 21 Jews are required to give up all of their gold and silver.

Mar. 14 Slovakia declares itself an independent state to be protected by Germany.

Mar. 15 Germany occupies Czechoslovakia, creating the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia and introducing the anti-Semitic decrees that are already in force in Germany.

Apr. 18 Anti-Semitic laws are passed in Slovakia.

Apr. 27-28 Germany rescinds its nonaggression pact with Poland and its 1935 Naval Agreement with Britain.

Apr. 30 Laws are adopted that regulate rental agreements with Jews and cancel eviction protection for Jews. Legal preparations are made to move Jewish families into "Jewish houses."

May 15 The SS transfers almost 900 women prisoners from the Lichtenburg concentration camp to Ravensbrück.

June 29 About 440 Romani (Gypsy) women and their children arrive in Ravensbrück from Austria. By 1945, about 5,000 Romani women will pass through this camp.

July 4 Jews are barred from holding government jobs in Germany.

Aug. 23 Germany and the Soviet Union sign a nonaggression pact.

Aug. 31 The British fleet mobilizes, and civilian evacuation begins in London.

Sept. 1 World War II begins after Germany invades Poland. The Nazis start to conduct numerous pogroms in Poland.

Sept. 3 Britain, France, Australia, and New Zealand declare war on Germany.

Sept. 10 Canada declares war on Germany.

Sept. 17 The Soviet Union invades Poland.

Sept. 21 Reinhard Heydrich, second in command of the SS, orders the creation of Jewish ghettos and *Judenräte* in occupied Poland. The *Judenräte*, or Jewish Councils, were charged with maintaining order in the ghettos.

Sept. 23 Radios are confiscated from Jews.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Sept. 27 Warsaw surrenders to Germany.
- Sept. 29 The Germans and the Soviets divide Poland. More than 2 million Jews live in the German area, and 1.3 million live in the Soviet-controlled territory.
- Oct. The Nazis begin to implement a program of euthanasia, targeting sick and disabled Germans.
- Oct. 6 Poland surrenders to Germany.
- Oct. 7 Jews are resettled in the Lublin district of Poland.
- Oct. 8 The first Jewish ghetto is established in Piotrków, Poland.
- Oct. 12 The first group of Jews from Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia is deported to Poland.
- Oct. 18 Jews in Włocławek, Poland, are required to display the Star of David on their clothing.
- Oct. 26 Jews in German-occupied Poland begin to be used for forced labor.
- Nov. 12 Forced deportation begins for Polish Jews from West Prussia, Poznań, Gdańsk, and Łódź.
- Nov. 23 Jews throughout German-occupied Poland are required to display the Star of David on their clothing.
- 1940**
- Jan. 25 Oświęcim (in German, Auschwitz), Poland, is selected as the location of a new concentration camp.
- Jan. 28 Wartime rationing of goods begins in Britain.
- Feb. 10-13 Deportation begins for Jews from the Pomerania area of Poland to Lublin, Poland.
- Apr. 9 Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- Apr. 20 The high command of the German armed forces issues a secret order that all persons of "mixed blood" and men who are married to Jewish women are to be discharged from the military.
- Apr. 30 The first guarded Jewish ghetto is established in Łódź, Poland.
- May 1 Norway surrenders to Germany.
- May 10 Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, and France.
- May 15 The Netherlands capitulates to Germany.
- May 20 The Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp is established.
- May 26 Evacuation of all Allied troops from Dunkirk begins.
- May 28 Belgium capitulates to Germany.

Holocaust Chronology

- June 3 Evacuation of Dunkirk ends.
- June 10 German troops defeat Denmark and Norway. Italy declares war on Britain and France.
- June 14 The Nazis occupy Paris.
- June 18 Hitler presents a plan to Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to transfer Madagascar from France to Germany and resettle all European Jews in the new Mandate of Madagascar.
- June 22 The French army surrenders and Marshal Philippe Pétain signs an armistice with Germany.
- June 30 All Jews living in Łódź, Poland, are required to live in the ghetto, which is sealed off.
- July 10 The Battle of Britain begins.
- July 23 The Soviet Union captures Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania.
- Aug. 8 Romania adopts anti-Semitic laws.
- Aug. 17 Hitler declares a blockade of the British Isles.
- Sept. 7 Germany begins a military blitz against England.
- Sept. 16 The United States adopts a military conscription bill.
- Oct. 3 The new Vichy government of France adopts the Statut des Juifs (Anti-Jewish Laws).
- Oct. 7 German troops enter Romania.
- Oct. 22 Jews are deported from Alsace-Lorraine, Saarland, and Baden to southern France and, in 1942, to Auschwitz. Jewish businesses in the Netherlands are required to be registered.
- Oct. 28 Jews in Belgium are required to register their property.
- Nov. 15 The Warsaw ghetto is sealed off.
- Dec. 29-30 Germany launches a massive air raid on London.
- 1941**
- Jan. 22-23 The Nazis begin to massacre Jews in Romania.
- Feb.-Apr. About 72,000 Jews are sent to the Warsaw ghetto.
- Feb. 22-23 About 400 Jewish hostages are deported from Amsterdam to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria.
- Mar. 1 Construction begins on the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp.
- Mar. 2 German troops occupy Bulgaria.
- Mar. 11 U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the Lend Lease Act, which allows the United States to send war supplies to Britain, the Soviet Union, and other Allied nations.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Apr. 6 Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.
- Apr. 24 The Lublin ghetto is sealed off.
- May 14 About 3,600 Parisian Jews are arrested. Romania adopts laws requiring Jews to perform forced labor.
- June The Vichy government revokes the civil rights of French Jews in North Africa and issues numerous restrictions against them.
- June-July Mass shootings of Jews begins in the Ponary Forest, near Vilna, Lithuania. By 1944, 70,000 to 100,000 people are murdered there.
- June-Aug. Numerous pogroms are conducted in German-occupied areas of the Soviet Union.
- June 6 About 300 male prisoners from Dachau arrive at Ravensbrück, where the SS holds them in a separate camp for men. These men are forced to build factories in the area.
- June 22 Germany attacks the Soviet Union.
- June 27 The *Einsatzgruppen* (Nazi mobile extermination squads) and local residents murder some 2,000 Jews in Luts'k, Ukraine.
- June 28 The Romanian Iron Guard, an anti-Semitic paramilitary group, murders 1,500 Jews in Iasi.
- June 30 Germany occupies L'viv, Poland (now in Ukraine), and 4,000 Jews are murdered by July 3.
- July The Majdanek concentration and extermination camp is established in Lublin, Poland.
- July 1 The *Einsatzgruppen* begin operating in Bessarabia, Soviet Union, where 150,000 Jews are shot by August 31.
- July 8 Jews in the Baltic countries are required to display the Star of David on their clothing.
- July 20 A Jewish ghetto is established in Minsk, Belarus.
- July 24 A Jewish ghetto is established in Chişinău, Moldavia (now Moldova), where 10,000 Jews are killed.
- Aug. Jewish ghettos are established in Bialystok and L'viv, Poland.
- Aug. 5-8 About 10,000 Jews are killed in Pinsk, Belarus.
- Aug. 15 The Jewish ghetto in Kaunas, Lithuania, is sealed off.
- Aug. 20 The Nazis begin the siege of Leningrad.
- Sept. Janowska, an extermination camp, opens near L'viv, Poland.
- Sept. 1 Police order all Jews in Germany age six and older to display a yellow Star of David on their clothing at all times, effective September 19.

Holocaust Chronology

- Sept. 3 The experimental gassing of prisoners at Auschwitz with Zyklon B begins.
- Sept. 6 A ghetto is established in Vilna, Lithuania, with a population of 40,000 Jews.
- Sept. 15 About 150,000 Jews are sent to Trans-Dniestria, Moldavia (now Moldova), where 90,000 die.
- Sept. 19 The Zhitomir ghetto in the Ukraine is liquidated , resulting in the murder of 10,000 Jews.
- Sept. 28-29 The mass murder of Jews at Babi Yar near Kiev, Ukraine, results in the deaths of 33,751. In 1961, Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko publishes “Babiy Yar” (“Babii Yar,” 1965) a poem that relates anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union to the atrocities committed there.
- Oct.-Nov. The *Einsatzgruppen* begin the mass murder of Jews throughout the southern Soviet Union.
- Oct. 3 German Jews are required to perform forced labor.
- Oct. 4 Thousands of Jews are murdered at Fort IX in Kaunas, Lithuania.
- Oct. 8 The Vitsyebsk ghetto in Belarus is liquidated and more than 16,000 Jews are killed.
- Oct. 10 A Jewish ghetto is established in Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia.
- Oct. 11 A Jewish ghetto is established in Czernowitz, Romania.
- Oct. 12-13 About 11,000 Jews are massacred at Dnipropetrovs’k, Ukraine.
- Oct. 14 The Nazis order the deportation of all Jews from Germany as defined by the country’s 1933 borders.
- Oct. 16 German Jews begin to be deported to the ghettos in Łódź, Poland; Riga, Latvia; and Minsk, Belarus.
- Oct. 23 About 34,000 Jews are massacred in Odessa, Ukraine.
- Oct. 28 About 34,000 Jews are massacred in Kiev, Ukraine.
- Nov. 1 Construction begins on an extermination camp at Belżec, Poland.
- Nov. 6 About 15,000 Jews are massacred in Kaunas, Lithuania.
- Nov. 24 A “model” concentration camp is created at Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia.
- Nov. 26 The Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau) concentration-extermination camp is established.
- Nov. 30 About 30,000 Jews from Riga, Latvia, are shot in the Rumbuli Forest.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Dec. 1 A unit of the *Einsatzgruppen* in Lithuania reports that it has murdered 136,441 Jews during 1941.
- Dec. 7 The Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor.
- Dec. 8 The Chełmno extermination camp opens in Poland, where 360,000 Jews will be murdered by April, 1943.
- Dec. 8 The United States and Great Britain declare war on Japan.
- Dec. 11 Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.
- Dec. 21 More than 40,000 Jews are shot at the Bogdanovka concentration camp in Romania.
- Dec. 22 Of the 57,000 Jews who once lived in Vilna, Lithuania, about 33,500 have been murdered.
- Dec. 30 About 10,000 Jews are killed in Simferopol', Ukraine.
- 1942**
- Jan. 14 The Nazis start to expel Jews from the Netherlands.
- Jan. 15 Prisoners from Łódź, Poland, are sent to the extermination camp at Chełmno.
- Jan. 20 Nazi officials hold the Wannsee Conference, where they finalize their plans for the "final solution"—the deportation and extermination of European Jews.
- Jan. 26 The first American armed forces arrive in Britain.
- Jan. 31 A unit of the *Einsatzgruppen* reports it has murdered 229,052 Jews in the Baltic states.
- End of Jan. The Nazis begin deporting Jews to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.
- Feb.-Mar. About 14,000 Jews are murdered in Kharkiv, Ukraine.
- Feb. 24 More than 30,000 Jews from Łódź, Poland, are sent to the Chełmno extermination camp.
- Mar. 1 The first Jews are murdered at the Sobibór extermination camp in Poland, where 250,000 Jews will be killed by October, 1943.
- Mar. 6 The Nazis hold their first conference on sterilization, where they define the use of sterilization for persons of "mixed blood."
- Mid-Mar. Germany begins Aktion Reinhard, an operation that aims to murder Jews in the interior of occupied Poland within the time line of the "final solution."
- Mar. 16-17 The Belżec extermination camp begins operations. Some 600,000 Polish Jews from Lublin, the Lublin district, and Galicia will be murdered there.

Holocaust Chronology

- Mar. 21 The Jews in the ghetto in Lublin, Poland, are resettled, with 26,000 sent to extermination camps at Belżec, Majdanek, and other locations.
- Mar. 23-24 The SS transfers 1,000 German Jewish and Romani (Gypsy) women from Ravensbrück to Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, where a women's camp is created.
- Mar. 26 About 60,000 Jews from Slovakia are sent to the extermination camps at Auschwitz and Majdanek.
- Mar. 28 The first Jews from Paris are transported to Auschwitz.
- Apr. Jews are prohibited from using public transportation, except for forced laborers who must travel to workplaces more than seven kilometers from their homes.
- Apr. 30 A Jewish ghetto is established in Pinsk, Belarus.
- Early May The first mass murders are conducted in the Sobibór extermination camp.
- May 4 Prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau who are considered weak, sick, or "unfit" are the first people to be murdered there.
- June 1 Jews in France and Holland begin wearing the Star of David. An extermination camp opens in Treblinka, Poland, where gassing of prisoners begins on July 23; about 700,000 Jews will be murdered there by August, 1943.
- June 2 The Nazis begin deporting German Jews to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.
- June 12 Anne Frank, a Jewish girl living in the Netherlands, celebrates her thirteenth birthday and receives as a gift a diary, in which she immediately begins to write.
- June 22 The first prisoners from the Drancy assembly camp in France arrive at Auschwitz.
- June 30 Jewish schools in Germany are closed.
- July 1 Jews are massacred in Minsk, Lida, and Slonim, Belarus.
- July 2 Jews from Berlin are sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp.
- July 4 The mass gassing of prisoners begins at Auschwitz.
- July 6 Anne Frank and her family leave their home and go into hiding in an empty section of a warehouse building in Amsterdam.
- July 15 The first Jews from the Netherlands are transported to Auschwitz.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- July 22 The *Umsiedlung*, or mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to Belżec and Treblinka extermination camps, begins. By September 13, about 300,000 Jews will be sent to Treblinka, where 265,000 will be murdered.
- July 23 The gassing of prisoners begins at Treblinka.
- Aug.-Sept. Jews are deported from Zagreb, Croatia, to Auschwitz.
- Aug. 4 The Nazis begin deporting Belgian Jews to Auschwitz.
- Aug. 10-22 About 40,000 Jews from the ghetto in L'viv, Poland, are sent to extermination camps.
- Aug. 14 The Nazis arrest 7,000 Jews in unoccupied France.
- Aug. 17 The first all-American air attack is launched in Europe.
- Oct. 4 The Nazis decree that all Jews who are imprisoned in concentration camps will be sent to Auschwitz.
- Oct. 28 The first group of prisoners from the Theresienstadt concentration camp is sent to Auschwitz.
- Oct. 29 About 16,000 Jews are executed in Pinsk, Belarus.
- Nov. 1 The first group of Jews from Bialystok, Poland, is deported to Auschwitz.
- Nov. 25 The deportation of Jews from Norway to Auschwitz begins.
- Dec. 10 The first group of German Jews arrives at Auschwitz.
- 1943**
- Jan. 18 The Jews in the Warsaw ghetto stage their first act of armed resistance to deportation.
- Jan. 29 The Germans order that all Gypsies be arrested and placed in concentration camps.
- Feb. 2 The Germans surrender at Stalingrad—the first significant defeat for Hitler's armed forces.
- Feb. 15 About 10,000 Jews are killed in the ghetto in Bialystok, Poland, before the rest are sent to the extermination camp at Treblinka.
- Feb. 25 The first group of Jews from Salonika, Greece, is transported to Auschwitz.
- Feb. 26 The first group of Gypsies arrives at Auschwitz.
- Feb. 27 Jewish armament workers from Berlin are sent to Auschwitz.
- Mar. Dutch Jews are transported to Sobibór, while Jews from Prague, Vienna, Luxembourg, and Macedonia are sent to Treblinka.

Holocaust Chronology

- Mar. 13 The Jewish ghetto in Kraków, Poland, is liquidated and its residents are deported to the Płaszów concentration camp. Oskar Schindler, a member of the Nazi Party and owner of an enamel factory near Kraków, is moved by these events and is determined to transfer his Jewish employees out of the area so they can avoid a similar fate. He obtains permission from the camp commandant to open a branch of his factory outside the Płaszów camp, and this action saves 900 Jewish workers from being imprisoned at Płaszów.
- Apr. 19 The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising begins on the eve of Passover. Ghetto residents continue their resistance as German troops surround the area.
- Apr. 23 Marek Lichtenbaum, the *Judenrat* chairman in the Warsaw ghetto, and his deputies are murdered by the Nazis.
- May 8 The Nazis liquidate Mila 18, the bunker that serves as headquarters for Jewish resistance fighters in the Warsaw ghetto.
- May 10 Many of the Warsaw ghetto resistance fighters escape through the sewers, arriving in the non-Jewish area of the city.
- May 16 German officials proclaim that the Warsaw ghetto is free of Jews and set fire to a Warsaw synagogue.
- May 19 The Nazis declare that Berlin is *Judenfrei* (free of all Jews).
- June 11 Himmler orders that all Polish ghettos be liquidated. On June 21, this order is expanded to include ghettos in the Soviet Union.
- June 21-27 About 20,000 people are killed during the liquidation of the Łódź ghetto.
- July 9-10 The Allies land in Sicily, Italy.
- Aug. 2 Prisoners revolt at the Treblinka extermination camp and the Krikov labor camp in Poland.
- Aug. 16-23 The Białystok ghetto is destroyed following a revolt there.
- Sept. 3 A group of Belgian Jews is arrested and scheduled to be deported to Auschwitz.
- Sept. 11 The Nazis begin to raid Jews in Nice, France.
- Sept. 11-14 The Jewish ghettos in Minsk and Lida, Belarus, are liquidated.
- Sept. 23 The Vilna ghetto is liquidated.
- Oct. 2 The Nazis order the expulsion of Jews from Denmark. However, rescue operations by the Danish underground enable 7,000 Jews to be evacuated to Sweden, and the Nazis capture only 475 Danish Jews.
- Oct. 13 Italy declares war on Germany.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Oct. 14 Prisoners in the Sobibór extermination camp stage a revolt.
- Oct. 18 The first Jews from Rome are sent to Auschwitz.
- Oct. 21 The Minsk ghetto is liquidated.
- Nov. 3 The Riga ghetto is liquidated. About 17,000 Jews who remain in the Majdanek extermination camp are killed.
- 1944**
- Jan. 22 The Allies land at Anzio, Italy.
- Feb. 11 Primo Levi and other Italian Jews interned at a camp near Modena, Italy, are transported to Auschwitz in twelve cramped cattle cars. Levi spends eleven months at Auschwitz before the extermination camp is liberated, and he later writes a memoir of his experiences in the camp.
- Feb. 24 The Gestapo raids a house in Haarlem, Netherlands, where Casper ten Boom and his daughters, Corrie and Betsie, have been hiding Jews and members of the Dutch underground. The three are arrested. Corrie and Betsie eventually are taken to Ravensbrück, where Betsie dies. Corrie survives and in 1971 publishes *The Hiding Place*, a book about her experiences.
- Mar. 19 Germany invades Hungary.
- Apr. 14 The first Jews from Athens are sent to Auschwitz.
- Apr. 16 The Hungarian government orders that all Jews must be registered and confiscates their property.
- May 15-July 8 About 438,000 Hungarian Jews are sent to Auschwitz.
- June 6 D day, the start of the Allied invasion of Normandy.
- July Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, arrives in Budapest and starts issuing documents aimed at saving Hungarian Jews.
- July 7 The Hungarian government stops the deportation of Jews.
- July 8 The ghetto in Kaunas, Lithuania, is liquidated.
- July 13 Jewish resistance fighters help liberate Vilna, Lithuania, where only 2,500 of the city's 57,000 Jews survive.
- July 23 Soviet troops liberate the Majdanek death camp. The Red Cross visits Theresienstadt.
- Late summer Oskar Schindler receives permission from the German army and the SS to move his Jewish workers and other endangered Jews from Płaszów to Brännlitz in the Sudetenland. There, he and more than 1,000 of his employees establish a bogus munitions factory in order to protect the Jewish employees until the end of World War II. Schindler's efforts to save Jews are later recounted in Thomas Keneally's novel *Schindler's List* (1982).

Holocaust Chronology

- Aug. 4 Anne Frank and her family are discovered and arrested by the Gestapo in Amsterdam.
- Aug. 6 About 27,000 Jews from camps east of the Vistula River are deported to Germany.
- Aug. 7 Nazis begin to liquidate the Łódź ghetto, deporting 74,000 Jews to Auschwitz.
- Aug. 25 Paris is liberated from the Nazis.
- Sept. All Jews in Dutch camps are transported to Germany. Additional prisoners are deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. The final group of prisoners is transported from France to Auschwitz.
- Sept. 4 The Allies liberate Antwerp, Belgium, where fewer than 5,000 Jews survive.
- Sept. 11 British troops enter the Netherlands.
- Sept. 14 American troops arrive at the German border.
- Sept. 23 Jews in the concentration camp in Kluga, Estonia, are murdered.
- Oct. 31 About 14,000 Jews from Slovakia are sent to Auschwitz.
- Nov. 2 The gassings at Auschwitz are terminated.
- Nov. 18 About 38,000 Jews from Budapest are sent to Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, and other camps.
- Nov. 26 In an effort to hide evidence of the extermination camps, Himmler orders the destruction of the crematorium at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Dec. 16-27 The Battle of the Bulge is fought in the Ardennes.
- 1945**
- Jan. 16 Soviet troops liberate 800 Jews at Częstochowa and 870 in Łódź.
- Jan. 17 Soviet troops liberate Warsaw, where few Jews remain.
- Jan. 17 About 80,000 Jews in Budapest are liberated.
- Jan. 17 Auschwitz is evacuated and the prisoners begin their "death march."
- Jan. 27 Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz.
- Feb. 13-14 Dresden, Germany, is destroyed in a firestorm after massive Allied bombing attacks.
- Apr. 6-10 About 15,000 Jews are evacuated from Buchenwald.
- Apr. 12 American troops liberate Buchenwald.
- Apr. 15 British troops liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.
- Apr. 23-May 4 The Sachsenhausen concentration camp is evacuated. The SS conducts its last massacre of Jews.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- Apr. 27 The final prisoners are evacuated from Ravensbrück, where the SS forces about 15,000 prisoners on a death march.
- Apr. 29 American troops liberate Dachau.
- Apr. 30 Hitler commits suicide.
- May 2 Representatives of the International Red Cross take over Theresienstadt.
- May 5 The Mathausen concentration camp is liberated.
- May 7-9 Germany unconditionally surrenders, ending the war in Europe.
- May 8 V-E (Victory in Europe) Day.
- May 23 Himmler is captured and commits suicide.
- Nov. 20 The Nuremberg war crime trials begin.

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LIFE WITH A STAR

AUTHOR: Jiří Weil (1900-1959)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Život s hvězdou*, 1948 (English translation, 1989)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Autobiographical fiction

This novel tells the story of one isolated and alienated Jew's experience of "living with a star" in the shadow of the Holocaust during the Nazi occupation of Prague.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Josef Roubicek, a former bank clerk struggling to survive in occupied Prague

Ruzena, his former mistress

Tomas, a stray cat who becomes his closest companion

Pavel, a rich friend of Roubicek who is stripped of all his possessions and transported to the camps by the Nazis

Materna, a Czech worker who befriends Roubicek and offers to hide him from the Gestapo

Robitschek, an acquaintance of Roubicek who commits suicide at the request of his Aryan wife and his daughter

OVERVIEW

Jiří Weil's *Life with a Star* has been described as the first important work of Czech fiction to come out of World War II. Its reception and its author's fate now seem all too familiar—indeed, exemplary. Weil's first novel, *Moskva-hranice* (1937; from Moscow to the border), which described what he observed of the purge after Sergey Mironovich Kirov's murder in 1934 and the beginning of Joseph Stalin's Great Terror while he was working in Moscow in the International Department of the Comintern, had earned him expulsion from the Communist Party and the Czech Writers' Union as well as a year in the labor camps of Central Asia. In 1948, Weil sought re-admission to the party and the Writers' Union, submitting the required self-criticism of his former failure to become a "good Communist"; he was rejected by the party but readmitted to the Writers' Union and, therefore, allowed to publish once again.

In the early 1950's, Weil was expelled a second time as a result of *Life with a Star*, which was banned shortly after its publication as a "decadent" example of "pernicious existentialism" by the cultural apparatchiks whose dogma had become Socialist Realism. In 1957, during the cultural thaw following Nikita S. Khrushchev's secret speech attacking Stalin and his "cult of personality," Weil was readmitted to the Writers' Union once more, permitted to publish a collection of short stories, and named director of the Jewish State Museum in Prague. He remained a marginal man, however, and when he died of leukemia in 1959 all of his works were out of print in his own country. He left two completed novels that were published posthumously: *Na strese je Mendelssohn* (1960; *Mendelssohn Is on the Roof*, 1991) and *Drevena lzice* (1992; the wooden spoon), a sequel to *Moskva-hranice* that was first published in Italian translation in *La frontiera di Mosca* (1970), a volume that included both the earlier work and the sequel.

Life with a Star now appears in English thanks to Philip Roth, who in his role as editor of Penguin's Writers from the Other Europe series helped to introduce American readers to the work of Milan Kundera, Bohumil Hrabal, Tadeusz Borowski, Tadeusz Konwicki, Danilo Kiš, Géza Csáth, Jerzy Andrzejewski, and other Central and Eastern European writers. In 1960, as a young writer whose eyes were focused primarily on the near at hand, Roth delivered a frequently quoted speech titled "Writing American Fiction." The American writer, Roth said,

has his hands full in trying to understand, describe, and then make *credible* much of American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's own meager imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents, and the culture tosses up figures almost daily that are the envy of any novelist.

By the early 1970's, Roth's horizons had expanded considerably—largely because of his fascination with Franz Kafka—and he began making annual visits to Prague and other cities in Eastern Europe. There he met writers whose history and everyday reality were challenging to the novelist in ways that he had never imagined. He first heard of Weil in 1973 on one of his earliest visits to Prague; when he returned to New York he met a translator who had completed English versions of two of Weil's short stories. Their publication in *American Poetry Review* (September/October, 1974), with a brief introduction by Roth, marked both Weil's first appearance in English and Roth's emerging interest in contemporary Eastern European writers.

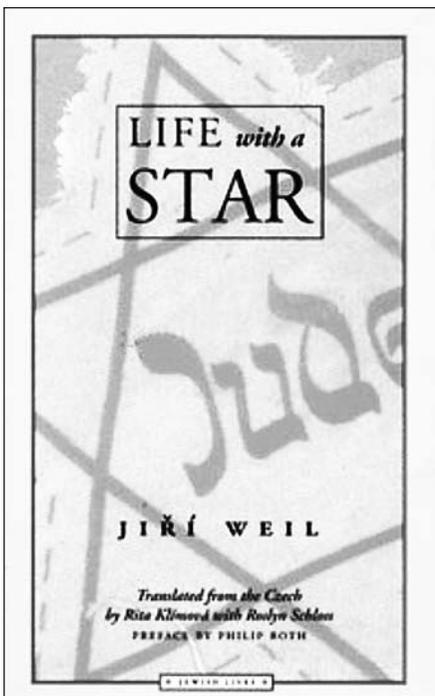
Life with a Star is a novel stamped on every page by Jiří Weil's personal

experience—both before and during World War II. Like his hero, Josef Roubicek, and tens of thousands of others, Weil wore the Jewish star during the Nazi occupation. Like Roubicek, he passed up a chance to emigrate to England early in the war. Like Roubicek, he watched the transports begin to leave for Terezín and points unknown in 1942, heard the rumors about their ultimate destinations, and grasped at the hope that the rumors were not true. And, like Roubicek, one day he received the summons to report to the Radio Mart for transportation. *Life with a Star* is a novel about a man trying to make up his mind; it ends when Roubicek decides to turn to the friends who have offered to hide him rather than to report as ordered. Roth tells the reader what happened next to Roubicek's creator: When he made the same decision, Weil left a briefcase with his identification papers on a bridge over the Vltava River, faked suicide by jumping into the water below, and disappeared until the end of the war.

While clearly autobiographical, *Life with a Star* is also rich in literary antecedents and affinities. Roubicek is part of a long Central European line of oppressed "little men," a direct descendant of Jaroslav Hasek's Schweik and Kafka's Josef K. (it is hardly coincidental that Weil names him Josef). Weil's consciously simple, spare, and understated style—"It was good to sit quietly and listen. It was good not to think about the chapel, about the

circus, or about the transports to the east; it was good not to think of bread spread with lean cheese or of barley cooked in water; it was good not to know about the decrees and prohibitions, about being thrown out of streetcars, or about processions and the sound of metal-tipped boots"—echoes the Hemingway who was admired by existentialists and socialist realists alike in the late 1940's and early 1950's.

Weil's *Life with a Star* also invites comparison to some of the most powerful works of fiction that have emerged from the Holocaust. Like Tadeusz Borowski's concentration camp stories, Weil's novel forces the reader to confront the ways in which human



beings faced with imminent extermination became compliant cogs in the machinery of destruction; how the desire for self-preservation could lead one person to exult at being spared while he saw thousands of others condemned; how the struggle for a slice of bread or some hot soup could become the whole world. Like Aharon Appelfeld's *Badenheim, 'ir nofesh* (1975; *Badenheim 1939*, 1980), *Life with a Star* is also a novel whose power rests in its obliqueness. The camps are not shown in Weil's novel. Instead, Weil depicts the bureaucracy that helped to fill them, the signposts that pointed to them, and the complex emotions that the vague prospect of them engendered—with the petty restrictions that eventually became a prison of separation and isolation; with the trickle of terrible rumors that became a torrent; with the growing doubts that were quieted by ever-greater self-deceptions; with the declining hopes that were kept alive by faith and pure will; with the ultimate despair that sapped the spirit when will could no longer deny reality.

It is not hard to understand the reaction of the Communist Party hacks who condemned Weil's novel. At a time when workers' solidarity was expected, Weil focused his attention on the thoughts and feelings of a radically isolated man. At a time when the prescribed tone was optimism, his novel was racked with despair. At a time when both Czechs and Communists were trying to forget their complicity in the extermination of the Jews, Weil presented unforgettable reminders of that complicity. Josef Roubicek's destruction of almost all of his possessions may have been susceptible to interpretation as a rejection of bourgeois materialism consistent with the sacrifices required in the name of a radiant future; his portrait of the Nazis may have accorded with the approved postwar demonology; his portrait of the worker Materna and the socialist workers' cell he led may have presented an appropriately positive image of the proletariat; and Josef's increasing understanding of the importance of political change and united effort may have fallen within acceptable bounds for portraying the necessary struggle to overcome prerevolutionary false consciousness. But even the official defenders of Socialist Realism were sensitive enough to understand that *Life with a Star* had more in common with Fyodor Dostoevski, Kafka, and Albert Camus than with the literary nonentities they praised and published.

Like Dostoevski's *Underground Man*, Kafka's *Josef K.*, and Camus's *Meursault*, Weil's Roubicek is caught in a web of consciousness and choice. When we first meet him, he has been stripped, or has stripped himself, of almost everything except his own consciousness and his ability to choose. The necessity of choice is Weil's essential theme. The emptiness and horror of existence in a world devoid of such choice is the nightmare

he portrays in most of *Life with a Star*. The liberation that comes with making one's own choices is his faint vision of hope; the overwhelming odds against exercising such self-assertion in a totalitarian society shape his conflict. "It was too much of a burden to be a different Josef Roubicek, to be a rebel who had a price on his head, who would go into hiding and have to prowl at night," his hero thinks, even on the last page of the novel. "Perhaps it would be better to become a number, a leaf carried by the wind until it falls to the ground and is trampled into the mud." Then Roubicek reconsiders:

I must come to a decision. It would have been easier to leave the decision to others, but there were no others. There was only myself between the cold, bare walls. . . . There was no one to ask for advice and there was no one to pray to, because now I had to cross the line.

The triumph of *Life with a Star* is that, in spite of the powers marshaled against him, Roubicek finally chooses life over death, rebellion over conformity, continuing to struggle over giving up and giving in. The triumph of Jiří Weil was that seeing what he had seen, living through what he had lived through—before, during, and after the war—he could still imagine that human beings in a society such as his had such a choice. Roubicek's and Weil's hard-won triumphs reverberated in late 1989 as, just months after this translation of *Life with a Star* appeared, millions of Czechs turned Weil's imagination of the possibility of choice into reality.

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—Bernard Rodgers

MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING

AN INTRODUCTION TO LOGOTHERAPY

AUTHOR: Viktor Emil Frankl (1905-1997)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager*, 1946 (*From Death-Camp to Existentialism: A Psychiatrist's Path to a New Therapy*, 1959; revised and enlarged as *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, 1962)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Psychology; memoir

In this volume, which is both a concentration camp memoir and an introduction to a new form of psychological therapy, Frankl makes a contribution of lasting significance not only to psychological thought but also to an understanding of the spiritual and social consequences of the Nazi regime.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGE:

Viktor Emil Frankl (1905-1997), a psychotherapist who was imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp

OVERVIEW

At the outbreak of World War II, Viktor Emil Frankl was director of therapy in a large mental hospital in Vienna and the organizer of a group of successful youth guidance centers. Frankl, along with his family and many other doctors, was soon sent to a Nazi concentration camp. He carried with him the manuscript for his first book, which was taken from him and destroyed at Auschwitz. Ironically, the desire to reconstruct and rewrite that volume on psychotherapy helped him endure three harrowing years of prison life. For Frankl, the situation confirmed Friedrich Nietzsche's words, "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how." From his observations in the concentration camp and his knowledge of psychology and philosophy, Frankl originated the school of logotherapy, or existential analysis. *Man's Search for Meaning* is both an introduction to that theory and an absorbing personal account of the most appalling event in modern history.

This brief volume is divided into two parts; the first, longer essay is ti-

tled "Experiences in a Concentration Camp," the second, "Basic Concepts of Logotherapy." Both are written in simple, nontechnical language for the general reader.

Frankl does not dwell unnecessarily on personal hardship, but he uses his experience and observations to illustrate the life of the ordinary prisoner. Inmates performed hard manual labor, such as digging ditches and tunnels for water mains or laying railway tracks, while working on a near-starvation diet. His observations thus have both the gritty reality of personal experience and the more universal quality of shared suffering. As a psychiatrist, Frankl was primarily interested in recording the mental and emotional reactions of prisoners to their experiences.

Three distinct phases of the typical prisoner's reactions are noted: the period of shock following his admission, the period when he was entrenched in camp routine, and the period following his liberation. Each phase has its striking images and typical symptoms. The reader will not soon forget the high-ranking Schutzstaffel (SS) officer who flicks his finger casually to right or left as the incoming prisoners file by. Those shunted to the right look capable of hard physical labor; those directed to the left head for the "showers," where they are gassed and shoveled into the insatiable furnaces. This was but the first of many selections between life and death that each prisoner must face. More experienced inmates warned them to shave every day, stand tall, and walk vigorously; even a limp because one's feet were frostbitten might cause an SS guard to wave a prisoner aside and send him to the oven.

The shock and horror of the first phase, marked by prisoners' thoughts of suicide, longing for home and family, and disgust with the ugliness and filth of the surroundings, gave place to the relative apathy of phase 2. Endurance in such circumstances demands a certain callousness. Eventually, the emotions of disgust, horror, and pity simply shut down. Much of the discussion concerning this stage dwells not so much on the physical brutality as on the mental agony of personal insult and the demeaning obsession with food. The daily ration of about ten ounces of bread and one and three-quarters pints of watery soup was never adequate for the labor they were forced to perform. The prisoners often fought among themselves irritably.

In spite of these depressing circumstances, however, Frankl does have some positive comments about human possibilities. Although most succumbed in some measure to the general apathy and irritability, there were persons who displayed compassion, comforting others and even giving away their last piece of bread. Frankl suggests that the kind of prisoner one becomes depends on some inner decision, not on environmental condi-

tions alone. There is a last human freedom, available in even the most deprived conditions: the freedom to choose one's attitude toward one's suffering.

The second essay is divided into short explanations of basic principles, such as "existential frustration," "noogenic neurosis," and "the search for meaning." Students of existentialism will recognize some of the ideas, such as "existential vacuum" and the influence of hopes or intentions for the future on present choices.

Frankl's observations about the concentration camp combine a certain modesty and humane tolerance of human weakness with a tendency toward strict moral judgment. In one sense, the account is more objective than most prison memoirs, partly because of Frankl's scientific background and purpose and partly because of his refusal to dramatize himself as the suffering hero. While he never focuses on his own behavior as especially altruistic, Frankl does note that quality in others. Moreover, he usually demonstrates such negative attributes as indifference and irritability with his own reactions. In explaining the callousness that develops after the initial shock of incarceration, for example, he remembers complacently sipping his thin soup as he watched the corpse of a cellmate who had just died being dragged laboriously downstairs by the feet, the head bouncing on every step, to be thrown unceremoniously on the ground. He writes that he would not even have remembered the incident except that his lack of emotion surprised him and aroused his professional interest. In fact, one of the most effective devices that helped Frankl preserve his sanity was his tendency to analyze reactions to stress, including his own.

Frankl does, however, unobtrusively defend himself from some of his negative judgments. It might seem unnaturally self-effacing, as one of the survivors, to say that "the best of us did not return." The context of that statement, however, tends to qualify its implications. It appears in a paragraph beginning with the selection of capos, the prisoners who helped the guards maintain order in exchange for better treatment and food. Although there were some relatively decent capos, most were chosen for their willingness to beat their fellow prisoners. Frankl, however, suggests there was a more insidious selection prevailing, one not attributable to the SS or their sadistic helpers:

There was a sort of self-selecting process going on the whole time among the prisoners. On the average, only those prisoners could keep alive who, after years of trekking from camp to camp, had lost all scruples in their fight for existence; they were prepared to use every means, honest and otherwise, even brutal force, theft, and betrayal of their friends, in order to save them-

selves. We who have come back, by the aid of many lucky chances or miracles—whatever one may choose to call them—we know: the best of us did not return.

The inference seems to be that Frankl himself did not betray others but survived against all odds, by chance.

Ultimately, Frankl makes a judgment as severe as the biblical division of the sheep from the goats: There are only two races of people—the race of decent men and the race of indecent men. These are found everywhere and in all classes of society, even in groups (such as the capos and the SS) that one would like to condemn en masse. His requirements for membership are not so precisely defined, however, as is Jean-Paul Sartre's concern with what is really "authentic" human behavior. The main ingredient for Frankl seems to be simple kindness. He speaks of being moved to tears when a foreman secretly gave him a piece of bread saved from his morning ration. In such simple acts, perhaps, one glimpses the kingdom of heaven.

Like Sartre, Frankl insists on some essential freedom for the individual in even the most coercive situations. Man is never completely determined by his past and present but thrusts himself into an imagined future that reflects his sense of life's meaning. There is no meaning to life in general; each person creates or discerns a meaning of his own. Frankl has been known to probe for that meaning by asking a patient, "Why don't you commit suicide?" This blunt question is intended not to suggest such a "solution" to emotional difficulties but to shock the patient into confronting his or her own reasons for living. Frankl observes that in the concentration camps everyone recognized the persons who had given up all hope for the future. They were called "Moslems" and behaved like zombies. They always died, even if they were healthy and strong when they entered. Sometimes, they hastened the inevitable by running against the electric fence.

Nevertheless, Frankl tries to distinguish between his own understanding of meaning and that of the atheistic Sartre. Sartre claims that man "invents himself"; that is, he designs not only what he essentially is but also what he ought to become. Frankl prefers to believe that man does not invent meaning but detects it. The process seems to be less self-centered than Sartre describes it, depending as it does on some perceived relationship to something outside the self. Although there is no such thing as an inborn moral drive, man decides to behave morally for the sake of a cause or for a person he loves or for the sake of his God.

As a psychiatrist, Frankl's goal is not to urge a patient to fulfill someone's preconceived notion of what a man ought to be or do; rather, he urges the patient to clarify his own meaning and pursue it more directly.

He follows the patient's lead, so to speak, unlike some analysts who dismiss some values as rationalized instincts or even as frauds perpetrated by society. Unlike some psychologists, especially behaviorists, he is neither afraid nor contemptuous of spiritual questions nor does he treat human love as merely sublimated sex or religious sentiment as leftover fear of the father.

Frankl suggests that doctors must distinguish between psychic disease and spiritual distress as a cause of emotional suffering, lest they override with tranquilizers a patient's despair over a seemingly meaningless existence. Neurosis is often, as Carl Jung put it, "the suffering of a soul that has not found its meaning." In that case, the doctor's role is to expand the patient's awareness of possibilities for meaning.

The killing despair of the "Moslem" in the concentration camp is an extreme example of the "existential vacuum" that afflicted the twentieth century. Philosophers define the existential vacuum as the sense of meaninglessness that arises from a combination of two causes: the human condition, which is peculiarly free of instinctual directions, and the contemporary social situation, in which tradition no longer defines meaning clearly. Frankl sees the haunting sense of inner emptiness not only in the wretched prisoner but also in the more ordinary sphere of life as a root cause of alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, and the despair of the elderly. Even worse, however, it promotes the cause of dictators so that many persons gladly adopt someone else's meaning to fill the vacuum.

Frankl wrote several books on logotherapy and related subjects. These include *Theorie und Therapie der Neurosen: Einführung in Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse* (1956), *Arztliche Seelsorge* (1946; *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy*, 1965), *Psychotherapy and Existentialism: Selected Papers on Logotherapy* (1967), and *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy* (1969). Logotherapy is distinguished from other schools of psychoanalysis by its emphasis on meaning, which, in Greek, is expressed as *logos*. Sigmund Freud was concerned with the pleasure principle, which he thought was the prime motivator of action. Alfred Adler emphasized the will to power. Frankl did not deny these drives but considered the will to meaning more basic. The concentration camp systematically stripped inmates of both pleasure and power, but even continual suffering did not eradicate the need to find meaning in the experience. The Holocaust might be termed a reenactment on some colossal scale of the tortured question of Job: Why do men suffer?

Like existentialism generally, logotherapy has not been as prominent in the United States as in Europe. Certain American humanistic psychologists, however, such as Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Carl Rogers,

employ some methods similar to Frankl's. Albert Ellis, the originator of rational emotive therapy, used a variation of Frankl's technique called paradoxical intention. Frankl expressed some differences of opinion with the popular psychologist Abraham Maslow of "self-actualization" fame. Frankl insisted that self-actualization is a side effect of self-transcendence, not an end in itself. Because religiously oriented therapists generally avoid any theory that deprives human beings of free will, pastoral counselors are especially drawn to logotherapy.

Frankl made a contribution of lasting significance not only to psychological thought but also to the understanding of the spiritual and social consequences of the Nazi regime. His account of the concentration camp has the impact of both social document and literature in the existential mode. Although Frankl alludes mostly to philosophers and at least once to Fyodor Dostoevski, who wrote of his prison experience in Siberia, one could also make some interesting correlations to Albert Camus's novel *La Peste* (1947; *The Plague*, 1948). Camus was struggling with some of the same moral dilemmas that beset the prisoners Frankl knew. *The Plague* is considered a parable of war-torn Europe, and some of Camus's fictional characters choose meaning over pleasure as a satisfactory goal in the face of almost certain death.

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—Katherine Snipes

THE MASTER PLAN

HIMMLER'S SCHOLARS AND THE HOLOCAUST

AUTHOR: Heather Pringle (1952-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2006

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

This work represents the first book-length study of the Ahnenerbe, the research and educational institute that promulgated many of the racial doctrines of the Third Reich.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the commander of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and patron of the research institute known as the Ahnenerbe

Karl-Maria Wiligut, a German soldier from World War I who emerged from a psychiatric institution to serve as adviser to the SS on early Germanic culture

Herman Wirth, a prehistorian who served as the first president of the Ahnenerbe

Franz Altheim, a historian who traveled to Spain, Romania, and Iraq to collect military intelligence for the Nazis while seeking traces of a prehistoric "Aryan culture"

Bruno Beger, a German racial scholar who journeyed to Tibet in an attempt to prove Nazi theories about the origins of European cultures

Herbert Jankuhn, an archaeologist who headed the Ahnenerbe's department of prehistory

August Hirt, a German anatomist who headed a project in which eighty-six Jewish prisoners were murdered so that scientists could analyze their skeletons

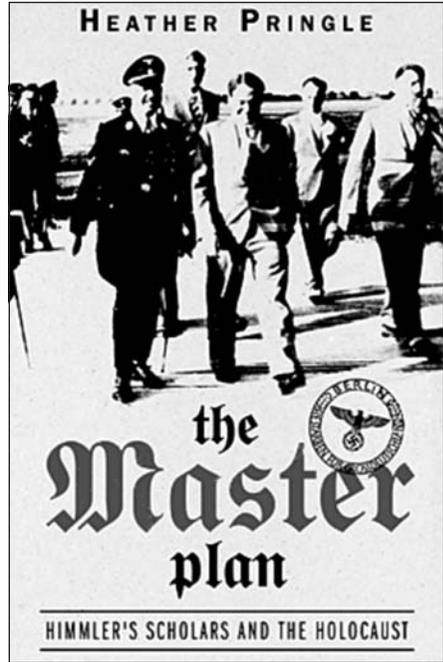
OVERVIEW

Heather Pringle's *The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust* began almost incidentally as a result of research she was conducting for her highly successful book *The Mummy Congress* (2001). While in the Neth-

erlands studying a group of human bodies that had been naturally preserved for nearly two thousand years by the region's peat bogs, Pringle discovered a book by the Dutch archaeologist Wijnand van der Standen that referred to how scholars in Nazi Germany had interpreted these strange artifacts in a highly politicized manner. Heinrich Himmler, Pringle learned, had regarded the Dutch bog mummies as executed criminals who had lived in an early Nordic society and had been condemned to death because they were homosexuals. Himmler based these beliefs on the theories of the archaeologist Herbert Jankuhn and the research

of a little-known scientific institute that had been created during the Third Reich, the *Ahnenerbe*, or "inheritance from our forefathers." Curious about this unusual group of scientists, pseudointellectuals, and opportunists, Pringle set out to produce the first comprehensive study of the *Ahnenerbe's* origins and history.

At least part of Pringle's story had been told before, most notably by Christopher Hale in *Himmler's Crusade: The Nazi Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race* (2003). Nevertheless, Pringle's primary contribution has been to present the *Ahnenerbe* in its entirety, painting a highly readable and carefully nuanced portrait of the many personalities who laid the "philosophical" basis for the atrocities of Hitler's Germany. In the story that Pringle tells, the influence of a single idea on successive generations of intellectuals and con men who corrupted the original concept out of their own self-interest, *The Master Plan* is somewhat reminiscent of Peter Washington's *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America* (1996). Where Washington traces a single idea from the nineteenth century's romantic backlash against scientific secularism to a bizarre array of related, but ultimately harmless, spiritualist and New Age philosophies, however, Pringle has a much more frightening message to convey. Beginning with a compelling academic theory developed during the nineteenth century—that nearly all



of Europe's languages were derived from a single linguistic parent known as Proto-Indo-European or "Aryan"—Pringle carefully traces the misuses to which this seemingly innocuous observation was put by later generations of German scholars.

The Ahnenerbe was created in 1935 as an intellectual and cultural institute devoted to studying the distant origins of the Germanic peoples. By the time of the Ahnenerbe's founding, the belief that most modern European languages had been derived from a parent language had been corrupted into a conviction among the Nazis that the people who spoke this hypothetical "ur-language" constituted a separate race, a superior tribe of warrior-philosophers to whom they attributed every noble quality and major cultural development. Proponents of this theory dubbed this mythical race of supermen the "Aryans," adopting a term first coined in 1786 by the British Orientalist Sir William Jones from the ancient Sanskrit word *arya*, meaning "noble." While later scholars continued to accept the existence of Proto-Indo-European as a linguistic parent of many modern languages, the notion that its speakers constituted a distinct and superior racial grouping was widely disparaged, except among those in Germany for whom the concept of a race of pure ancestors provided an attractive myth. In the minds of Nazi scholars, the "Aryans" must have been identical to the progenitors of all Nordic peoples. They envisioned these early forebears as tall, blond, blue-eyed, and militarily invincible, serving as a natural aristocracy wherever they subdued inferior peoples in their diaspora.

The problem that the Nazis faced with such a hypothesis was that absolutely no archaeological evidence supported it. As even Hitler himself was well aware, the ancestors of the Germans lived in primitive huts long after the Greeks had built the Parthenon and the Romans had constructed the Pantheon. Among the upper echelons of the Nazi leadership, only Heinrich Himmler seems to have been a true believer in the ancient existence of this superior race of proto-Aryans. *The Master Plan* explores how Himmler's support for the Ahnenerbe arose out of his futile quest to uncover some evidence that the early Aryans spread culture throughout Europe. If the values of this pure and noble culture could only be identified, Himmler believed, modern Germans could be restored to the greatness of their proud Nordic forebears. Even in the darkest days of World War II, Himmler would interrupt his work as head of Hitler's elite bodyguard, the Schutzstaffel (SS), to read the field reports and study the artifacts sent back to Germany by the Ahnenerbe. Although resources were badly needed to sustain Germany's war effort, Himmler diverted as much funding as possible to underwrite the expeditions and publications of his favorite scholars.

Pringle depicts the members and supporters of the Ahnenerbe as an un-

savory but ultimately fascinating collection of misfits. In addition to genuine, if misguided, scholars such as the classical historian Franz Altheim, the Ahnenerbe attracted a wide variety of incompetents, criminals, and frauds. For example, Herman Wirth's fieldwork in Sweden was so unskilled that he damaged a large number of the rock carvings he was attempting to clean and study. Karl-Maria Wiligut, who claimed to predict the future on the basis of his understanding of ancient runes, was a former inmate of a psychiatric institution where his wife had consigned him because of his delusions and attempts at having inappropriate relations with his children. Pringle also intersperses surprising revelations about Nazi Germany throughout her narrative. She reveals, for instance, that the German firm Hugo Boss supplied the SS with its uniforms and that these uniforms were intentionally designed to be stylish to attract an elite group of recruits who would have been turned off by the plain brown uniforms of the SS at least as much as by that group's anti-intellectualism and thuggery.

By-products of the Ahnenerbe's "research" ran the gamut from the ludicrous to the truly horrific. Among the former was Himmler's pet project of an academy for elite SS officers at Wewelsburg, near Paderborn. Conceived partly out of Wiligut's delusions about the distant past, partly out of Arthurian fantasy, and partly out of Wagner's image of the Grail knights' secret enclave of Montsalvat in Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882), Wewelsburg was intended to train SS officers in the lore and values of their mythical Aryan ancestors. Similarly foolish was the Ahnenerbe's research into "Thor's Hammer," an imaginary electrical weapon believed to have been developed by the ancient Aryans that the Nazis hoped would be rediscovered in time to save them near the end of World War II. With amazing irony and lapse of judgment, the Nazis dismissed the military potential of nuclear energy as impractical while they pinned their hopes to an ill-conceived notion based on a misunderstanding of primitive cultures.

Among the more ghastly projects advocated by members of the Ahnenerbe were misguided experiments seeking to find an antidote to mustard gas and a horrific endeavor known as the Jewish Skeleton Collection. Both of these activities were overseen by August Hirt, the director of an anatomical institute at Hitler's newly created Reich University of Strassburg. Hirt's mustard-gas experiments consisted of exposing prisoners to a highly lethal blistering agent, a form of chlorinated sulfur that had injured many soldiers in World War I, including Hitler himself. Hirt had become convinced that, despite a lack of evidence to support his hypothesis, the dye trypaflavine would be effective in treating soldiers who had been exposed to mustard gas. Unfortunately, trypaflavine proved to be itself toxic, and Hirt's victims perished in intense agony.

As barbaric as these experiments were, however, they paled in comparison to the cold-blooded ruthlessness that lay behind Hirt's Jewish Skeleton Collection. Out of his erroneous belief that adherents to the Jewish faith constituted a distinct race of humanity, Hirt sought representatives of distinctively "Semitic looks" who would be killed and flayed so that their skeletons could be preserved as part of "scientific" collections on the races of humanity. While the project was under way, eighty-six Jews were identified, murdered, and reduced to skeletons, only to have their remains cremated as the Third Reich fell in an effort to destroy evidence of war crimes.

Perhaps Pringle's most chilling account comes near the end of *The Master Plan* when she locates Dr. Bruno Beger, still alive in 2002. Expecting a frail, nearly deaf, defeated old man, Pringle was surprised to discover that Beger was still vigorous and largely proud of his early racial studies. Beger still possessed the notebooks, calipers, and sliding compasses that he had used during his racial examinations in Tibet. When asked about his participation in the Jewish Skeleton Collection, Beger lapsed into a well-rehearsed and oft-repeated justification of how he had not known what would happen to the individuals selected for their studies, how his interest had been solely scientific, and how he was convicted after the war solely as a scapegoat. For the first time since her opening chapter, Pringle intrudes on her narrative to speak of the sleepless night and emotional exhaustion that she experienced following her interview with Beger.

Of all the information that was gathered through the research of the Ahnenerbe, moral awareness about the universality of human dignity was, unfortunately, not part of it. Pringle's well-researched book includes an extensive bibliography, numerous photographs, a biographical glossary of principal personages, nearly ninety pages of endnotes, and a useful index.

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—Jeffrey L. Buller

MASTERS OF DEATH

THE SS-EINSATZGRUPPEN AND THE INVENTION OF THE HOLOCAUST

AUTHOR: Richard Rhodes (1937-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2002

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

This well-researched historical study explains in detail the workings of the Einsatzgruppen, Nazi mobile execution squads that carried out the systematic killing of more than 1.5 million people.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the head of the German police forces

Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942), the leader of the *Einsatzgruppen* and organizer of the Wannsee Conference

Hermann Göring (1893-1946), the German interior minister and minister of aviation, 1933-1945

Odilo Globocnik (1904-1945), an Austrian Nazi who participated in mobile execution squads and performed sadistic experiments on prisoners using poisonous gases

Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962), a Nazi war criminal who was executed in Israel for his crimes against humanity

Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo

Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), the Soviet dictator whose Red Army repulsed the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union

Benjamin Ferencz, an American lawyer who was the chief prosecutor at the 1947 trial of *Einsatzgruppen* murderers

OVERVIEW

Much of substance has been written on the horrendous Nazi death camps such as Auschwitz, Sobibór, Treblinka, and Dachau, where millions of Jews and other groups hated by Nazis were killed and then cremated, but scholars have not written extensively on the *Einsatzgruppen*, or mobile

extermination squads, that murdered at least 1.5 million people in Eastern Europe, the Baltic states, and western regions of the former Soviet Union between 1939 and 1942. In this extremely well-researched book, Richard Rhodes explains that although the existence of these mobile extermination squads has been known for decades, the extent of their murders was not fully understood because so many documents now located in Poland, Eastern European countries, and the former Soviet Union were largely unavailable to Western historians until the end of Soviet colonialism starting in 1989 and the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991. Rhodes carried out extensive archival research in Eastern Europe and personally interviewed numerous Jews who managed to escape death at the hands of the *Einsatzgruppen* criminals. The quality of his research is superb.

In a comment printed on this book's back cover, Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Prize-winning writer and Holocaust survivor, praises Rhodes for his effective portrayal of "absolute evil and its cold, calculated, and blood-chilling brutality." Wiesel's remark is insightful because it acknowledges Rhodes's attempts to describe both the incredible planning that went into these mass executions and the complete arrogance and immorality of these criminals, who saw nothing wrong with personally murdering innocent men, women, children, and infants.

Rhodes correctly identifies Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler as the two people most responsible for implementing the Holocaust, or Shoah, a Hebrew word meaning "extermination" that Jewish historians prefer to use for the event. Unlike some modern writers who attempted to psychoanalyze these two war criminals, both of whom committed suicide before they could be tried by war crimes tribunals, Rhodes wisely avoids such offensive speculation, which only serves to diminish the personal guilt of leading Nazis. Rhodes does, however, explain that both Hitler and Himmler were brutal, sadistic, and viciously anti-Semitic as early as their late adolescence. He argues persuasively that these essentially violent aspects of their character suffice to explain both their sadistic cruelty toward others and their refusal to accept responsibility for their crimes. Hitler had his body burned, and Himmler bit down on a cyanide capsule while in British custody. British soldiers buried him in an unmarked grave. Rhodes remarks with wonderful sarcasm, "It was no killing pit, but it would do."

Soon after Hitler became chancellor in 1933, he asked Himmler to eliminate all opponents to his absolute rule. This included Nazis such as Ernst Röhm—whom Hitler no longer trusted—clergymen, judges, and legislators who dared to criticize Hitler's policies. Rhodes argues persuasively that Hitler wanted to eliminate quickly the system of checks and balances that prevents dictatorial rule and protects individual rights. Hitler re-

warded Himmler for his loyalty by designating him as the chief of all police forces in Germany. Since Hitler quickly reduced judges to subservience and stripped them of their independence, the actions of Himmler's secret police officers were not subject to judicial review. They acted with complete impunity.

Himmler concluded that the most effective means of killing people was through the use of execution squads. Executions could occur in the basement of police stations, prisons, or concentration camps. At first, Himmler had the executions performed by groups of his "police" officers for very practical reasons. He did not want his officers to believe that they were personally responsible for murdering innocent people. He did not want them to become depressed by the daily drudgery of killing people. It is emotionally draining for prison officials to execute criminals who have been lawfully sentenced to death after objective trials and exhaustive judicial review. Hitler had problems with this approach because he realized that not enough Jews and members of other groups whom he despised could be killed if *Einsatzgruppen* murderers executed victims in a leisurely manner. He wanted to exterminate European Jews, and for this reason he insisted that Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich devise methods for killing large numbers of people at once.

Hitler asked them to create special forces of trained and callous killers who would not hesitate to execute hundreds of innocent men, women, and children daily. Himmler and Heydrich were arrogant and did not believe that non-Aryan Germans deserved to live, but it was difficult for them to find enough executioners. At first they relied on similarly fanatic anti-Semites, but eventually they recognized the need to empty German prisons of pathological criminals who had already committed violent crimes. Himmler and Heydrich correctly concluded that such thugs would enjoy having the opportunity to kill people with apparent impunity. Rhodes explains that Himmler and Heydrich kept these sociopaths in line by means of horrendous punishments for those who committed crimes not ordered by their superiors. Himmler and Heydrich wanted these executioners to realize that they could yield to their sadistic tendencies as long as they only killed designated enemies of the Nazis while blindly obeying orders from the *Einsatzgruppen* officers.

Before the invasion of Poland in 1939 and the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Himmler and Heydrich coordinated their efforts with those of the Wehrmacht, the German army. When the German army invaded Poland in September, 1939, and quickly occupied this unfortunate country, more than three thousand *Einsatzgruppen* soldiers moved into occupied areas and began the systematic execution of Jews and others who protected

Jews. Himmler, Heydrich, and their thugs did not want to engage in battle.

They viewed themselves as nothing more than executioners. Himmler and Heydrich implemented plans so that all the Jews could be executed in town after town throughout Poland. At first, only adult men were shot, but soon Himmler and Heydrich presented the argument that it was necessary to kill women and children lest avengers rise up against Nazis in later generations. They presented this rationale so that *Einsatzgruppen* killers would not hesitate to shoot women, children, and infants.

The *Einsatzgruppen* were very efficient in shooting to death Jews, communists, and others who opposed their invasion of the Soviet Union, and they also carried out horrendous massacres such as the killing at Babi Yar near Kiev in the Ukraine, where well over 100,000 were executed and buried in a single ravine. In addition, the *Einsatzgruppen* used German doctors to give lethal injections to another 100,000 victims in Kiev. Similar mass murders occurred throughout the Ukraine, Byelorussia (now Belarus), Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. An *Einsatzgruppen* thug named Karl Jäger

bragged in a report dated December 1, 1941, that the soldiers in a single *Einsatzgruppe* had executed 137,346 people in the area of Kaunas, Lithuania, in the previous five months.

Even mass murders on this scale were not enough for Hitler, Heydrich, and Himmler. They wanted to exterminate all Jews in Nazi-occupied countries. At Hitler's request, Heydrich called the infamous Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942, just outside Berlin. As a result of this conference, the Nazis began constructing huge concentration camps, with gas chambers and crematoria, in places such as Sobibór, Treblinka, and Auschwitz. *Einsatzgruppen* soldiers under the command of Odilo Globocnik had already demonstrated the effectiveness of using poisonous gas to mur-



German soldiers look on as a member of *Einsatzgruppe D* murders a Jewish man kneeling before a filled mass grave in Vinnytsya, Ukraine, in 1942. (Library of Congress)

der Jews in mobile killing vans. Adolf Eichmann learned from Globocnik how to use poisonous gas to execute people in stationary buildings such as gas chambers. *Einsatzgruppen* officers thus provided the technical expertise that Eichmann and other concentration camp commanders needed to murder large numbers of Jews simultaneously. *Einsatzgruppen* criminals also taught Schutzstaffel (SS) murderers that different gases could be used. In addition, they worked with death camp commandants and architects to help design gas chambers and crematoria. Carbon monoxide and Zyklon B, a prussic acid insecticide, were most frequently used to exterminate people in gas chambers. Starting in early 1942, the main task of the *Einsatzgruppen* changed. Henceforth, their responsibility would be to round up Jews and send them by train to death camps for extermination.

Rhodes chose the words for his book's subtitle—*The SS-Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust*—very carefully. The *Einsatzgruppen* carried out the first systematic killing of European Jews by shooting them, but they also taught concentration camp commanders how to murder Jews in gas chambers on a massive scale and how to destroy the corpses in crematoria. Although the *Einsatzgruppen* soldiers had no qualms about killing innocent people, they always tried to hide the evidence of their crimes by burning or cremating corpses. Rhodes demonstrates convincingly that Hitler's infamous "final solution" could not have been implemented without the eager cooperation of Himmler, Heydrich, Globocnik, and numerous other war criminals from the SS and the *Einsatzgruppen*.

In the final chapter of his book, Rhodes describes what happened to the *Einsatzgruppen* criminals after the Allied victory over Germany. Like so many other Nazi war criminals, far too many members of the *Einsatzgruppen* were not sentenced in open court for their crimes. Czech patriots assassinated Heydrich in 1942. Hitler killed himself in August, 1945, and Himmler committed suicide the next month. Both criminals chose the easy way out and did not have to appear in court. Heinrich Müller, the head of the Gestapo, was never seen again after April, 1945. It is likely that war crimes trials for *Einsatzgruppen* soldiers would never have taken place had it not been for an American Jewish lawyer named Benjamin Ferencz, who was then serving in the American army. He went through thousands of SS documents that had been seized in Gestapo headquarters in Berlin by liberating American soldiers and discovered clear proof of the atrocities committed by the *Einsatzgruppen*. He then obtained from Telford Taylor, chief prosecutor at the first Nuremberg Trials, permission to prosecute *Einsatzgruppen* leaders for murder and crimes against humanity. Through his efforts, fourteen *Einsatzgruppen* leaders were sentenced to death at Nuremberg. Four other *Einsatzgruppen* criminals were hanged in other countries.

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—Edmund J. Campion

MAUS

A SURVIVOR'S TALE

AUTHOR: Art Spiegelman (1948-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, 1986; *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale—And Here My Troubles Began*, 1991

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Graphic novel; autobiographical fiction; allegory

In these graphic novels, Spiegelman uses the metaphor of cats and mice to dramatize the true story of his father's experiences during the Holocaust and his own efforts to understand how those events affected both father and son.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Art Spiegelman (b. 1948), a successful cartoonist and son of a Holocaust survivor

Vladek Spiegelman (1906-1982), Art's father, a Polish Jew

Anja Spiegelman (1912-1968), Art's mother and Vladek's wife

Mala Spiegelman, Vladek's second wife, also a Holocaust survivor

Françoise Mouly Spiegelman, Art's French wife

OVERVIEW

In *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, a history of his father's experiences during the Holocaust, Art Spiegelman offers a portrait of his father in America, a picture of his father's tortured route from Sosnowiec, Poland, to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz and at last to the United States, and a description of his own complicated relationship with the old man. *Maus* is a graphic novel that uses the tradition of cartoon images of cat and mouse to dramatize the years of hiding and narrow escapes that almost all Holocaust survivors endured; in this work, Spiegelman portrays the Jews as mice and the Germans as cats. Other nationalities are also portrayed as animals; the Poles are pigs, for example, and the Americans are dogs.

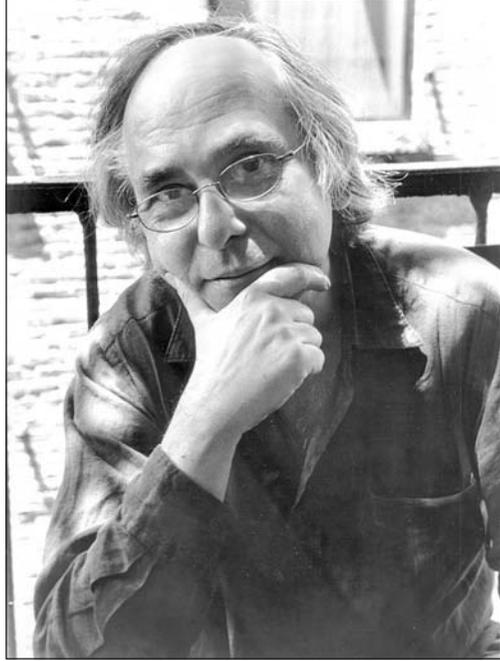
Although he uses a comic-book format, Spiegelman's point is not to trivialize the events or to suggest that they are in any way laughable. Instead, he implies that these events are so hugely painful that only through something like the cat-and-mouse allegory can the reader begin to compre-

hend them on an emotional level. The two volumes of this biographical work are drawn in black and white, and the drawings themselves are severely stylized, each panel crowded with characters. The final effect suggests the drab ghettos and the death camps, with their prisoners in gray and black uniforms crowded into intolerable closeness until they are piled into ovens or graves.

The first volume, *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, opens in Rego Park, New York, as Art Spiegelman visits his father, Vladek. Vladek Spiegelman is a difficult man. He snipes at Mala, his second wife (his first wife, Anja, committed suicide in 1968), and worries about his health, but at his son's urging, he begins to relate his Holocaust experiences. This sort of double narrative, of the father-son relationship and of the father's past, continues throughout the two volumes. Vladek introduces his young self as a handsome young Polish Jew, successful in business and attractive to women. Indeed, he breaks off a long-term love affair when he meets Anja, impressed by her personality and also, perhaps, by her family's wealth, for Vladek has always been concerned with financial security.

Vladek and Anja are married in the mid-1930's, and they soon have a son, Richieu. In 1938, when the couple travels to Czechoslovakia, where Anja is to spend some time in a sanatorium, they have their first encounter with the Nazis and hear rumors of anti-Semitic terrorism in Germany. When they return home to Poland, war is about to break out; Anja and the baby go to join her family, while Vladek is forced into the Polish army to fight the Germans. Vladek urges Anja to take some of her household knickknacks with her; he knows they can be sold if times become hard. This is an example of the sort of pragmatism that contributes to Vladek's ability to survive (but that makes him look like a skinflint in his modern-day American life).

Vladek often interrupts his narrative to count his numerous pills (he



Art Spiegelman. (Courtesy, Random House)

earlier had a heart attack), to accuse Mala of caring only about his money, or to complain about his son's unwillingness to help him with household repairs. In one interlude, he discards his son's coat, insisting that Art should take his imitation-leather windbreaker, a jacket Art loathes. In all of Vladek's story, Spiegelman carefully creates the sound of his father's accented English: "It was everything quiet until near morning," Vladek says, describing the battle in which he was taken prisoner by the Germans. In the German camp, Vladek sharpens his survivor's skills; he is hopeful because, in a prophetic dream, his dead grandfather has predicted his release.

At last freed to return to Sosnowiec, Vladek learns that conditions have steadily worsened for Polish Jews. Twelve people are living in his father-in-law's household, and rations are meager. Ever the manager, Vladek helps the family by trading on the black market and by judiciously selling some family possessions, but the next chapters detail a steadily tightening noose as the family sees more and more terrorism and severe deprivations. In one chilling scene, Vladek notes that the hanged bodies of four Jewish businessmen were left in the town square for days. Eventually, Vladek and Anja are reduced to moving at night and hiding in the cellar of a sympathetic Pole, eating the fragments of food she can spare.

At this point, Art learns that his father has seen an old comic book that Art wrote about his mother's suicide—*Prisoner on the Planet Hell* (1972). Anja's death left the teenage Art in a tangle of grief, guilt, and anger so serious that he spent some time in a mental hospital. Now he wonders if it has caused the tensions he feels with his father.

At the end of the first volume, Vladek and Anja find that their months of hiding from the Nazis' relentless pursuit have only brought them to Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp. At this point, too, Art learns that his father has destroyed Anja's journals, thus ending Art's hopes of using them in his biography. He is angry with his father, who remains blandly oblivious to his son's sense of loss.

The second volume, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale—And Here My Troubles Began*, begins with one of Vladek's infuriating ploys; he calls Art and Art's wife, Françoise, from their vacation to his bungalow in the Catskills, claiming to have had a heart attack. Instead, he is simply upset that Mala has left him, and he seems to expect his son to spend the rest of the summer with him. After Art refuses, he must blush to watch his father attempt to return half-empty boxes of cereal to the local market. Vladek's narrative shows that his refusal to waste even a cornflake is the very quality that enabled him to survive in Auschwitz, where he carefully hoarded part of every chunk of stale bread and took advantage of every opportunity to ingratiate

himself with his captors, always in the faith that something advantageous might come of his foresight. As a result, he was able to maintain contact with Anja, he helped some of his fellow prisoners, and he garnered some lighter work assignments that preserved his own strength. Of course, many did not survive, and Vladek carefully describes the arrangement of the gas chambers at Birkenau, the death camp adjoining Auschwitz, and explains in detail how they were used.

While writing the narrative, Art has been seeing a psychiatrist in an effort to deal with his conflicting feelings about his father. He respects the horrors the old man endured, but at the same time he is angry at his father's miserliness and racism, and still he questions whether his book will now seem to ridicule Vladek. The psychiatrist, himself a Holocaust survivor, suggests that Art is feeling guilt for not having undergone such experiences himself.

Repeatedly in his story, Vladek displays a sort of callous disregard for the fates of many of the people he met, some of whom helped him and some of whom he aided. He takes for granted that people expected to be paid for hiding him; thus, his insistence on taking some small valuables with him when the family left their home is well justified. He can end a story about someone who was killed before his eyes or who simply disappeared with a chilly dismissal, a sort of self-protective attitude born of Holocaust horrors. As he and Art look at some family photos, he recites a phlegmatic litany of the fates of various relatives. "She finished . . . in the ghetto," he says baldly of one; "He killed himself" of another.

At the end of the narrative, Vladek has had another heart attack, and Mala has returned to help him. Much frailer now, he recounts to Art how he and Anja were reunited after the war and, as he puts it, "lived happy, happy ever after." In a final irony, the book's last panel pictures a tombstone containing the names and dates of Vladek, the survivor, and Anja, the suicide.

In 1992, *Maus* won a Pulitzer Prize Special Award. The graphic novel's historical connection with comic books and fantasy may have contributed to the Pulitzer committee's difficulties in deciding how to categorize *Maus*. Nevertheless, the public seems to have had no trouble in recognizing the work's worth. It has been reprinted in paper format and reproduced on CD-ROM. Among other honors, it won the Religious Award in the French Angoulême International Comics Festival Awards in 1988 and received *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Fiction in 1993. It has been widely adopted in high school and college courses on the Holocaust and its literature and has been the subject of numerous scholarly articles that have praised its value as history, biography, fiction, and art. Unconventional though it may

be, *Maus* has interpreted the Holocaust for many readers who might never have approached more conventional histories.

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—Ann D. Garbett

THE NAZI DOCTORS

MEDICAL KILLING AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GENOCIDE

AUTHOR: Robert Jay Lifton (1926-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1986

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Ethics; medicine; psychology

This book draws on original documents, historical studies, and interviews in tracing the evolution of Nazi doctors from healers to mass murderers. Lifton analyzes how these physicians rationalized their participation in the state-sanctioned sterilization and euthanasia of German citizens and the extermination of Jews in Auschwitz.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the head of Hitler's special security force, the Schutzstaffel (SS), 1929-1945

Josef Mengele (1911-1979), a Nazi physician and medical researcher at Auschwitz

Eduard Wirths (1909-1945), the chief SS doctor at Auschwitz

OVERVIEW

The central question probed by Robert Jay Lifton in *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* is how German physicians, who took the Hippocratic oath, swearing to keep their lives and skills "pure and holy" and never to harm their patients, could become voluntary executors of horrendous medical experiments and facilitators of the slaughter of countless innocent people. Lifton, an American psychiatrist and psychohistorian, had developed an interest in how people lose and reconstruct their humanity in such extreme situations as war and imprisonment in concentration camps. In *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (1967), he studied the Japanese who lived through the first atomic bombing. Stimulated by the advice of a rabbi and friend, who urged him to do his duty as a Jew to progress from Hiroshima to the Holocaust, Lifton eventually decided, when an editor sent him some documents on Josef Mengele's medi-

cal experiments at the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, that a need existed for a study of how highly educated doctors became involved in the Nazi regime's schemes of "medicalized killing."

Because Lifton chose a psychological approach to this question, he feared that, in uncovering motivations of malevolent acts, he might be seen as providing justifications for "Nazi evil." In *The Nazi Doctors* he emphasizes that this was not his purpose. Rather, he states, his aims were to understand evil in order to fight and extirpate it and to help all human beings understand their own potential for great evil.

In his introduction to *The Nazi Doctors*, Lifton discusses the shocking historical fact that many German physicians, convinced that they were advancing evolutionary progress, supported the Nazis, and a significant percentage of these, who believed that the genetically inferior were "lives unworthy of life," played leading roles in the foundation, administration, and execution of the sterilization and euthanasia programs instituted by Germany before World War II. During the war, they actively engaged in the mass-killing process at Auschwitz and other camps. Unlike these doctors, who separated humans from "subhumans," Lifton describes the Nazi doctors not as demons or inhuman beasts but as human beings whose behavior was "a product of specifically *human* ingenuity and cruelty." At the core of this book is Lifton's analysis of how Nazi ideology helped to socialize doctors into biomedical killing and how modern psychology can provide insights into this metamorphosis of healers into mass murderers.

Although Lifton drew on documents from the period as well as historical studies, his primary research tool was the interview of both Nazi doctors and prisoner-doctors who survived the war. Lifton's psychological analyses led him to a conclusion that is close but not equivalent to Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil." Lifton did discover that, for the most part, the Nazi doctors were ordinary—or "banal," in Arendt's characterization—but what they did was far from banal, as his research uncovered evidence of commonplace humans carrying out uncommon evils. The fact that some German doctors refused to cooperate in these evils shows that humans have alternatives even in extreme situations, and Lifton's purpose is to encourage his readers to behave not like Nazis but as enlightened altruists.

The Nazi Doctors consists of three parts. In Part I, "Life Unworthy of Life: The Genetic Cure," Lifton examines Nazi ideology and the effect it had on doctors' participation in the sterilization and euthanasia programs. Part II, "Auschwitz: The Racial Cure," presents a case study of how Schutzstaffel (SS) doctors carried out medicalized genocide in a particular concentration camp. Part III, "The Psychology of Genocide," explores the mental and emotional techniques that the Nazi doctors used to continue to live in ordi-

nary families while actively engaged in abominable atrocities.

Without Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler, there would have been no Nazi doctors, and, unlike other scholars, Lifton concentrates on the ideas of these ideologues, who insisted that National Socialism (Nazism) was nothing but applied biology. For example, Hitler felt strongly that the Jews were a threat to the health of the "Nordic race." Other scholars have pointed out that German doctors had invented "racial hygiene" long before the Nazis, and German eugenicists, following the example of the United States, helped enact laws that provided for the compulsory sterilization of the criminally insane and genetically inferior. Once Hitler came to power in 1933, he saw it as his "sacred racial mission" to preserve the fit and eliminate the unfit, and when the Nazi government passed the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, it was widely supported by German physicians, as was the amendment to the Nuremberg Laws in which all Jewish doctors had their medical licenses nullified.

As the Nazis augmented their political power, their laws against the unfit became bolder, and a euthanasia program for killing incurably ill and mentally deficient children was well under way by the time World War II began. Within a few months of the war's start, Hitler extended the euthanasia program to include adults, thus making medical killing an official Nazi policy. By early 1940, the Nazis had extended their killing program to the Jews, in the so-called final solution to what they termed the "Jewish problem." Under this new program Jews were to be killed not because of mental or physical abnormalities but simply because they were Jews.

The place that has come to symbolize the Nazi genocide of the Jews is Auschwitz, a concentration camp where much of the Nazis' mass murder occurred. Lifton dedicates about half of his book to how the doctors at Auschwitz carried out the Nazi policy of "medicalized killing." He focuses on such doctors as Josef Mengele and Eduard Wirths, both of whom exhibited what Lifton terms "doubling"; that is, each managed to live comfortably with two selves, an Auschwitz self who was complicit in mass torture and killing and a non-Auschwitz self who was an ordinary family man and doctor. Mengele was more at home at Auschwitz than was Wirths, because Mengele felt his actions were in accord with the Nazi ideal of racial purification. Jews were "diseased individuals" who had to be excised from society, just as a doctor would remove cancerous tissue from an individual. According to Lifton, psychological doubling allows an individual to remain guiltless by walling off half of his self. In addition to explaining the actions of the Nazi doctors, Lifton asserts, this theory also deepens our understanding of all people who are placed in extreme situations.

Many reviewers praised *The Nazi Doctors* as a major contribution to Ho-

locaust studies, some even calling it the definitive work on its subject. Bruno Bettelheim's review for *The New York Times Book Review* was controversial, however. Bettelheim, a child psychiatrist and concentration camp survivor, argued that Lifton had come "dangerously close" to the attitude encapsulated in the French maxim *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* (To understand all is to forgive all). Bettelheim held that some human acts are so deeply evil that our goal should be either to prevent them or to reject them, not to "try to understand them empathetically," as Lifton did. Some critics asserted that Lifton had "trivialized" what should be a deeply solemn subject, and others saw his psychiatric terminology as detaching or distancing the reader from the horrors of his material. Lifton replied to these criticisms by insisting that human beings will better serve the future by confronting their own potential and that of others to do monstrous evil. In the years since the early reviews of *The Nazi Doctors*, many have continued to praise Lifton's book, and numerous scholars have consulted it in conducting their own research. Indeed, now consider *The Nazi Doctors* a classic that will be studied for many years to come.

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—Robert J. Paradowski

NAZI GERMANY AND THE JEWS

AUTHOR: Saul Friedländer (1932-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, 1997; *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945*, 2007

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

This comprehensive two-volume history of the development and realization of the anti-Jewish program of the Nazis covers the period from the time the National Socialists first took power in Germany until their defeat at the end of World War II.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), the German propaganda minister, 1933-1945

Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the commander of the Schutzstaffel (SS), 1929-1945, and organizer of the military *Einsatzgruppen*

Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942), the chief of the Reich Security Main Office under the direction of Himmler and one of the main organizers of the Holocaust

Victor Klemperer (1881-1960), a German of Jewish background whose diaries provide detailed inside views of Nazi persecution during the war

Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the chairman of the Jewish Council in the Łódź ghetto in Poland, who made the controversial decision to collaborate with the Nazis in deporting Jews

Adam Czerniakow, the chairman of the Jewish Council in the Warsaw ghetto, whose 1939-1942 diary is an important source of information on the Holocaust in Poland

OVERVIEW

Well over a half century after the end of World War II, the genocide of European Jews by Nazi Germany continues to be a subject of historical controversy. A small but vocal minority of writers continue to deny that

the Holocaust ever happened or to assert that the killing occurred on a much smaller scale than is generally believed. Most historians utterly reject the claims of the Holocaust deniers, but they still take a variety of positions on how and why the mass murder occurred. Some maintain that the Holocaust was a consequence of deep-seated anti-Semitism in German culture, whereas others see it more as a result of the manipulation of German society and government by a small extremist clique.

Historians disagree on the extent to which Nazi leaders planned the Holocaust according to a design for extermination rather than responded to changing circumstances in the war. If there was a particular point in time when the Germans planned the so-called final solution to the "Jewish question," when was this, and who exactly took part in the planning? Did the majority of Germans support the persecution and later the killing, or did many of them simply go along out of fear of a hateful elite that had eradicated all means of protest? Once the killing began, how widespread was the knowledge of it among the German population?

Beyond these debates, the Holocaust was a human experience of the most extreme sort. Much of the understanding that we have of the lived reality of the persecution and genocide comes from diarists such as Anne Frank and Victor Klemperer, to name two of the most famous. This literature tends to live alongside the grand historical accounts; relatively few authors have attempted to integrate the two completely.

Saul Friedländer's two-volume work *Nazi Germany and the Jews* wrestles with all of the major debates around the Holocaust and draws on diaries, memoirs, and letters to show the terrible years from 1933 to 1945 through the eyes of those who lived and died in that time. Friedländer seems to have read nearly every secondary and primary source available in order to shape his comprehensive account. The first volume, titled *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, focuses first primarily on events within Germany; it then widens to take in developments in Austria and other locations. The chapters in this volume are arranged in order of historical events, but they present themes in the growth of Nazi anti-Jewish policies. The second volume, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945*, takes in the whole of the European area under Nazi control after the beginning of the war, and it shifts to strictly chronological chapters, organized by dates.

When the Nazis first took power, as Friedländer recounts, the Jews were not their most immediate victims. The new masters of Germany in 1933 were more concerned with striking against their communist and socialist rivals for control of the nation than they were with taking immediate action against the Jews. Still, anti-Semitism was a foundational myth for

the Nazis, and Jewish Germans were subject to a shift in the atmosphere almost immediately in those early years.

The German religious and intellectual elites were divided in their attitudes toward the anti-Jewish measures during the first year of Nazi power. Few were active supporters of the Nazis, but most of these elites were sympathetic to the Nazi goal of a new social order. Non-Jewish university professors, for the most part, held attitudes and interests that converged with those of the Nazis and were willing to give quiet consent to the actions of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (that is, the Nazi Party). The churches were somewhat more divided in their willingness to go along with an anti-Jewish program for several reasons, including Christian beliefs, the connection of Judaism to Christianity, and the existence of converts to Christianity from Jewish backgrounds. This division led to an actual split in German Protestantism, into the anti-Semitic German Christians and the Confessing Church, which put up weak resistance, mostly on behalf of converts. The Catholics, whose international reach gave them the greatest potential for opposition, largely concentrated their few efforts on Jewish converts to Catholicism. In the meanwhile, the Jewish elites were caught in hope and confidence that their contributions to German history and culture would protect them.

Anti-Semitism had a long history in Germany, and this fact may account for the willingness of many Germans to go along with the anti-Jewish activities of the Nazis. At the same time, the Nazi attitude toward the Jews was different from the prejudices of many other Germans. Friedländer addresses the debate about whether the sources of the Holocaust lay in German culture or in the manipulations of a genocidal regime by arguing that historical developments in the culture helped make the regime possible. Anti-Jewish attitudes were spread through all German institutions to a much greater extent than in other European countries, and the Germans had a much more fully developed ideology within which to formulate their feelings of resentment. Biologically based arguments about race fused together with a mystical sense of race to produce what Friedländer calls "redemptive anti-Semitism," the belief that Germans could and should be saved from the pollution of Jewry.

The redemptive anti-Semitism of the Nazis met with only feeble opposition from a population with little disposition to show itself as pro-Jewish. Still, the persecution proceeded gradually in a series of stages, first in efforts to segregate the Jews from the rest of the German public. An undercurrent of sympathy for the Jews accompanied these attempts to push Jews into a new ghetto, but gradually links between the Jews and their German neighbors were weakened. With the Nuremberg Laws in the fall of 1935,

the separation was formalized as Jews were explicitly denied civil rights and marriage and sexual contacts between Aryans and Jews were legally forbidden.

In the years following passage of the Nuremberg Laws, the period Friedländer refers to as “the entrapment” began. At one level, Adolf Hitler and his associates began a campaign to convince their countrymen that the nation was engaged in a struggle for the life of civilization and that the Jews were the central threat to Germany and to Europe. Under the authority of the Schutzstaffel (SS) Security Office (known as the SD), the Nazis also began compiling a card index of all the Jews living in the German Reich and another index intended to include all important Jews living in other countries. Despite the intensity of their hostility toward Jews, however, the Nazi leaders do not seem to have envisioned mass murder as a solution in the 1930’s. While disenfranchising and cataloging the Jewish population, the Nazis continued to plan on the emigration of Jews, even continuing cooperation with the Zionists in Palestine to move Jews to the Middle East.

While German anti-Jewish policies progressed over the course of the 1930’s, anti-Semitism also increased in other parts of Europe. Friedländer looks at the growth of these attitudes in Paris, Warsaw, and Vienna as well as in Berlin. The Austrian capital had particular importance. The sudden and thorough actions against Jews in former Austria after Germany annexed that country in 1938 suggested an “Austrian model” for future programs in Greater Germany. By the end of the 1930’s, the persecution had become an onslaught through all the lands under Hitler’s regime.

In the second volume of *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Friedländer continues to the war years, when Nazi efforts to persecute, segregate, and push Jews out of German territory turned to a murderous attempt to annihilate the Jews of Europe. He divides the years of extermination into three periods that make up the sections of the book. The first period, called “Terror” by Friedländer, began in September, 1939, with the start of the war and lasted until June, 1941, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. The second period, which Friedländer calls “Mass Murder,” continued from the opening of warfare between the Germans and the Soviets until July, 1942, when the Germans were spread widely in the East and their initial onslaught had begun to falter. The final period, called “Shoah,” lasted from the turning of the war against Germany in the summer of 1942 until the final destruction of Nazi Germany by May, 1945.

The terror expanded and intensified after Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and World War II began. Hitler portrayed the Jews as the instigators of the war and made them scapegoats for a new level of conflict. As Ger-

mans came into contact with Jews in the East, the Germans saw these newer groups as culturally different, and the contempt of German soldiers grew as they saw the poverty and desperate circumstances the war had thrust upon these newer Jewish groups. The Germans also made contact with anti-Jewish elements in the countries they invaded, so that Ukrainians, Poles, and Lithuanians worked with the German *Einsatzgruppen*—"special forces" of killers under the direction of SS commander Heinrich Himmler—in murdering large numbers of Jews. The violence begun in Poland and other Eastern European countries began the acceleration toward the "final solution."

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union began a new phase, that of widespread mass murder. Hitler had always emphasized that he believed that communism was part of a longer-term Jewish plot. As the Germans moved into lands occupied by the Soviet Union and into the Soviet Union itself, eliminating Jews became part of an effort to wipe out partisan support for the Soviets.

At the end of 1941, the United States became part of the war. Hitler and his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, believed that the Jews were also controlling the Americans, and the Nazis began expelling Jews from Germany and other lands under the Reich and engaging in planned mass killings of those they saw as an internal enemy. This was the time of the transition from original, vague goals of pushing the Jews out of Europe toward extermination. At the Wannsee Conference, chaired by Reinhard Heydrich, the outlines of the program of genocide became clearer. In the spring of 1942, the assassination of Heydrich, together with the bombing of an anti-Soviet exhibit in Berlin, strengthened the convictions of the Nazi leadership that the Jews were a threat to them as well as to their social order.

Friedländer makes it clear that knowledge of the killings was widespread among the German public. Still, while a small minority of Germans were sympathetic to Jews, German public attitudes remain something of a mystery. The dedication of the Nazi leadership to the complete elimination of Jews in the final stage of the war comes across in Friedländer's work, but the author never completely puts readers into the state of mind that produced the eerie pitilessness of people such as Himmler. In part, this is a result of Friedländer's concentration on primary sources created by the victims themselves, which provides a richly detailed insight into the lives of those who disappeared into the Shoah (a Hebrew word that translates as "catastrophe" or "calamity") by the end of the war. Ultimately, however, the mentality of the Nazis themselves may simply be incomprehensible. Friedländer has succeeded in producing the authoritative masterwork on one of the most horrific episodes in human history.

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—Carl L. Bankston III

NAZI TERROR

THE GESTAPO, JEWS, AND ORDINARY GERMANS

AUTHOR: Eric A. Johnson (1948-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2000

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Johnson presents a well-researched case study of how German civilians cooperated with the Gestapo in three German cities to make possible the murder of Jews in concentration camps.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), a victim of Nazi persecution

Alfred Effenberg, a Gestapo officer in Krefeld

Ludwig Jung, the head of the Gestapo in Krefeld

Josef Mahler, a victim of Nazi persecution

Emanuel Schafer, the head of the Gestapo in Cologne

Richard Schulenberg, a Gestapo officer in Krefeld

Father Josef Spieker, a victim of Nazi persecution

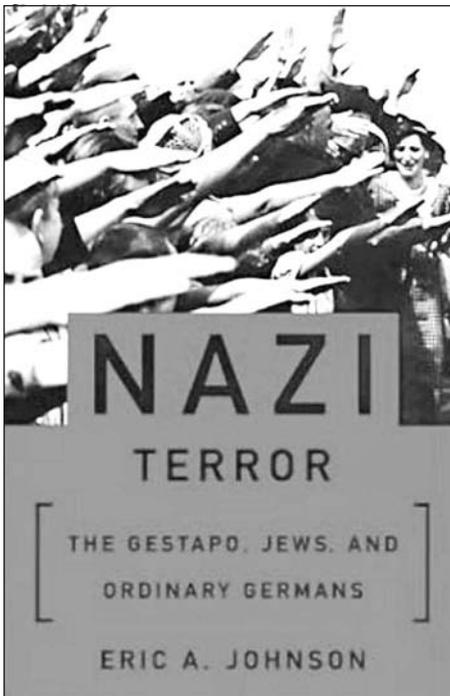
OVERVIEW

Eric A. Johnson is a professor of history and a specialist in criminology and modern German history. His previous books include *Urbanization and Crime: Germany, 1871-1914* (1995) and the coedited volume *The Civilization of Crime: Violence in Town and Country Since the Middle Ages* (1996; with Eric H. Monkkonen).

Many recent scholars have argued persuasively that ordinary Germans and not just Nazis and members of the Gestapo and the Schutzstaffel (SS) should be held responsible for the crimes against humanity committed during the Nazi reign of terror from 1933 to 1945. In his 1996 book *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen argued that the Holocaust would not have taken place without the full cooperation of the German public. Goldhagen's book provoked a lively controversy in Germany because he questioned the revisionist claims that most Germans did not know about the so-called final solution

until the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945 and would have opposed the Holocaust had they known of the enormity of the crimes committed by the Nazis against the Jews and all who opposed their policies. The title of Johnson's book *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* makes clear reference to Goldhagen's analysis of the role of everyday German citizens in the implementation of the Nazis' program of exterminating the Jews.

Some German reviewers criticized Goldhagen's book, claiming that his accusations were too general. This argument certainly cannot be made about Johnson's book, which he based on rigorous research conducted on Gestapo and court archives in three German cities. He selected a very large city (Cologne), a medium-sized city (Krefeld), and a small city (Bergheim). In his introductory chapter, he persuasively justifies his choice of these three cities. First, Gestapo and court records have been very well preserved in all three cities, and they are accessible to scholars. Second, the diversity in size of these three cities can serve as a model for the operation of the Nazi reign of terror throughout Germany and other occupied countries. Finally, in the 1933 election, the number of votes for Adolf Hitler by citizens of these cities was somewhat lower than the national average. Johnson argues that this fact is important because it suggests that the residents of Cologne, Krefeld, and Bergheim were not at first rabid supporters of National Socialism.



Johnson's research is very impressive. He thoroughly went through all the relative documents in the archives of these three cities, and he reveals a solid knowledge of historical studies on the Gestapo and the Holocaust. He also supplemented his research by sending questionnaires to Jewish and non-Jewish people who had been at least of adolescent age in Cologne, Krefeld, and Bergheim during the Nazis' reign of terror.

In the years immediately after World War II, many people had the mistaken belief that the Gestapo was an extremely large

and efficient agency that did not need to rely on informants or ordinary Germans to arrest Jews and others whom the Nazis viewed as enemies. Approximately 170,000 people lived in Krefeld during the Nazi years, and there were never more than fourteen Gestapo officers and two secretaries for this entire town—that is, there was fewer than one Gestapo employee for every ten thousand residents. Gestapo records in the Krefeld archives clearly reveal that many Jews and other Nazi enemies had been arrested not as a result of investigations started by Gestapo officers and their paid spies but because of denunciations made by ordinary Germans against their neighbors and coworkers. The motivation for such unsolicited collaboration with the Gestapo varied. Sometimes denunciations were made after a dispute with a neighbor or the ending of a love affair and not for ideological reasons. Both Jews and Gentiles were denounced by their neighbors, but Johnson demonstrates that the Gestapo systematically treated Jews much more harshly than non-Jews for violation of Nazi laws.

Johnson explains very well that the first targets of the Nazis from 1933 to approximately 1935 were Communists, whom the Nazis viewed as a threat to their power. Some prisoners were brought to trial, but many were either sent directly to concentration camps or assigned “special treatment,” a euphemism for immediate execution by Gestapo officers. On their own authority, Gestapo officers could order the torture or execution of any prisoner they had interrogated.

These executions were carried out either in local Gestapo headquarters or in local prisons. Prisoners were referred to local tribunals only if the Gestapo officer was unsure how to treat criminals. At first, judges in Cologne conducted trials fairly, and several defendants were actually acquitted, but the Nazis quickly put an end to judicial independence. Judges soon did as they were told and returned the guilty verdicts and death sentences requested by the prosecutors. Johnson argues that those who denounced neighbors to the Gestapo must have understood the consequences of their actions because so many of those brought to Gestapo headquarters never returned home alive.

Johnson explains that until the systematic destruction of synagogues and Jewish businesses known as *Kristallnacht* (the “night of broken glass”), which took place on the evening of November 9, 1938, throughout Germany, Nazi policy had been to dismiss Jews from almost all jobs, seize their businesses, and make their lives so miserable that they would willingly leave Germany. This situation changed drastically on November 10, 1938, when Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler, commander of the SS, decreed that Jews would henceforth be targeted for systematic and organized elimination.

On the afternoon of November 10, 1938, Krefeld Gestapo officers set fire to the Krefeld synagogue and made sure that firemen were not called to extinguish the blaze. That same day, sixty-three Jews in Krefeld were arrested and soon thereafter sent to the Dachau concentration camp. Gestapo officers used information supplied by cooperative informants to locate and arrest Jews. Once again these innocent people would not have been sent to their deaths without the active collaboration of "ordinary Germans."

In a thoughtful chapter titled "The Cross and the Swastika: Quieting Religious Opposition," Johnson examines specific cases of Christians who resisted the Nazis and were severely punished by the Gestapo. One such case is that of a Jesuit priest named Josef Spieker. In October, 1934, Father Spieker began giving sermons in which he explained very calmly and eloquently that German Catholics owed their allegiance to God and not to Hitler. He later wrote essays in Catholic newspapers in which he argued that National Socialism was incompatible with Catholicism. For these remarks, Father Spieker was sent to a concentration camp. Because he was such a well-known Catholic priest, the Nazis decided for public relations reasons to send him into exile in 1937 instead of killing him. Father Spieker was a priest in Chile from 1937 until 1950, when he returned to Germany. He died in Düsseldorf eighteen years later. In 1937, the local Catholic bishop in Cologne criticized Spieker for his anti-Nazi comments, but by the 1960's German Catholics came to view him as a courageous Christian.

Although many other Catholics and Protestants collaborated with the Nazis, many Christians, such as the Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sacrificed their lives to remind others that one could not be a Nazi and a Christian.

Johnson also points out that Jehovah's Witnesses were especially targeted for extermination because they continued to argue in public that Christianity was incompatible with National Socialism. They were right, but speaking the truth cost them their lives.

Johnson explains very thoroughly that the "final solution" would never have killed so many Jews had "ordinary Germans" not willingly cooperated with the Gestapo. His accurate analysis of the functioning of the Gestapo and Nazi terror in three representative German cities indicates how the Gestapo operated throughout Germany and other countries occupied by the Nazis.

Johnson does not limit his fascinating historical study solely to the twelve years of the Third Reich. He also examines postwar trials of Gestapo officers from Cologne, Krefeld, and Bergheim. It is well known that leading Nazis were sentenced either to death or to long prison terms at the end of the Nuremberg Trials for their crimes against humanity. However,

what happened to other Gestapo officers who also had blood on their hands?

Johnson examines two specific trials of former Gestapo officers. Emanuel Schafer served for years as the Gestapo head in Cologne. During Schafer's 1954 trial, a Holocaust survivor named Moritz Goldschmidt testified that only 600 of the 13,500 Cologne Jews whom the local Gestapo under the command of Schafer had sent to various concentration camps had survived World War II. Despite Schafer's obvious guilt, the judges accepted his claim that he was innocent because he did not know what happened in concentration camps and because he had simply obeyed the orders of his superiors. This was, in fact, the same claim that the judges had rejected at the famous Nuremberg Trials. The Cologne judges at Schafer's 1954 trial accepted this specious claim even though several witnesses testified that Schafer had played an active role in arresting Jews and sending them to their deaths. He was acquitted on the capital charge of mass murder. The judges convicted him of the charge of "aggravated deprivation of liberty." For causing the deaths of almost 13,000 Jews, Schafer spent only six years in jail.

Other Gestapo officers were treated even more leniently. Alfred Effenberg was tried in 1949 before a Krefeld court for crimes against humanity. The indictment accused him of having caused the deaths of several Krefeld Jews. The surviving spouses of a Jewish man named Toni M. and a Jewish woman named Sibylla C. had been denounced to the Krefeld Gestapo by neighbors. Both spouses had spoken personally with Effenberg, and both the widow of Toni M. and the widower of Sibylla C. testified under oath that Effenberg had signed the papers that sent their spouses to their deaths in concentration camps. Both witnesses indicated that he alone was responsible for their deaths. The Krefeld Gestapo chief, Ludwig Jung, stated that it was his policy to simply sign recommendations from Gestapo officers that Jews be sent to concentration camps. He indicated that his officers had complete authority to assign people to concentration camps. Despite this clear indication of Effenberg's guilt, the judges accepted his assertion that he had simply been following orders. The court acquitted him on the capital charge but found him guilty on the minor charge of acting as an accomplice in an aggravated case of deprivation of liberty. He was sentenced to three months in prison. Johnson describes many other trials of Gestapo officers from Krefeld and Cologne that resulted in acquittals or very light sentences. Prosecutors and judges did not seriously punish local residents who had clearly committed crimes against humanity by causing the deaths of Jewish people from Krefeld, Cologne, and Bergheim.

Nazi Terror is an extremely well-researched historical study that en-

riches a reader's understanding of how the active collaboration of ordinary Germans and the Gestapo made possible the extermination of millions of ordinary Germans' fellow citizens.

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—Edmund J. Campion

NEVER TO FORGET

THE JEWS OF THE HOLOCAUST

AUTHOR: Milton Meltzer (1915-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1976

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; young adult literature

Meltzer chronicles German dictator Adolf Hitler's movement to exterminate the European Jewish population in the 1930's and 1940's by examining the history of hatred against the Jews, the systematic murder of Jewish people in Hitler's Germany, and the Jewish resistance movement.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany and Nazi Party leader, 1933-1945

Chaim Kaplan, a Holocaust victim whose diary of his years in the Warsaw ghetto has survived

M. I. Libau, a fourteen-year-old Berlin resident who survived Kristallnacht

Rivka Yosselevscha, a Ukrainian Jewish woman who survived attempted execution by the German army

Reuben Rosenberg, a survivor of four Nazi death camps, including Monowitz, the slave labor camp attached to Auschwitz

Primo Levi (1919-1987), an Italian chemist and Auschwitz survivor

Abraham Lisper, a Polish youth who survived by jumping off the train transporting his family to Auschwitz and hiding for two years underground

Sima, a twelve-year-old resistance fighter from Minsk

OVERVIEW

Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust is Milton Meltzer's highly personalized look at the attempted extermination of an entire ethnic group during the 1930's and 1940's. Meltzer looks specifically at the years between 1933, when the Nazi Party came to power in Germany, through 1945, the year that it lost power. During those twelve years, two out of ev-

ery three Jews in Europe were murdered. These events are known collectively as the Holocaust.

The work is divided into three sections, labeled books. Book 1 deals with the history of hatred, persecution, and discrimination directed against Jews. The background of how and why the Holocaust occurred in Germany and the events leading to Adolf Hitler's rise to power are explored in five chapters. Although Germany is the country in which modern anti-Semitism reached its zenith, the roots of discrimination against Jews goes back much further in history. The accusation that the Jews were to blame for the crucifixion of Jesus was used to make them outcasts in society as early as the fourth century. This popular and enduring hatred of Jews was systematically exploited by Hitler. Through a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign, Hitler used anti-Semitism brilliantly to unite the German people. Jews were portrayed as parasites on society and blamed for the ills of post-World War I Germany. While persecution of Jews was not new, the Nazi anti-Semitism was preached with a boundless fury, beyond the portrayal of Jews as scapegoats or inferiors to charges that they were the cause of every major problem—and thus, the solution to all problems existed in the elimination of the Jews. As the persecution and violence escalated against the Jewish population, no one intervened. Hitler continued until the plan known as the "final solution" was in place: the death of all Jews.

The "final solution," the systematic destruction of the Jewish population as carried out by Hitler's government, is the subject of book 2. The historic tragedy unfolds as told through first-person narratives, eyewitness accounts, and surviving diaries of Holocaust victims. Starting with November 9, 1938, the Kristallnacht (the "night of broken glass"), a nationwide German program in which the Nazis destroyed Jewish shops, synagogues, businesses, and homes, Meltzer takes the readers through the Holocaust years. Stories from the Warsaw ghetto, mass murders in Germany and Russia, and life in the concentration camps are chronicled.

Book 3 tells the story of Jewish resistance to the Holocaust. One question asked in the third part of *Never to Forget* is "How could the Jewish people fight back?" Another question examined is "What degree of resistance existed among non-Jews?" Hitler's army swept over Europe with incredible speed. How could Jews who had nothing retaliate? Nevertheless, many Jews did. Resistance fighters, those who worked underground and those who organized violent rebellion, are profiled. Included in the story of the resistance is the rebuilding process that the Jews faced at the end of World War II. Those who survived had no family, no home, and a difficult future. Although the Jewish homeland of Israel was created, it was not a peaceful

land. For Jews, the Holocaust had nearly been their destruction. It happened once; it could happen again.

The book is supported with maps, a comprehensive index, and a chronology. Chapter notes and source documentation are provided. An extensive bibliography is included, as well as statistical data and charts concerning the death toll of the Holocaust.

Meltzer begins with the question "Why remember?" It is his belief that the Holocaust did not occur in a vacuum. It was the logical outcome of certain conditions; given the nature of Nazi beliefs, the crime of the Holocaust could be expected. Because the world of Hitler is not totally alien to the world today, according to Meltzer, the Holocaust must be examined in order to understand why it happened and to prevent it from happening again.

This examination is at a very personal level. The author recalls how he felt as a teenage Jewish boy in the United States reading newspaper accounts about Hitler and the Nazis. Young Meltzer found the knowledge terrifying that Jewish people lived under a threat. He asked what most people would ask, "Could that happen to me?" In order to create this personal perspective of history, Meltzer relies on the eyewitness accounts of those who experienced the Holocaust. The truth does not consist of merely the facts and figures of the Holocaust but is found through the stories of those who experienced the terror and grief. Meltzer articulates the meaning of being set apart by something over which one has no control not only through his own experiences but through those of others as well. What sets Meltzer apart from other nonfiction writers for young adults is his use of a definite point of view in his work. He usually does not attempt to present more than one side of his story, and *Never to Forget* is told totally from the Jewish perspective.

Never to Forget also deals with the basic conflict of good against evil. The Holocaust demonstrated that all people have the capacity to be both good and evil. It is the story of those who treated other human beings as less than human and the story of those who tried to resist or held out a helping hand. Forces exist that can cut off human response and make it possible to be evil without feeling responsibility; this is how the massacre of a whole people can be organized by a government. The individual conscience vanishes in the face of orders from superiors or perceived superiors. Not enough people in Nazi Germany said "no" to the Holocaust. Meltzer wonders what would have happened if more people, not only in Germany but also in the rest of the world, had said "no." Would the Holocaust have happened? Readers are confronted with the dilemma of what they would have done in this situation.

Never to Forget makes an important contribution to the understanding of one of the most tragic events in history by making it a personal story. The tragedy that befell one group of people is presented by sharing the experiences of a few who lived it; this approach is responsible for the powerful impact of many of Milton Meltzer's works. This personal face on history offers a different perspective to those readers who may know of the Holocaust only from a few paragraphs in a history text or a list of facts.

Meltzer demonstrates an awareness of his audience, the young adult reader. His books seek to help adolescents become aware of themselves and their role in society by leading readers to ask "Would I have done that?" or "How could people have allowed this to happen?" Many of the voices heard in *Never to Forget* are those of young adults. This book can serve as validation that young people can make their voices be heard and make a difference in their world.

Twelve years after he wrote *Never to Forget*, Meltzer addressed the Holocaust again in *Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust* (1988). This book tells the stories of some of those courageous people who aided the Jews. Once again, Meltzer puts a personal face on history by using first-person accounts to tell the story, and he leads the reader to ask "Would I be able to do that?" These two works are recommended reading for young adults studying World War II, the Holocaust, and Jewish history.

Meltzer has been quoted as saying "the writer's voice must be heard on the pages of the book." Whatever he writes comes out of his own personality and experiences. In *Never to Forget*, Meltzer's voice provides insights to the experiences of those caught in the nightmare of the Holocaust.

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—Jane Claes

NIGHT

AUTHOR: Elie Wiesel (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Un di Velt hot geshvign*, 1956; *La Nuit*, 1958 (English translation, 1960)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Memoir

In what has been called the most widely read memoir of the Holocaust, Wiesel presents a searing account of the nightmarish year that resulted in the deaths of half his family members, when he and his father were imprisoned in five successive Nazi concentration camps.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Eliezer Wiesel (b. 1928), the author and narrator

Moishe the Beadle, the village madman and mystic

Shlomo Wiesel, Eliezer's father, a shopkeeper

Tzipora Wiesel, Eliezer's little sister

Mrs. Schächter, a fellow prisoner who has terrifying visions

Josef Mengele (1911-1979), the Nazi physician known as the Angel of Death

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

OVERVIEW

Elie Wiesel's *Night* made its preliminary appearance as a lengthy Yiddish manuscript, *Un di Velt hot geshvign* (literally "and the world remained silent"), published in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1956. Wiesel then distilled the essence of his harrowing experience into one slim volume written in French, the literary language he prefers, which appeared in 1958 under the title *La Nuit*. This book was translated into English in 1960 by Stella Rodway and again in 2006 by Marion Wiesel, the author's wife. The latter translated volume, which Americanizes some of the British phrasing and clarifies many minor details, also contains Wiesel's 1986 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech and a new author's preface that compares this final version with excerpts from the original Yiddish manuscript.

As a deeply religious youth in the village of Sighet, Transylvania, in

northern Romania, the young Eliezer Wiesel was intrigued by the mysticism of the Kabbala, although his father preferred that he study the Talmud and modern Hebrew. A friend, Moishe the Beadle, was eager to discuss the teachings of the Kabbala with the boy, but after Hungary annexed Transylvania, Moishe was deported because he was not a Hungarian citizen. He barely escaped the Nazi slaughter of Jews in Poland, returning to Sighet in 1942 to warn of executions and mass graves. Ironically, no one believed him.

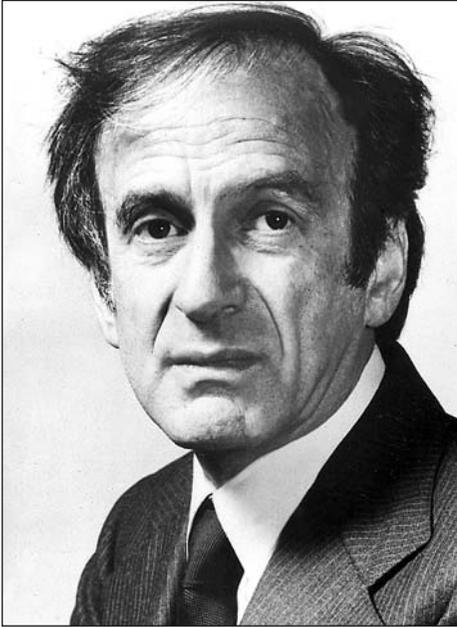
Hearing rumors of approaching Germans, Eliezer urged his father, Shlomo, to emigrate to safety in Palestine, but his father refused. The Nazis, at first well behaved and courteous, arrived in April, 1944, but soon the Jews of Sighet were isolated in a ghetto until they could be relocated. The Wiesels' former maid, a Christian, pleaded with the family to hide in her village, but again Shlomo refused, believing that his family must not be separated from their Jewish community. Neighbors, watching them pass toward the trains, waited to plunder their homes.

The Sighet Jews were transported to Poland in sealed railroad cattle cars. At the death camp of Birkenau, where Eliezer's mother and seven-year-old sister Tzipora died, father and son grasped the grim importance of staying together in order to keep each other alive. Warned to lie about their ages for safety, the boy became eighteen, not fifteen; the man became forty instead of fifty. They were examined and cleared for work by Dr. Josef Mengele, who sent more than 400,000 prisoners to their deaths at Auschwitz.

Innocence died in the camps. From the main camp of Auschwitz, the men were sent on to Buna as unskilled laborers. There a dentist checked Eliezer's mouth for gold crowns to be extracted and sold on the black market; there homosexual guards trafficked in boys. Food quickly became more important than freedom or even faith. No longer able to plead with or pray to a silent God, the boy refused to fast on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Eating became his rebellion; meanwhile, his father grew weaker with fasting. As if in a ghastly bildungsroman, the child of faith was journeying from mysticism to anger and doubt of God's justice.

In January, 1945, while in the infirmary for an infected foot, Eliezer was warned to escape before the next winnowing of prisoners, although he eventually chose to remain with his father. Their fear was that all sick patients would be killed, for the Nazi *Endlösung* (final solution) sought not only to exterminate the Jews but also to eliminate any memories of them. Hearing the sound of guns in the distance, prisoners waited in vain for the arrival of the Russian army, which could liberate them.

Ultimately, Buna was evacuated, and father and son were forced to join



Elie Wiesel. (© The Nobel Foundation)

in a death march to Gleiwitz (Gliwice) in the snow. Anyone who faltered was summarily shot. The prisoners were subsequently transported deep into Germany in roofless cattle cars. Numbed men ate snow off each other's backs to ease their desperate thirst; a son murdered his father for a crust of bread. After ten days and nights on the train, which stopped each day to throw out the dead, only twelve of the hundred prisoners survived the final transport to Buchenwald. Eliezer's father developed dysentery but was refused treatment and was brutally beaten when he begged for water. His son, too frightened

to help him, was forced to listen to his father's dying moans, just two and a half months before the American liberation of Buchenwald on April 11, 1945. Only later did the boy learn that his two older sisters had survived.

Even though Wiesel's memoir is written in the language of simplicity, it is not merely a list of atrocities; it is an almost poetic rendering of an unspeakable passage. One of the most powerful sections of the book contains this litany:

Never shall I forget that night . . . that turned my life into one long night. . . .
 Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky.

The heartbreaking image of little Tzipora, her blond hair carefully combed as she obediently walks to her death, haunts this book as it does the author's memory.

Night is Wiesel's overarching symbol of the Holocaust itself, illuminated only by flaming trenches and the voices of unheeded prophets: Moishe the Beadle; Mrs. Schächter, the mad prisoner on the first transport who screamed at her horrific vision of fires in the night that metamorphose into the fatal furnaces of Birkenau; even the dying Jew who confesses to Eliezer, "I have more faith in [Adolf] Hitler than in anyone else. He alone

has kept his promises . . . to the Jewish people”—that is, to annihilate them completely.

Initial confusion over whether *Night* was indeed a memoir, caused by discrepancies in Wiesel's name and age in the book, led some critics to believe it was a work of fiction. At first the book did not sell well because its subject was too gruesome. Strong feeling existed, especially in Europe, that one need not revisit the Holocaust but instead should move on. *Night's* major reputation developed later, particularly in the United States, not only as a literary work but also as a primary historical document that, as one reviewer wrote, forever changed Americans' understanding of the Holocaust.

Although Wiesel would become prolific in other genres, the Holocaust remained his great subject. He has confirmed that *Night* is his first and most important book and that all of his other work flows from his pivotal experiences during the Holocaust. As a survivor, he dedicated himself to bearing witness: "I was duty-bound to give meaning to my survival, to justify each moment of my life." His legacy, and that of *Night*, is as an irrefutable eyewitness to the millions of lives lost in the human and moral darkness of the Holocaust.

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—Joanne McCarthy

NIGHTFATHER

AUTHOR: Carl Friedman (1952-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Tralievader*, 1991 (English translation, 1994)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Autobiographical fiction; young adult literature

Not only are both the parents of the family in this novel victims of the Holocaust but their children also become victims because of the way the experience affects their parents' lives. Although the war is over, the Nazis still have power over the family because of their memories and fears.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Ephraim, a Dutch Jewish Holocaust survivor

Bette, Ephraim's wife, also a Holocaust survivor

The narrator, Ephraim and Bette's unnamed eight-year-old daughter

Max, Ephraim and Bette's older son

Simon, Ephraim and Bette's younger son

Sigismund and

Willi, guards at the concentration camp where Ephraim and Bette were imprisoned

OVERVIEW

It is a considerable challenge to write a book for young people about the horrific events of the Holocaust. Carl Friedman meets this challenge by writing from a child's perspective and setting her story years after World War II. She allows readers to distance themselves from the horrors of the Nazis' genocide by letting a survivor tell anecdotes about the events in a way even children can understand.

Like Friedman herself, the unnamed narrator of *Nightfather* is the child of two Holocaust survivors. Ephraim, the narrator's father, cannot stop talking about his experiences, whereas Bette, the child's mother, never talks about hers. (Friedman's own mother's name was Bette.) This dichotomy has been found to be very common among Holocaust survivors, some speaking often of what they went through and others completely avoiding the subject—very few, it seems, have taken a middle ground.

Ephraim relates everything in life to the Holocaust. For instance, he refuses his daughter permission to join the Brownies, because they, like the Boy and Girl Scouts, are too much like the Hitler Youth. He does not drive a German-made car, but rather a British-made one. Whenever they watch Westerns on television, Ephraim roots for the Native Americans. He equates the European American settlers in the stories with the Germans and their push for "living space" (*Lebensraum*), and he compares the U.S. Cavalry soldiers to the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS). When the narrator's brother Max dresses up for a dance lesson, Ephraim recalls the time the Polish concentration camp guard Sigismund the Flogger gave him a shave and dressed him in relatively decent clothes for a visit to a friend in the hospital.

Eventually, a story emerges from the anecdotes, which are told out of order. Bette and Ephraim were sweethearts before the war and living in the Netherlands, where she was studying ancient Greek. For a time during the Nazi occupation of their country, Ephraim was able to hide out from the Nazis. First, he stayed on a farm until a neighboring farmer betrayed him and some other Jews who lived there. Years later, he still has scars on his leg from jumping on the blades of a plow while fleeing from the SS. Then he lived behind a secret trapdoor in the attic of a house in a city. The people who hid him did not have much food, but they shared what they had. They also brought him books, which he read intently. He was reading *Job: The Story of Simple Man*, a 1930 German novel (published originally as *Hiob: Roman eines einfachen Mannesa*; English translation, 1931) by the Jewish author Joseph Roth, when he was finally caught. By coincidence, the first book he saw after he was released was a copy of the same edition of *Job*, and he still had it to show to his children. The previous owner must have been bleeding as he read it, because the copy was stained with blood.

Ephraim never names the concentration camp to which he was sent. It was not Bergen-Belsen, because Ephraim tells an anecdote about refusing to go there. He helped build a factory inside the camp, which was eventually bombed, so the camp could not have been Auschwitz. In the confusion following the bombing, Ephraim killed Willi the Hammer, a sadistic German guard who had beaten him on a regular basis.

Ephraim became a hustler for a time during his captivity, trading food and cigarettes until his supplier went to the gas chamber. On one occasion, he and his fellow prisoners stole dog food to supplement their meager diet. Of course, the guard dogs were better fed than the prisoners, but the dog food still made them sick. Sigismund the Flogger stole food from the prisoners to trade for cigarettes, which he then traded for better food and blankets for himself.

Ephraim made only a few friends in the camp. One of them was a former dentist with whom he played chess. Unfortunately, the dentist died of typhus. Another friend was a Gypsy who played the violin; this man was hanged after playing a joke on the Nazis. Then someone Ephraim knew from before the war went crazy and attempted to escape by jumping off a roof and flapping his arms to fly like a bird. The guards shot him before he even hit the ground. At some point during his imprisonment, Ephraim made himself a knife, but he never used it; he still had it when he told this story to his children.

In 1945, to escape the Soviet Union's advancing Red Army, the Germans forced Ephraim and his fellow prisoners to march to a camp further west. Fortunately, Ephraim survived this death march and landed in a Russian transit camp, where he got three square meals a day for the first time in years. He was later transferred to British and French camps before he was eventually reunited with Bette. Bette and Ephraim's situation was unusual, as many Holocaust survivors rushed into loveless marriages in an attempt to rebuild family life.

Ephraim's stories affect his children in unusual ways. The narrator hides her toys so that the SS cannot find them, and in school she draws pictures of scenes described by her father, such as a dead man hanging by the neck. When she tries to draw pixies like another girl, she puts one in a guard tower. When one of her teachers asks her what she wants to be when she grows up, she answers that she wants to be invisible, so the SS cannot catch her. She finds the zoo very disturbing, because it reminds her of her father's stories about the concentration camp. Max tries to freeze his feet by sticking them in the refrigerator and drinks rainwater from a puddle, because he feels he has to earn his father's love by imitating him. The narrator's other brother, Simon, carries his toothpaste around with him because his father has told him that toothpaste can serve as an emergency source of water. However, what most horrifies Simon, of all the anecdotes Ephraim has told them, is that toward the end of the war, the prisoners had no underwear.

The literal translation of *Tralievader* is "father behind bars." Ephraim has never truly been released from the camp, because he still feels the barbed wire and the presence of the guards. "I have camp," he would often say, as if it were a chronic illness. The condition manifests itself in nightmares and insomnia, and Ephraim cannot keep still for even short periods of time. Eventually he suffers from the tuberculosis he contracted in the camp, and he has to go to a sanatorium, where he feeds the birds. Although the family never attends religious services, Ephraim states that he still believes in God, saying that he would rather believe in a God he does not understand than in no God at all.

Nightfather was proclaimed a minor masterpiece by critics and reviewers in the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States when it was first published. It is often included on Holocaust reading lists for readers of all ages, not just young adults and children. It is also frequently cited in studies of the psychological problems of the children of Holocaust survivors. In 2004, Friedman received the E. du Perron Award for the promotion of tolerance among population groups.

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—Thomas R. Feller

NUMBER THE STARS

AUTHOR: Lois Lowry (1937-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1989

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Historical fiction; children's literature

In this novel, Annemarie Johansen gradually discovers the reason for a hurried trip from Copenhagen to the port city of Gilleleje and learns about the Danish resistance to the cruel actions of the Nazis in their attempt to "relocate" the Danish Jews, the value of true friendship, and the nature of bravery.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Annemarie Johansen, a ten-year-old girl who helps her friend Ellen and other Jews escape to Sweden

Ellen Rosen, a Jewish friend of Annemarie

Inge Johansen, Annemarie's mother, who knowingly assists the endangered Jews

Mr. Johansen, Annemarie's father

Uncle Henrik, Mrs. Johansen's fisherman brother

Kirsti Johansen, the youngest daughter in the Johansen family

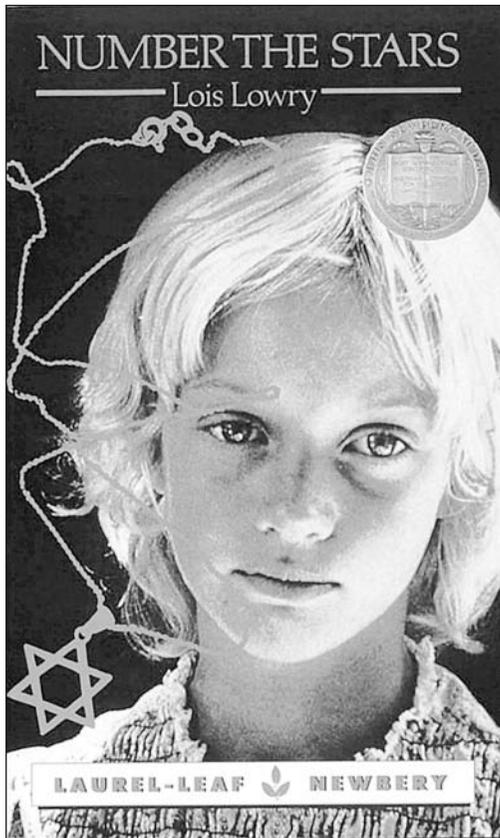
Lise Johansen, the oldest Johansen daughter, who is killed by the Germans

Peter Neilsen, the former fiancé of Lise Johansen

Mr. and Mrs. Rosen, Ellen's Jewish parents

OVERVIEW

This historical novel, set in German-occupied Denmark in 1943, includes in its account of two fictional Danish families—one Christian and one Jewish—many factual incidents that occurred as the Danish people successfully helped many of their Jewish fellow citizens escape to Sweden and thus avoid death and deprivation at the hands of their Nazi captors. In seventeen brief chapters, author Lois Lowry recounts the fear, secrecy, uncertainty, and subterfuge experienced by the Johansens as, in the spirit of all Danes during World War II, they protected and assisted the Rosens and other Jewish friends, demonstrating their individual courage, their innate



humaneness, and their unrelenting empathy for a persecuted people. Annemarie Johansen learns from her father the various stories about the bravery of their good King Christian X and the Danish Resistance, and she wonders whether she could be as courageous. The events over the next few days will tell.

For three years, German troops have occupied Denmark, but everyone becomes worried when two soldiers question Annemarie and her friend Ellen Rosen on the way home from school and when on the following day the Hirsches' shop is found locked by the Germans and the Hirsches are mysteriously gone. The Jewish community knows that it must

act when the rabbi tells them he has word the Nazis plan to "relocate" the Jews. The Rosens make hasty arrangements for Ellen to stay with the Johansens under the guise of being Annemarie's sister Lise, who had been killed, according to her parents, in an automobile accident. Annemarie understands the wisdom of such a ploy when German soldiers break into their house that night.

Annemarie has already learned firsthand to fear the abuse of the rude Germans, and she understands somewhat the dangers facing the Jews in Denmark. What is she to make, however, of the cryptic telephone call by her father and the sudden trip by Mrs. Johansen and the children, including Ellen, to the seaport village of Gilleleje to visit Uncle Henrik? She perceives that her parents and Uncle Henrik are lying to her. Piece by piece, the puzzle comes together. First, the wake for Great-Aunt Birte—who, Annemarie knows, never existed—is actually a gathering of Jews, the Rosens included, whom Uncle Henrik will take in his boat across the short distance to freedom in Sweden. Annemarie unwittingly plays a crucial role

in the success of the escape when she delivers to Uncle Henrik an important packet containing a handkerchief. She experiences a fearsome night and rough treatment by German soldiers who roughly search the contents of her decoy lunch basket.

Only after the success of the rescue of Jews that night does Annemarie discover fully the truth about coded messages, secret compartments on boats to hide escaping Jews, a special drug to block temporarily the sense of smell by German police dogs, and the valiant efforts of the Danish Resistance, which cost the lives of her sister Lise and her fiancé, Peter Neilsen. To her surprise, she learns that she, too, is courageous, for as Uncle Henrik explains, bravery is "not thinking about the dangers." Perhaps more important, she learns about the terrible injustice of racial prejudice.

Through one family's efforts to aid Jewish friends in their escape to free soil in Sweden, *Number the Stars* captures the heroic spirit of many compassionate Danes during World War II who risked their lives and property by defying Nazi persecution of their Jewish citizens. It is a story that young people need to know; it is a story that promotes a tolerance that all people need to possess. Beyond the particulars of historical fact, the novel addresses universal issues that maturing youths must resolve: the natures of social justice, racial prejudice, personal responsibility, and courage.

The story of King Christian X fearlessly riding alone through the streets of Copenhagen because, as her father said, all Denmark is his bodyguard greatly impresses Annemarie and introduces the central theme of the true definition of bravery, which she doubts that she has. Yet, without consciously deciding to be brave but instead employing unrecognized inner resources, she acts courageously when she snatches Ellen's necklace with the Star of David pendant and hides it in her hand while German soldiers search their bedroom and when later she races to Uncle Henrik's boat to deliver the handkerchief. The Jewish families also exhibit courage as they face the dangers and deprivations of the escape route. Bravery is thus defined dramatically as doing what is necessary without considering the possible costs. Its genesis is in a concern for people, a conviction of rightness, and a determination to do what is right.

The juxtaposition of the Nazis' hatred and persecution of blameless Jews with the Danes' caring protection of them is telling. Moreover, the interrelated themes of social justice, racial acceptance, and personal responsibility permeate the novel from the beginning and invade the story from several sources. The Johansen family is a microcosm of the Danish people, for they are unwilling to sit idly by when the Danish Jews are threatened. The Johansens risk disastrous reprisals by passing Ellen off as their Gentile daughter, by smuggling the Jews out of the country, and, in the case of Lise

and her fiancé, Peter, by participating in the Danish Resistance. They understand that one must go beyond mere intellectual agreement with justice and equality to the level of personal involvement, regardless of the cost. Annemarie demonstrates this spirit of identification with others in the closing line of the book: She says of Ellen's Star of David that until the return of the Rosens, "I'll wear it myself."

The final, symbolic action of Annemarie's decision to wear Ellen's necklace, undeniably striking in itself, is overshadowed by a similar symbol early in the novel when, to prevent Ellen's being detected as a Jew by three Nazi officers who burst into their bedroom, Annemarie jerks Ellen's necklace off and clasps it tightly in her hand. After the officers leave, she relaxes the clenched fingers and sees the Star of David imprinted in the palm of her hand. The implication is clear; she, a Gentile, bears the mark of a Jew. Lowry's point is just as clear: The answer to racial prejudice lies not in mere tolerance of other races but in active identification of oneself with them.

In some sense, *Number the Stars* is a suspense story. Annemarie is not always told the truth about what has happened and why certain actions and precautions are being taken. Thus, she (and the reader) is puzzled and must either figure out what is going on—and what is likely to happen—or be told later in the concluding chapter. She is told that the closed lips are for her safety; nevertheless, the lack of information makes for suspenseful reading.

Although she had already established herself as a noted author of children's books through many previous novels, especially those about Anastasia Krupnik, Lois Lowry reaches new heights of achievement with this historical novel, which won the coveted Newbery Medal in 1990. Her other well-loved books deal mostly with the perils of puberty, but the depth of content exhibited in *Number the Stars* and later in *The Giver* (1993), for which she won her second Newbery Medal, show her to be a writer of the first order.

For much of the historical information in the book, Lowry is indebted to her friend Annelise Plat, who was a child in Copenhagen during the German occupation. The story of the Danes' love for King Christian X, the blowing up of the small Danish navy to prevent the ships from falling into the hands of the Germans, the warning to the Jews by a high German official that allowed the smuggling of almost all of the seven thousand Danish Jews to Sweden, the hiding places on boats, the use of a special drug on handkerchiefs to deaden police dogs' sense of smell, the execution of young freedom fighters—all make their way into the fabric of this much-needed novel for youths.

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—Maverick Marvin Harris

O THE CHIMNEYS

AUTHOR: Nelly Sachs (1891-1970)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *In den Wohnungen des Todes*, 1946 (English translation, 1967)

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRES: Lyric poetry; verse drama

This poetry collection is rooted in the agony of the realization that six million Jews were put to death in concentration camps during World War II. Through this work, Sachs provides a voice for persecuted peoples of every time and place.

OVERVIEW

Nelly Sachs's *O the Chimneys* contains several collections of loosely connected free-verse poems, some preceded by quotations from the Old Testament, written to give voice to the horror and tragedy of mass murder. Each collection is set off by a thematic title, such as "In the Habitations of Death," "Eclipse of the Stars," or "And No One Knows How to Go On." As the series continues, titles indicate a progression toward tired, wistfully sad resignation and recognition that profound tragedy can never be explained. Representative titles are "Death Still Celebrates Life" and "Glowing Enigmas I, II, and III." Within the larger units, individual poems, usually eighteen or twenty in each group, carry descriptive titles indicating their content. Also included in the book is the verse drama *Eli: A Mystery Play of the Sufferings of Israel*, which was first produced in 1962.

The collection, which begins with the title poem "O the chimneys," includes such thematic designations as "O the night of the weeping children," "Even the old men's last breath," "A dead child speaks," and "Chorus of the Unborn." The poem "O the night of the weeping children," for example, is divided into two parts deriving their effectiveness from paradox and contrast. The poet speaks of the night, but one in which sleep is impossible, and of nursemaids who do not foster life but sow death, suckling the children on panic instead of mother's milk. In the second half of the poem, the author uses such concrete items as "the doll with cheeks derouged by kisses" and a stuffed toy to recall the happier, innocent time that she terms "yesterday," but the poem ends with abandoned toys and

the image of nightgowns blown over children's hair "that no one will comb again." Sentimental evocations are overpowered by death in this poem, with that word reiterated three times in the space of nineteen lines.

The free rhythms contain cadenced lines and strophes of uneven length that are entirely unrhymed. They customarily contain rhetorical devices, such as repetition, parallelism, calls to an unseen force, rhetorical questions, and other technical devices from the tradition of speech, debate, or drama; likewise, the position of words, especially at beginnings and ends of lines or verses, carries significant weight.

Sachs's poems are characterized by rich poetic imagery; by echoes of biblical cadences; by such classical evocations as references to oracles or to Mars, the ancient god of war; by animal references, as to wolves, calves, dragonflies, various kinds of birds, and butterflies (the latter two often symbolic of the soul); by a preponderance of references to astronomical entities, such as stars, the sun, constellations, and the heavens in general; by botanical references, as to dandelions, seeds, or bindweed; and by multiple references to images having to do with time, such as clocks ("the clock face of ages"), dust, stones, and the sands of time. Family relationships also play a significant symbolic role in the work of this compassionate and often-anguished poet. The critic Harry Zohn has drawn attention to Sachs's use of images drawn from Jewish mysticism.

Few women achieved fame in German literary history before the late twentieth century. In 1966, Sachs shared the Nobel Prize in Literature, specifically for her poetry, with the Israeli writer S. Y. Agnon. Her importance in the German lyric tradition is limited, although she is a significant voice for the Jewish experience in World War II Germany and the immediate postwar years.

Eli: A Mystery Play of the Sufferings of Israel is fairly unknown in the twentieth century German dramatic tradition. Sachs wrote it in the space



Nelly Sachs. (© The Nobel Foundation)

of a few nights in 1943 after receiving news of the atrocities in Nazi Europe. This verse drama contains a series of seventeen scenes but no formal acts, a large catalog of anonymous characters, variously described disembodied voices, and four named characters. It features dream dialogue, fragmented memories or flashbacks to the destruction of the Polish village in which it takes place, and the music, dance, mysticism, and miracles expected in a mystery play. Like her poetry, it is replete with images of building and tearing down, death (including graves, blood, and decay), animals, plants, seeds, clothing, family relationships, stars, time, Jewish tradition, isolation, retribution, and rebirth.

Similar in form to plays of the expressionist period in literature (1910-1925) and to post-World War II dramas of such writers as Wolfgang Borchert, as well as to traditional religious drama, *Eli* retells the death of an innocent child and the tracking of his murderer after the war by a Jewish seer. Parallel to this content is the rebuilding of the Polish village on the site and memories of its destruction during the war. In both instances, the task, built on pain and actuated by the necessities of the time, is successful, thus redressing injury, reestablishing the balance in society, and reaffirming a traditional moral order.

The poetry collections subsumed under the title *O the Chimneys* are dedicated to "my dead brothers and sisters"; they give voice to the agony of the realization that six million Jews were put to death in concentration camps during World War II. The poems make Nelly Sachs, more than other lyric writers, a poet of the Holocaust and a voice for persecuted peoples of every time and place. The vivid evocation of the chimneys in the death camps, whose smoke is the bodies of her fellow Jews, is the most poignant image among the many pictures woven into and unifying the poetry of this collection. An identification with her Jewish compatriots informs Sachs's poetry, even though she wrote from exile while they suffered in a world either indifferent to their martyrdom or unable to save them. This poetry illustrates significant ways in which all humanity, if not the very universe itself, participates in the infliction of suffering as well as in the redemption of a martyred group.

Indeed, despite the mute witness of the heavens, the depictions of death, separation, bereavement, shoes left behind as symbols of truncated hopes, and orphaned survivors struggling to rebuild their lives, this poetry bespeaks the necessity for striving toward transformation. It envisions rebirth and a place in the world for every group of people, however immutably the present time has been transformed by the flagrant example of genocide. For example, the poem "Whither o whither," from the cycle "Eclipse of the Stars" uses a series of short, mournfully elegiac lines, seventeen in

all, to depict a new process of evolution taking place out of the "chrysalis" of sorrow and longing. This evolution results in the rebirth of the soul, which will emerge from "under the ice of the death mask." Such anthropological and biological, but hopeful, depictions are typical of Sachs's tone and imagery. Peter Demetz terms such poems "dirges and psalms," which captures their often paradoxical quality as well as their derivation from poetic forms typically found in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the faith implied in the poetry of Sachs is touching in its instinctiveness and its inaccessibility to reason. As Demetz has observed, the poet suggests that "theological questions do not require definite answers."

The verse play *Eli* shares with the poetry a witness to the senseless death of innocent people, particularly children, and attempts to reconcile the irrevocable past with a future built on hope as well as memories. The flashbacks to wartime events are balanced by a community effort to rebuild this village on the very site of its previous destruction. The role played by Michael is central; he is at once a mysterious folk hero of the Jewish faith, a fellow villager and sufferer, the agent for retribution, and the symbol of hopeful change. The fact that he can reduce the former Nazi soldier to his constitutive atoms and is then taken up into heaven while still remaining a very human Jew is immensely positive. One is left with the certainty of a society rebuilt along traditional lines under the eye of a beneficent deity who has seen the anguish of the people and redressed their suffering.

O the Chimneys does not address women's issues alone, but rather the shared martyrdom of all humans. There are, however, tragic aspects of suffering, death, and rebirth that pertain specifically to women, such as intense feelings of loss for children and husbands. The poem titles "Princesses of sadness" and "Mouth suckling on death" are indicative of this subject. The poems "O sister" and "Forgive me my sisters" indicate another common theme: the shared feelings of women, who are united in a sisterhood of support in suffering. The play *Eli* also contains these ideas. Likewise, both the poetry, as in the collection "Flight and Metamorphosis," and the drama contain encouragement specifically for women to go beyond losses of the past into a future that women are instrumental in shaping because of their procreative powers, understood both literally and figuratively.

The Jewish culture of the earlier part of the twentieth century was strongly patriarchal, as is witnessed by the leading roles played exclusively by men in the poetry and the drama. Even such traditionally female concepts in Western thought as the earth and angels are masculine in Sachs's writing—"Earth, old man of the planets" or Michael in the play.

The roles ascribed to women are the traditional ones of procreation, support for children and male authority figures, baking, washing, and (all too often) mourning.

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—Erlis Glass-Wickersham

ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF DESTRUCTION

AUTHOR: W. G. Sebald (1944-2001)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, 1999 (English translation, 2003)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Current affairs; history

Assessing the destruction visited on Germany during World War II, German literary scholar and novelist Sebald probes the silence, repression, evasion, and forgetting that he finds characteristic of German responses to the nation's largely self-inflicted Nazi wounds.

OVERVIEW

W. G. Sebald loved photography, but he was deeply troubled by the contrasting pictures he reproduced in "Air War and Literature," the chapter that is both the opening and the centerpiece of his notable book *On the Natural History of Destruction*. One postcard pairing shows the German city of Frankfurt am Main *Gestern* (yesterday) and *Heute* (today). Although the same cityscape is depicted, the scenes are utterly different. One photograph, dated 1947, shows a bombed and ruined city; the other, dated 1997, portrays glistening skyscrapers that seemingly bear no witness to the wasteland that existed fifty years earlier.

Sebald understands that Frankfurt's ruins in 1947 required the kind of rebuilding that directed attention toward the future. He acknowledges that the contrasting photographs reveal an impressive postwar reconstruction. His concern, however, is that the reconstruction also produced what he calls "a second liquidation in successive phases of the nation's own past history." Rebuilding, which was not confined to bricks and mortar but included personal and national identities, went hand in hand with evasion of the past.

That burial included more than the removal of physical debris; it involved repressing, if not forgetting, what Germans had experienced and done during the Third Reich. Thus, there is irony in the title that Sebald gave this book. Destruction may have a "natural history," for there is a

logic in its unfolding. In Sebald's view, however, the postwar reinvention of German life, necessary though it has been, brought with it silence, problematic rationalization, and dishonesty that remain as harmful as they were understandable. Although German reluctance to confront—or, in some cases, to keep confronting—the Nazi past may be “natural,” Sebald writes to resist that tendency. More pathologist than therapist, he offers no easy cure for the afflictions he studies, but his book thoughtfully identifies the conditions—geographical, psychological, spiritual—in which they are embedded.

While acknowledging that he cannot deal with all the subject's complexities, Sebald ensures that his mapping is not a one-way indictment that simply faults Germany for failing to come to terms with its Nazi past. On the contrary, Sebald concentrates specifically on a topic that has received less attention than many other aspects of World War II: the massive Allied bombing attacks on German cities and the immense death and suffering that those raids inflicted on German civilians and families. Sebald begins by observing that it is scarcely possible to visualize the destruction of German cities in the war's last years, nor can imagination fathom the hideous maiming and death that firestorm bombing produced in Cologne, Hamburg, Dresden, and many other large population centers.

During the bombing, temperatures soared to one thousand degrees as flames rose two thousand meters into the sky. Asphalt melted; even canals blazed. Air-raid shelters became ovens that roasted people to death. Filled with rats, flies, and the rotting flesh on which they feasted, metropolis became necropolis. Sebald's statistics may not produce sympathy, let alone forgiveness, for citizens of Nazi Germany, who for the most part were willing followers of Adolf Hitler, but his data compel attention, and his concise, matter-of-fact descriptions merit heartache for the wasting of human life that they encompass. According to Sebald, for example, a million tons of British bombs alone fell on Germany. Air raids leveled scores of cities, destroyed more than three million homes, and left 7.5 million people homeless. The attacks took the lives of 600,000 German civilians. The destruction's scale, writes Sebald, was “without historical precedent.”

Sebald's account of the bombing of Germany took shape originally as a series of lectures that he delivered in Zurich, Switzerland, in the autumn of 1997. His commitment to write on the topic grew from links between his life and the air war. Although those links, he indicates, have been “entirely insignificant in themselves, they have nonetheless haunted my mind.” Born “on the northern outskirts of the Alps” in rural Germany, Sebald was only a year old when the war ended. As time passed, he became increasingly gripped by the fact that “at the time, when I was lying in my bassinet

on the balcony . . . and looking up at the pale blue sky, there was a pall of smoke in the air all over Europe, over the rearguard actions in the east and west, over the ruins of the German cities, over the camps where untold numbers of people were burnt."

He also realized that he had grown up with the absence of reflection by German writers about "the monstrous events in the background of my own life." Furthermore, as he spent his scholarly life in eastern England, Sebald knew that his British home stood near one of the seventy airfields that had been departure points for the bombing runs on his native Germany. The silence of those places—"most were abandoned after the war"—added to his puzzlement.

Such experiences, the author explains, "impelled me to go at least a little way into the question of why German writers would not or could not describe the destruction of the German cities as millions experienced it." His analysis focuses primarily on four factors, the first pointing back to the bombing descriptions with which his book begins. The bombing raids were catastrophic. Nazi Germany's governmental agencies were completely untrustworthy sources for truth about the devastation, and eyewitness accounts from reliable sources were not easily available at the time.

Stunned and traumatized, most survivors—many of them fleeing refugees "vacillating between a hysterical will to survive and leaden apathy"—were in no condition to write, although some diarists, Friedrich Reck and Victor Klemperer prominent among them, tried their best to describe as much as the limitations of information and language permitted. Noting that "the need to know was at odds with a desire to close down the senses," Sebald sums up the situation by adding, "on the one hand, large quantities of disinformation were circulating; on the other, there were true stories that exceeded anyone's capacity to grasp them."

Sebald's analysis helps to show why immediately written eyewitness accounts about this chapter of German history are scarce. These gaps, moreover, do not strike him as the most decisive, because he believes that the bombing attacks must have paralyzed clear thinking among those who narrowly escaped them. Even when eyewitness accounts exist, Sebald asserts, they have "only qualified value"; they need to be supplemented by careful historical study and what he calls synoptic perspectives. The gaps in these latter areas are what trouble him most. While Sebald continues to understand how natural it is that Germans have not accurately written the full story of their own destruction, his voice becomes more critical as he explores three more reasons for that outcome.

To grasp the significance of these three factors—humiliation, moral discrediting, and redefinition of identity—it is helpful to see more of what

Sebald means by the natural history of destruction. Where, he asks, should such a history begin? Part of the answer is found in the abandoned British airfields. At first, the bombing of German cities took place because the Western Allies needed to bring the war home to Germany. The strategy was to shatter German home-front morale, particularly among industrial workers. It remains arguable whether that strategy worked as well as expected, but as the bombing campaign ramped up, it took on a life of its own. The destruction of German cities, as Sebald sees it, became both the means to end the war and an end in itself. In that sense, the bombing was less strategic than total. The devastation escalated accordingly. If the immediate impact for Germans caught in the catastrophic raids was traumatizing horror, the aftermath brought humiliation, which is the second factor that Sebald identifies in his account of German inability or unwillingness to write about the devastation.

On February 18, 1943, with the tides of war already turned decisively against the Third Reich, Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister, urged the German people to devote themselves to "total war." Nazi Germany fought on for more than two years, but when unconditional surrender came in early May, 1945, the German price paid for Nazism was evident. Sebald underscores "the sense of unparalleled national humiliation felt by millions." Nazi ideology had proclaimed the German people to be superior in every way. There was some German dissent from those views, but it was insufficient to displace the welcome that Germans gave them. Crushing military defeat turned those claims to rubble. The ruins were uninhabitable, psychologically and spiritually, if not physically. Even when there were retrospective literary glances that focused on them, the looking, says Sebald, was often an evasive "looking away at the same time."

The silence and evasion caused by humiliating defeat might have been more easily broken if the majority of Germans—many writers among them—had been less loyal to the Third Reich, "a society," says Sebald, "that was morally almost entirely discredited." Loyalty to a morally discredited regime could not be defended. One result, Sebald believes, is that for many Germans the horror of the Nazi period, including the bombing raids, became "taboo like a shameful family secret." Germans did not even debate openly whether the fire bombings were justified ethically, although in light of the fact that the nation "had murdered and worked to death millions of people in its camps," there were some Germans who "regarded the great firestorms as a just punishment, even an act of retribution on the part of a higher power with which there could be no dispute."

A sense of shame, however, was by no means the only explanation for the lack of a full and honest reckoning with the past. Sebald is most searing

when he deals with writers who found that “the redefinition of their idea of themselves after 1945 was a more urgent business than depiction of the real conditions surrounding them.” Sebald’s essay on the German novelist Alfred Andersch epitomizes what he takes to be a widespread phenomenon. Andersch’s fiction and self-estimate highlighted the concept of *innere Emigration* (inner emigration). Accepting an ambiguous identity, “inner emigrants” were those Germans who rejected National Socialism or claimed they did but chose not to leave Nazi Germany. Sebald measures Andersch’s autobiographical fiction and postwar self-characterization against his actual life during the Third Reich. At best, Sebald concludes, Andersch turned out to be a compromised “inner emigrant,” for he benefited from National Socialism more than he resisted it. What Sebald ironically calls “tactful omissions and other revisions” in Andersch’s writing reflected postwar German tendencies for self-reinvention that did little to encourage openness and honesty about Germany’s Nazi past.

In contrast to Andersch and those like him, Sebald ends his book with two essays that pay tribute to writers who are his soul mates. In German writings and radio talks, Jean Améry, an Austrian Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, spoke profoundly and honestly about the resentment he felt because Germans under Hitler had destroyed what Améry called trust in the world. In the German Jewish author and artist Peter Weiss, Sebald finds a voice insistent on remembering the past with passion, and persistence, which can make possible the recovery that only remorse can bring. At the end of this courageous book, Sebald’s call for German honesty about the Nazi past comes full circle. He wants modern Germans to be able to know about and grieve openly over the destruction brought by the Allied bombing raids, but Sebald concludes that the price for release from silence and repression must include remorseful awareness that Germans themselves “provoked the annihilation of the cities in which we once lived.”

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—John K. Roth

OPEN CLOSED OPEN

POEMS

AUTHOR: Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Patuach Sagur Patuach*, 1998 (English translation, 2000)

GENRE: Poetry

SUBGENRES: Lyric poetry; meditation

In this collection, Amichai treats a variety of themes, including reflections on life and death, the Holocaust, Israel's recent past, love, and his own life experiences.

OVERVIEW

One of Israel's greatest modern poets, Yehuda Amichai, who died in September, 2000, at the age of seventy-six, presents a series of poems in *Open Closed Open* that are among his best accomplishments in verse. They are written in free verse with very strong rhythms and striking metaphors and similes. The title of the collection derives from a rabbinic tale describing the fetus in its mother's womb, when its mouth is closed and its navel is open, but at birth the reverse is true. In one of the first poems in the collection, "I Wasn't One of the Six Million: And What Is My Life Span? Open Closed Open," Amichai writes:

... Before we are born, everything is open
in the universe without us. For as long as we live, everything is closed
within us. And when we die, everything is open again.
Open closed open. That's all we are.

In the rest of the poem and in the poems that follow, Amichai tries to open himself and his world to readers, and he very largely succeeds. Despite a few cryptic utterances, his poetry is lucid and powerful, studded with arresting imagery and allusions that help the reader visualize and understand what he is driving at. He is also a master of irony, as the title of his next poem, "I Foretell the Days of Yore," suggests. In this poem he proclaims that he is "a prophet of what has already been." He goes on to describe the future:

. . . As when a man sees a woman with a beautiful body
 walking before him in the street
 and looks after her with desire, but she doesn't turn
 to look back, just smooths her skirt a little,
 pulls her blouse tight, fixes the back of her hair, then
 without turning toward the man's gaze
 quickens her step. That's
 what the future is like.

It is attractive, but elusive and mysterious. Only the past can be known. Life is "a series of rehearsals/ for the real show." Extending the metaphor, Amichai says that a rehearsal still allows for changes up until "the real show." Then there is no changing, and "the show closes right after opening night."

Though not conventionally religious in an orthodox sense, Amichai nevertheless is well versed in the Bible and in Jewish tradition. For example, in "The Bible and You, the Bible and You, and Other Midrashim" (Midrashim are commentaries on the Bible and stories), he writes about Gideon choosing his army at the Spring of Harod, Moses, Abraham and his sons, King Saul, Ruth, and others. His account of Abraham and his sons is especially interesting, since Amichai says Abraham had three sons, not two: Yishma-El [Ishmael], "God will hear"; Yitzhak [Isaac], "he will laugh"; and Yivkeh, "he will cry." The youngest is the son no one has ever heard of. He was the one Abraham loved best, and the one Abraham sacrificed; he was the ram. At the end of this section of the poem, Amichai writes: "Yishma-El never heard from God again,/ Yitzhak never laughed again,/ Sarah laughed only once, then laughed no more."

God is very much a presence in these poems, as in "Gods Change, Prayers Are Here to Stay." Here Amichai describes the kind of god he wants and the kind he finds:

I want a god who is like a door that opens out, not in,
 but God is like a revolving door, which turns, turns on its hinges
 in and out, whirling and turning
 without a beginning, without an end.

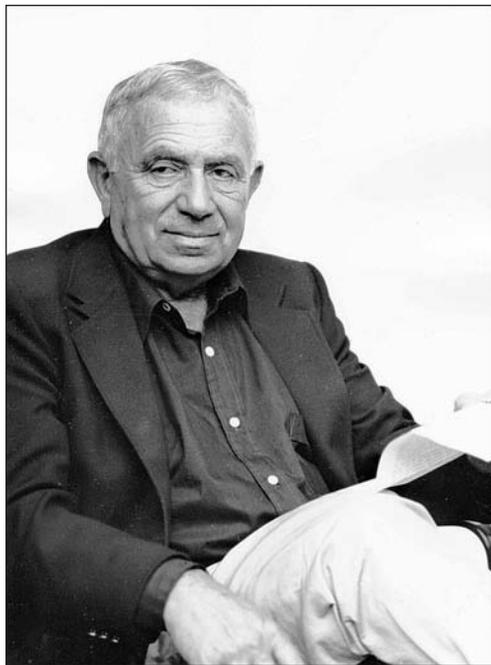
In Amichai's view, prayer preceded God, created God, and paradoxically only then God created human beings, who create prayers. God is now absent, but when he "packed up and left the country, He left the Torah/ with the Jews. They have been looking for Him ever since." Jews read the Torah every week aloud to God, "like Scheherazade who told stories to save her life." By the time Simchat Torah rolls around (the end of the cycle of read-

ing Torah, the last of the High Holy Days), "God forgets and they can begin again." God's love for the Jewish people, His people, is "an upside-down love": first "crude and physical," creating miracles, plagues, and commandments; then "more emotion, more soul/ but no body, an unrequited ever-longing love/ for an invisible god in the high heavens. A hopeless love."

In this poem Amichai recalls his own religious upbringing, attending synagogue services, remembering what it felt like to draw out his tallith (prayer shawl) from its velvet bag, putting it on with its striped decoration ("Stripes come from infinity and to infinity they go,/ like airport runways where angels land and take off"), beating his chest on Rosh Hashanah during the days of penitence, remembering the women behind the lace curtain that separates them from the men, singing the welcome to the Sabbath Bride on Friday nights, the procession of the Torah scroll on Saturday mornings. Amichai juxtaposes against these memories the recollection of Auschwitz, and compares the smoke rising from the crematoria to the smoke rising from the Sistine Chapel when a new pope is elected. For him, after Auschwitz there is no theology, or rather a new theology:

the Jews who died in the Shoah
have now come to be like their God,
who has no likeness of a body and has no body.
They have no likeness of a body and they have no body.

Amichai's parents emigrated from Germany to Israel in 1936, when Yehuda was twelve years old; hence, they escaped the Holocaust and died in Israel. In "My Parents' Lodging Place," Amichai describes passing their resting place in a cemetery in Jerusalem. He remembers how they brought him up—their warnings and exhortations, yelling and screaming, but also their love and care. His mother, he says, was a prophet, but his father was "God and didn't know it." He taught him the commandments and added two to the ten: "Thou shalt not change" and "Thou shalt change." In a poem later in the collection, "My Son Was Drafted," Amichai writes about how he feels toward his own son and echoes the words of his father. He gives him advice, as from an old soldier (Amichai was a veteran of Israel's wars), about drinking a lot of water on a hot day, and on night patrol filling his canteen to the brim so that it does not make sloshing sounds and give him away to the enemy. He follows up by saying that is also how his soul should be in his body, "large and full and silent," though when he makes love he can make all the noise he wants. His daughter is also drafted. When his son and daughter are both asleep at home in the house near the wall of



Yehuda Amichai. (Ullstein Bild/The Granger Collection, New York)

the Old City of Jerusalem, Amichai considers that “a father is an illusion, just like the wall./ Neither one can protect. Can only love, and worry.”

Love looms large in Amichai’s poetry, love of all kinds. In “The Language of Love and Tea with Roasted Almonds,” he writes that one has to say “I love you” seven times, just as religious Jews say “The Lord is God” seven times at the end of the Yom Kippur service. Lovers “leave fingerprints on each other,” “surrender to each other,” know each other intimately, gain a sense of the infinite. He not only describes his own feelings of love but also writes

about the way women love. He compares the faces of women in love to the face of the Virgin Mary in the pietà, women who remember what has not happened yet, “pain and joy yoked together.” He also compares women in love to “our mother Sarah” as she was in Egypt when Abraham had to call her his sister, and to Rachel and Leah making love, and to Rebecca, Isaac’s wife. He ends with a wry comment:

And every loving woman is like Rebecca at the well, saying
“Drink, and thy camels also.” But in our day Rebecca says:
“The towels are on the top shelf in the white closet
across from the front door.”

Some of the most moving poetry in this collection are Amichai’s verses about himself as he grows old and remembers the past, as in “In My Life, on My Life.” He thinks of the days of his life as chess pieces (all his life he has played chess, he says): “good and bad, good and bad—I and me,/ I and he, war and love, hope and despair,/ black pieces and white.” Now all the pieces are jumbled together, and the chessboard has no squares. The game is calm and has no end and no winners or losers. He is calm and lis-

tens to the “hollow rules/ clang in the wind.” He recalls praying as a child, the aunts who used to tickle him as a child, his return visits to the sands of Ashdod where he once fought for Israel. He compares himself to “a man who holds his wrist up/ to catch a glimpse of Time, even when he isn’t wearing a watch.” He longs for peace—not in death but in this life. He does not want to fulfill his parents’ prophecy that “life is war.” He says: “I, may I rest in peace—I, who am still living, say/ May I have peace in the rest of my life./ I want peace right now while I’m still alive.” It is a prayer or a wish that many Israelis share.

In “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Why Jerusalem?” Amichai writes about the place where he lived many years. As anyone who has visited that city knows, it is a place of fascination, and Amichai conveys its myriad aspects. For him, Jerusalem is “like an Atlantis that sank into the sea,” from whose bottom people “dredge up ruined walls/ and fragments of faiths, like rust-covered vessels from sunken/ prophecy ships.” Along with ancient memories are young ones, too, “a love-memory from last night, see-through memories/ quick as glamor fish caught in a net, thrashing and splashing.” His use of metaphor and simile is often like Walt Whitman’s—his verse rhythms and cadences, too, as in these lines from section 20:

I saw the faces of bride and groom under the wedding canopy and almost
rejoiced. When David lay with Bathsheba I was the voyeur,
I happened to be there on the roof fixing the pipes, taking down a flag.
With my own eyes I saw the Chanukah miracle in the Temple,
I saw General Allenby entering Jaffa Gate,
I saw God.

The lines, like many of Whitman’s, also convey the sense of a universal “I” observing, witnessing all that has happened in this city of many happenings.

One of the last poems in *Open Closed Open*, “Autumn, Love, Commercials,” returns to the theme of love and in its last section expresses much of what Amichai has been saying throughout his collection:

For love must be spoken, not whispered, that it may be
seen and heard. It must be without camouflage,
conspicuous, noisy, like a raucous laugh.
It must be a kitschy commercial for “Be fruitful and multiply.”

Amichai’s poems are like the love he proclaims; though hardly “kitschy” and only sometimes “noisy,” they are “without camouflage,” and they must be seen and heard.

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—Jay L. Halio

ORDINARY MEN

RESERVE POLICE BATTALION 101 AND THE FINAL SOLUTION IN POLAND

AUTHOR: Christopher R. Browning (1944-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1992

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; psychology

Browning explores the actions of the German policemen in Reserve Police Battalion 101, which participated in Jewish deportations and executions in Poland. By examining the factors that caused or influenced the behaviors of individuals, the author sheds light on the motivations that made these “ordinary men” become murderers.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Wilhelm Trapp (1889-1948), the German who commanded Reserve Police Battalion 101

Odilo Globocnik (1904-1945), the higher Schutzstaffel (SS) and police leader for the Lublin district of German-occupied Poland

OVERVIEW

Inherent in Holocaust studies are two key questions: How widespread was the guilt? What caused the perpetrators to commit such acts? Christopher R. Browning’s *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* introduces the argument that psychological and social factors were more potent instigators than ideology, fear of legal consequences, or ethical constraints. Browning’s conclusions are based on the postwar files assembled for the war crimes trials of members of Reserve Police Battalion 101. This unit, which participated in roundups and massacres of Jews in occupied Poland, was unique in that initially its commander offered to exempt those members with moral qualms from participating in the killing. This circumstance stripped away the often-used excuse of coercion and placed guilt squarely on individuals.

It is significant that Reserve Police Battalion 101 was not an ideological unit—it included few Nazi Party members, and most of the personnel

were overage men seeking draft exemptions. Many came from Hamburg, a city with strong socialist, not Nazi, leanings. Most members of the unit survived the war and were later interrogated for trials, so Browning's conclusions are largely based on the words of the perpetrators, not the testimony of their victims. The options open to these men and their subsequent actions thus become a unique laboratory for identifying the real motivations of those whose actions turned the political ideologies of racism and genocide into realities.

During the years following World War I, Germany raised a number of armed police battalions for paramilitary duties. This was one surreptitious method used to create an armed reserve that could expand and reinforce the military during wartime. Once World War II began, many noncommissioned and junior officers were culled from police battalions and utilized as cadres for the creation of new units. Reserve Police Battalion 101 was one such unit. Its personnel included many who were too old or physically unsuitable for the military draft but who were sufficiently able to perform occupation duties. Such units were transferred to newly conquered areas such as Poland and given the responsibilities of disarming soldiers, arresting lawbreakers, and ensuring order. This freed regular troops for use elsewhere, and maintenance of public order fell within the ambit of police responsibilities.

The reserve police battalions were hastily incorporated into the Third Reich's racial plans of conquest and colonization. Newly conquered areas of Poland and Russia were to be resettled with people of German ancestry. To accomplish this, the Germans removed the current residents either by force or through harsh policies such as severe rationing or "resettlement." The Jews were the first group removed, and in late 1939 many were forcibly moved into either large or small ghettos scattered throughout Poland. Reserve Police Battalion 101 participated in deportations throughout 1940. By 1942, German policy concerning the Jews had evolved from concentration to annihilation. With German soldiers busy at the front and the Schutzstaffel (SS) too dispersed, the elimination of Jews in these territories required more personnel, so reserve police battalions were pressed into service and became essential cogs in the machinery of the Holocaust.

The "final solution"—deportation of Jews from ghettos to specially constructed annihilation camps such as Auschwitz and the killing of the survivors through hard labor—coincided with the promotion of Odilo Globocnik as the higher SS and police leader for the Lublin district of German-occupied Poland. One unit under Globocnik was Reserve Police Battalion 101. On July 12, 1942, this battalion was ordered to terminate the ghetto in the small hamlet of Józefów. First the Jews were to be separated into two

groups: “work Jews,” who were to be sent to Lublin, and “nonproductive Jews”—women, children, the aged, and the infirm—who were to be taken into the nearby forest and shot.

This was the battalion’s first massacre, and in his preaction harangue the unit’s commander, a distraught Major Wilhelm Trapp, explained that the orders were distasteful, but given that Germany was at war, orders had to be obeyed. He offered to let those who were unwilling to kill be excused from the shooting, but ultimately only a few men—less than 20 percent of the battalion—opted to take advantage of Trapp’s offer. Even these remained involved in the massacre, resupplying the shooters or guarding the area. Throughout the following months, battalion members served frequently as perimeter guards and, infrequently, as shooters in other massacres and forest sweeps for escaped Jews. Throughout, only about 10 to 20 percent of the men actively sought to avoid killing; the rest continued to participate in the shootings.

The postwar interrogators recorded many excuses offered by members of the battalion for their murderous activities. Some quoted Major Trapp’s insistence that orders given during wartime were paramount, but orders to the unit did not absolve individuals from making the personal decision to shoot rather than shelter behind Trapp’s offer of exemption. To shed light on how these men individually decided to become murderers, Browning turns to intergroup dynamics and individual psychology.

He focuses on two famous psychological studies, the 1963 Yale University “Milgram experiment” and the 1971 “Stanford prison experiment.” The first, run by psychologist Stanley Milgram, examined student subjects’ willingness to inflict pain on other subjects as directed by an authority figure. The second, run by Philip Zimbardo, used student volunteers’ role-playing as guards and prisoners to illuminate how individuals’ behaviors are driven by the expectations associated with social roles. In both studies, individuals allowed authorities or expectations to drive their actions.

Browning also discusses how soldiers’ identification with a unit often results in a hesitancy to risk their standing in that unit by looking “too weak” or by appearing to “not carry their own weight.” He argues that the confluence of these factors was so strong that most of the battalion chose to shoot rather than to assuage their moral objections by accepting Major Trapp’s offer. In a more general sense, Browning concludes his book with the sobering thought that in any circumstance of atrocity, these same factors can turn “ordinary men” into killers.

Ordinary Men was well received, and it also became the focal point of many arguments about the factors that undergirded German atrocities. To a degree, Browning merely amplifies the conclusions of Omer Bartov’s

groundbreaking 1985 work *The Eastern Front, 1941-45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*. Bartov dissects the records of three German divisions that fought in Russia and finds that although common German soldiers committed atrocities that might have been spurred by the violence and deprivation found at the front, these atrocities were abetted and condoned by Nazi indoctrination and by junior officers who had bought into Nazi racial theories. By using the records of these units, Bartov is able to rebut common postwar claims that atrocities were committed only by the SS and by small numbers of Nazi soldiers and thus introduces the idea of widespread individual guilt by many soldiers that was driven by a Nazi philosophy that was in turn reaffirmed by junior officers. *Ordinary Men* expands this theme by looking at Holocaust-related atrocities and focuses on the individual responsibility—and guilt—of the shooters.

The publication of *Ordinary Men* spurred debate concerning individual guilt versus national guilt. In 1996, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* was published. Goldhagen looks at Nazi anti-Semitic policies and actions, including the Józefów massacre, and argues that the Holocaust was a uniquely German phenomenon based on a special and long-standing German anti-Semitism. Much of this is a refutation of Browning's focus on the individual, and Goldhagen's book received very mixed reviews. Many Holocaust and Third Reich scholars have dismissed Goldhagen as too simplistic and tendentious. Goldhagen seems, moreover, to replace the broad-brush Nazi condemnations of "all" Jews' greed and evil intentions with an equally broad-brush view of "all" Germans' anti-Semitism. In contrast, Browning's conclusions remain some of the most cogent and important tools for historians to use in explaining why Adolf Hitler's virulent anti-Semitism was converted into the bloody and horrific reality of the Holocaust.

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—Kevin B. Reid

THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM

AUTHOR: Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1951

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Arendt examines the roots of Hitlerian totalitarianism—which she finds in anti-Semitism and imperialism—and then goes on to extrapolate from the German example to Stalinist Russia and to the nature and origins of totalitarianism as a whole.

OVERVIEW

The fact that Hannah Arendt was a Jewish refugee from Nazi oppression cannot be divorced from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Written with eminent scholarship (hardly a page lacks footnotes and in some cases the footnotes are of greater length than the text), the book nevertheless is a passionate condemnation of totalitarianism. Arendt, in short, was searching for the intellectual roots of the movement that had displaced her from her native Germany and had made her a refugee in a world decidedly unfriendly toward Jews. Clearly the book is the product not only of thought but also of suffering. In fact, it was only with the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that Arendt was able to secure an academic position. Eventually she would become a full professor at Princeton University, the first woman to achieve that position.

The work is divided into three sections: “Antisemitism,” “Imperialism,” and “Totalitarianism,” with the last two parts having been revised in the 1958 and 1966 editions. (As the book was revised, it grew in length, running to 526 pages in the 1966 edition.) It is Arendt’s thesis that the two most important contributions to totalitarian movements have been anti-Semitism and imperialism. In the first three chapters, Arendt discusses the origins of anti-Semitism and the position of the Jews in Western European society, particularly in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. She differs from many scholars in taking issue with the Jew-as-scapegoat analysis of anti-Semitism; instead, she attempts to demonstrate that anti-Semitism arose from several causes. It was a consequence of the declining

importance of Jews, particularly Jewish bankers in the nineteenth century, the rise of the nation-state, and the emergence of a new type of nationalism in which the Jews were perceived as an alien element in the nation. Moreover, Jews had historically aligned themselves with the nobility, a class that had been in a position of power and so was able to protect them. Now, the nobility was seen as the major impediment to the formation of unified nation-states, and the Jews were perceived as the nobility's lackeys.

Chapter 4 deals with the Dreyfus affair, in which Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French officer and a Jew, was railroaded into imprisonment on Devil's Island, falsely accused of spying. Although Dreyfus was known to be innocent, his trial and imprisonment, and the attempted suppression of evidence that would have freed him, revealed the anti-Semitic climate of both the army and large segments of the population in turn-of-the-century France.

Part 2, "Imperialism," consists of five chapters. Each discusses an aspect of imperialism, but the thrust is the development of racism as a consequence of imperialism and the consequences of racism. Imperialism and racism went hand in glove, according to Arendt, and it was imperialism that brought Europeans into contact with nonwhite peoples, peoples the Europeans believed to be culturally inferior and who were increasingly seen to be racially inferior as well.

Given the presence of such colonial populations, Europeans were more easily able to abandon whatever moral scruples they possessed. The natives thus were never given the rights that the inhabitants of the home countries were afforded, and, particularly in Africa, brutality—even mass murder—was not unusual.

The expansionist climate would result in the pan-movements in Europe. The philosophy of these was that all people who spoke a particular language as their mother tongue were of that nationality. For example, and regardless of political frontiers, all who spoke German were Germans and belonged within one unified German state. In short, imperialism aided the formation of supernationalist sentiments, and, by the same token, supernationalist emotions helped to create the collective mass consciousness necessary for the development of totalitarianism.

The third and final section of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which consists of four chapters, deals directly with totalitarianism, concentrating on Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, although more space is given to the former than to the latter.

Given a climate of anti-Semitism and supernationalism, Arendt adds another element: "mass man," the refugee within his own society, a man led by declassed intellectuals. Arendt grants that political ideology could

and would vary from society to society, but in her view political ideology was not the basic issue. What was necessary for the rise of totalitarianism were the factors mentioned above.

A new factor was added in the twentieth century: the presence in great numbers of mass men. These atomized individuals had no attachment to job, family, friends, or class. They were available to follow a leadership that allowed them to gain identity in a mass movement. No matter how brutal or irrational such a movement might be, it nevertheless offered a sense of identity to those who had never sufficiently gained one or who had lost the one they had possessed.

The Origins of Totalitarianism is a wide-ranging book, capacious to a fault. Indeed, some of the chapter subsections could stand alone and perhaps should not have been included; instead, they should have been published as separate historical pieces, as they are tangential to the subject of the book. Moreover, it is surprising that Arendt never precisely defines totalitarianism, although she deals with Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany as prime examples. What emerges is a portrait of an entity that seeks to establish total control within the state, absolute control not only of the government but also of every aspect of the lives of those who reside within it. Whatever the political philosophy—and political philosophies differed greatly between Nazism and Communism—no deviance in thought or action was permitted. In fact, to a totalitarian regime, ideology is secondary. What is of prime importance is the state itself. The state is above the individual, and both the individual and the party exist for the state. The state itself is the cause, the cause to which all belong and in which all submerge their individual identities and become one.

Every agency of the totalitarian state has but one function: to enforce uniformity, to stamp out deviance. The forms of enforcement or enculturation may differ from regime to regime, as they in fact did in Adolf Hitler's Germany or Joseph Stalin's Russia, but the ultimate purpose remains the same. Thus regimes such as those in Spain under Francisco Franco, Italy under Benito Mussolini, and Argentina under Juan Perón do not qualify as totalitarian, for their fascist masters sought only absolute political control. Other areas of life, such as art, music, and literature, were left untouched. The dictators of these regimes did have their personal preferences, but they did not impose them on the nations they governed. Totalitarianism, on the other hand, is all-pervasive and all-encompassing. Hitler himself differentiated between fascism and Nazism in this regard.

Arendt provides an excellent analysis of the seemingly unlikely alliance of the mob and the intellectual. The underclass, whether *Lumpenproletariat* or fallen bourgeoisie, stripped of jobs, family, friends, a sense of commu-

nity, and, perhaps, religious attachments, becomes atomized. Being human, however, such individuals seek a sense of identity, an identity that can be found in a mass movement, such as Communism or Nazism. In joining a mass movement, the individual identity, weak though it was, is lost, submerged in a mass—and much more powerful—identity.

The role of the intellectual was to mobilize and direct the masses, the very mass of atomized men who yearn to be mobilized and directed and to lose themselves in the collective whole. The intellectual, as Arendt defines him, need not be a formally educated person. Neither Hitler nor Stalin had much formal education; Hitler was in fact anti-intellectual, but he was a man of ideas, a man with a message.

Arendt's discussions of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia are excellent, but what is surprising is that she omits discussion of China under Mao Zedong. That is understandable in the first (1951) edition, but it seems the 1958 and 1966 revisions should have contained a treatment of China, which was then the world's largest totalitarian society. One suspects that Arendt did not wish to deal with China because Mao, whatever his faults, was no Hitler or Stalin, and the Chinese peasant, who had brought Mao to power, was not the European atomized man. Similarly, one can take issue with Arendt's view that whereas dictatorship can occur in nations of any size, totalitarian regimes can develop only in states with quite large populations. This view has been disproved by the genocidal Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, a fairly small nation. It is true that the murder of three million people by the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot and the totalitarian nature of his regime came to light only after the last revision of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in 1966. Indeed, the facts were not widely known until after Arendt's death in 1975, but the evidence of Cambodia does disprove her contention regarding state size and totalitarianism.

Given her background, it is not surprising that Arendt would focus on anti-Semitism as a root cause of totalitarianism. Again, the evidence of China and Cambodia, nations without an anti-Semitic tradition, seems to contradict her on this point. Totalitarianism can exist, and has existed, entirely separate from anti-Semitism. Furthermore, as penetrating as her analysis of anti-Semitism is, it does not account for medieval and early modern anti-Semitism. Reading the book, one could almost gain the impression that anti-Semitism was a nineteenth and twentieth century phenomenon. The roots of anti-Semitism lie deep within the Christian tradition, however, as churchmen sought to distance their new religion from its parent, Judaism. It was not the Nazis who first built the ghetto walls, and it was not the persecutors of Alfred Dreyfus who perpetrated the Crusader massacres.

In a similar vein, imperialism may or may not be a cause of totalitarianism. Under William II, Germany acquired a colonial empire, and it seems reasonable that the experience of overlordship of nonwhite people who were considered racially inferior did in fact further an atmosphere of racism within Germany. That such racism added to the climate that brought the Nazi regime to power also seems reasonable, but China under Mao was clearly a totalitarian regime, and it was neither imperialist nor racist. Precisely the same statement can be made concerning Cambodia under Pol Pot. On the other hand, Great Britain and France, the two greatest imperial powers of the modern world, never experienced totalitarianism; they evolved into parliamentary democracies.

What Arendt has done, then, is primarily to examine the roots of Hitlerian totalitarianism, and she has done so with solid scholarship, providing a number of penetrating insights. She has gone on to extrapolate from the German example to Stalinist Russia and to the nature and origins of totalitarianism as a whole. Yet the Nazi experience was only one among a number of totalitarian regimes; thus, while anti-Semitism, imperialism, racism, and the desire of an atomized population led by declassed intellectuals to gain a new sense of identity clearly contributed to the rise of Nazi totalitarianism, the same would not necessarily be true elsewhere. For example, the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union was not openly anti-Semitic until its last days, although Russia was historically anti-Semitic. Moreover, Communist doctrine, far from being racist, openly and avowedly opposes racism. The book thus would have been far truer to its content and scope if it had been titled *The Origins of Nazi Totalitarianism*, for it is apparent that that is the subject about which Arendt knew most and is really the topic she most wished to discuss.

A work of eminent scholarship, although some of its basic premises can be faulted, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* vaulted Hannah Arendt into the ranks of intellectual preeminence. She would go on to author a number of books but became best known to the general public as a result of the 1963 publication of the controversial *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Adolf Eichmann was the German officer directly in charge of the genocide practiced against the Jews in World War II. He had been kidnapped in Argentina by the Israelis and brought to Jerusalem to stand trial.

Arendt claimed that it was wrong simply to concentrate on one man, Eichmann, because others were also responsible: other countries that stood passively by, other Germans, and even Jews who had not acted with determination in the face of the Nazi evil. It was her view that, first in Germany and then in other parts of Nazi-occupied Europe, evil became common-

place, hence banal, and so did not garner the moral opprobrium it normally would have aroused. From 1963 onward, the phrase “banality of evil” would be associated with Arendt and would remain controversial.

Written between 1945 and 1949 and published in 1951, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* serves as an example of the right book at the right time. The true horror of the Nazi regime and its death factories had struck the world with awful force, and the West, then in the grip of the Cold War, was also reacting to the perceived menace of Communism, not only in the Soviet Union but also throughout Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe. The time was thus ripe for an examination of totalitarianism, and Arendt’s book filled the need. It was not only erudite—it would have been recognized as a major treatise in any period—but also timely.

The Origins of Totalitarianism and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* are Arendt’s best-known works. In them one sees her focus on Nazism, the force that displaced her from a comfortable life in her native Germany, made her a refugee, and murdered millions of her fellow Jews. It is no wonder, then, that the thrust of her intellectual interests thereafter would be an attempt to understand Nazism and that her clarity of vision was perhaps clouded by the anti-Semitism of Hitlerian Germany and its horrific consequences. Whatever its faults of conceptualization, however, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* will remain a major work in its field, for it provides much useful historical information and a number of profound insights into totalitarianism, a topic of crucial importance in the history of the twentieth century.

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—Joel M. Roitman

OUR GOLDA

THE STORY OF GOLDA MEIR

AUTHOR: David A. Adler (1947-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1984

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Biography; children's literature

Adler's biography for young readers describes how Golda Meir heard the message of Zionism from early childhood and grew up to become a political activist and eventually the prime minister of Israel.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Golda Meir (1898-1978), one of the founders of the State of Israel and prime minister of Israel, 1969-1974

Moshe Yitzhak Mabovitch, Golda's father, a carpenter and cabinetmaker

Blume Mabovitch, Golda's mother

Sheyna, Golda's older sister, a Zionist

Morris Meyerson, a cultured sign painter who eventually became Golda's husband

David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), the first prime minister of Israel

OVERVIEW

David A. Adler's *Our Golda: The Story of Golda Meir* is a biography of Israel's famous prime minister. Adler did not know Meir or her times personally, but he obviously admires her. His admiration adds a warmth to the text that is often missing from biographies of important but distant personages. The reader is drawn in closer yet by the soft black-and-white pencil illustrations by Donna Ruff. The twelve drawings of Meir and her family and compatriots help put a human face on the legend.

Meir's story is told chronologically, with little dialogue or description. The emphasis is always on describing events and giving information, not on putting the reader at the scene. Each of the book's five chapters is named for a different part of the world where Meir lived out an important stage in her development. The first chapter, "Kiev," shows the strength of Meir's parents and grandparents, who lived in poverty and oppression be-

cause they were Jews. This chapter provides an excellent overview of the hardships faced by Russian Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Adler understands the power of the truth simply told, without dramatics. Golda Mabovitch is only the second of her mother's first six children to survive. Her father leaves Russia for the Golden Land—the United States—to establish a better life for his family.

In the second chapter, the remaining family members are forced to move to Pinsk, within the Pale of Settlement for Jews. Life is even harder here, and the threat of pogroms is always present. As Golda grows up, she overhears and is fascinated by the planning of groups of Zionists. The third chapter, "Milwaukee," covers the harrowing journey to the United States to join her father and follows Golda's formal and informal education as a schoolgirl and as a Zionist. She struggles under her parents' old-fashioned demands and their inability to understand her desire for education. They believe that education is wasted on a woman and that at fourteen Golda ought to be thinking of marriage. At fifteen, she runs away to Denver, where her older sister Sheyna lives, and becomes involved in Zionist activism. She meets Morris Meyerson, whom she will later marry.

The fourth chapter, "Palestine," shows Golda and Morris settling on a kibbutz in Palestine, their name Hebraized to "Meir." Golda becomes more and more involved politically, especially with labor issues, and less involved with her husband and children. She travels throughout Europe and North America seeking support for a Jewish state and refuge for Jews fleeing Nazi persecution. In 1947, the United Nations votes to partition Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. The fifth chapter is titled "Israel," and it begins with war against the Arab nations. Golda Meir again travels to North America, returning with millions of dollars for weapons, which help Israel prevail. She signs the Israeli Declaration of Independence, becomes minister of labor and then foreign minister, and retires in 1965. In 1969, Meir is elected prime minister, and she serves in that position through the Six-Day War, until her second retirement in 1974.

In *Our Golda*, Adler brings together several skills and interests demonstrated throughout his career, which has produced more than one hundred books for children and young adults: The book is nonfiction, features a strong female central character, and presents an important part of Jewish history and culture. These elements come up repeatedly in Adler's work and help account for the continuing popularity of this biography.

For Adler, the line between fiction and nonfiction is a clear one. He stands at a respectful distance from his subject, presenting only information that he can somehow verify. He was not able (or did not seek) to interview family members or to examine private family documents. He is not

himself a contemporary, able to recount his own sensations of the terror of the pogroms or the Holocaust. Most important, he does not attempt to fictionalize Meir's life, to present words that she must have spoken under the circumstances or to describe how their family's apartment probably looked. The tone and the stance throughout are somewhat distant, with a focus on actions and events rather than on motivations and feelings.

One happy result of this distance, of keeping the focus on events, is that the book avoids taking on a strident political voice of its own. Clearly, the central character is Golda Meir, and clearly she is working and fighting against great odds to create and maintain a Jewish homeland. Yet, Adler does not put in his characters' mouths the arguments, the rhetoric, or the biblical quotations. He could easily supply adjectives for Meir, calling her "brilliant" or "righteous" or "wise," and he could refer to Arabs as "misguided" or "evil," but he does not. He presents events in clear factual language, with few adverbs or adjectives. He trusts the power of simple language to guide the reader gently: "During the next few months in Israel there were shootings, roadblocks, attacks, and bombings. The Arabs were fighting to keep Israel from being born, and the Jews were fighting back."

Adler, however, is not totally removed from his subject. He obviously sees Meir as a hero, as a fighter for justice and freedom. He explains in a



Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1973. (Library of Congress)

brief "About the Book" section that he grew up during Meir's rising career in the Israeli government. Although she held important offices, he and his family always "referred to her affectionately as 'Golda,' as if she were a close personal friend."

It is interesting to note that although *Our Golda* is part of Viking's Women of Our Time series, Adler does not make much of the fact that Meir was a woman in what is usually thought of as a man's world. Just as he does not argue for the rightness of the Zionist cause, but simply assumes it, neither does he devote much ink to pointing out that it is unusual for a woman to be the elected leader of a modern nation engaged in war.

There are a few places where gender becomes an issue. Golda's parents had clear assumptions about a daughter's role. She could attend school, but working in the family store was more important than homework. By her mid-teens, she should be settled into marriage—and her parents went so far as to select a successful (and much older) husband for her. Although she married a Zionist and a scholar of her own choosing, Golda soon found that her physical and mental powers were greater than his. She also was more interested in political life than in family life. Her ambition and ability led her to positions of greater responsibility and prominence, while her husband faded into the background. The marriage ended, and Meir spent far less time with her children than she would have liked. In a biography of a successful man, these separations would hardly draw a comment, and Adler does not make issue of it here. His concern is with presenting a straightforward story of a strong leader, and he lets that story speak for itself.

David Adler has written several books about Jewish history and culture for children at all levels, including *A Picture Book of Passover* (1982) and *A Picture Book of Hanukkah* (1982), *The Number on My Grandfather's Arm* (1987) for middle schoolers, and a well-known book of essays and photographs, *We Remember the Holocaust* (1987), for older students. He is also the author of the Cam Jensen series of young adult mystery novels, featuring another strong and intelligent female character.

As public education becomes more concerned with celebrating the rich diversity of the world's people, *Our Golda* is an important book, both for its portrayal of a strong female leader and for its presentation of an essential piece of Jewish history. When the book was new, it received an Outstanding Social Studies Book for Children citation from the Children's Book Council and was named a Carter G. Woodson Award Honor Book by the National Council for Social Studies. Teachers and school librarians still select *Our Golda* for its soundness, its evenhanded treatment of difficult political issues, and its lively writing.

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—Cynthia A. Bily

PAUL CELAN

POET, SURVIVOR, JEW

AUTHOR: John Felstiner (1936-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1995

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Biography

Felstiner provides a richly integrated analysis of the poetry and the life of Paul Celan, a Holocaust survivor who has been described as one of the greatest poets to write in German since World War II.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGE:

Paul Celan (1920-1970), a Romanian-born poet of Jewish descent

OVERVIEW

The story of Paul Celan, born Ancel (Celan is an anagram), is not unlike that of many creative survivors of the Holocaust. Primo Levi, the brilliant Italian memoirist and essayist, recorded his suffering at and liberation from Auschwitz with a searing honesty that earned for him the awe and admiration of thousands of readers. Nevertheless, he finally took his own life many years after World War II. So did Jean Améry, and so did Paul Celan. All three wrote about the Holocaust and seemed to rise above their ordeal through the power of their literary art, but finally some irresistible force called them back to the suffering of their fellows in the darkest hour of Jewish experience. They were able to make art out of memory, but memory could not be purged. As has been said of Celan, he achieved “radiance without consolation.”

John Felstiner has labored hard and long to map Celan’s tragic quest. Felstiner gets readers to believe in the terrible earnestness of Celan’s desperate attempt to memorialize the suffering of his people not by belaboring the sadness and despair and even madness that plagued Celan the man but by looking closely and intently at Celan the poet. His mother’s murder by the Nazis haunted Celan all his life. She was shot at a labor camp when she proved too sick to work; his father died at the same camp. Celan’s mother had brought him up to love the German language and its literature; in Czernowitz, at the eastern border of the old Habsburg empire, where

Celan was born, Jews with cultural aspirations strongly identified with the German language. It was Celan's fate, as a poet, to be locked into the same language that was used for the slogan "Arbeit Macht Frei" (work will make you free) over the gates of Auschwitz. In a strange way, this paradox committed him to a purification of the German language, which had been contaminated by Nazi jargon and racist thinking. It is a supreme irony that this Romanian Jew, a survivor of the Holocaust who lived in Paris, should have become the outstanding German poet of the later twentieth century.

In Felstiner's book, readers learn how Celan escaped from a labor camp and after the war made his way to Vienna and finally Paris; how he married a French artist whose parents were Catholic reactionaries; how Celan dealt with the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, whose Nazi past revolted him but whose philosophy of being proved vital to the development of his own ideas; how Celan and Nelly Sachs, another great German Jewish poet, came to a mutual understanding of their mission as survivor-poets; how Martin Buber, the great German Jewish philosopher, fell short of Celan's expectations—primarily because Buber seemed almost facile in his willingness to make "peace" with Germany; how in the last decade of his life Celan submitted to electric shock therapy; how he finally had to live apart from his wife and child because of acute depression; and how, late in April of 1970, Celan, a strong swimmer, jumped into the Seine. His body was discovered a week later by a fisherman seven miles downstream.

Readers learn all these things in Felstiner's narrative, but they are never allowed to drift very far from the poetry. Felstiner makes clear that from the very beginning of Celan's life as a poet after World War II, he was totally committed to revealing the essence of what the Jews had suffered. This meant questioning and exposing the Christian values of hope and redemption, which, ironically, many Gentiles believed to be at the heart of his work. Celan used Christian metaphors in a kind of reverse typology; instead of prefiguring Christian salvation, which is the traditional way that Christians interpret the Old Testament, Celan's Christian metaphors—particularly the Crucifixion itself—refer back to Jewish suffering and become tropes for the bloodletting that Jews suffered at the hands of a Christian world, a form of persecution that reached its satanic apotheosis in the "final solution" of the German extermination of the Jews:

It was blood, it was
what you shed, Lord.

It shined
It cast your image into our eyes, Lord.

All of this becomes very important because of the way in which Celan's poetry has been used by Germans to overcome the legacy of guilt associated with the Holocaust. Educators and critics in Germany have translated Celan's infinitely subtle and often devastatingly ironic poems into visions of reassuring Christian transcendence. The poem "Tenebrae," from which the above lines are taken, has been read by German readers in ways that favor traditional Christian interpretation. One German critic writes "that when the body and blood of men, not of Christ, are sacrificed in Celan's poem, this 'extends the meaning' of the Eucharist." The philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, who sees a Christian existentialism in Celan's poem, speaks of the "commonality between Jesus and us" as the poet's central theme. Here is Felstiner's judgment on such a reading:

Yet the subversions in "Tenebrae" do not support an idea of commonality; nor does the poem's "we" migrate into Gadamer's "us." "Eli, Eli lama sabachthani?" we hear in the Gospel account of Jesus' final hour, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). That that cry sounded originally in Psalms or that the Lamentations of Jeremiah form part of the Tenebrae service does not signify a continuity, as far as Jewish history is concerned.

Celan's most famous poem is "Todesfuge" (1952; "Death Fugue," 1988), which he wrote shortly after the war ended and which eventually became an icon in Germany for dealing with the Holocaust, an icon that encouraged confrontation of the truth at the same time it distanced the reader from the truth through aestheticization. The poem is famous for its stark imagery and incantatory repetition:

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening
 We drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night
 We drink and we drink
 We shovel a grave in the air . . .

German schoolchildren recited this poem; it was put to music and sung in choirs; it has been recited at important occasions of state in the German parliament. Despite the sincerity and contrition that underlie the German embrace of "Todesfuge," the way it has been ritualized in music and politics tends to distance the reader from the poem. For example, much has been made of the musical fugue as a clue to the poem's structure, and high school students have been guided through formalistic readings in which Celan is closely compared with Johann Sebastian Bach. This kind of analysis softens the force of Celan's irony: The Nazis made prisoner-musicians

play orchestral music as victims marched to murderous hard labor or their deaths in the gas chambers: “we drink you at midday Death is a master from Germany.” Felstiner notes Celan’s pun on “master” (*Meister* in German) as conflating artist and dancing master with tyrant. The Nazis were artists at murder.

In the early 1950’s, Celan’s powerful imagery attracted readers and earned him a considerable reputation not only in Germany but also among poets and critics worldwide. He earned several prestigious prizes in Germany. He was very sensitive, however, to hostile criticism and chafed angrily at the notion that he was more of a technical virtuoso than a poet with a subject. The truth is that he was increasingly drawn to an inspired silence, a crafted silence, as the only way to do full justice to the unspeakable nature of his subject—the Holocaust and its moral and psychological burden. This crafted silence took the form of an increasingly abstracted, gnomic, abbreviated diction and syntax. The luxuriant imagery and rhythmic cadences of the early verse yielded gradually to the stripped and bare, often teasingly truncated, lines of his last poems. The curious thing is that these poems, desiccated and stark, often evoked erotic and life-affirming impulses. Here are some lines from a poem written in celebration of Celan’s one trip to Israel—only one year before his suicide:

There stood
a splinter of fig on your lip

There stood
Jerusalem around us. . . .

I stood
in you.

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—Peter Brier

THE PAWNBROKER

AUTHOR: Edward Lewis Wallant (1926-1962)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1961

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Psychological realism

This novel, which takes place fifteen years after the Holocaust, presents an indelible portrait of the results of human behavior so sadistic that some who survive it biologically do so only by committing emotional suicide. At the same time, the work offers a testament to the healing power of goodness.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Sol Nazerman, a Holocaust survivor and pawnbroker in New York City's Harlem

Jesus Ortiz, a Puerto Rican youth, Sol's assistant

Marilyn Birchfield, a Protestant social worker

Bertha, Sol's sister, who came to the United States before the war

Tessie Rubin, Sol's mistress, a Holocaust survivor

Mendel, Tessie's father, a Holocaust survivor

Goberman, a refugee and extortionist

Murillio, a racketeer who "launders" profits from illegal businesses through the pawnshop

OVERVIEW

The Pawnbroker is a stunning work that details the psychic journey of a tortured Holocaust survivor. A third-person omniscient narrator introduces and describes characters and circumstances that reinforce the main character's rage as well as those who help release him from it.

The novel's protagonist, forty-five-year-old Sol Nazerman, was a professor at the University of Kraków in Poland. Arrested by the Nazis for being Jewish, he was physically and emotionally tortured in an extermination camp where his wife and children died. At the beginning of the novel, Sol lives in Mount Vernon, New York, with his sister, her teacher husband, and their two children, and he supports them by running a Harlem pawnshop, a setting redolent of lost dreams and corrupted lives. Bertha, Sol's sister, tries

hard to assimilate herself into American upper-middle-class life, while Sol's nephew Morton, like Sol, is a solitary soul who studies drawing.

Described as an intensely private, bitter man with no allegiances, Sol speaks mostly in cold monosyllables to his family and isolates himself from them. Sol's sleep is often interrupted by flashbacks to horrific experiences, as when his son drowns in the bottomless human feces in the railroad cattle car en route to the death camp.

At the pawnshop, Sol hires a lively, amiable young assistant, Jesus Ortiz, who rapidly becomes more than a mere apprentice to Sol. Jesus wishes to learn the pawn business so that he can open his own shop someday. Sol explains that the Jewish affinity for business and money comes from thousands of years of insecurity caused by anti-Semitism. A typical day at the pawnshop includes an endless series of junkies, prostitutes, and other desperate souls, each with an item to pawn. Sitting in his wire cage like a trapped animal, Sol coldly ignores their entreaties for more and gives each customer from two to five dollars.

Another important character is Marilyn Birchfield, a warm and caring social worker. She is not put off by Sol's coldness, and she senses the tortured person behind his impenetrable facade. Her friendly visits seem to quell Sol's inner rage slightly. Although he chafes at her kindness, Sol has a few moments of peace when they take a Hudson River boat trip; still, he dissuades her interest by likening a relationship with him to necrophilia.

The Holocaust is never far from Sol's mind. He frequently visits his mistress Tessie and her father Mendel, both of whom are tortured by their memories of the death camps. It is loss, not love, that ties Sol and Tessie together, as each has lost both spouse and children at the camp. A less sympathetic survivor is Goberman, who betrayed his own family for food rations and who now threatens and manipulates other survivors to contribute to the Jewish Appeal. In another flashback to an episode in which a terrified inmate threw himself against an electrified fence, Sol recalls Tessie's idea that the dead are far better off. Therefore, when pawnshop owner and racketeer Murillio shoves the barrel of his gun down Sol's throat because Sol is angry that the pawnshop illegally launders money from Murillio's brothel, Sol encourages him to pull the trigger. Readers are then shown another flashback to Sol's horror at having to watch his wife's forced sex acts in a Nazi brothel.

After Mendel's painful death and Sol's traumatic flashback to his camp job of dragging gassed corpses to the crematoria, Sol treats Jesus more coldly. Sol even lectures Jesus that he trusts and believes in money only. This motivates the young man to conspire with some unsavory associates to steal cash from the pawnshop. When Sol thwarts the robbery by stand-

ing in front of the safe, Jesus moves to protect Sol and is accidentally killed by his coconspirators. This crime—occurring on the fifteenth anniversary of the death of Sol's family—so stuns Sol that he suddenly feels great compassion and love for Jesus, reaches out to his nephew Morton for help at the shop, and begins to grieve his terrible losses.

Wallant's major characters function both as well-developed individuals and as symbols that advance the novel's themes. His minor characters are never stock or one-dimensional, but their full development is necessarily subordinated to that of the major characters.

Because Sol rarely communicates verbally in more than monosyllables, readers learn about him mostly from the reactions of and comparisons with Jesus, Marilyn, Tessie, and Mendel as well as from omniscient narration, interior monologues, and nightmarish flashbacks. Wallant uses eye imagery for Sol, who wears the eyeglasses he removed from a corpse about to be cremated; this becomes symbolic of Sol's Holocaust-driven outlook on life. In addition to communicating the theme of the war's indescribable horrors, Sol's flashback to a family picnic in Poland shows him as a loving family man whose emotions and soul are later eviscerated by unimaginable depravity and deprivation. Indeed, the geographic, psychic, and professional parameters of Sol Nazerman's life are a study in violent contrasts: peaceful 1930's Poland versus Holocaust depredations; filthy death camps versus affluent Westchester, New York; Westchester versus decrepit and decaying Harlem; and erudite university professor versus heartless pawnbroker. Images of death and isolation permeate the scenes in which Sol appears. By contrast, river and water imagery is a positive force in readers' understanding of Sol. He finds momentary peace on his boat trip with Marilyn, and at the end of the novel he metaphorically casts his agony into the water.

Sol's taciturnity contrasts strongly with Jesus' garrulousness, accenting their complementary teacher-student, father-son relationship. Although energetic conversation defines his character, Jesus' facial expressions and body language (often a smile and sprightly movement) give nonverbal cues to his youthful innocence, ambition, and sensitivity. These qualities lead the reader to affection for Jesus and to shock and grief at his violent, untimely death.

Wallant presents a balanced portrayal of Marilyn Birchfield, who represents both good and life in the novel; Marilyn is defined through her talkativeness, her verbal hesitation, and her kindly inner thoughts as she attempts to draw out and soothe Sol's tortured psyche. Like Sol, Marilyn is associated with river imagery as a natural force that moves forward and diminishes pain. It is her invitation to a Hudson River cruise that helps Sol to commence the exorcism of his inner demons.

Name symbolism also colors the novel's characters. "Nazerman" could imply "Nazi" or "Nazarene" (early Christians of Jewish origin who retained Jewish rituals), and "Sol" could relate either to the sun or to the biblical kings Saul and Solomon. Jesus, a fatherless young man who was threatened with emasculation by a white gang, just as Sol was threatened by Nazi doctors, looks to Sol as a father or uncle—even though Sol, ironically, teaches his "pupil" only the most negative, materialistic view of life. The name Jesus has added resonance because Sol begins to live after Jesus sacrifices his own life. By contrast, Marilyn Birchfield's purity, strength, and stability are suggested by her name, which connotes a field of birch trees.

The Pawnbroker is a shocking and indelible portrait of the results of human behavior so sadistic that some who survive biologically do so only by committing emotional suicide. Taking place some fifteen years after the Nazi genocide, the novel suggests that although many millions were slaughtered, those who survived did so only with deepest agony, suppressed outrage, and resultant aberrant behaviors; one survival mechanism is the resolution never to be vulnerable to human feeling again. Sol Nazerman has so successfully cauterized his emotions that he is, though ambulatory, among the living dead. Through the macrocosm of Harlem and the microcosm of the pawnshop, Sol's memories of crime and despair at the death camps are reinforced. The novel depicts in flashbacks the excruciating pain and loss that engender Sol's volcanic rage, survivor guilt, and emotional shutdown, through which he has lost the ability to give, feel, and receive positive emotion.

In fact, Sol's protracted fury embodies the axiom that if one hates long and deeply enough, one becomes the thing he hates. Though Sol has left the sadistic sociopathy of the death camp "kingdom," he has, perhaps unconsciously, set up his own unfeeling mendacious pawnshop fiefdom, where he fosters Murillio's criminal corruption and sits in judgment, and often condemnation, of innocent and pathetic customers.

Wallant's novel, however, is more than a scathing indictment of human inhumanity and its terrifying, debasing consequences. It is also a testament to the healing power of human goodness in the persons of Marilyn, Jesus, and even Morton and Tessie. While Sol uses all of his energy to keep shut the door on his titanic pain, Marilyn, Jesus, and Tessie honestly admit to their pain but still feel and spread positiveness and love.

Through the deaths of Jesus and Mendel, Sol emerges from his agonized carapace and finds expiation in the courage to cry, to vent rage and self-poisoning hatred, to grieve his tremendous losses, and to help Tessie grieve hers. On the anniversary of their deaths, Sol realizes that the proper

memorial for his lost family is not to consume himself in fury but to live. Wallant suggests that self-destructive wrath is almost as toxic and pernicious as human sadism and that real life and healing begin with self-forgiveness and reaching out to others. *The Pawnbroker* is about the complexities of grief and suffering and the self-exorcism of the demons of hate required for spiritual transcendence and redemption.

As a child, Wallant spent many hours in an uncle's pawnshop; later, he befriended a Holocaust survivor. The memory of these two life threads merge and blend in *The Pawnbroker*. In 1960, Wallant's first published novel, *The Human Season*, a celebration of human courage and strength, won the Jewish Book Council Fiction Award. *The Pawnbroker* was nominated for the National Book Award, and the film rights were purchased by director Sidney Lumet. Wallant died suddenly at age thirty-six, and his remaining two novels—*The Children at the Gate* (1963), which deals with the tension between intellect and emotion, and *The Tenants of Moonbloom* (1964), a comic revolt against the absurdity of life—were published posthumously.

The Pawnbroker evinces such stylistic influences as Fyodor Dostoevski, Thomas Wolfe, and Ernest Hemingway. Thematically, Wallant's work focuses on the deterioration of the American family (especially the delicate and difficult father-son relationship) and increasing individual isolation. Through use of both Jewish and Christian imagery, Wallant's most prevalent themes are confrontation with and responsibility for oneself and others and the possibilities of spiritual rebirth and regrowth.

The Pawnbroker was one of the first American literary works to so centrally deal with the Holocaust. Like Bernard Malamud and Saul Bellow, Wallant also emphasizes Jewish American alienation within society as well as an innate and profound humanism through which his protagonists, despite their agonized isolation, still work to rejoin the human family.

Although Sol, like the protagonists of Philip Roth's and Richard Elman's novels, is conflicted about his own Jewishness, Wallant does not diminish the unique horror of Nazi genocide by displaying Sol's agony alongside Black, Hispanic, and Christian suffering. In fact, by placing Sol's humanity in front of his Judaism, Wallant clearly elucidates that human inhumanity transcends race and religion.

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THE PERIODIC TABLE

AUTHOR: Primo Levi (1919-1987)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Il sistema periodico*, 1975 (English translation, 1984)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Memoir

In this memoir, Levi, a Holocaust survivor, finds the perfect link between his personal experience and the history of humankind through the metaphor of the periodic table. Blending history and philosophy, the work shows the unity of all things.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGE:

Primo Levi (1919-1987), an Italian Jewish chemist who survived imprisonment in Auschwitz

OVERVIEW

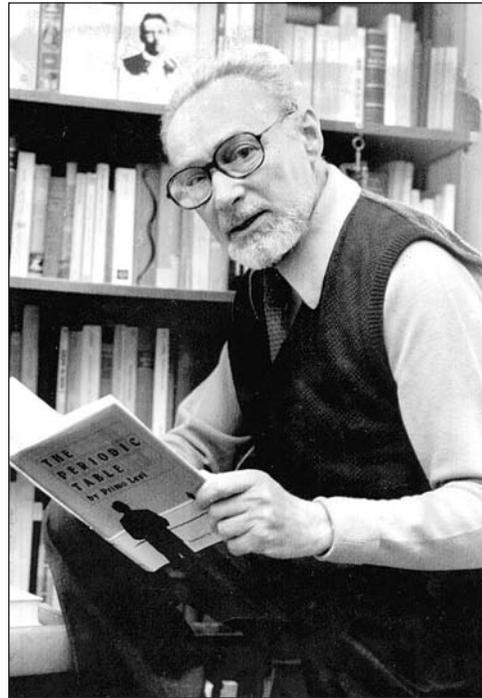
Primo Levi, an Italian Jewish novelist, short-story writer, poet, and memoirist, was also a chemist for most of his professional life. As *The Periodic Table* demonstrates, his careers as chemist and writer were inseparable. Each chapter of the memoir is named for a chemical element, explores Levi's work in the laboratory, and relates that work to his personal, social, and political experience. It is a cliché to speak of human chemistry when discussing human nature. The virtue of Levi's book is that he refreshes the cliché and shows the profound connections between chemical elements and the elements of human behavior.

Each chapter can be read as a discrete piece of work, concentrating on some episode or period in Levi's life. Nevertheless, the chapters are also unified by the author's growth in perception. As he learns more about specific chemical elements and about the procedures required to study those elements, so he also discovers life in more depth, encountering unusual characters who teach him about the meaning of their lives and about existence as a whole. The form of *The Periodic Table* is unified by chronology. After the first chapter, "Argon," which describes Levi's ancestry, subsequent chapters chart his life and career from the years just before World War II and his incarceration in a concentration camp to the decade or so following the Holocaust.

By titling his memoir *The Periodic Table*, Levi suggests that there is a structure to his writing about experience that is analogous to the way elements are analyzed in chemistry. Like the various substances the chemist tests in his laboratory, the author's experiences have different degrees of purity, different weights, and different reactions, depending on what he uses to stimulate them. Human character in the memoir, in other words, has certain properties from the beginning, but it can be transformed in a number of ways given the changing nature of environments.

Altogether, there are twenty-one chapters or elements in *The Periodic Table*, each of which presents a peculiar problem or story Levi tells about his life and his chemistry. Some of the chapters read like mystery stories and have clear resolutions; others remain open-ended, puzzling and tantalizing. Two chapters, typeset entirely in italics, are fables of life suggested to the author by his career in chemistry. Each chapter has its own style, for Levi strives to achieve an absolute perfection of form and content, so that the words he uses seem to grow out of the experiences they render.

Although Levi is an autobiographical writer, he does not write autobiography as such. He prefers the more flexible form of the memoir, which allows him to concentrate on certain episodes or periods without the need to cover his life in its entirety. Each chapter reads like a short story. He is careful to point out, however, how actual events often do not have the clean shape of fiction. As a result, several chapters of *The Periodic Table* do not have neat conclusions. For example, after providing a sensitive narrative of his correspondence with a German chemist who had supervised his work in the concentration camp, and just before their fateful reunion after the war, Levi receives a message announcing the man's death in his "sixtieth year of life." In one sense, the death is accidental. It could have happened before or after their correspondence. In an-



Primo Levi. (AP/Wide World Photos)

other sense, it seems determined by the correspondence, for while the German has rationalized the death camps, it is also clear that the extermination of millions has haunted him to the "sixtieth year of [his] life" and that he wants some sort of absolution from a reluctant Levi. Levi does not say the man dies of a bad conscience, but it is difficult not to draw that conclusion. Much of *The Periodic Table* has this understated yet insistent significance.

The Periodic Table begins with a discussion of inert gases:

They are indeed so inert, so satisfied with their condition, that they do not interfere in any chemical reaction, do not combine with any other element, and for precisely this reason have gone undetected for centuries.

The phrase "so satisfied with their condition" is clearly an affectation. Chemists do not believe that gases are sentient. A gas does not reflect on its own condition. Human beings do, however, and human beings are chemists. This is Levi's point: His work in chemistry has stimulated him to reflect on the human condition and to realize that "the little I know of my ancestors presents many similarities to these gases."

In other chapters of *The Periodic Table*, the author is not so explicit. The connections between chemistry and human lives are not always specified, although the connections are there in the way Levi writes, in the way he lives. His ancestors, for example, have been inert in the sense that they have been "relegated to the margins of the great river of life." Again, the sense of something elemental suffuses Levi's style. By the second page of his memoir, it is clear that chemistry has become a part of his writer's vocabulary and that his way of life—and by extension all lives—is chemistry.

This constant parallel between chemistry and life might prove tiresome if it were not for Levi's elegant, concrete style. His ancestors may be like inert gases, but he can make them as colorful and all-absorbing as gases are to a chemist. There is his vivid memory of Barbarico, a fine doctor who disliked everything that went along with having a career. Barbarico hated hard work, schedules, appointments, commitments, politicking—in short, all the things a professional normally does to advance in the world. He loved men and women and nature. He let various women take care of him. While he was an excellent diagnostician, he preferred spending the day reading books and newspapers. If a patient sent for him, he would readily go, never asked for his fee, and accepted whatever goods his poor clients handed him. His needs were simple. He was more than ninety when he died "with discretion and dignity," Levi concludes.

In his evocation of Barbarico, Levi conveys his deep affection for a relative, but he also views the man with considerable objectivity, measuring

him like a scientist, a chemist curious about how this individual combines with other elements of life. Using another cliché, Levi suggests that “the comparison to inert gases with which these pages start fits Barbarico like a glove.” “Like a glove”—the very terms of comparison make Levi’s point that whether one is comparing gases or human beings, the principle of comparison is the same. If the elements fit, it is like the fit of glove to hand.

The Periodic Table, like the table of elements for which it is named, is constructed on the principle of making comparisons, of weighing and analyzing substances and experiences. Although Levi never says so explicitly, his memoir begins with a discussion of his inert relatives because he himself has been inert. In “Potassium,” for example, he explains why he and his family did not leave Italy when each day brought fresh evidence that the Fascists were bent on destroying the Jews: “We pushed all dangers into the limbo of things not perceived or immediately forgotten.” Their life was Italy. In the “abstract” they could have escaped, but they would have “needed a lot of money and a fabulous capacity for initiative.” Having neither, and wanting to live, they imposed on themselves a blindness, trying not to witness how circumscribed their lives had become.

Like an impure element, the Jews were driven out of Italy and into the extermination camps—a hideous irony for Levi, who spends his career examining the impurities of elements and who is constrained, as well, to contemplate the imperfections of human beings. In “Nickel” he presents what amounts to a fable of human history, a story about a mine he worked, where many years earlier (so the story was told to him) the workers had given way to every kind of chaotic behavior and sexual promiscuity, forcing the “governors in Milan to carry out a drastic, purifying intervention.”

Levi’s own mind, as presented in *The Periodic Table*, is like an impressionable metal that retains its own structure while becoming amazingly adaptable to the pressures exerted on it. During the war, he worked for a Swiss scientist who involved him in fruitless projects such as discovering an “oral anti-diabetic.” Although Levi put forth a few objections to his superior’s wacky scheme, he immediately complied when he found the scientist’s attitude “hardened like a sheet of copper under a hammer.” Levi’s friend Giulia became angry with him for humoring the superior’s weird ideas, but that is Levi’s strength: his pliable yet resistant nature. He goes along with nonsense without ever becoming nonsensical himself.

Levi’s memoir is both a historical and a philosophical work. It is also remarkable for the way it can blend history and philosophy in a single passage, thereby showing once again the unity of all things. For example, Levi describes his feelings as a chemistry student, learning about the periodic table, treating it as a kind of densely packed poetry he has to unravel. It

provided “the bridge, the missing link, between the world of words and the world of things.” Working in a laboratory was also an “antidote” to the dogmas of fascism, those unproved but deeply held prejudices. Chemistry and physics “were clear and distinct and verifiable at every step, and not a tissue of lies and emptiness, like the radio and newspapers.”

Chemistry, for Levi, is at once a study of nature and of human nature. As he suggests in his conclusion, chemistry has taught him that he is a collection of cells, which is “the me who is writing.” No one has yet been able to explain how it is that a human personality has evolved in this way or exactly how out of the multitude of choices available to him, the writer selects the signs that are put on the page. *The Periodic Table* ends with this chemical mystery, which is also an assertion of human will. The memoir ends by focusing on the process of writing itself, on “this dot, here, this one,” and suggests that Levi has accounted for as much of his life—and of life itself—as is possible.

The Periodic Table is the third volume of Primo Levi’s autobiographical trilogy. *Se questo è un uomo* (1947), translated in England as *If This Is a Man* in 1959 and in the United States as *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* in 1961, may still be his best-known work. The American title is somewhat misleading, for it emphasizes only the documentary quality of the memoir and not Levi’s philosophical and literary concerns, which he continues in *La tregua* (1958), translated as *The Truce: A Survivor’s Journey Home from Auschwitz* (1965) in England and as *The Reawakening* (1965) in the United States. Translations of his work—as these titles indicate—have varied enormously in quality, and some have done him a disservice. *The Periodic Table*, however, is widely regarded as a faithful rendering of Levi’s Italian. In cases where the translator has not been able to duplicate Levi’s vocabulary—especially where the author plays on words—footnotes offer explanation. Even a reader unfamiliar with Levi’s reputation in Italy will receive a glimmer of his exquisite literary sensibility in *The Periodic Table*. Levi is a master of the Italian language who makes frequent and subtle allusions to Italian literature from Dante to the late twentieth century.

The Holocaust is the central event in Levi’s life and in his work. As many discussions of his memoirs note, his writing is remarkable for its compassion, detachment, objectivity, and lack of personal bitterness. Nevertheless, there is plenty of passion in Levi. He does not, for example, readily forgive the German chemist who seeks a meeting with him. He is aware, however, of his own complicity, his own inertness, in the face of profound evil. He does not scapegoat the Germans, making them into the source of all evil, but he also does not simply make their crimes the burden of humanity. He is specifically historical in his description of how the Jews

were exterminated while realizing that the deaths of millions do raise important questions about human nature.

The Periodic Table has attracted a large audience outside of Italy because of its perfection of form. Many of Levi's previous volumes are just as well written, but the imaginative conception of *The Periodic Table* is at once the most ambitious, most profound, and most perfectly executed of the author's works to appear in English. In this memoir, Levi finds the perfect link between his personal experience and the history of humankind. In elaborating the metaphor of the periodic table, he does justice to the complexity of reality while simultaneously making it concrete and analyzable, like the elements in his chemistry laboratory.

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—Carl Rollyson

PERPETRATORS, VICTIMS, BYSTANDERS

THE JEWISH CATASTROPHE, 1933-1945

AUTHOR: Raul Hilberg (1926-2007)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1992

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Detailing personal and political dimensions of the Holocaust, Hilberg explores the attitudes and intentions, the actions and reactions, of the German perpetrators, their Jewish victims, and the multitude of bystanders who facilitated or hindered genocide.

OVERVIEW

In April, 1991, a major symposium honored one of the University of Vermont's retiring faculty members. It paid tribute to an exceptional professor of political science. His research, including especially a monumental book titled *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), arguably made Raul Hilberg the world's preeminent scholar of the Holocaust—Nazi Germany's planned total destruction of the Jewish people, the actual murder of nearly six million of them, and the annihilation of millions of non-Jewish victims who were also caught in that catastrophe.

Among the many distinguished persons who honored Hilberg was filmmaker Claude Lanzmann, whose epic *Shoah* (1985) is a cinematic counterpart to Hilberg's authoritative scholarship. Hilberg plays an important part in Lanzmann's film. In a segment on the Warsaw ghetto, for example, he discusses the dilemmas faced by Adam Czerniakow, the man who headed the *Judenrat*, or Jewish Council, there. Czerniakow documented his role in the diaries he kept until he took his own life on July 23, 1942, the day after the Germans began to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto by deporting its Jewish population to the death camp at Treblinka. Hilberg knows the details of Czerniakow's life because he helped to translate and edit the Czerniakow diary.

In another segment of Lanzmann's *Shoah*, Hilberg studies a different kind of document: *Fahrplananordnung 587*. This railroad timetable scheduled death traffic. Conservative estimates indicate that *Fahrplananordnung*

587, which tracks a few days in late September, 1942, documents the journey of some ten thousand Jews to Treblinka's gas chambers.

Hilberg spent his adult life detailing how such things happened. Thus, in his first appearance in the Lanzmann film, he observes:

In all of my work I have never begun by asking the big questions, because I was always afraid that I would come up with small answers; and I have preferred to address these things which are minutiae or details in order that I might then be able to put together in a gestalt a picture which, if not an explanation, is at least a description, a more full description, of what transpired.

In *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders*, Hilberg continues his unsurpassed attention to the Holocaust's detail. His documentation of that catastrophe's particularity forms a terribly vast description. Although no delineation, however full, could answer completely the biggest question—Why did the Holocaust happen?—this book has much of importance to say about that issue because of its novel emphasis on how the so-called final solution developed.

Organized into three distinct but overlapping parts that converge, respectively, on the Holocaust's perpetrators, its victims, and the bystanders, Hilberg's book consists of twenty-four crisp chapters. None is even thirty pages long, but each is packed with content, filled with insight, and documented with precision. Hilberg invites his readers to explore the chapters "in any number and any order," for they are written, he says, as self-contained modules. Hilberg's word is good. It is possible to dip into this book at random. Its longer chapters, "Adolf Hitler" and "The Survivors," for example, can be read as freestanding essays. The same is true of even shorter reflections, such as those titled "Neutral Countries" and "The Churches."

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Hilberg wrote on random topics and then assembled discrete pieces to create a book that is merely a compilation of unrelated parts. Composition much more subtle and significant emerges here instead, because Hilberg's word is also good when he states that his lifelong intention has been to provide Holocaust description that is a gestalt, a configuration that goes beyond the sum of its parts but that cannot be understood well without painstaking attention to each of those parts.

A key ingredient in Hilberg's gestalt is the brilliance of his own writing style. Clarity is its hallmark, but that characteristic is only the beginning. Hilberg analyzes history and probes politics with a remarkable flair for narrative. His reports often involve ordinary people who do extraordinary

things. Hilberg portrays their passions and prospects, their dilemmas and decisions, with all the skill of the gifted storyteller that he is. Concurrently the reader is gripped by cultural and social inquiry the gravity of which is intensified not by overtly expressed emotion, let alone by preachy moralizing, but instead by prose that is controlled and shrewdly understated. Hilberg's writing is all the more compelling because it remains calm, even matter-of-fact, as it marks the causes and effects of a disastrous bureaucratic process of destruction.

The effect of Hilberg's astute writing is that readers can begin anywhere in this book, but they will discover that one chapter leads to another irresistibly. During that unfolding, Hilberg's gestalt is further defined, but not by any single chapter or even entirely by his twenty-four. As readers explore Hilberg's modules, the Holocaust's immensity, its unrelenting and systematic scope, becomes evident. The book reveals itself to be like the tip of an iceberg: Hundreds, even thousands, of modules more would still leave incomplete the story that Hilberg is already disclosing in such concreteness and with such force.

Drawing on his unrivaled learning, which runs the gamut from his mastery of the most important scholarship done by others to his extensive pathbreaking investigation of documentary evidence, Hilberg explains how Nazi Germany's genocidal undertaking encompassed vast geographical terrain, huge populations, and immense logistical problems. The elimination of European Jewry did not result from random violence carried out by hooligans. It was instead a state-sponsored program of population riddance made possible by modern technological capabilities and political structures. The Nazi destruction process required the cooperation of every sector of German society. It depended, too, on reactions, or the lack of them, outside the Third Reich.

As for the primarily Jewish victims, that European minority population, largely defenseless and with immigration restrictions working against them as well, found themselves trapped in a Nazi vise of anti-Semitism and racism. The annihilation went on for years. When Germany surrendered in May of 1945, Europe's long-flourishing and distinguished Jewish culture had virtually disappeared.

Depending on where one starts to read this book, and also on the order in which one studies its chapters, the experience of Hilberg's gestalt will vary, and yet it will be the same. The genius of Hilberg's scholarship, the craft of his writing, aimed at that outcome. His plan works, but understandably most of this book's readers will be more conventional than its author. They will naturally start at the beginning and read the chapters in their published order. Anticipating that strategy, sensing what many peo-

ple think of first when they consider Nazi Germany or the Holocaust in particular, Hilberg begins his book with "the first and foremost perpetrator . . . Adolf Hitler himself."

For good reasons, studies about Hitler often run to thousands of pages. Those lengthy examinations have their place, but for readers who want an analysis of Hitler as substantial as it is succinct, Hilberg provides it. In a few thousand words, he supplies a perceptive analysis that persuasively addresses the major questions concerning Hitler's hatred of the Jews, his policies toward them once he rose to power in Nazi Germany in 1933, and his essential role in the "final solution."

By no means was the Holocaust the doing of Hitler alone. It required an enormous establishment of officials and offices, but that establishment also needed direction. The *führer* furnished it; thus Hilberg calls Hitler the "supreme architect" of the Jewish catastrophe. The designation does not mean that Hitler intended to murder the European Jews from the moment the Nazis took power in Germany. Existing documentary evidence does not make it possible to identify exactly Hitler's words or timing for decisions that launched what became the so-called final solution. But during the "fateful months" of 1941, as historian Christopher R. Browning names them, Hitler made his wishes known: The "final solution," Hilberg concludes, "was not evadable; it was the *Führer's* will."

Hitler's anti-Semitism, his expansionist foreign policy and war aims, the organizations and administrative apparatus he initiated, the Nazi leadership he assembled around him—those components created an ever more deadly logic. Actions followed from it. Fundamentally generated by Hitler and subsequently governed by determined followers who used destructive ingenuity of their own to implement their understanding of his aims, those policies climaxed in the Holocaust's shooting operations, deportations, and gassings.

About two-thirds of European Jewry, between five and six million persons, perished in the Holocaust. In addition to supplying new angles of vision on controversies about Jewish leadership during the catastrophe as well as the Holocaust's survivors, subjects that Holocaust scholars have debated at length before, Hilberg's discussion of the Holocaust's victims concentrates on other topics that have received less attention. Hilberg writes, for example, about Jews who were in mixed marriages, about those who had converted to Christianity, and about the predicament of Jewish children. In a chapter titled "Men and Women," he takes up another matter that frequently has been overlooked, if not ignored—namely, as Hilberg puts it, that "the road to annihilation was marked by events that specifically affected men as men and women as women."

There is much more to say on this subject than Hilberg's five-page chapter offers. Nevertheless, his contribution is significant. As brief, cautious, and conservative as it is, Hilberg's chapter shows that gender differences were important during the Holocaust and that attention to those differences is vital in understanding what the Jewish catastrophe entailed. The principal judgments include the following points. First, there were more women than men in the Jewish population of German-dominated Europe, and "in the final tally, women were most probably more than half of the dead, but men died more rapidly." Second, mass executions by shooting typically targeted Jewish men first, because "there was a need to rationalize the infliction of death, and it was easier to do so when the victims were men." All too soon, however, "it was the turn of Jewish women and children" as well. Third, before the ghettos in Eastern Europe were liquidated by the Nazis in 1942 and thereafter, hard labor and inadequate nourishment produced a death rate that was higher for Jewish men than for Jewish women. When deportations from the ghettos to the death camps began, however, "there was a reversal of fortunes. . . . More women than men could now be considered 'surplus.'" Fourth, when labor selections were made at the death camps, "fewer women than men were spared from immediate gassing. Possibly a third of the Jews who survived Auschwitz were women."

Had there been fewer bystanders, the Holocaust's toll could have been much lower; indeed, it might not have existed at all. Evaluating the evidence for and against such propositions, the essays in Hilberg's third part are among the most distressing in a book that is never less than disquieting. The perpetrators and victims of the Holocaust, after all, were small in number compared with those who were not "involved." Those who were not involved directly, however, often were very much involved—or could have been—in one way or another. Hilberg appraises governments and groups, institutions and individuals. He stresses that "specific historic, cultural, and situational factors," especially as they affected relationships between non-Jews and Jews, must be weighed in each situation.

Hilberg's result is a judicious and evenhanded reckoning, and just for that reason this third sector of Hilberg's gestalt has an acutely cutting edge. By confirming that too little was done too late by too few, Hilberg's essays on the bystanders not only augment all of his others in shedding light on how the Jewish catastrophe happened but also reintroduce the biggest question—Why did the Holocaust happen?—in ways that should make readers resist small answers as they wonder not just about the past but about a post-Holocaust world in which genocide remains no stranger.

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—John K. Roth

THE PIANIST

THE EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY OF ONE MAN'S SURVIVAL
IN WARSAW, 1939-1945

AUTHOR: Władysław Szpilman (1911-2000)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Śmierć miasta: Pamiętniki Władysława Szpilmana*, 1939-1945, 1946 (English translation, 1999)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Memoir

Szpilman offers a fresh account of life in Warsaw during the German occupation, including a glimpse into the attitudes of many Jews and their resistance. A concert pianist, Szpilman must struggle to survive, avoiding death at the hands of the Germans and resisting the urge to take his own life.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Władysław Szpilman (1911-2000), a Jewish concert pianist

Wilm Hosenfeld, the Wehrmacht officer who saved Szpilman's life

OVERVIEW

Władysław Szpilman was not particularly extraordinary. He was a well-trained concert musician and no one doubted his talent, but he lived his life much like other middle-class Jews of Warsaw during the 1930's. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Szpilman and his family faced the same challenges that other Jews faced under Adolf Hitler's reign of terror. Szpilman's simple and direct account of this time offers a fresh outlook on life in Warsaw, and the Warsaw ghetto, under Hitler's regime.

Prior to World War II, Szpilman and his family lived together in a flat in Warsaw and worked to support one another. When Germany occupied Poland in 1939, this interdependence became increasingly important. As regulations were more frequently imposed, it became harder to earn a living, so each member played a part in the survival of the whole family. The Szpilman family worked as a unit and had nightly discussions about what the family should do next. Ultimately they decided to stay together, working and scraping to maintain a living.

As lifelong residents of Warsaw, the Szpilman family considered the city their home, despite the German occupation. The family was established, and Szpilman's name was recognized from his work as a talented pianist on Polish radio. All the connections the family had, both Jewish and Aryan, remained in Warsaw. The prospect of fleeing the city they knew and loved was not welcome. Like many of the other 400,000 Jews in Warsaw, the Szpilman family initially opted to stay in familiar surroundings.

This decision was not made lightly or with a disregard for what the future might hold. More often than not, such decisions were based on hope, with a faith in humanity that would ultimately be destroyed. Rumors circulated about how close the Soviets' Red Army was to Warsaw, which fed the hope that soon the Germans would be gone and life would return to normal. Szpilman shows this best through his father, who held a hope that something better awaited those who climbed aboard the railroad cattle cars for "relocation."

Ultimately the decision to relocate was made, and the family prepared to leave their home and carefully packed their most precious belongings. As his family walked toward the train, not fully aware of what lay in store for them, Szpilman was pulled from the crowd and found himself behind a wall of officers. At first he struggled to make his way back to his family, but he almost instantly realized that death was the destination of those on the train. He escaped back into the ghetto, having lost everything, including his family.

Szpilman's survival rested on his willingness and ability to work hard. Physical labor concerned him; his hands were his skilled instruments, used to manipulate the piano keys. Recognizing this, he managed to be transferred to a job where he did not risk much damage to his hands. In this position, he worked to smuggle weapons into the ghetto that would later be used in the famous Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. Various jobs brought Szpilman to the Aryan side of Warsaw, and eventually he was able to get word out to some Aryan friends about his location. After making the appropriate arrangements, he escaped the ghetto under the protection of those friends and was able to secure living arrangements in hiding. He depended on his friends to procure and deliver food and other necessities, otherwise living a silent and isolated existence. Life in the Aryan district of Warsaw was more comfortable than life in the ghetto, yet Szpilman remained in a constant state of anxiety. One false move could betray his location and mean an end to his life. Food was scarce, which meant he had to ration everything given to him. He was protected but was never sure of when his protectors would arrive or how much food they would be able to provide.

This level of partial security ended in 1944 with the events known as the Warsaw Uprising, during which the Poles tried to liberate Warsaw from German occupation as part of a nationwide rebellion. Suddenly the war was brought to the streets of Warsaw. The building in which Szpilman was staying came under fire, and he was forced to leave. Living in the bombed-out ruins of Warsaw, he ate whatever scraps he could find and hid in the destroyed buildings.

One day, while scrounging for food, Szpilman found himself in the shadow of a German officer. Terrified and certain that death was imminent, he was questioned by the officer, who asked him what he did for a living and then requested that he play the piano in the home where Szpilman had most recently been hiding. For the first time in more than two years, Szpilman escaped his hell by returning to music. The officer, Captain Wilm Hosenfeld, unlike the other Germans Szpilman had encountered, had no desire to humiliate or harm the Jews. Szpilman had seen German officers kill Jewish children and continue walking down the road as though nothing out of the ordinary had taken place. Hosenfeld balked, however, at the supposition that he intended to kill Szpilman. Hosenfeld spent the remainder of the war hiding Szpilman and providing him with food. Upon Germany's withdrawal from Warsaw, he made a note of Szpilman's name in case the pianist might later need assistance.

Despite his best efforts, Szpilman was unable to locate Hosenfeld after the war. It was later found that Hosenfeld had died in a Soviet prisoner-of-war camp, ridiculed rather than exonerated for the outrageous claim that he had helped Jews during the war. Szpilman remained in Warsaw and returned to his piano, becoming an internationally recognized pianist.

Śmierć miasta (literally, "death of a city"), the title under which this book was originally published in 1946, garnered little acclaim. Perhaps because the pain and suffering of the war were so fresh in the minds of Poles, Szpilman's work was particularly disliked; moreover, it portrayed a German soldier as a hero. In addition, the growing oppression of Poland under the Soviet premier Joseph Stalin led to the removal of the book from publication and circulation. Then, in 1999, with the assistance of his son, Szpilman reissued the book in English translation under the title *The Pianist*. It quickly jumped to the top of the best-seller lists, telling a new story about humanity. The book was quickly embraced by Polish American film director Roman Polanski, a survivor of the Holocaust from Kraków. In 2002, Polanski produced *The Pianist* as a major motion picture, paying painstaking attention to the realism of the Warsaw ghetto and the characterizations of its inhabitants. Starring Adrien Brody as Szpilman (a role for which the actor received an Academy Award), the film met with critical acclaim.

Szpilman's book stands out in the canon of Holocaust literature not only for its unique story but also for its direct treatment of its subject matter. Szpilman wrote the manuscript immediately after the war, while his pain and memories were still fresh. His account is almost cold, reflecting the distance he had to put between himself and the events he suffered in order to survive. He provides a glimpse into a life that is all too often difficult to imagine. The reader is taken through the decisions of whether to stay or flee, to resist or hope, to obey or die. As a memoir that has not been colored by postwar research or decades-old recollections, *The Pianist* is a raw portrayal of survival.

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—Tessa Li Powell

PLAYING FOR TIME

AUTHOR: Fania Fénelon (1918-1983)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Sursis pour l'orchestre*, 1976 (English translation, 1977)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Memoir

Fénelon, who was a singer and pianist in Paris before she was imprisoned, describes how she survived the inhumanity of a Nazi concentration camp by performing as part of the camp's orchestra.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Fania Fénelon (1918-1983), a half-Jewish French singer and pianist who is a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp

Clara, Fania's companion in the camp, who is corrupted by its brutalities

Alma Rosé, a gifted musician who becomes the camp orchestra's tyrannical director

Tchaikowska, a camp prisoner who is made block warden of the orchestra

Frau Maria Mandel, the chief Schutzstaffel (SS) officer in charge of the women's camp at Auschwitz

Joseph Kramer, the SS officer who is commandant of Auschwitz

OVERVIEW

Fania Fénelon tells her story of terror and survival at Auschwitz in *Playing for Time*. In German-occupied Paris, she had been a nightclub singer, well trained in both classical and popular music. The Nazis arrested her for aiding the French Resistance in 1943. Once they found out that her father, Jules Goldstein, was a Jew, they shipped her to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the combination work camp and death factory in occupied Poland. She survived the journey and the initial selection of deportees for the gas chambers, along with her friend Clara, and was recognized at the camp as a well-known musician. She had little choice but to audition by singing arias from *Madam Butterfly*, and she was assigned to the orchestra.

The Auschwitz women's orchestra was made up of some forty inmates. Within the camp, they had a special position, with adequate clothing, shelter, and toilet privileges. Yet their food was the same as that of the regular prisoners, and they were subject to the same arbitrary roll calls, beatings, and abuse. They knew that if they did not please their Schutzstaffel (SS) masters, they might at any time be "selected" for extermination. To preserve their lofty position, the "orchestra girls" had to play march music for the work gangs as they trudged to and from their barracks, "welcome" tunes as new trainloads of prisoners arrived, and various concerts for the diversion of the SS officers who ran the camp. The prisoners in the orchestra had their own hierarchy. The concert violinist, Alma Rosé, was at the top as *kapo*, a combination camp police officer and conductor. Just below her was the tough and humorless Tchaikowska as *blockowa*, or barracks' warden. Within this madness, Fénelon tried to provide some musical leadership and human kindness to those around her.

In early 1945, the orchestra was dissolved. Fénelon and some of the other Jewish members were transported in an open boxcar to Bergen-Belsen, in north-central Germany. Conditions were far worse there, with virtually no regular food, water, or shelter from the cold winter rains. She contracted typhus and was near death when the camp was liberated by British troops in April, 1945. She was again recognized, and she mustered enough energy to sing the "Marseillaise," the French national anthem, for the British radio reporters accompanying the liberators.

Fénelon's narrative of her year and a half in Nazi captivity skillfully combines stories of terror, tenderness, brutality, and courage. The German SS officers who ran the camp are rightfully denounced as brutes and murderers. Joseph Kramer, the commandant, is portrayed as a stupid butcher who liked to relax with a bit of musical entertainment to forget the "difficult tasks" that he faced running a death camp. Frau Maria Mandel, the chief of the women's camp, was even worse. Fénelon describes her as a beautiful woman, capable of appreciating fine music, but one who coldly and fanatically dedicated herself to the exploitation and extermination of the "inferiors" under her control. At one point, she "rescued" a toddler from a trip to the gas chambers, dressed him up and played with him as if he were a doll for a few days, and then gave him back to the machinery of death in the next selection.

More interesting, however, is Fénelon's picture of the divisions among the prisoners themselves. One might expect that they would unite in solidarity against their oppressors, but such was not the case. Prisoners who were not Jewish despised and hated the prisoners who were Jews. There was no love lost between the French, the Germans, the Poles, and the Hun-

garians in the little orchestra. Fénelon's closest companion from Paris, Clara, changes dramatically through the book, from a naïve schoolgirl to a graspingly selfish opportunist who becomes a *kapo*, beating her fellow prisoners with a truncheon given to her by the German SS. Rosé, the conductor and chief *kapo* of the orchestra, was a well-trained musician and famous as the niece of Gustav Mahler, the composer. A German Jew, she imposed sharp discipline on the "orchestra girls," much to Fénelon's disgust. Worse yet, in the author's eyes, were the Polish non-Jews like Tchaikowska, who took out their frustrations on the Jews. In spite of the mutual inhumanity within the orchestra, however, some incidents of graciousness and courage emerged, as when Fénelon's fellows cared for her when she nearly died of typhus.

Fénelon recognizes that she herself was capable of irrational hatreds under the extreme conditions of the camps. She hated Rosé for being so German. She hated Polish non-Jews for being anti-Semitic. She hated her French friend Clara for prostituting herself to obtain extra food. She hated herself for giving pleasure to the enemy through her music. As she tells the story of her own grasping for life, she makes clear that these hatreds were morally wrong and yet perfectly understandable under the circumstances.

The harsh realities of the camp are described without sugar coating. Ethnic slurs are on everyone's lips at one time or another. Filthy latrines, murderous beatings, sickening food, and the stench of the crematoria are part of the story. Sexual activity, both heterosexual and homosexual, is mentioned. Profanities in German, French, and English appear in the pages from time to time. This is not a book for the squeamish, and some people might object to young people reading certain portions. Arthur Miller's adaptation of *Playing for Time* as a television drama tells the same story in a somewhat toned-down form. The overall message of Fénelon's book, however, is certainly positive: Survival and even gracious beauty are possible even in the most atrocious of circumstances.

Fénelon was about twenty-five years old when she fell into Nazi hands, somewhat older than the intended teenage audience for her book. Because many of the people she describes in the book were still in their teens, however, young readers can identify with the "orchestra girls." She often describes herself and her compatriots as laughing in the midst of the suffering around them, such as when the SS officers happily clapped time to the orchestra's tunes, not knowing that Fénelon had arranged music by forbidden Jewish composers for their pleasure.

After her liberation, Fénelon resumed her musical career, and she turned to her memoir of Auschwitz only after her retirement in 1972. She wrote the book with Marcelle Routier in French under the title *Sursis pour l'orchestre*,

and it was published in Paris in 1976. The English translation by Judith Landry appeared in 1977 under the title *Musicians of Auschwitz* in England and *Playing for Time* in the United States. The book was not originally intended especially for young people, and it was offered to adults as a selection by the Book-of-the-Month Club.

Fénelon's story of survival in Nazi Europe has not become a classic in the way that Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1960) and Anne Frank's *Het Achterhuis* (1947; *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 1952) have; it lacks the literary brilliance of Wiesel's book and the charming naïveté of Frank's. Young people who have read either of those works, however, would do well to turn to Fénelon's account. It is more explicit and brutal in certain passages, and therefore more realistic as well. Fénelon tells the reader that she kept a secret notebook throughout her months in the camps, and thus she had notes from which to rebuild her story. The occasional use of German, French, and Polish words will bewilder some readers, so it is regrettable that the publisher does not provide a glossary. Nevertheless, the story moves quickly, and the reader cannot help but get caught up in it.

The controversies over the 1980 television drama based on the book were rooted in the casting of Vanessa Redgrave as Fénelon. At the time, Redgrave was a political supporter of Palestinian causes. Many Jews, including Fénelon herself, objected, saying that a person known for criticizing Israel should not portray a Jewish heroine. That controversy may be ancient history for young readers, but it provides a poignant counterpoint to the book itself. *Playing for Time* is a significant contribution to the survival literature of the Holocaust, one that will give young adults insight into the absurdities, the brutalities, and the courage of that critical period in the history of Western civilization.

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—Gordon R. Mork

THE PORTAGE TO SAN CRISTÓBAL OF A. H.

AUTHOR: George Steiner (1929-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1979

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Alternate history; suspense

This work uses an alternative-history scenario—the search for and capture of Adolf Hitler more than thirty years after the end of World War II—to examine questions about the relationship between good and evil and the source of evil’s power.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Adolf Hitler, the former chancellor of Germany, now in his nineties and living in the Amazonian jungle

Emmanuel Lieber, a Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter, the director of the team sent to capture Hitler

Nikolai Maximovitch Gruzdev, a former Soviet military intelligence agent

Gervinus Röthling, a government lawyer for the Federal Republic of Germany

Marvin Crownbacker, an American CIA agent

Teku, an Indian guide

Isaac Amsel, an Israeli commando

Elie Barach, an Israeli commando

OVERVIEW

The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H. is a philosophical fantasy and thriller about the capture of Adolf Hitler by an Israeli search team more than thirty years after the collapse of the Third Reich. By this time, Hitler has become a feeble old man in his nineties. The novel begins with the immediate discovery and capture of Hitler by the search party. The sight of Hitler creates a mixture of shock, disgust, and exultation in the search party. The commandos cannot believe their eyes, for the diabolical Hitler is now only a lit-

tle old man. Two major themes will grow out of this epoch-making rediscovery of Hitler. The first problem deals with the challenge of getting Hitler out of the jungle, while the second is concerned with the vast implications caused by the capture of Hitler.

The search party is fiercely dedicated to braving the perils of the jungle to bring Hitler back to civilization, to the city of San Cristóbal, and then to Israel for a trial similar to that of Adolf Eichmann. A forgetful world must be reminded of the Holocaust one generation after the event. The Israelis communicate their amazing news to their government in code words of spiritual exaltation. While the Jews struggle to take Hitler out of the jungle, however, the American, British, French, and Soviet governments find out what has happened and scheme to capture Hitler for their own purposes. The Jews state their determination to try Hitler in Israel, for the Holocaust was primarily directed against the Jews of Europe while the world stood by.

The scene briefly shifts from the jungles of Brazil to London and Moscow. The British and the Russians have learned that Hitler is still alive, thus substantiating some past theories that the Nazis had killed Hitler's double and that the real Hitler had been flown out of Berlin in 1945.

The story then switches back to the jungle. Emmanuel Lieber, the Nazi hunter and director of the search party, exhorts the commandos by radio to ignore any verbal tricks that Hitler might use to save himself. To strengthen the resolve of the search team, Lieber recounts some heartbreaking examples of the harrowing sufferings of individual Jews, particularly children, during the Holocaust. These passages are the most moving and eloquent in the novel, an example of how a gifted writer can conjure up the past and convey at least an inkling of what it was like to experience the Holocaust.

The locale shifts again, this time to a soldier of fortune and a CIA agent who seek to capture Hitler for themselves, turn the coup into a media event, and cash in on the Hitler mania. The story then quickly switches to West Germany, where a government lawyer recalls the moral corruption and cowardice of many Germans during the Third Reich and wonders whether Hitler can be prosecuted under West German law. The news of Hitler's capture has also reached Paris. A representative of French intelligence concludes that the capture of Hitler is a matter for the great powers. He argues that a trial of Hitler at this time would be a farce, would reopen old wartime wounds in France, would promote morbid nostalgia and entertainment, and would be meaningless for the younger generation. When the news reaches the United States, the secretary of state calls a press conference concerning the whereabouts of Hitler and the question of a trial. Like the other government officials, the American expresses his doubts over the



George Steiner. (AP/Wide World Photos)

efficacy of the Nuremberg war crimes trials of 1945-1946 and the legality of a trial in Israel. Thus, even though the great powers want Hitler for themselves, they do not want to be reminded of Hitler's crimes. The world wants to forget.

The Jews deep in the Amazon jungle remember. The members of the search team argue about the colossal implications of Hitler's capture and trial. Why did God permit such evil to happen? Will the world care about a trial? Will a trial become a spectacle? Moreover, how can the death of six million people be avenged, let alone imagined? Is a simple

hanging too good for Hitler? Could Hitler have done it alone without the malice and indifference of millions of other Germans and Europeans? Will the Jews be accused of vengeance and the execution of Hitler then clear the conscience of the world?

Toward the end of the story, the Israelis learn that the CIA, the KGB, and the major news networks are on the trail of Hitler. The commandos burrow deep into the Amazonian jungle and themselves put Hitler on trial.

As the trial begins and the novel ends, the hitherto silent Hitler finds his voice and launches into a familiar tirade. He accuses the Jews of bringing the Holocaust on themselves by inventing the unbearable spiritual demands of monotheistic conscience, Christian love, and social justice. He claims that he took the idea of the master race from the Jews themselves, enumerates the many horrors of the twentieth century to obscure the Holocaust, and even argues that through his actions he hastened the coming of the State of Israel.

Hitler has the last word. Just as his harangue is over, two helicopters arrive from the outside world. The odyssey ends with the helicopters suspended in midair; the identity of the helicopters and the outcome of Hitler's capture are left to the imagination of the reader. So ends the novel—an invitation to ponder the significance of Hitlerism and the Holocaust to the end of time.

Because of the international implications of its subject, this novel of only 170 pages has a very long list of characters. The Israeli search team is a diverse group ranging from Holocaust survivors to young men who were not even born at the time of the catastrophe. It is given to Emmanuel Lieber, a Nazi hunter clearly modeled on Simon Wiesenthal, to narrate some moving episodes about the victims of the Holocaust. His stories are effective because they deal with individual people and not with numerical abstractions. The British, French, and American government officials are portrayed as cynical and morally obtuse spectators who are interested in capturing Hitler only after they find that the Jews are on his trail. They want Hitler for prestige and profit, not to stimulate memory and morality. They have no idea what they will do with Hitler after he is captured. Gervinus Röthling, the West German lawyer, is a former Nazi, now a smug government official who enjoys listening to music. Nikolai Maximovitch Gruzdev, the former Soviet military intelligence official, is portrayed as a sympathetic figure. In 1945, he had maintained that Hitler was still alive. Since this was different from the official Soviet position, Gruzdev was sent to a labor camp. Now that his theory has been proven right, the KGB interrogates him once again.

The central character of the novel is Hitler. When he is first captured and confronted with the charges against him, he lamely replies, "Ich?" As the trek through the jungle continues, Hitler is alternately shrewd and pathetic. At one point, he identifies a flock of vampire bats overhead. Is he devil or human, harmless or dangerous? The commandos cannot decide. When Hitler makes his speech at the end of the novel, some of his ideas, such as the assertion that the Jews invented conscience, come from Hitler's writings. Hitler's assertion that his idea of the Germans as a master race was borrowed from the Jewish conception of the chosen people, however, is George Steiner's idea, not Adolf Hitler's. Hitler's self-controlled manner and his almost didactic oratorical style as portrayed by the novel are out of keeping with the veritable library of histories as well as eyewitness accounts of Hitler that are available.

Only Teku, an illiterate Indian guide, is swayed by Hitler's words, even though he does not understand them. He makes a throne for Hitler and cries out in approval of what he has heard. At that point, the helicopters arrive. Steiner seems to imply here that Hitler will always find his admirers, especially among those who seek violent, simplistic solutions to the problems of the world. Indeed, there are those who secretly approve of the Holocaust even while maintaining that it never happened.

At the center of *The Portage to San Cristóbal of A. H.* is the reality of evil. Steiner's novel, no flight of abstract theorizing, is rooted in the awful par-

ticulars of a single historical event—the Holocaust—yet it addresses questions that cannot be limited to any one time or place. What is the relationship between good and evil? What is the source of evil's power? How is it possible for high culture to be complicit with inhuman cruelty? In wrestling with such questions, Steiner acknowledges their intractable difficulty yet insists that we must struggle to understand.

Steiner is also arguing for the necessity of historical memory. Mere forgetting, however, is not the only alternative he deplors. The Holocaust has been trivialized in countless shoddy books and films; Hitler, too, has been reduced to a caricature whose power to enthrall seems incomprehensible. Thus, in the novel's climactic scene, Steiner's Hitler is granted the authority of evil at its most seductive. Yet in his insidious arguments—his tracing of Nazi ideas about racial purity to the Jewish concept of the chosen people—Hitler reveals the ultimate poverty of evil: It can exist only as a travesty of the good.

George Steiner is a distinguished literary critic who has written important studies and collections of essays on the relationship between language and culture and between literature and the inhuman. His awareness of the Holocaust—a current that runs throughout his works, whatever their immediate subject—has given him an acute sense of the power of language to create both good and evil. Words can heal the world, but they can also beguile, maim, and kill. Hitler's use of language helped to create hell on earth.

The Portage to San Cristóbal of A. H. is Steiner's first and only novel. Shortly after it appeared, the novel was adapted by Christopher Hampton for the London stage. The book and its version for the stage caused much controversy. There is no doubt that it has great imaginative power and some memorable scenes. Its brief evocation of the sufferings of the victims of the Holocaust, for example, has been rarely surpassed. The play of ideas is brilliantly presented, and the moral issues are powerfully drawn.

The novel has some serious flaws, however. It is a thriller more in its challenge to the intellect than in its plot structure or narrative line; the gifts of the storyteller give way to the talents of the essayist. There is a lack of verisimilitude: The elegant language and brilliant points scored by the Israeli commandos resemble the speech of the academic with some slang thrown in to create an impression of realism. There is little of the suspense that one expects in a true thriller. There is no account of how Hitler has been found or of how the individuals and governments scheme to capture Hitler.

Hitler's speech and behavior as presented in the novel do not correspond to the real written and spoken record. Hitler's closing arguments

that blame the victims will appear specious and self-serving to readers with some knowledge of Nazism and the Holocaust, but they might come across as completely plausible to those who are less knowledgeable or less sophisticated. Hitler thus threatens to become a mouthpiece for Steiner's own theories rather than a unique historical character. Steiner's book challenges the intellect, memory, and conscience, but it falls short as a satisfying work of fiction.

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—Leon Stein

PREACHING EUGENICS

RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND THE AMERICAN EUGENICS MOVEMENT

AUTHOR: Christine Rosen (1973-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2004

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Ethics; medicine; religion and spirituality

Rosen presents an exploration of the ways in which religious leaders collaborated with scientists and social reformers in an unprecedented, audacious, and controversial movement to narrow the hereditary characteristics of the human race. The horrifying consequences of the eugenics movement were demonstrated by the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Kenneth MacArthur, Protestant minister whose family won the American Eugenics Society's Fitter Family Context

Albert Edward Wiggam, flamboyant eugenics speaker who devised a new ten commandments for the eugenically minded

Phillips Endecott Osgood, rector of Saint Mark's Church in Minneapolis and winner of the 1926 American Eugenics Society's Eugenics Sermon Contest

Walter Taylor Sumner, dean of the Cathedral of Saint Peter and Paul in Chicago, who required all couples he married to have health certificates from a reputable physician

Harry Emerson Fosdick, a leading liberal Protestant minister and member of the American Eugenics Society

John A. Ryan, one of the liberal Catholic clergy members to become involved in the eugenics movement

Stephen Wise, one of the principal Jewish rabbis to express support for eugenics

OVERVIEW

In 1883, Francis Galton, a British scientist and cousin to Charles Darwin, coined the term "eugenics," which he derived from a Greek word meaning

“good in birth.” Galton sought to employ the powers of modern science to harness the unruly creativity of nature. “What nature does blindly, slowly, ruthlessly, man may do providentially, quickly, and kindly,” Galton confidently argued.

To the devoutly religious, Galton’s program for human improvement should have seemed blasphemous. His words suggested that human beings could usurp God’s role. Especially disturbing to religious thinkers was the growth of eugenics organizations that advocated mass sterilization of the “feebleminded” and birth control programs that would prevent the weaker members of the human species from reproducing.

Certainly the Catholic Church regarded the eugenicists with suspicion, if not outright condemnation. (That came in 1930, in Pope Pius XI’s encyclical about family planning.) Catholic teaching affirmed natural law and the dignity of the individual as defined by Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274). To presume to interfere with the divine order of nature, to decide which human beings could reproduce and which could not, defied Church doctrine.

Similarly, most other conservative Christians—especially evangelicals and fundamentalists—reacted with horror at the idea of scientists—or any secular body of human beings—interfering with family life in such drastic and dangerous ways. Indeed, eugenicist organizations aspired to a power over family planning that the Church saw as its province. On the face of it, then, eugenics and virtually all forms of religious belief would seem poles apart.

Yet, as Christine Rosen demonstrates in *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement*, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, eugenics commanded the attention and sometimes the enthusiastic support of religious leaders. Most of them—Protestants, Jews, and even a few Catholics—were progressives or liberal reformers. They responded to eugenics as simply a movement aimed at human betterment. In most cases, these clergymen had little grasp of the fundamentals of science, and so their sermons emphasized the positive outcome eugenics promised rather than the means that would achieve that laudable goal.

Otherwise well-educated ministers also saw eugenics as a way to assert their modernity and show that their churches were relevant to contemporary society. This was a period when writers such as Bruce Barton wrote books (*The Man Nobody Knows*, 1925) about Jesus that suggested that if Jesus were alive in the twentieth century, he would be a businessman and a eugenicist. Eugenicists such as Albert Edward Wiggam traveled the United States with a missionary zeal—lecturing with a charismatic power that rivaled the style of evangelists such as Billy Sunday.

Moreover, the eugenicists were keen to make common cause with those ministers who seemed susceptible to persuading their flocks to adopt the new “scientific” view of human improvement. The word “scientific” has to be put in quotation marks here, because the eugenicists’ claims that they would be able to improve the hereditary characteristics of the human race were false. By the 1920’s, geneticists had demolished the eugenicist argument, although it took a full decade more for the bogus and dangerous aspects of eugenics to become apparent to certain clergymen and others.

In retrospect, Rosen points out, eugenics obviously seems like a terrible idea. Laws passed in the 1920’s that permitted the sterilization of the so-called feeble-minded engendered crimes for which state governors are still apologizing. The very idea that heredity could be controlled through sterilization or birth control seems unscientific, to say the least, as well as immoral.

However, at the advent of the twentieth century, progressive thinkers like Theodore Roosevelt worried about “race suicide.” Intermarriage between persons of different races and religious faiths seemed to be a growing problem and was feared to lead to social, political, and religious strife—not to mention unhappiness for the individuals involved. Novels and plays confronted what was deemed the chaotic rush of immigrants to America. By the 1920’s, nearly a third of New Yorkers were Jewish, and one eugenics study suggested that 60 percent of them might be “feeble-minded.”

Indeed, the obsession with the feeble-minded seems, in retrospect, an extraordinary fantasy. Sermons, newspaper articles, and books, however, treated this phenomenon as fact. Society—the world, really—was degenerating, the eugenicist-minded announced. Eugenicists made studies of families and communities that were found to be so debased that only sterilization or segregation of the enfeebled could save society from their polluting presence. One eugenics study suggested that the Pine Barrens sections of New Jersey ought to be separated from the rest of the state. That region’s inhabitants were a menace to their fellow citizens, the state’s governor concluded.

Toward the end of her book, Rosen suggests that the liberal religious thinkers who made common cause with the eugenicists lost their bearings; that is, the ministers, driven by the demands of a social gospel that focused on the good of society, not the salvation of individuals, abandoned their traditional role. Their attempt to be more meaningful to secular society ultimately diluted their religious principles, and by the late 1930’s—when eugenicists began to acknowledge the importance of environment, not just heredity—most of the clergy had already drifted away from the move-

ment. Any lingering attachments to eugenics was annihilated during World War II, when the Nazi experiments on human beings, the death camps that included among their prisoners the so-called enfeebled, and mass sterilization programs demonstrated the horrifying consequences of looking at the world eugenically.

It seems logical to ask what happened to all those feebleminded American people the eugenicists kept identifying in alarming numbers. Rosen does not quite address the issue, except to suggest that, driven by an obsession, the eugenicists were always able to find what they were looking for. A good many of the putative feebleminded were probably suffering from vitamin deficiencies and other health problems. Others were simply poorly educated. In a period when Jews and Slavs, for example, were deemed inassimilable into American life, is it any wonder that eugenicists—who decried the declining birthrate among Mayflower descendants, the original settlers of America—should believe the country was headed for a steep, chaotic decline? To some extent, as Rosen might have made clearer, political interventions such as the New Deal in the 1930's focused efforts on improving the environmental factors that produced the putative feebleminded. When nutrition, labor conditions, and public benefits were improved, concerns about the feebleminded diminished rapidly. Readers unaware of these developments may find it puzzling that Rosen never quite explains what happened to the masses of defective people who were supposedly dragging the United States down to its doom.

In her conclusion, Rosen implies that the idea of eugenics is not quite dead in an age that is testing the limits of genetic engineering. After all, polls seem to indicate that Americans see nothing wrong with tampering with the genetic code of their offspring for both medical and cosmetic reasons. Rosen does not believe that genetic engineering is the same as eugenics, but her language implies a level of disapproval that she is not quite willing to make explicit: "Thus, parents meddling with the genetic composition of their unborn children does not suggest to most people the same assault on free will and individual rights that forcible eugenic sterilization does." To use the term "meddling" suggests a degree of distress that the author does not develop.

There is one puzzling aspect of Rosen's conclusions that requires further thought:

The liberal tenor of religious participation in the eugenics movement also serves as a reminder that eugenics was never exclusively a conservative movement. Eugenic ideas rested comfortably within the mainstream of progressive American reform in the early decades of the twentieth century. It

was a movement that the liberals of its day wholeheartedly embraced as an effective form of social engineering and one that political leaders viewed as providing justification for a range of state interventions, including immigration restriction and compulsory sterilization.

How, one wonders, can Rosen write about eugenics as “never exclusively a conservative movement”? In what sense was it conservative at all? If by the word “conservative,” she means a political position, then her book supplies no evidence of conservative support for eugenics. If she is applying the word “conservative” to parts of the religious establishment, then, again, where is the evidence? Only the most liberal Catholics tended to have any sympathy with eugenics, and even those were wary. Most other Protestant and Jewish eugenics supporters were liberal. The conclusion to be drawn from Rosen’s book seems quite the opposite: Only the religious conservatives saw early on the sinister implications of eugenics. What political conservatives made of the movement will remain a mystery to readers of this otherwise well-researched and well-argued study.

Quite aside from the intellectual and religious arguments that Rosen canvases, her book offers a panoply of colorful personalities (many of them appear in portrait photographs) that help to show how eugenics was sold to the public. The minibiographies of the eugenics stars, so to speak, help to make this an entertaining as well as an instructive work of scholarship. While it is useful to have these photographs included at those places where the subjects are mentioned in Rosen’s argument, it would have been helpful, for reference purposes, if she had also included a list of illustrations. Her detailed notes and comprehensive bibliography make this an essential resource.

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—Carl Rollyson

“A PROBLEM FROM HELL”

AMERICA AND THE AGE OF GENOCIDE

AUTHOR: Samantha Power (1970-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2002

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Journalism; history

Prompted by her mid-1990's experience as a journalist in the former Yugoslavia, Power draws on archival research and interviews with American policy makers to analyze why the U.S. government failed to suppress genocide—including the Holocaust—in the twentieth century.

OVERVIEW

Books about genocide are unlikely to have many heroes. Samantha Power's Pulitzer Prize-winning *“A Problem from Hell”* is no exception, but it does give prominence to people the author calls “screamers” or “upstanders.” These persons focus attention on problems that others ignore. Speaking out when silence is “politically correct,” they try, sometimes successfully, to turn tides that seem overwhelming. As Power explores “America and the age of genocide,” the theme announced in her book's subtitle, Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) is revealed as one who fits those descriptions. A Jewish lawyer who fled Poland during the Holocaust, Lemkin coined the word “genocide.” He also stubbornly prodded the United Nations until it adopted the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, whose definition of that crime pinpoints “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.”

Lemkin knew that genocide existed long before he invented the word. He fervently hoped that the U.N. Convention would bring it to an end, but that hope remains far from fulfilled. Thus, as it honors Lemkin, Power's critical study of American responses to genocide echoes “Hardly Ever Again,” a song composed by Hank Knight and Tom Paxton while the world watched Rwandan Hutu slaughter more than 800,000 Tutsi in 1994. Knight and Paxton noted how the Holocaust, Nazi Germany's destruction of Europe's Jews, led to the midcentury slogan “Never again!” Their song

questions whether what people—and governments, especially—had really meant to say was, "Hardly ever again."

From the Turks' annihilation of Armenians during World War I and the Holocaust that raged during World War II to Pol Pot's mass murder of Cambodians in the 1970's, Saddam Hussein's destruction of Iraqi Kurds in the late 1980's, the so-called ethnic cleansing carried out by Serbs against Bosnian Muslims in the 1990's, and the Hutu slaughter of the Tutsi, the twentieth century was genocidal. Combining journalism, historical scholarship, and political advocacy, Power's brisk style does more than document and lament this sorry and unnecessary display of humanity at its worst. Taking her book's title from a phrase that U.S. secretary of state Warren Christopher used on March 28, 1993, during an interview about the troubled Balkan region on the television program *Face the Nation*, Power expresses her belief that the United States can correct its bystanding tendencies. "After a century of doing so little to prevent, suppress, and punish genocide," she urges, the United States must assume the leadership and risks required to make "Never again!" a credible imperative.

In mid-February, 2002, about the time that Power's book appeared, the former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević went to trial in an international court at The Hague in the Netherlands. Milošević was the first head of state ever to be indicted for genocide. Whether his trial's result, or any genocide-related court action, will deter future genocide remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that the murderous Serbian nationalism of Milošević and his henchmen Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić drove Power to write her book.

Having dispatched reports from war-torn Bosnia for nearly two years, Power was in Sarajevo on Sunday, June 25, 1995, when Bosnian Serb gunners shelled a playground, killing a nine-year-old girl named Sidbela Zimic and three of her playmates. Power observes that their deaths raised "the total number of children slaughtered in Bosnian territory during the war from 16,767 to 16,771." She knew that Sarajevo's 280,000 besieged residents counted on protection promised by statements such as those made by Bill Clinton on February 9, 1994: "No one," the American president had said, "should doubt NATO's resolve. Anyone, anyone shelling Sarajevo must . . . be prepared to deal with the consequences."

Power also believed that such words from Clinton or other American leaders could not be trusted, for she "had long since given up hope" that NATO intervention would prevent the Serbs' continuing assault on Sarajevo or other areas inhabited primarily by Bosnian Muslims. A few days later, Bosnian Serbs unleashed the worst mass murder in Europe since the Holocaust, attacking the so-called safe area of Srebrenica, where Mladić

slaughtered more than seven thousand Muslim men and boys while inadequately supported United Nations peace-keeping forces were helpless to intervene.

Hard questions gnawed at Power's conscience when she returned to the United States. Why had the U.S. government not responded more effectively to the genocidal situation in the former Yugoslavia? Would the American response have been different if the targeted population had been different (that is, not Muslim) or if the disaster had happened in a different time



Samantha Power. (Tsar Fedorsky/Courtesy, Basic Books)

and place? As she followed where these questions led her, Power found answers that were scarcely encouraging. "It did not take long," she writes, "to discover that the American response to the Bosnia genocide was in fact the most robust of the century." Following up on that claim, Power acknowledges that U.S. power to intervene in genocidal situations has not been uniformly high. She also recognizes that American policy makers have had different backgrounds and ideological commitments. Nevertheless, she argues that U.S. policies about genocide in the twentieth century were "astonishingly similar across time, geography, ideology, and geopolitical balance." Power's assessment of those policies and policy makers is harsh: Although the United States has sometimes fought against genocidal regimes—Nazi Germany, for example—never has the United States intervened explicitly to stop genocide, and only rarely has the U.S. government condemned genocide while it was taking place.

Power pays attention to the Holocaust and to the Armenian genocide that preceded it. She argues, however, that defining genocide too much by its quintessence, the Holocaust, can have an unfortunate consequence: Genocidal cases may fail to be identified as such because they fail to parallel the Holocaust closely enough. Paradoxically, Power indicates, the Holocaust can provide cover both for perpetrators of genocide, who may be able to commit genocidal acts without having them named as such, and for governments whose understanding of national interest leads them to pre-

fer policies of indifference and inaction that would not be easily defended if more acts of destruction received the designation of genocide that they deserve. Noting that "U.S. leaders who have denounced the Holocaust have themselves repeatedly allowed genocide," Power does not downplay the Holocaust's importance, but she does worry that "America's public awareness of the Holocaust" may inadvertently encourage genocide denial.

All genocides trouble Power deeply. Precisely because the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust provide such unmistakably devastating examples, she is especially concerned about genocides that have taken place late in the twentieth century, long after the world should have learned lessons from the plights of the Armenians and the Jews. "Despite broad public consensus that genocide should 'never again' be allowed, and a good deal of triumphalism about the ascent of liberal democratic values," Power asserts, "the last decade of the twentieth century was one of the most deadly in the grimmest century on record." The United States was not alone, but during that decade, says Power, American administrations "shunned the g-word" with regard to Bosnia and Rwanda, "afraid that using it would have obliged the United States to act under the terms of the 1948 genocide convention."

Bedrock American values are enshrined in the Declaration of Independence: All persons are created equal; they are endowed with unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Arguably nothing could be more antithetical to those values than genocide, which denies individual personhood and makes perpetrator-defined group membership equivalent to a death sentence. "Why," asks Power, "does the United States stand so idly by?" Her question does not invite explanations to justify bystanding. To the contrary, it is an ethical challenge to the United States. Given what Americans stand for, how can the United States stand by when genocidal acts are under way?

To make her challenge stick, Power discredits excuses. First, the United States cannot credibly maintain that it did not know what was happening. Power's incisive research shows that during the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, and even more so in the cases of Bosnia and Rwanda, "U.S. officials have pumped a steady stream of information up the chain of command to senior decision makers—both early warnings ahead of genocide and vivid documentation during it." Power observes that President Clinton modified the "we didn't know" excuse in his 1998 apology for the lack of American intervention in Rwanda. The line became that American officials "didn't fully appreciate" what was happening as Rwandan Hutu butchered "eight thousand Tutsi a day for one hundred days without any

foreign interference." Rejecting such alibis, Power insists instead that "we are responsible for our incredulity."

Second, Power refuses the claim that the United States could not have intervened effectively. Such rationale is unconvincing, she argues, because it begs the question. "The only way to ascertain the consequences of U.S. diplomatic, economic, or military measures," claims Power, "would have been to undertake them." Recognizing how costly her approach might be, Power advances it nonetheless and for two reasons. First, genocide's perpetrators watch to see whether they can proceed with impunity; historically, they have found relatively few impediments from Washington or other capitals around the world. Second, one can see retrospectively, partly from the few interventions that were made, how the United States could have saved countless human lives if genocide prevention had been an American priority. No genocide is inevitable, Power contends, nor is intervention against it impossible. American priorities are among the most decisive in the world.

Neither a lack of knowledge nor a lack of influence can explain, let alone justify, American bystanding during the genocidal twentieth century. A lack of will, Power asserts, is the gut issue. "Simply put," she says, "American leaders did not act because they did not want to. They believed that genocide was wrong, but they were not prepared to invest the military, financial, diplomatic, or domestic political capital needed to stop it." The telling implication of Power's analysis seems to be that the United States has preferred to let genocide rage rather than to take the risks necessary to suppress it. Cutting to the chase, Power's book asks insistently, Will the United States continue to embrace that unfortunate preference?

A new century's arrival does nothing to ensure that the age of genocide is over, but better accountability from the United States would be a step in that direction. Reflecting a pragmatic blend of morality and national interest, Power's appeal for better American accountability emphasizes how genocidal threats wreak havoc that undermines the rights and values that Americans claim to hold most dear. "*A Problem from Hell*" shows convincingly that the best coincidence of ethics and national interest would make the prevention, suppression, and punishment of genocide high priorities on the American agenda. Power knows that the American record does not inspire confidence in that regard. Her book concludes with notes of uncertainty about whether the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the United States will make Americans more or less concerned about "peoples victimized by genocide." Nevertheless, with persistence reminiscent of the "screamers" and "upstanders" whom she admires and resembles so much, Power refuses to despair. She continues to hope lest comfort be given to

neutrality, indifference, and cynicism, which always favor genocide's perpetrators and never its victims.

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—John K. Roth

RETHINKING THE HOLOCAUST

AUTHOR: Yehuda Bauer (1926-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2001

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Assessing the state of Holocaust debates in the twenty-first century, Bauer revisits key issues and continues his distinguished career as a historian by defending his important views about Nazi Germany's attempt to destroy the Jewish people.

OVERVIEW

Born in the Czech city of Prague, Yehuda Bauer escaped the Holocaust when he and his parents immigrated to Palestine in 1939. Nevertheless, Nazi Germany's destruction of European Jewry marks his life, for after serving in Israel's 1948-1949 War of Independence and completing his doctoral studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, this Jewish scholar became a leading historian whose work does much to define Holocaust studies.

Bauer's book is not a history of the Holocaust but "an attempt to rethink categories and issues that arise out of the contemplation of that watershed event in human history." Rethinking the Holocaust requires what he calls "historiosophy," a term denoting investigations within the territories where philosophy and Holocaust history intersect. Focusing on how the Holocaust happened and why, Bauer identifies key implications of that dark chapter in human experience. His inquiries also shed light on his own methods and concerns. As the work unfolds, it becomes apparent that a mature scholar seeks to restake his claim to ideas and interpretations that he fears will be distorted, overridden, or eclipsed by scholarly competitors.

To support these claims, consider five themes that distinguish Bauer's outlook: The Holocaust remains unprecedented. The Holocaust is, at least in principle, explicable. If scholars probe why the Holocaust happened, a task that many of them tend to avoid, anti-Semitism looms large. The Holocaust is best understood from a Jewish perspective. Study of the Holocaust involves political aims.

First, Bauer defends the Holocaust's uniqueness, although his rethinking makes him prefer the term "unprecedentedness" instead. By switching terminology, he tries to elude a criticism, namely, that the concept of uniqueness lacks meaning because all historical events are particular and therefore unique in one way or another. Bauer contends that this criticism is neither telling nor helpful, for it overlooks the point that sound analysis entails comparison of historical events. When comparison takes place, and one event exhibits an element—especially one of immense importance—that all others lack, then a claim for that event's uniqueness, far from being trivial, is appropriate and significant. Bauer hopes to avoid misunderstanding by using "unprecedented" instead of "unique," but the change reaffirms the Holocaust's uniqueness nonetheless.

To advance his claim about the Holocaust's unprecedentedness, Bauer acknowledges that the Holocaust was a genocide, but he also argues that much more needs to be said to answer the question, "What was the Holocaust?" As the term "genocide" is commonly used, it refers primarily to the destruction of a national, ethnic, or so-called racial group. Genocide, however, does not necessarily mean that the murder of every single member of such a group is intended, but that was the fate that Adolf Hitler and his Nazi followers had in mind for the Jews. In ways never seen before or since, says Bauer, Nazi ideology, a "pure fantasy" that combined racial anti-Semitism with belief in a global Jewish conspiracy to control the world, condemned Jews "anywhere in the world" to death "just for being born," and murdered them in killing centers that were brought "to a totally new stage of development."

Second, if the Holocaust is unique, especially in the sense that no event before or since has been driven by such lethal intentions, then it could be argued that the Holocaust defies explanation. The brutality involved was so senseless, the vastness of the catastrophe so immense, the suffering of the victims so devastating that we are at a loss to understand how the Holocaust could happen. Bauer rejects such reasoning. Far from making the Holocaust inexplicable, the Holocaust's unprecedentedness depends on the fact that its horror was unleashed by one group of human beings and inflicted on another. Unless it is claimed that human beings cannot be understood, which it is not, the Holocaust can be comprehended by historical analysis because it was a human event from start to finish.

Up to a point, Bauer realizes that his position about the Holocaust's intelligibility involves problems. He thus emphasizes that he is not saying that anyone has fully comprehended how the Holocaust happened and why. He stresses that historians develop interpretations and theories to ex-

plain events. These efforts involve alternative and even competing views, and the historians' accounts do not—indeed, cannot—encompass everything. They are incomplete, subject to correction as errors are discovered, and destined for revision as new evidence is found.

Bauer hedges his bets on the degree of explicability one can expect, but still his analysis does not probe deeply enough. Because historical analysis is a human endeavor, one that inevitably lacks omniscience, there is no good reason to assume that full historical comprehension of the Holocaust is possible. If full historical comprehension is impossible, then claims that the Holocaust is explicable—even “perfectly explicable,” at least in part, as Bauer sometimes says—are in more trouble than he thinks. God might possess the comprehension that is needed to make the Holocaust fully explicable, but while Bauer finds Holocaust-related theology fascinating, he concludes that it is “a dead end” and thus does not turn to God for the explicability he seeks. Still, Bauer-the-historian insists, the Holocaust remains explicable in principle.

Unfortunately, Bauer's rationalism deceives him at this point, for his appeals to explicability in principle, let alone his claims about “perfectly explicable,” are too problematic to be trusted completely. If no one, in fact, can finally explain the Holocaust through historical analysis—and that is where the logic of Bauer's “historiosophy” leads—then how does it make sense to say that, in principle, the Holocaust is explicable historically? At best, the reader ultimately seems to be left with hypotheses that are “likely stories”—some far better documented and more accurate than others—but probably not more than that. The point is not that the Holocaust escapes human understanding altogether, but rather than clinging to the specious reed of explicability in principle, Bauer would be on firmer ground to settle for the fact that the historical comprehension of the Holocaust, real though it is, has serious limits, partly because of the finite and fallible nature of human capacities and partly because the event raises questions and possesses implications that are more than historical analysis alone can contain. Ultimately, the question “Why did the Holocaust happen?” is the most important question of that kind. Historical analysis always remains inadequate to respond to it sufficiently.

Third, Bauer stresses that anti-Semitism must loom large if one is to grasp why the Holocaust happened. This emphasis plays a central role in his conviction that one goal of historians should be to present “overarching pictures of the Holocaust that make sense.” Scholars such as Raul Hilberg and Zygmunt Bauman have rightly emphasized that the Holocaust involved an immense bureaucracy—drawing expertise from virtually every sector of German society—that was necessary to implement the Nazis'

genocidal intentions. Bauer contends, however, that their accounts evade or respond inadequately to the issue of motivation. Concentrating on what activated the bureaucracy, Bauer thinks that ideology was the decisive factor—not the only one, but a condition much more salient than it is for Hilberg or Bauman. Bauer finds at the core of Nazi ideology a racial anti-Semitism that took Jews to be so threatening and detestable, politically and cosmically, that their elimination from Nazi Germany's "superior" culture became imperative. That anti-Semitism, suggests Bauer, provides "a central explanation for the Holocaust." On this point, Bauer's analysis puts him in qualified agreement with Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, whose controversial book *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996) achieved best-seller status in the late 1990's.

Bauer stresses that his own views constitute just one among the interpretations that seek support from readers and listeners, but when he goes on to say that he naturally finds his own views convincing, he rarely misses an occasion to argue that the interpretations of other scholars are wanting, especially Goldhagen. Although Goldhagen does better than some scholars in emphasizing anti-Semitism, Bauer insists that Goldhagen has a simplistic, unnuanced understanding of anti-Semitism, which, among other things, fails to account adequately for ways in which political and administrative structures were also necessary to promote genocide. On the other hand, whenever Bauer finds that Goldhagen is on target, he is quick to argue that Goldhagen is a latecomer whose views are neither original nor properly credited to his scholarly predecessors—including, predictably, Bauer himself. Goldhagen receives more of Bauer's criticism than other scholars, but Bauer is prepared to trump all of his scholarly peers. Too often for its own good, *Rethinking the Holocaust* finds Bauer—his modest protests to the contrary notwithstanding—concerned with buttressing his positions so that their superiority will be acknowledged.

Fourth, Bauer thinks that the Holocaust is best understood from a Jewish perspective. Hence, he says that the core of his interpretation is found in two chapters that focus on Jewish responses, especially resistance, to Nazi Germany's onslaught. Contrary to persistent myths, Bauer argues that Jewish resistance took diverse and widespread forms. He interprets resistance in relation to the Hebrew term *amidah*, which means "standing up against." Understood in that way, resistance could be armed or unarmed, individual or communal. It could and did involve, for instance, food smuggling to keep life going in Jewish ghettos as well as violent escape attempts at death camps such as Treblinka and Sobibór. Resistance also could and did involve what the Jewish tradition calls

“sanctification of life,” which in the context of the Holocaust included efforts such as educating children or practicing religion to keep life meaningful on Jewish terms, in spite of the overwhelming odds that German domination inflicted.

Bauer does not contend that resistance is the whole story of Jewish responses during the Holocaust, but he thinks that the best explanations for this mixed picture require a focus on German power more than on flawed Jewish character. Specifically, in the cases where resistance was not evident or sustainable, especially in the “sanctification of life” dimensions of *amidah*, Bauer finds that minimal conditions necessary for its appearance were lacking. For example, the chances for organized resistance among ghettoized Jews were scant whenever German rule early on combined factors such as “totally ruthless exploitation, starvation, and mass murder of young men.” As Bauer assesses the evidence, Jews were anything but passive, although the Holocaust conditions brought to bear against them became so devastating that death prevailed.

By focusing on the Holocaust from a Jewish perspective, Bauer believes, “a lesson, possibly, a warning, possibly, or an encouragement, possibly” may be found. *Rethinking the Holocaust* thus makes a fifth point clear: It is Bauer’s conviction that study of the Holocaust involves political aims. The book ends with a speech that Bauer gave to the Bundestag, the German house of representatives, on January 27, 1998, the German Holocaust Memorial Day. As his speech concluded, Bauer alluded to the biblical Ten Commandments, suggesting that where mass murder, genocide, or “a Holocaust-like disaster” threatens, the Decalogue should be supplemented by three additional imperatives: You shall not become a perpetrator. You shall not allow yourselves to become victims. You shall not become bystanders.

Rethinking the Holocaust shows that the Holocaust is studied because it happened, but not only for that reason. “Too many humans have been murdered,” says Bauer, “and the time has come to try and stop these waves that threaten to engulf us.” The Holocaust compels attention because, unprecedented though it may be, the warning that it could become—and to some extent already has been—a precedent in our time is still needed. Bauer’s book has its flaws, but the moral intentions that inspire it are not among them.

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—John K. Roth

RETURN TO AUSCHWITZ

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF A GIRL WHO SURVIVED THE HOLOCAUST

AUTHOR: Kitty Hart (1926-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1981

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Memoir; history

Relating how she survived the Holocaust, Hart gives a personal view of life in the concentration camp of Auschwitz and also educates readers about the facts and horrors of World War II.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Kitty Hart (b. 1926), a young girl who survived Auschwitz

Kitty's mother, who stayed with her and also survived the Holocaust

Kitty's father, who died during the war

Ralph, Kitty's husband

OVERVIEW

In *Return to Auschwitz: The Remarkable Story of a Girl Who Survived the Holocaust*, Kitty Hart not only gives a personal view of the plight of Jews under Adolf Hitler's regime but also provides a historical outlook on the events that took place leading up to and during World War II. She relates how she and her family struggled to evade the Nazis until she and her mother were captured and sent to Auschwitz. Hart describes her experiences through a series of twelve personal narratives, each of which makes up a chapter in the book and focuses on a particular time or incident.

Hart begins the book by describing her arrival in England after the war, explaining the struggle that she faced in rejoining a society that did not want to know or hear about the trials that she and thousands of other people suffered. In the next nine chapters, Hart retraces the journey from her birthplace in Bielsko, Poland, to a Jewish ghetto in Lublin, a hiding place in Dorohusk, a prison in Germany, and then Auschwitz, the most dreaded of all concentration camps. A map provided at the beginning of the book illustrates the paths that she took from one place to another, a journey that

she finished with her mother alone; thirty of her immediate relatives perished during the war, among whom were her father, her brother, and her grandmother.

In *Return to Auschwitz*, Hart does not merely describe the horrors that she witnessed on a daily basis; in addition, she reflects on them, questions them, and, above all, shows how she learned from them. She rebukes those who seek to mitigate the atrocities performed in the concentration camps or who continue to claim the Holocaust never happened. In relating her personal experiences, Hart also poignantly describes the life-and-death struggles of the people around her, the most important of whom was her mother. Hart and her mother miraculously managed to stay together throughout the war, and it is a tribute to their support and love for each other that they survived.

In addition to her experiences, Hart includes a brief summary of Hitler's rise to power and the events that took place during his regime. She gives specific figures as to the numbers of people exterminated in the concentration camps and describes the roles of the leading Nazis involved in this extermination, such as Heinrich Himmler, Rudolf Hess, and Adolf Eichmann. Hart also relates details regarding the philosophy and techniques employed by the Nazis to carry out their program of destruction. By interspersing her personal experiences with established facts and figures, Hart provides a strong historical background for the book and educates readers on the magnitude, effectiveness, and impact of the Nazi extermination machine.

Included in the book are two sections of black-and-white photographs depicting scenes from Auschwitz and a layout of the Birkenau extermination camp as well as portraits of Hart with both her brother and mother.

Hart makes it clear at the beginning of her narrative that *Return to Auschwitz* is a result of her determination to tell the world the truth about the atrocities that took the lives of six million Jews and thousands of other Nazi prisoners. As she movingly states, "Those of us who survived have a duty to those who died. They are not here to speak: we must speak for them." Her commitment to this goal is obvious: Upon their liberation from Auschwitz, Hart and her mother immediately became active in the process of reestablishing order in the aftermath of the Nazi destruction. Working first for the Americans and then for the British, Hart and her mother acted as translators and aided with the trials of liberated Poles accused of stealing from German farms and the identification of Schutzstaffel (SS) officers and concentration camp staff members.

Hart begins the book in a positive manner by focusing the first chapter on her arrival in England after the war. Although she reflects on her experi-

ences as they affected her new life, she does not go into immediate detail on what she saw and experienced. References to "death," "gas chambers," and "ovens" are left unexplained, giving only a sense of what is to come in the text. In discussing the difficulties that she faced after the war, however, Hart establishes an important precedent, as many books are based solely on the horrors of the war without a discussion of what survivors faced when it ended. It is important to know that those who survived the Nazis had to survive the denial and disbelief of a society that refused to analyze or acknowledge the atrocities that occurred. It is also in this chapter that Hart discusses the reasons for her return to Auschwitz and questions those who would deny its existence. These questions are reemphasized at the end of the book, when Hart's narration of her experiences during the war is completed, in order to challenge her readers to deny what she experienced.

Hart recounts her story in an unaffected and straightforward manner. She seeks neither to horrify nor to condemn, but simply to state what she witnessed and experienced. She describes her experiences in detail, and though she relates the struggles to avoid the Nazis prior to being sent to Auschwitz, the majority of the book is devoted to the eighteen-month period that she and her mother spent in that concentration camp. Hart explicates the inhuman conditions in which she and thousands of other women lived, the physical and mental degradation to which they were consistently subject, and the courage and strength that kept them alive. Yet, surprisingly enough, the most moving chapter in the book is the final one, "Return to Auschwitz," when the kaleidoscope of images of wartime Auschwitz is superimposed on the hollow Auschwitz before which Hart stands in 1978.

As she tells of the deceit and abuse among the prisoners themselves, actions that the Nazis promoted, Hart repeatedly states that she and her mother never participated in such behavior. Instead, she credits their survival to the support that they gave each other and to their refusal to succumb to the degradation around them. Hart also writes of the intense guilt that many prisoners felt upon their liberation because of their actions during the war, an aspect that, though not dwelt on, provides another insight into the affects of the war.

What is remarkable in Hart's narration is the lack of bitterness with which she relates her experiences. Her greatest regret is the education of which she was robbed. As she observes Auschwitz upon her return, Hart poignantly describes it as her "old school" where she learned "to obey or try not to obey, to revolt against or slyly circumvent, and always, either way, to fear."

In *Return to Auschwitz*, Hart has succeeded in creating an unforgettable

narrative of personal triumph over the most abominable of situations. At the same time, she creates a historical text that is effective in baring the egregious tyranny of the Hitler era and the depths of inhumanity of which people are capable.

Hart's book was published thirty-six years after the end of World War II, a period in which the world first denied and then slowly accepted the existence of the concentration camps and the mass exterminations that took place within them. A previous book that Hart had written in 1961, *I Am Alive*, met with little success, as many people were still uneasy about confronting the facts of the war. Twenty years later, however, Hart shared her experiences in the television documentary *Return to Auschwitz*, which met with international acclaim. As a result of her continued commitment to exposing the truth, Hart subsequently wrote the book with the same title, which met with enormous success.

Critics agreed that Hart's compelling testimony had a substantial impact in combating the indifference toward and denial of the Holocaust. Listed in the *Senior High School Library Catalog* as a recommended component of every high school library, *Return to Auschwitz* serves as an invaluable educational tool in depicting the plight of the Jews during World War II. Although not specifically written for a young adult audience, the book provides a lesson in both history and humanity for readers of all ages.

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—Barbara Carol Calderoni

REUNION

AUTHOR: Fred Uhlman (1901-1985)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1971

GENRE: Novella

SUBGENRE: Historical fiction

Uhlman's novella traces the deteriorating relationship between two close friends, one Jewish and the other German, as German Jews in the 1930's ignore intensifying signs of anti-Semitism and cling to a belief that their "German" patriotism will save them from persecution.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Hans Schwarz, a German Jewish schoolboy, narrator of the novel
Herr Schwarz, Hans's father, a physician who believes in assimilation
Konradin Graf von Hohenfels, an aristocratic school chum of Hans
Herr Zimmermann, a teacher at Hans's school
Max "Muscle" Loehr, the gym teacher at Hans's school
Herr Pompetzki, a Nazi history teacher at Hans's school

OVERVIEW

Hans Schwarz, the narrator of the novella *Reunion*, recounts events that occurred thirty years earlier when he first met Konradin Graf von Hohenfels, who became the "source of my greatest happiness and of my greatest despair." Hans describes Konradin, who epitomized distinction and aristocracy, as a "ghost," a person "from another world" who intimidates even Herr Zimmermann, the boys' teacher at the Karl Alexander Gymnasium (secondary school) in Stuttgart, Germany. Despite the class difference between them, which is only too apparent to Hans, Konradin prefers Hans to the "vons," the aristocratic boys who would seem to have more in common with him, and the "Caviar of the Class"—three boys named Reutter, Müller, and Frank who are the self-styled literati of the class.

Hans, who possesses a combination of innocence, purity of body and mind, and selfless devotion, has an exalted ideal of a friend, and only Konradin is worthy of that devotion. In order to win Konradin's friendship, Hans, previously an indifferent student, determines to stand out

from the rest of the class and display his intellectual prowess to his teachers and his athletic prowess to the gym teacher, Max "Muscle" Loehr.

Their shared interest in coins brings Hans and Konradin closer together, and the two boys seem "like two lovers still nervous, still afraid of each other." Despite his elation, Hans worries that Konradin's parents will warn him "against chumming up with a Jew," but his fears prove to be groundless. Together, the boys travel, recite their favorite poems, and debate the existence of God. Some indications of political unrest are becoming apparent in Stuttgart (the posting of signs bearing swastikas, the beating of a Jew), but Hans ignores them, preferring to believe, like his parents, that there is nothing to worry about.

When he invites Konradin to his house to see his books and collections, Hans pauses to discuss his attitude and the attitudes of his parents toward their Jewishness. Hans considers his world to be "utterly secure and certain to last forever." The Schwarzes have lived in Stuttgart for two hundred years, and Hans considers Germany his country. For Hans, being Jewish is no more significant than being "born with dark hair and not with red." He sees himself as a Swabian, then a German, and finally a Jew, and he distinguishes between his family and other Jews. Because they are more or less nominal Jews who oppose Zionism, Hans and his father consider the current political problems a disease that, like measles, will run its course. They are proud to be assimilated, and Hans's father, twice wounded in World War I, declares himself ready to fight for Germany again.

During Konradin's visit, however, Hans learns something about himself and his father that undercuts his relationship with Konradin and makes him reexamine his attitudes toward Jews and toward Aryans such as Konradin's family. Hans's mother behaves just as Hans had hoped while Konradin is visiting, but his father, for whom Hans has always had great respect, clicks his heel when he meets Konradin and proceeds to tell him inappropriate stories. "Never had I known him to behave so outrageously," Hans relates. He sees himself exposed as a snob, but he fails to see that his father's actions also represent the uneasy relationship between Germans and German Jews.

After a few weeks, Konradin reciprocates and invites Hans to his home, but once there, Hans does not meet Konradin's parents. He also chooses to ignore the portrait of Adolf Hitler he thinks he sees there. Hans begins to suspect that he is invited only when Konradin's parents are away, and those suspicions are confirmed when he attends a performance of Ludwig van Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* at which Konradin, who makes a grand entrance at the opera hall with his family, sees but does not acknowledge him. Upset, he leaves before the performance is over and returns home.

That night, he dreams that he is being attacked by lions.

When Hans confronts Konradin about the snub, his friend denies that he is ashamed of Hans and declares him his "only friend," but after Hans presses him, Konradin explains that he did not acknowledge Hans because of his mother, who detests Jews. According to Konradin, his mother believes that her son's relationship with Hans is "a blot on the Hohenfels escutcheon" and that Hans has "undermined" Konradin's religious faith. Moreover, she believes that Hans is in the "service of world Jewry, which is only another word for Bolshevism," and that Konradin will become a "victim" of Hans's "devilish machinations." Her beliefs reflect all the stereotypes that anti-Semites use. When asked about his father's views, Konradin explains that he is "different," but his comments only make the situation worse because they reflect the condescension with which his family members regard the Jews. Even Konradin's plea, "My dear Hans . . . do accept me as I have been created by God and by circumstances which I can't control," suggests that he regards their differences as ordained. When Konradin shuts the iron gates at the entrance to the family home after seeing Hans out, Hans realizes that "the House of the Hohenfels was closed to me for ever." Hans knows that this incident "was the beginning of the end of our friendship and of our childhood."

When school reopens in the fall, anti-Semitic posters and swastikas appear all over Stuttgart, and Hans's schoolmates, who had not previously harassed him, begin to treat him differently. Herr Pompetzki, the new history teacher, espouses Nazi propaganda, extolling Aryan virtues and blaming "certain dark powers" (Jews) for Germany's problems. Pompetzki's theories alter the mood of the school, and eventually one of Hans's fellow students, Bollacher, tells Hans to "go back to Palestine." After Hans hits the boy and Pompetzki asks why, Hans tells the teacher what happened. Pompetzki replies that Bollacher's words were not an insult, but "sound, friendly advice."

Hans's parents, who believe the craziness will eventually end, decide to send him to the United States. Before he leaves he receives two letters, one from Bollacher and one from Konradin. Bollacher's letter is threatening and demeaning; Konradin's letter explains that he believes in Hitler, who alone can save Germany from Bolshevism. Hans is far more upset by Konradin's letter.

Years later, after his parents have committed suicide, Hans reveals that his "wounds" have not healed, that the years since he left Germany are mostly "as dead as dry leaves on a dead tree." He receives an appeal from the Karl Alexander Gymnasium asking him to contribute to a memorial for all the students who died in World War II. As he goes through the list of the

four hundred boys who died, he at first avoids the names beginning with *H*, but finally his curiosity gets the better of him, and he learns that Konradin was executed after being implicated in a plot to kill Hitler. In a sense, Konradin has redeemed himself.

Reunion was a modest financial success for Uhlman, who had been regarded primarily as a painter, and the book was highly praised by critics. Renowned author Arthur Koestler, who wrote the preface to the novella, was only one of many writers, mostly on the political left, who admired the book, which has, as Koestler predicted, found a "lasting place" on the shelves of Holocaust literature. In 1988, Harold Pinter wrote the screenplay for the highly regarded film adaptation of Uhlman's book; the film, directed by Jerry Schatzberg, was released in 1989.

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—Thomas L. Erskine

THE RISE AND FALL OF ADOLF HITLER

AUTHOR: William L. Shirer (1904-1993)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1961

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Biography; children's literature

In a biography intended for young readers, Shirer chronicles the significant events in the life of Adolf Hitler, the Nazi leader responsible for the bloodiest chapter in European history.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940), the prime minister of Great Britain, 1937-1940

Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), the propaganda minister for Nazi Germany

Hermann Göring (1893-1946), the Reich marshal and chief of the German air force

Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934), a World War I hero and president of Germany, 1925-1934, upon whose death Hitler seized power

Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, the leader of an unsuccessful plot by German officers to assassinate Hitler

OVERVIEW

In *The Rise and Fall of Adolf Hitler*, William L. Shirer presents a precisely focused political and military biography of the individual who determined the direction of European history during the second quarter of the twentieth century. Hitler's personality, ambitions, actions, achievements, and defeats dominate this work to the exclusion of even such closely related subjects as the war in the Pacific, the United States' role in the fighting, and such major figures as Franklin D. Roosevelt and Hirohito. Instead, this biography attempts to identify those factors that shaped Hitler, the circumstances that enabled him to rise to power, his skill in manipulating people, and his ability to exploit opportunities in order to expand his political control. The book chronicles his increasing importance in German life, his in-

satiating desire for military victories, his campaigns to overrun Europe, his dream of world conquest, the defeat of his armies, his consequent despair, and, finally, his suicide.

Shirer describes the historical context that made possible Hitler's appeal: the anger and despair felt by many Germans at their country's defeat in World War I, which were exacerbated by terrible economic conditions that included massive unemployment and uncontrolled inflation. These factors, combined with a pervasive nationalism and a powerful authoritarian tradition, offered fertile conditions for an extremist response. Yet Shirer sees Hitler not as the product of these circumstances but as the individual capable of exploiting them to his own ends.

The four major sections of this biography, organized chronologically, are subdivided into seventeen chapters that examine Hitler's childhood, his dissolute youth, his artistic pretensions, the emergence of his political ambitions, his rise to power, the major German military campaigns, the ultimate Allied victory, and Hitler's death. Shirer, a journalist in Germany during much of the Third Reich, was a firsthand witness to many of the events that he describes. He supplements his observations with quotations from Hitler's writings and speeches, the diaries of contemporaries, secret Nazi files captured by the Allied armies, and official documents and transcripts.

More than two dozen black-and-white photographs illustrate important people, events, and circumstances in Hitler's life. Pictures of major German political figures, military encounters, and scenes of the war's devastation are provided. The most powerful images are scenes of the massive rallies and parades that show the passion of his followers and the machine-like regimentation that was a hallmark of Germany during this time.

Shirer is hardly neutral in his attitude toward the subject of this work. He describes Hitler as "an evil genius, one of the cruelest, most bloodthirsty and barbarous tyrants who ever lived." At the heart of this narrative is the impact of this individual on world events—how his personality and character developed and how circumstances allowed him to become a major player on the world stage. Because Shirer claims that Hitler directed events and was not their product, he believes that it is critical to understand who this person was.

Shirer explores Hitler's early years—his relationship with his parents, his school failures, and his frustration at the rejection of his artistic talents—in an attempt to identify the factors that produced an obsessed, charismatic, totally unscrupulous man who was nevertheless revered by millions of Germans. The author finds some characteristics that manifested themselves early: his unbounded faith in himself, an insistence that his

failures were the fault of others, a passion for violence, and a lust for control. These qualities evolved into an indomitable will, a fanatical anti-Semitism, a reckless disregard for life, and an insatiable thirst for military conquest.

The author is sympathetic to the plight of the post-World War I Germans, who faced unemployment, devastating inflation, a collapsed economy, and even starvation. Nevertheless, he condemns their indifference to the loss of their liberties and the enthusiasm with which they supported their führer's barbarism. He is also critical of the German militarists and monarchists who thought that they could control Hitler but soon became his pawns.

Shirer regards Neville Chamberlain as craven and unforgivably naïve for allowing Germany to violate the Versailles and Locarno treaties by re-arming, creating a nearly invincible military force, and annexing Czechoslovakia. Shirer considers the French government equally culpable, arguing that either France or Great Britain could have prevented World War II if their leaders had acted with intelligence and courage.

The invasion of Poland is portrayed as a critical event, as Hitler moved into the role of commander in chief of the armed forces. First, he neutralized the Soviet threat through a cynical alliance with Joseph Stalin, who agreed not to challenge the invasion in exchange for a share of Polish territory. After staging a false attack on German forces by Polish soldiers, Hitler's army raced through the country in only three weeks. Although France and England declared war, neither was prepared to take on the military might of their enemy. In less than a year, German armies overran the Western European continent and drove British troops across the Channel.

Encouraged by his victories and confident that he knew more than his generals, Hitler insisted on running all aspects of the war. Convinced that he was unbeatable, he attacked the Soviet Union. Unable to accept defeat, he demanded that his armies hold indefensible positions and therefore lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Poor military decisions, inadequate supply lines, the brutal Russian winter, and the growing power of the Allies turned the tide of battle. Eyewitness reports reveal that Hitler was growing increasingly irrational, yet, despite evidence that he was declining physically and mentally and the war was going badly, most of his fellow Germans and his military leaders remained loyal.

Shirer describes the most important of the plots to assassinate Hitler. It was badly bungled and everyone accused of being allied to the plotters was killed, but the plot was evidence that there was some dissension. By then, the defeat of Germany was inevitable. Hitler found surrender unac-

ceptable and planned for the total devastation of Germany and his own dramatic demise. He assembled his devoted followers—including his mistress, Eva Braun, whom he married the day before his death—and made his final plans. He wrote a will in which he blamed the Jews for the war and destruction and extolled the contribution that he made to his people, and he left instructions for the disposal of his remains. Shirer concludes with the hope that this nightmare will yield to a desire for a more humane world.

The Rise and Fall of Adolf Hitler was part of Random House's popular Landmark series, which sought to make the study of history of compelling interest to young readers. Landmark books were distinguished from the other series that began to dominate juvenile nonfiction in the 1950's because of its reliance on recognized experts, such as MacKinlay Kantor, Katherine B. Shippen, and Shirer, instead of on established juvenile authors. Shirer's reputation as a journalist and his adult works, including *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934-1941* (1941) and *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (1960), identified him as an important, credible, and readable chronicler of this era.

World War II is a part of the history curriculum that generates interest beyond the classroom. Prior to *The Rise and Fall of Adolf Hitler*, most of the titles on the war directed toward young readers addressed the Holocaust, the underground and resistance movements, the lives of civilian populations in occupied territories, espionage adventures, and the fighting. Little was available on the individual who precipitated and remained at the center of these events.

Before the 1960's, biographies written for a juvenile audience were considered useful primarily for providing models of achievement, perseverance, compassion, and dedication. Consequently, few books were written about villains. There was another daunting challenge: For a comprehensive portrait, it was necessary to outline the political maneuverings that enabled Hitler to seize and solidify his power, a difficult subject to make clear to an unsophisticated readership. This biography, Shirer's first attempt at writing for young people, has remained an important resource for students as well as a model for other authors.

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—Karen Harris

SCHINDLER'S LIST

AUTHOR: Thomas Keneally (1935-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Schindler's Ark*, 1982, in Great Britain and Australia (in the United States as *Schindler's List*, 1983)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRES: Historical fiction; biographical fiction

Keneally's novel relates one of the most dramatic stories of World War II Europe, that of businessman Oskar Schindler, who attempted to save his Jewish employees from the ravages of the Holocaust.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Oskar Schindler (1908-1974), a young war profiteer who manufactures products in Poland for the Nazi government

Emilie Schindler, Schindler's wife

Abraham Bankier, Schindler's plant manager

Leopold Pfefferberg, a young Jewish prisoner at the Płaszów Forced Labor Camp

Amon Goeth, a captain in the German army and commandant of the labor camp

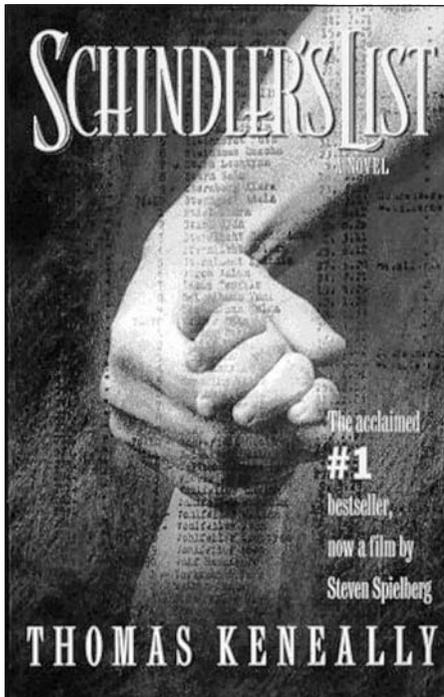
OVERVIEW

The Holocaust is, by its very nature, a tale of unremitting woe. One small beam of light in that immense darkness came from an unlikely source: Oskar Schindler, a German-speaking Czech who managed to save about eleven hundred souls while millions perished in the Nazis' concentration camps. That the story of Schindler's actions is true is without question. It is amply supported by the documentary record and by the personal testimonies of those who were rescued. It is ironic, therefore, that the first book-length treatment of these events came not from a historian but from a well-known Australian novelist, Thomas Keneally. Other novelists, from James Fenimore Cooper to Shelby Foote, have made successful forays into nonfiction, so it is not as though Keneally lacked alternatives. The author defends his recourse to a fictional genre by stating that "the novel's techniques seem suited for a character of such ambiguity and magnitude as Oskar."

This is not an insignificant problem, for fiction by its very nature deviates from a strict presentation of facts in order to explore a higher truth. One of the reasons a fictional approach can be effective is that it allows the author to deal more freely with his or her subject, from supplying dialogue for scarcely remembered conversations to speculation regarding the motives of a mysterious figure such as Oskar Schindler. In *Schindler's List*, moreover, a fictional treatment allows Keneally to examine more fully the nature of evil, especially as it relates to the brutal personality of Commandant Amon Goeth. Keneally risks his credibility, however, because he is exploring the heroic actions of a very real human being in what is classified as a novel. Given the fact that there are those who—despite voluminous evidence to the contrary—doubt that the Holocaust took place, Keneally takes a difficult approach by employing the artistic license of fiction.

There is no doubt that Oskar Schindler is a character fit for a novel. Born in 1908 to a Catholic family in the Sudetenland, the German-speaking portion of Czechoslovakia, Schindler would seem to be an unlikely candidate for protecting members of a threatened minority group. Although he married early to a strict Catholic, he himself rarely practiced his faith and was widely known to be an inveterate womanizer. What would eventually become Schindler's great quest began in 1939, when the thirty-one-year-old businessman traveled to Poland, which was newly conquered by Germany, with the intention of becoming a war profiteer. Schindler planned to manufacture goods that would ensure the continued success of the German war machine.

Prior to the invasion of Poland in September, Schindler had used his business contacts to act as an agent for the Abwehr, a German intelligence organization. Once in the Kraków region of Poland, he set about acquiring a bankrupt factory with the intention of producing field kitchenware and mess kits for the German army; this would soon become the Deutsche Emailwaren Fabrik (DEF)—the German Enamelware



Factory. Although Schindler had a war profiteer's rapacity for money, Keneally indicates that it was clear from the start that this was not the usual German patriot. Schindler rejected the official anti-Semitism of his government, and in his private conversations with his Jewish employees he affirmed the common roots of Christianity and Judaism.

Under the conditions of wartime Poland, the Jewish population had in effect become the property of the German government, and as a businessman Schindler had to pay the Nazi administration for the use of Jewish workers. He was employing slave labor: All Jews were living under a death sentence, with employment in labor camps or, as in Schindler's case, under lease to businesses, being considered a mere stay of execution. Any effort to ameliorate the sufferings of DEF employees thus ran counter to government policy and could provoke reactions ranging from amusement to outright hostility. On three separate occasions, Schindler was arrested and imprisoned by the Schutzstaffel (SS). Only his contacts with senior government officials saved him from torture and death.

Keneally states that Schindler's remarkable accomplishment "is the story of the pragmatic triumph of good over evil." Schindler's miracle was achieved in two distinct phases, one in Poland and the other in Czechoslovakia. Although he traveled to Poland only to achieve wealth, he set himself apart from other entrepreneurs in the area by insisting that SS guards stay out of his factory, by warning his employees of impending attacks by the German military on Kraków's Jewish ghetto, and by spending enormous amounts of money to buy food for his employees on the black market.

In this first part of their ordeal, which lasted from the autumn of 1939 until October of 1944, Jewish laborers regarded the primitive working conditions of the DEF as a kind of paradise compared to such death camps as Auschwitz. What enabled the DEF workers to survive was Schindler's peculiar combination of bravado, compassion, and an uncanny ability to judge character. Given his middle-class German cultural background, Schindler could easily have mutated into someone resembling Amon Goeth, the vicious commandant of the Płaszów forced-labor camp. It was Schindler's special talent that he could carouse with such men, bribe them shamelessly, and yet remain untainted by them. This is why Keneally's fictional approach ultimately proves so effective in capturing the elusive core of Schindler's personality. It gives the author the kind of speculative latitude not afforded by a straightforward nonfictional account.

By exploiting the Third Reich's propensity for graft and affirming the value of his Jewish workers to that regime, Schindler kept them alive until late 1944, when DEF operations were to cease. The now-famous list that he

created consisted of those workers who were to be transferred to a new facility in Brinnlitz, Czechoslovakia—a “factory” that served no purpose other than the salvation of its Jewish employees. That this German Catholic war profiteer became the “savior” of Jews is a factual irony worthy of the best fiction. The Schindler who emerges from Keneally’s novel is surely no messiah. His commitment to religion never progresses beyond a rare appearance at church; indeed, given his many vices, Schindler might have been a fit subject for reformation in nineteenth century fiction. It is only through the magnitude of his deeds in the context of his time that he achieves moral redemption.

Significantly, the novel was first published in Europe as *Schindler’s Ark*, a title that Keneally himself acknowledges as an allusion to the Ark of the Covenant of ancient Israel. The Ark of the Covenant was a chest that was reputed to hold fragments of the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments, and it served as the ultimate sanctuary for the condemned. This is a fitting interpretation in the context of the Holocaust; however, the book’s European title also suggests Noah’s Ark, a place of refuge in a time of universal destruction. For the Jews of Kraków, Schindler’s list was the only alternative to the German list: a bill of lading for a human cargo destined for the death camp.

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—Cliff Prewencki

A SCRAP OF TIME, AND OTHER STORIES

AUTHOR: Ida Fink (1921-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Skrawek Czasu*, 1987 (English translation, 1987)

GENRES: Short fiction; drama

SUBGENRE: Psychological realism

In this chilling collection of stories, Fink subtly and movingly exposes the diabolical evil of the Holocaust and demonstrates its sadistic effects on individuals.

OVERVIEW

Having survived the Holocaust—first in a ghetto and then in hiding—Ida Fink, born in Zabaráz, Poland, has fashioned twenty-two semiautobiographical short stories and one short play into a brilliantly crafted and emotionally devastating collection of memories in *A Scrap of Time, and Other Stories* (1987). Winner of the first Anne Frank Award for Literature, *A Scrap of Time* comprises works that take place in small, rural Polish towns during and after the Holocaust.

The people of Fink's stories awaken to find the beauty, safety, and predictability of their lives about to be transformed into a grotesque, nightmarish world of constant terror and savagery where undeserved suffering and death are the only certainties. Lurking just behind Fink's deceptively quiet, unemotional, tightly controlled prose is an endless flood of agony that wells up to engulf and drown both the characters and readers of these stories.

Through her juxtaposition of the diametric opposites of serenity and terror, Fink re-creates absolute horror. In the title story, "A Scrap of Time," she describes the beautiful sights, sounds, and scents of an idyllic spring morning in which children are silently skipping stones across a stream at the same time seventy Jews, including their rabbi, are being thrown brutally into trucks en route to their deaths. In "The Garden That Floated Away," a scene of young girls happily picking apples is contrasted with the fear their father experiences while he obtains the Aryan papers necessary to save them from death. In "Behind the Hedge," birds chatter on a cool, misty

morning while, "every couple of minutes, there was a shot, a little bit of screaming and then silence"; in "Jean-Christophe," "the bluebells, hazelwood and daisies, very pretty, very colorful," chafe against "shooting . . . people screaming and crying . . . it was a slaughterhouse out there."

How do mere anemic words convey even a bit of the agony humans have suffered because of elective human savagery and barbarity? During and after the Holocaust, how do puny words communicate the incommunicable when language, time, truth, and law were all murdered along with millions of innocent people?

"In war," the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus asserted, "truth is the first casualty." Certainly language is a close second. Fink defines "action" as "a word signifying movement." For the Nazis, however, "action" was a grotesque euphemism for the assembly and deportation of Jews to the death camps. For example, "Aktion Erntefest," hideously meaning "Harvest Festival," resulted in the murder of some forty-three thousand Polish Jews in three days as loud music masked sounds of the screaming and shooting. "Aktion Reinhard" (1942-1943) resulted in the deaths of more than two million Polish Jews in twenty-one months at the Nazi death camps of Treblinka, Sobibór, and Belżec.

Before the war, "selection" referred simply to a choice in life, but for the Nazis "selection" referred to the fiendish, split-second judgment concerning which Jews would live and which would die. In each ghetto, the Nazis created a committee of Jews known as the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council). Although portrayed as a self-governing body, the *Judenrat* was forced to facilitate the murder of selected fellow Jews. The term "roundup" may sound benign, but a roundup was actually the prelude to "conscription for labor," which, Fink writes, "had nothing to do with a labor camp." Both "roundup" and "conscription for labor" were Nazi perversions of language that signified transportation to death. Even the word "camp," which had once suggested a peaceful, rural gathering spot, became synonymous with the diabolically efficient Nazi death factory.

Like language, all communication during the Holocaust, Fink shows, was perverted or murdered, given that every thought and feeling expressed related to death. In "The Key Game," parents repeatedly rehearse their three-year-old son to respond to the dreaded knock on the door by stalling for time so his father can hide. When the Nazis enter and ask his father's whereabouts, the boy is trained to reply, "He's dead." In "A Spring Morning," while young parents silently carry their children to the death trains, a father whispers to his daughter to run when they pass a church; she is shot dead, and he is forced to continue to carry her limp body while he whispers to his dead child, "Forgive me. . . . Don't be afraid. I'll carry you."

Communication is a sadistic “game” used to exploit human suffering in “Inspector von Galoshinsky,” when an imprisoned Jew who is about to die is brutally tormented and humiliated by a fellow prisoner who pretends to be a Nazi torturer. When the attacked prisoner demands to be killed, the perpetrator says, “You’re the first to spoil the game.” In “Titina,” teenager Ludek, in order to save his own life, must deliver his former French teacher, a demented old woman, to the Nazis. Ludek plays the deceptive “game” of telling Titina in French that the Nazi commandant wants to learn French from her. Finally convinced, the delusional woman happily consents to be escorted to the death trucks. Horrified by the destructive “game” he has played, Ludek runs to his death.

Communication is so devalued that it does not even help heal the survivors. In “Splinter,” a young man pours out the agony he has lived with to his girlfriend, only to find that she is fast asleep. In “Night of Surrender,” the young Klara is horrified when her American soldier boyfriend innocently tells her she should retain the false identity she assumed for self-protection during the war because it will be “easier” not to return to her real, prewar self. Because no one will listen or understand and words are meaningless, communication will never accurately convey the agony of the Holocaust survivor.

Along with language and communication, time too has been murdered. Time has collapsed in on itself, and reality has become surreal. Linear time (beginning, middle, end) has morphed into “before the end,” “just before the end,” and “the end.” In “A Scrap of Time,” Fink indicates that traditional time measured in months and years was replaced with “after the first ‘action’ or the second or right before the third.” In “Inspector von Galoshinsky,” an imprisoned young man asks, “How much time had passed since they came for [me]? It seemed like a fraction of a second; everything had run together.”

Law and truth were murdered too in the Holocaust and its aftermath, as is evidenced in *The Table: A Play for Four Voices and Basso Ostinato*, which follows the twenty-two short stories in *A Scrap of Time*. At the trial of Nazis who had killed about twelve hundred people in a small Polish town twenty-five years earlier, the Prosecutor is obsessed with trivial details, such as the size of the table at which the “selections” occurred, whether the Nazis stood in front of or behind the table, exactly which Nazi killed which Jew, and what each Nazi said to the other. Rather than illuminating the horror, the Prosecutor’s insistence on minutiae obfuscates the Nazi butchery. Fink questions whether justice is even possible when there is no precedent for language to embody the barbarity of genocide.

Critics unanimously praised the inordinate restraint and consequent

power of *A Scrap of Time*. In one quietly devastating tour de force after another, Fink makes accessible the innocent individuals and families whose lives were stolen for no reason other than arbitrary and perfidious hate. *A Scrap of Time* has earned praise also for Fink's sparse, unemotional language, which underscores the deeply emotional authenticity of the characters and their terrifying fate. The collection, which plays an important role in helping to keep alive the memory of those who lived through and those who died in the Holocaust, has been translated into German, Dutch, French, Italian, and Spanish.

The totality of the Holocaust may not be communicable in mere language, but *A Scrap of Time* offers a patchwork quilt of fragmented memory and innocent lives brutally cut short that forms a scathing indictment of human inhumanity. Only by being exposed to such scraps of time—shards of memory that sting, cut, inflame, and infect—can we be even minutely aware of the horrors of the Holocaust. Our natural instinct is to look away from such sadistic savagery, but as one character in "Behind the Hedge" instructs, "We have to know about it. And look at it. And remember."

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—Howard A. Kerner

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

A COMPLETE HISTORY

AUTHOR: Martin Gilbert (1936-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1989

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

In this narrative history of World War II presented from a global perspective, Gilbert clearly demonstrates the importance and the brutality of the Holocaust.

OVERVIEW

Major histories of World War II, such as *Total War: The Story of World War II* (1973), by Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint, and *La Seconde guerre mondiale* (1968; *The Second World War*, 1975), by Henri Michel, tend to follow a pattern. They begin by tracing the origins of the war back through the 1930's and often to the end of World War I. They then divide the war into manageable segments, such as the basic ones of the European and Pacific theaters, and they periodize their material according to major battles and other "turning points." The authors enter the narrative to explain or analyze the course of events for the reader. Given the grand scale of events of the greatest war in history, such studies examine only the big picture, discussing major events and decision makers. Though their focus remains invariably the fighting fronts, they also include some explanation of the process of the mobilization of civilian society in their effort to provide a reasonably complete picture of total war.

Martin Gilbert's 1989 addition to such major works, *The Second World War: A Complete History*, defies all these conventions in its adherence to what seems the most conventional of all approaches to any subject, a purely narrative history of events from 1939 to 1945. The book begins with the German invasion of Poland in September, 1939, and although it includes two short final chapters examining selected postwar topics, it essentially ends with the Japanese surrender in August, 1945.

After marshaling and selecting the facts in his chronological narrative, Gilbert seldom intervenes explicitly for purposes of analysis or interpretation. In a rare example, he labels the German declaration of war on the

United States “the greatest error” and “single most decisive act” of World War II. Otherwise, the book is singularly devoid of the scholarly judgments that one takes for granted in most works of this genre. Gilbert eschews the presentation of analysis for the pure narrative, leaving readers to draw the significance and implications of events for themselves—no easy task with such a large and complex subject as World War II.

Chapters lack summaries to indicate the import of the welter of factual material in them. Gilbert skips across Europe and the Pacific within paragraphs to establish events in chronological order, sometimes, it seems, on a nearly daily basis, and then does not provide an orderly overview of events. Perhaps he wishes the reader to understand that history does not necessarily proceed in an orderly fashion and that the historian’s attempt to place events in some rational order may falsify the natural disorder of things. To further complicate the picture, he intersperses the grand and majestic with the small and individual. Major battles on the eastern front, for example, may be juxtaposed with the struggle for survival of a single British prisoner of war in a Japanese camp simply because they occurred simultaneously, with no attempt made to distinguish between the significance of the two events.

While the appearance of many heretofore unnoticed characters helps to personalize the history of the war, the manner in which they appear, combined with Gilbert’s failure to differentiate among events in terms of their significance, is sometimes disconcerting. Usually, when authors personalize the histories of major events by including the recollections of the common people, such memories are used to illustrate some larger point and make it relevant to the general reader. Gilbert, however, allows these individual experiences to stand alone, not as illustrations but as points equal to a general discussion, for example, of a great battle.

Both the narrative approach to history and an approach that stresses the importance of the individual in history are valid, because analytic approaches that slight chronology and individuals in order to get at deeper processes depersonalize history and denigrate the individual to the point that such history threatens to lose the reader’s interest. Gilbert’s work, however, underscores the importance of finding some happy medium between these methodologies. The historian does have some obligation to place the narrative in context, to weave the multitudinous strands of such a complex history together, and to render judgments that are sufficiently explicit for all to ponder. With the addition of an introduction on the origins of the war, conclusions to his chapters, and an overarching conclusion to the book, Gilbert could have combined his fascinating narrative with the analysis necessary to make this a more complete history of World War II.

The work would still not be the “complete history” it purports to be, however, because Gilbert’s day-by-day narrative approach to the war does not discuss the mobilization of the home front in the combatant nations. Gilbert does not penetrate beyond the battlefield and the violence that occurred behind the lines—in occupied nations and in concentration and prisoner-of-war camps—to discuss those long-term policies or processes that in fact determined Allied victory and Axis defeat as much as or more so than any single battle. Critical aspects of total war, particularly industrial mobilization, appear nowhere in the book, and that is certainly a major flaw.

Regarding technical aspects of the book, the maps are most praiseworthy, their number and excellence attributable to Gilbert’s earlier publication of historical atlases. The absence of footnotes, a typical omission in these works, is regrettable. Gilbert’s work contains anecdotes that have previously appeared in print, but, without footnotes, readers cannot recall where or see what sources the author used in order to delve more deeply into a particular subject. Although readers can certainly consult Gilbert’s works on Winston Churchill and the Holocaust for sources, the addition of a topical bibliography to future editions of this work would be most beneficial.

Such criticisms notwithstanding, the book has numerous strengths that make it well worth reading. Gilbert’s determination to highlight common individuals makes for a fascinating work, one very different from previous general histories of the war, in which only the great—the warlords, the generals—appear. In Gilbert’s work, one does encounter the leaders; heroic quotations from Churchill appear frequently in the book, for example, as one might expect from the celebrated official biographer of England’s foremost wartime leader. Gilbert’s recounting of Adolf Hitler’s continued preoccupation with architectural plans for Berlin and, later, Linz, as he vacillated about frontline priorities and Germany collapsed all around him, allows a cogent insight into an unbalanced mind. More significant, however, through the constant appearance of heretofore anonymous personages, Gilbert reminds the reader how individuals participated in and were affected by these cataclysmic events, occasionally playing crucial roles in them, more often being swept away. Individual acts of heroism—in frontline combat, in the Resistance, and in the camps—appear sporadically throughout the book. The brave, the cowardly, the cruel, the vile, and the noble are all noted.

From the narrative emerges clearly and unequivocally the importance of the Holocaust, the fruit of Gilbert’s previous extensive work on the subject. The book vividly depicts the brutality of the Nazis, in particular the

Schutzstaffel (SS) and its collaborators, and of the German army (and the Japanese as well) in general. Gilbert exposes the widespread assistance the Nazis received in their persecution of the Jews, from the Ukraine and Lithuania in the east to Norway in the north and France in the west. In the viciousness the invading German army demonstrated in Poland, the *Schrecklichkeit* for which they were noted in World War I assumed ever more extreme forms from the start of the second great conflict. The penchant of the SS for murdering any and all, from Jews to prisoners of war, and the Germans' merciless treatment of invaded countries and their peoples recall graphically the widespread brutality of the war. A kaleidoscopic series of snapshots informs the reader of the violence at the front and in the rear. Gilbert also cites the cases of the few individual German officers and soldiers who protested the unprincipled methods of the SS and Gestapo, often at the price of their own dismissal and execution. Ultimately, the book demonstrates the relative importance for the Nazis of the war at the front compared with the war against the Jews: Regardless of the fortunes of the former, the Nazis pursued the extermination of the Jews with singular determination. The book's recounting of wartime atrocities and the postwar prosecutions of the Nazis can easily lead one to the conclusion that SS criminals and their collaborators were not punished adequately for their horrendous crimes.

Gilbert emphasizes the importance of espionage and the intelligence war for both sides, for the Allies in defeating Rommel in North Africa and the U-boats in the Atlantic, for the Germans in their attacks on convoys in 1942. He also shows the impact of the partisan and resistance movements in Europe, particularly on the eastern front, where partisan activities tied down numbers of German troops and let them know that they were not safe even in their conquered territory. Finally, Gilbert recounts the Allied and Axis interest in and development of the atom bomb. Ultimately, the book reminds one of the monstrous human cost and suffering of the war. Here, perhaps, Gilbert's approach leaves its most lasting impression, for the grim statistics assume, in many cases, faces and names, bringing home the horrible impact of the greatest war in history more vividly than the mere recitation of figures ever could.

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—John H. Morrow, Jr.

THE SHAWL

AUTHOR: Cynthia Ozick (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1989

GENRES: Short fiction; novella

SUBGENRES: Historical fiction; psychological realism

Based on her short story of the same title, Ozick's novella captures the horrors of the Holocaust in one unforgettable symbolic scene and horrifying image, followed by her narrative of a Holocaust survivor years after she lost her child to the Nazis.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Rosa Lublin, a survivor of a Nazi internment camp

Magda, her infant daughter

Stella, her niece

Simon Persky, an elderly man interested in Rosa

Dr. James Tree, a sociologist

OVERVIEW

The Shawl combines Cynthia Ozick's metaphorically complex and morally profound short story of the same title, about the horrors of the Holocaust, with her longer follow-up novella about the personal reverberations of those horrors some thirty years later.

"The Shawl" (1980) is a breathtaking story. In seven short, poetically terrifying pages, Ozick compresses the unspeakable experience of the Holocaust into a story that is as close to formal perfection as a story can be. The plot is thin to the point of nonexistence—a young Jewish mother loses her infant child to the barbarism of the Nazis. The characters are not so much real as they are highly compressed embodiments of tortured terror. It is therefore neither event nor persons that make this story so powerful, although history agrees that the event described is the most shameful in modern life, and the characters in the story suffer more pain in a moment than most human beings will in a lifetime. Rather, as is typical of great works of art, it is the voice and language of the speaker that make this miniature narrative such a powerful story. Therefore, it is not possible to summarize its events without also referring to the words used to describe them.

The style of "The Shawl" is a combination of short, unembellished descriptive and narrative sentences and nightmarish metaphors of human ugliness and transcendent beauty. The story opens with a march through a winter landscape toward a Nazi concentration camp. There are only three characters: Rosa, a young Jewish mother; her fifteen-month-old daughter, Magda; and her fourteen-year-old niece, Stella. The Nazi soldiers are monstrous mechanical abstractions that inflict pain and death rather than real human presences. Rosa is described as a "walking cradle" as she hides the baby between her breasts under her clothes. She feels in a trance, like a "floating angel." While Magda is like a squirrel in her nest, Stella, her knees like tumors on sticks, is jealous of Magda's cozy safety.

Ozick uses language to humanize and dehumanize her characters simultaneously. The face of the child is round, a "pocket mirror of a face"; one small tooth sticks up from Magda's bottom gum like an "elfin tombstone." The duct crevice of Rosa's empty breast is like a "dead volcano, blind eye, chill hole." For lack of physical nourishment, the child sucks on the shawl that gives the story its title—a shawl that Ozick calls magical, for it has nourished the child for three days and nights. Because Magda occupies herself with the shawl, never uttering a sound, she has so far been spared. On the horrifying day described in the story, however, Magda scurries into the prison yard crying loudly for her mother, for Stella has taken her shawl away from her. Although Rosa runs quickly to retrieve the shawl and quiet the baby, she is too late. When she returns to the yard, she sees Magda being carried over the head of a guard and thrown into the electrified fence of the camp: "She looked like a butterfly touching a silver vine." The story ends with Rosa stuffing Magda's shawl into her mouth to stifle her own screams so she will not also be killed.

The story is so powerful that the reader can hardly bear it, which is Ozick's point: Rosa, like the millions of others caught in the horror of the Holocaust, can hardly bear it. Yet bear it she must, and "Rosa," the second story in the collection, recounts how Rosa has borne it. This story is quite different from the first. It is less poetic, less compact, and more discursive; it is more focused on character and consciousness than on visceral and poetic impact. Thirty or forty years after the event of "The Shawl," Rosa is living in Miami, Florida. Just before the story begins, she has gone "mad" and destroyed her junk store in New York. She is now a middle-aged woman staying in a hotel that caters to the elderly. Her niece, Stella, who still lives in New York, sends her money.

The events of the story focus on a few days of Rosa's life in which the following events occur: She meets an elderly man, Simon Persky, who is interested in her and wants to get to know her better; she receives a request

from a sociologist, Dr. James Tree, who wants to interview her as part of a study he is doing on Holocaust survivors; and she receives the "magical" shawl that she has requested that Stella send to her. Rosa meets Persky, whose wife is in a mental hospital, in a self-service laundry, where he often goes to meet women. When Persky asks her, "You ain't got a life?" she replies, "Thieves took it." When Rosa goes home and discovers that she is missing a pair of her underpants from the laundry, she thinks that she has been the victim of another thief, believing that Persky has stolen them. While she is considering this violation of her privacy and person, she receives a more pointed invasion—a letter from Dr. Tree, who wants to treat her as a subject of study; he is developing a theory about survivors of the Holocaust.

Rosa's search for her lost underpants takes her on a journey into the heart of darkness of the Miami night. Accidentally wandering onto the private beach of one of the large Miami hotels—an ironic image of a Nazi concentration camp but an enclosure that now harbors the analytical Dr. Tree—she cannot escape the barbed-wire compound that encloses her until she is thrown out by the manager. When she returns to her hotel room to find Persky waiting for her, and to find that her underpants have simply gotten mixed up with the rest of her laundry, she begins to accept Persky's interest and to make connections to the world outside. She gets her telephone reconnected, and she allows Persky to visit her. The story ends with the lines: "Magda was not there. Shy, she ran from Persky. Magda was away." This does not mean that Rosa is finally free of her obsession, but it does suggest that she has begun to allow real people to replace the magical shawl of her memory.

The only real character in these two stories is Rosa, for it is her conflict and her loss that are the focus of the first, and it is her isolation and her anguished efforts to "reconnect" that constitute the longer story that bears her name. In "The Shawl," the infant Magda is little more than the moon-faced creature of Rosa's womb whom she hides between her dried-up breasts. In the second, Magda is the child of her fantasy, whom she imagines is now a professor of Greek philosophy at Columbia University and to whom she writes letters that she never mails. In "The Shawl," Stella is an unfortunate fourteen-year-old child who clings to life; even if she decides that she must sacrifice the infant Magda, her situation is so extreme that she cannot be blamed. In "Rosa," where the reader meets Stella only in letters and a telephone call, she serves as a reminder of the truth of the past to a Rosa who does not want to remember. Stella chastises Rosa for wanting to hold on to the past, as she wants to hold onto the talismanic shawl.

Because Rosa must bear so much, both as the symbolic Jewish mother of

all those lost in the Holocaust in the first story and as one still stunned and entrapped in the past in the second story, she is more complex than any of the other characters, who exist primarily to reflect her complexity. Her efforts to protect her child and to survive, her inarticulate helplessness even to rage or grieve at the death of her child, her confused entrapment in the memories of the past, and her valiant effort to survive on her own terms without allowing those fears to violate her further make her the powerful center of both of these stories.

The most significant aspect of Rosa's character is a stylistic one, for in the novella that bears her name she is not only a distracted and disoriented aging woman who is often irrational and neurotic, but also, when she writes to her imaginary daughter Magda, a sensitive and articulate spokeswoman of all that the Holocaust stole from its victims. Indeed, the sections in which readers are privileged to read Rosa's letters to Magda, in which she invents fictions to retrieve her past, are the most powerful parts of the story.

It is difficult to articulate any single thematic meaning for "The Shawl." Like Shirley Jackson's famous story "The Lottery," with its mixture of myth and reality and its shocking climax, Ozick's story has an immediate visceral impact; moreover, it is structured with such consummate skill that it impresses one as a stylistic tour de force. When the story won first prize in the 1981 annual *O. Henry Prize Stories*, editor William Abrahams said in the introduction to that collection that "The Shawl" is one of those stories that



Cynthia Ozick. (Julius Ozick)

suggests that its author has been inspired—has received the story and written it in a single go, without even pausing for the manipulations of craft. In reality, what makes the story so memorable is precisely that it is so well crafted that it has the force of a breathtaking work of art.

What Ozick has achieved so brilliantly in the story is to capture the horrors of the Holocaust in one unforgettable symbolic scene and horrifying image. Writers have long known that to try to reflect the persecution of the Jews under Adolf Hitler by realistically depicting its magnitude is futile. The very immensity of the tragedy numbs the

mind and freezes the feelings. Ozick uses the power of language to capture the horror in its quintessential reality. Even though in reality the death of a single child represents only one inconsequential event in the midst of the murder of millions, in Ozick's story all the accumulated sorrow and horror of that unbelievable historical tragedy is expressed by Rosa's stuffing the shawl into her mouth to prevent her own screams.

The meaning of the longer story "Rosa" is easier to discuss, for it contains more exposition and more direct emphasis on the themes of violation, exploitation, memory, and the human attempts to hold on to the past yet escape it. "Rosa" is emphatic about the very power that makes "The Shawl" difficult to discuss—the power of language. When Rosa writes to the nonexistent Magda, the pen unlocks her tongue, for she is immersed in language. Writing for her is the power to "make a history, to tell, to explain. To retrieve, to reprieve! To lie!" By giving Rosa's writing her own highly articulate voice, Ozick is able to present the writer as a maker of parables, one who tells fictions that have more truth-value than the accounts of history: The stories the writer tells are concrete, specific, and powered by emotion and desire rather than by facts, figures, or abstract ideas.

Cynthia Ozick is a Jewish writer in the tradition of Bernard Malamud, for her stories, like many of his, are a special blend of lyricism and realism; they create a world that is socially immediate and recognizable while also being mythically mysterious and distant. She is also a Jewish writer in the tradition of Saul Bellow, for her fiction, like much of his, is powered by an underlying political and cultural vision. Ozick is a skilled novelist and poet as well as a powerful essayist on Judaism, art, feminism, and other subjects both contemporary and eternal. It is probably her short stories, however, that most significantly reflect her genius. When "Rosa" won first prize in the O. Henry competition three years after "The Shawl" did, William Abrahams said he would not hesitate to name her one of the three greatest living American writers of short fiction. "The Shawl" is one of those magical stories that so capture the imagination they become instant classics. It has been widely published in college-level short-story anthologies, where—with its eerie and unreal imagery, its distanced and transcendent point of view, and its horrifying climactic event—it will continue to shock and astonish readers for many years to come.

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—Charles E. May

SHOAH

AUTHOR: Claude Lanzmann (1925-)

FIRST RELEASED: 1985

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; oral history; documentary film

In the most comprehensive documentary film ever made about the Holocaust, director Lanzmann does not focus on footage of carnage; rather, he interviews the perpetrators and the victims, the witnesses to the “final solution,” and the scholars who try to make sense of it.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Claude Lanzmann (b. 1925), the film’s director and principal interviewer
Raul Hilberg (1926-2007), one of the most highly respected scholars of the Holocaust

Abraham Bomba, a barber who cut hair in the concentration camp and survived

Franz Suchomel, a Schutzstaffel (SS) guard who describes the concentration camp gas chambers

Jan Karski, a Pole who witnessed the appalling conditions in the Warsaw ghetto

Franz Grassler, second in command of the German administration of the Warsaw ghetto

OVERVIEW

An oral history of the Holocaust that focuses on the concentration camps and on the Warsaw ghetto, where the Jewish resistance made a last stand against German persecutors, *Shoah* is a documentary film that reveals the horror of what came to be called the “final solution,” the Nazi effort to destroy European Jewry. Unlike previous films about the Holocaust, *Shoah*, which runs nine and one half hours long, shows remarkably little footage of starving concentration camp survivors. Absent also are shots of bulldozers pushing bodies into mass graves. It is as if Claude Lanzmann, the film’s director, takes for granted that anyone watching his film has already seen these gruesome scenes.

Lanzmann first of all wants viewers to watch and listen to the Jewish survivors. The film repeatedly features Abraham Bomba, a barber who was forced to cut the hair of people who would soon enter the gas chambers. Although he knew these people were headed for destruction, he believed it was more humane not to tell them of their fate. Bomba relates his story in a calm, strong voice, almost as if he is lecturing to the camera. Only later, in one of the film's crucial scenes, is it revealed that Bomba's straightforward, almost cold, demeanor is the only way he can maintain his composure. When Lanzmann films Bomba cutting a customer's hair and asks him to relate what happened when Bomba recognized the wife of one of his friends entering the gas chamber, Bomba breaks down—or, rather, he just shuts down, telling the director (who is off camera) that it is too difficult. "I told you it would be difficult," Bomba mutters in a voice that is so quiet, so intimate, that it feels as if Lanzmann has invaded his interviewee's psyche. Lanzmann (still off camera) keeps telling Bomba, "You must [tell your story]. You must." The tight-lipped Bomba, chewing his lips, remains silent—although he eventually does tell his heartbreaking story.

The scene is emblematic of what other survivors have to say. How to explain an event that is so horrible that no words can do it justice? How to help people in a helpless situation? How to cut their hair and give them some dignity when they have been deprived of their humanity? Bomba never raises these questions, but his account implicitly raises them.

Lanzmann also wants to show how the Nazi death camps operated—how it was possible, for example, to gas more than three thousand people in one day. He goes over train timetables with a German bureaucrat. He interviews Franz Suchomel, who seems to relish providing Lanzmann with the details of mass extermination. Suchomel, however, is not aware that he is being filmed. The camera is hidden from him—a fact that is obvious not only from the poor picture quality of the scene but also from interspersed shots of technicians in a van adjusting an antenna and various controls that bring Suchomel into focus. Such scenes provide a feeling for what the filmmaker went through in dealing with wary witnesses. In Suchomel's case, Lanzmann agreed not to use his name. Suchomel's name does appear on the screen, however—Lanzmann's signal that he will not hesitate to document exactly who did what in order to make the machinery of mass extermination work. Suchomel still seems in charge. He is still an "authority" as he uses a pointer to explain a blueprint layout of the Treblinka concentration camp.

Suchomel's eyewitness testimony is confirmed by Lanzmann's extensive interviews with Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg. Lanzmann and Hil-

berg are shown in conversation, with Hilberg explaining in horrifying detail how the Nazis meticulously transformed the “final solution” into a self-financed operation. Jewish property was confiscated and then turned into the funding that paid for the transportation of Jews on trains to the concentration camps. Showing Hilberg’s extraordinary ability to decipher the coding of documents is Lanzmann’s telling way of demonstrating how the administration of mass murder could be couched in bureaucratic language.

Hilberg’s most important point, however, is that except for the so-called final solution (the effort to kill all the Jews), every method the Nazis used to persecute the Jews had already been practiced in European history. In other words, the Nazis saw themselves as the culminating point of a movement to eradicate a whole people, and the Nazi sense of mission is what made their “final solution” a new event in the history of humankind.

Contrasting with Hilberg and with the concentration camp survivors and Schutzstaffel (SS) guards who appear in the film is Franz Grassler, whose chief responsibility was to maintain a labor force in the Warsaw’s Jewish ghetto. It was an impossible task, Grassler confesses. Subsisting on a diet of about twelve hundred calories a day, their illnesses untreated, the people of the ghetto died in the streets. All regrettable, admits Grassler, who impresses on Lanzmann that he did what he could for the dwindling population. Grassler takes no other responsibility for this suffering, however. To Lanzmann’s repeated questions about why there was so little food, Grassler shrugs. He was simply dealing with the resources that his command provided for him.

The persistent Lanzmann questions Grassler about what he knew. Surely he was aware that the Jews were being exterminated in the camps? Grassler denies it, claiming he learned of the Holocaust only after the war. When Lanzmann asks Grassler what he thought his superiors had in mind, Grassler seeks refuge in his lowly status, saying he was only twenty-eight years old and hardly in a position to judge or understand the outcome of events. Lanzmann indicates that twenty-eight is not so young, and he implies that surely Grassler knew more than he now admits. Grassler does not answer; rather, he suggests that the interview is getting nowhere. Clearly it serves Lanzmann’s purposes, however, for it demonstrates how deliberately an officer such as Grassler made it his business not to know, or perhaps not to speculate on, the implications of his actions.

One of the final interviews in *Shoah*—with Jan Karski, who agreed to tour the ghetto after Jewish resistance fighters urged him to inform the Allies of the German plans to annihilate the Jews—is one of the most shattering scenes in the film. The anguished Karski describes the wretched

people of the ghetto and notes that the experience became unbearable for him and he had to leave. Although he did carry out his mission to inform his fellow Poles and the Allies of the Holocaust, the Polish resistance refused to supply the ghetto fighters with arms, and none of the Allies diverted any resources to destroying the camps or saving the ghetto, which the Germans destroyed.

Grief is mixed with outrage in Karski's eloquent coda to the film, which closes with an often-repeated scene: shots of the tracks leading to Birkenau, the Nazis' largest factory of death. The camera angle is such that viewers seem to be on the train heading toward the end of the line: Where the tracks ended the beatings began, followed by the march to the gas chambers.

A controversial film, *Shoah* has been attacked for placing undue emphasis on Polish anti-Semitism, implying that the Poles were indifferent to the fate of the Jews. That anti-Semitism is a fact, however, and the film certainly features Poles such as Karski, who knew and tried to do something about the Holocaust. On the other hand, there is no question that the film shows many Poles who looked on and did nothing. The film hardly makes them a scapegoat, however, as its broader conclusion is that the whole world stood by while millions were murdered.

The place of *Shoah* as the premier work in the history of film about the Holocaust seems secure. No other filmmaker has presented a more painstaking or comprehensive view of the subject or questioned survivors and perpetrators more sharply than Lanzmann. *Shoah's* steady accrual of facts, testimony, and visual depictions of concentration camp sites is unparalleled in the history of films about the Holocaust.

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—Carl Rollyson

SOPHIE'S CHOICE

AUTHOR: William Styron (1925-2006)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1979

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Psychological realism

Narrated by the protagonist twenty years after the events it records, Sophie's Choice tells the story of the Holocaust's impact on the life of a Polish survivor and those around her.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Stingo, the narrator, would-be writer of the great American novel

Sophie Zawadowska, a displaced concentration camp survivor

Nathan Landau, a brilliant madman, Sophie's lover

Stingo's father, a liberal gentleman of the American South

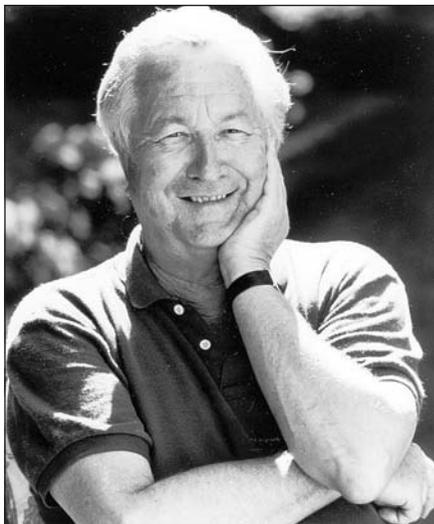
OVERVIEW

Many critics consider this novel, William Styron's fourth, to be his greatest achievement. In *Sophie's Choice*, Styron introduces a theme new to his novels, the Holocaust and its long-term impact, and revisits an old theme, the suicide of a woman. The novel is constructed as a memoir narrated by the protagonist, Stingo, twenty years after the events it records. As is usual in Styron's fiction, it attempts to connect major themes of recent Western history to a confessional type of story.

Stingo, an aspiring southern novelist in his early twenties, has resigned an unrewarding editorship with a major New York publishing firm and moved into economical lodgings in a Brooklyn rooming house to devote all of his energies to his writing. Stingo's father has sent him five hundred dollars from a recent discovery of old gold pieces that were paid to his great-grandfather for the sale of a slave, Artiste. Although embarrassed by the source of this windfall, Stingo uses the money to support himself while he creates his first literary masterpiece, a novel about Maria Hunt, a high school friend whose suicide Stingo's father related to him as of possible interest. His father has written to him regularly and once came to visit him to try to persuade Stingo to return to his roots in the South. Stingo has refused

to leave New York, but he often reconsiders that decision.

Soon Stingo is deeply involved in the lives of Nathan Landau, one of several Jewish boarders, and Nathan's passionate lover, the Polish refugee Sophie Zawadowska, a former Catholic. Stingo falls in love with Sophie at first sight, but he has too much respect for Nathan's prior claim to woo her. He befriends the couple and retells Sophie's story as she gradually unfolds it to him. Reared in Kraków, Sophie had a professor father who provided a strict, oppressive upbringing, while her passive but refined mother taught her a love for



William Styron. (© Peter Simon/Courtesy, Random House)

classical music that became her only consolation in the madness of the Auschwitz concentration camp and later the postwar United States.

At first, Stingo idealizes the brilliant, talkative, and volatile Nathan, whose claim to be a cellular biologist Stingo accepts at face value. It soon becomes clear, however, that Nathan indulges in brutally abusive moods, exacerbated by drug use, that end in gun-waving, threats to kill, physical and verbal abuse, and sexual violence for Sophie. Stingo's perplexity about Sophie's enduring and even clinging to this disastrously destructive relationship is only partially satisfied when he learns her story. She has inherited guilt for her professor father's fascist political beliefs, his anti-Semitism, and his foreshadowing of the Holocaust through a monograph he wrote calling for the extermination of Jews. He demanded that Sophie distribute the monograph, and he died as the Nazis shot him and Sophie's husband because they were professors and Polish. Sophie's most terrifying burden arose from the few horrifying moments when she arrived at Auschwitz with her two children, a boy and a girl, and a drunken German physician demanded that she decide which of her two children should be sent to the gas chambers. Such was Sophie's choice. Her boy lived, and Sophie obtained a clerical position with the camp commandant, Rudolph Hoss. She tried to seduce Hoss, kissed his boots, and begged to see her child—all to no effect. She never saw her son again.

Now, only her love for Nathan and classical music fuels Sophie's will to live. She constantly fills the neighborhood with strains from Wolfgang

Amadeus Mozart, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Ludwig van Beethoven, played on Nathan's gramophone. Stingo learns from Nathan's brother Larry, a wealthy physician, that Nathan has suffered chronic mental illness; that he cannot be employed as a scientist or anything else; and that between bouts in mental hospitals he has occupied the boardinghouse room paid for by his family, on whose patronage he is completely dependent. Now convinced that Nathan might well be homicidal, Stingo offers Sophie an escape, a new life married to him, living on the small Virginia farm his father has offered for his use—ironically, inherited from a man of offensively rightist ideology whom his father tolerated and befriended in traditional liberal American style.

Once again, Sophie becomes a refugee, on a train bound this time for Virginia, where former slave territory now offers possible liberation, healing, and a life accompanied by Stingo, the gallant lover nearly twenty years younger than she. After a stopover in Washington, D.C., so Sophie can have a tourist's introduction to America's political heart, Stingo and Sophie spend a passionate night together. Stingo then awakes to find himself alone. Grieved, Stingo wavers between continuing toward his life as a southern gentleman-farmer and writer and returning to New York. At last, his illusions nearly all dispelled, and realizing Sophie's latest choice entails her death, Stingo frantically returns to the boardinghouse to discover officials removing the bodies of Nathan and Sophie, who have fulfilled their suicide pact.

The parallels between the facts of Stingo's experiences at the rooming house and Styron's own life at that age are so consistent that readers may interpret Stingo as a persona tied closely to Styron himself. Styron did live in such a boardinghouse in order to write and did know such a woman as Sophie, "beautiful but ravaged." Although he knew her only slightly, his experience lends authenticity to the narrative voice at the same time that Styron takes full advantage of artistic freedom to realize a personal vision. Through Stingo, Styron unifies a complex variety of themes, two of which are central: the difficulty of keeping faith with God, religion, and human nature in view of the Nazi atrocities; and the difficulty of becoming a literary artist in view of those atrocities as well as in view of the decline of southern regional writing. As Nathan observes to Stingo, southern literature is a dying tradition; the difficulty of creating in the wake of such notables as Lillian Hellman, William Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, and Carson McCullers is Styron's great challenge. A major theme of *Sophie's Choice* is Styron's focus on this challenge, and he responds by creating a South contextualized in the colorful mixture of many ethnicities and backgrounds. As Stingo notes, the Brooklyn rooming house is a microcosm of American heterogeneous types.

By placing his South in such a broad context, Styron is able to make his point that suffering is universal for human beings, and even the Holocaust may be integrated into a larger picture of human tragedy. The risk is in proposing such a morally ambiguous world and such a pessimistic vision of life that creativity becomes wholly arbitrary and useless. Styron seems to find a sufficient balance and some rays of convincing hope, but only as Stingo overcomes his youthful naïveté and exercises self-control in his relationships with others. The South of his youth and the European past are as sweet, innocent, and irrecoverable as Sophie's own childhood in Gothic Kraków, resounding with the divine music of the classic composers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, George Frideric Handel, Johann Sebastian Bach, and Johannes Brahms. The past is not altogether obsolete and archaic, however, nor are the obstacles to happiness the only powers at work. Joy visits at unexpected moments. Whether readers find in these moments sufficient recompense for pain or little more than an interruption of pain will determine the degree to which they find Styron's tragedies absolute. The joy is, in any case, real in Nathan's brilliant conversation, in the progress of Stingo's first novel, and in Sophie's friendship, uninhibited sexuality, and beauty. Joy is there even in Stingo's father's idealism and old-fashioned manners, his solicitous love for and faith in his son. It is present in Sophie's quasi-mythical youth in prewar Poland, in her struggles to help others and make the best of her imprisonment in the concentration camp at Auschwitz, and in her efforts to regain her health, to love faithfully, and to rebuild her life in the United States, although she is haunted by memories, especially guilt over the enforced choice between her two children.

Structurally, *Sophie's Choice* is a complex achievement. Styron structures the novel on stated and implied parallels—between Poland and the U.S. South, between Nathan's sadistic moods and the Nazi persecution of his race, between Stingo's and Sophie's inability to find permanent happiness through love. The novel benefits from Styron's careful craftsmanship and such deeply considered relationships. Its only serious narrative weakness comes when Stingo gives over his storytelling persona in order to summarize historians' scholarship concerning Rudolf Hess's involvement in the Nazi movement, an interruption in the fictional world that jars readers' sensibilities.

While critics have rightly observed that Nathan is weak because he is too improbable, Styron's strength rests with his recurring thematic emphasis on tragic women trapped between their need for self-realization and their dependence on unstable and neurotic men. He writes with great sensitivity about traditional women's roles and offers convincing psychological insights into the major dilemmas of feminine existence. While recent

history and Styron's autobiography provide a realistic atmosphere, the female character, presented with extraordinary sensitivity and intimacy, is an archetype synthesized in Styron's imagination, the femme fatale become voluntary sacrifice, in a ritual of recompense as old as humanity: a self-assigned offering necessary to balance the scales against man's terrible inhumanity to man.

Men are not immune from pain or victimhood, as the tragicomic adventures during which Stingo tries unsuccessfully to lose his virginity remind us. In Styron's fictional world, no one group, ideology, religion, race, or gender owns exclusive rights to suffering or claims to the superiority of its sufferings. Nor are victims merely passive objects of sadism. Tragedy is defined by the complicity of victims in their suffering, whose commitment to life and goodness ironically traps them as accessories to the evils that befall them. Sophie's so-called choice illustrates the point precisely. One's acceptance of this burden of responsibility restores some dignity to human life, and this theme redeems Styron's literary vision from absolute darkness.

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—Diane Brotemarkle

THE STATE OF ISRAEL VS. ADOLF EICHMANN

AUTHOR: Hanna Yablonka (1950-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Medinat Yisrael Neged Adolf Eichmann*, 2001 (English translation, 2004)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Analyzing the process that led to the conviction and execution of Adolf Eichmann, a key perpetrator of the Holocaust, Yablonka shows how Eichmann's 1961 trial contributed to the shaping of Israel's national identity.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962), a Nazi war criminal who was tried and executed in Israel

David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), the first prime minister of Israel

Gideon Hausner (1915-1990), Israel's attorney general

OVERVIEW

On May 23, 1960, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion made an announcement to the Knesset, the Israeli parliament: Agents of Mossad, Israel's secret service, had captured the Holocaust perpetrator Adolf Eichmann in Argentina and brought him to an Israeli prison. As author Hanna Yablonka demonstrates, that arrest began a process that transformed Israeli society and Jewish consciousness.

Born in 1906, Eichmann grew up in Austria and joined the Nazi Party in 1932. As a member of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and the Security Service (SD), he developed expertise on Jewish affairs. Although Eichmann did not control the Third Reich's anti-Jewish policies, his ties to Reinhard Heydrich, his SS superior, made him part of the inner circle that plotted and carried out the destruction of the European Jews. Eichmann played decisive parts in implementing Nazi policy as it went from forcing Jews to emigrate from the Third Reich in the late 1930's to deporting them to killing centers such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, where millions were gassed from 1942 until the end of 1944.

In particular, Eichmann presided over the forced emigration of Austrian Jews in 1938. He participated in the Wannsee Conference, the infamous meeting held on January 20, 1942, at which Heydrich and other Nazi leaders coordinated plans for the so-called final solution. Eichmann also supervised the deportation of Hungarian Jews in the spring and summer of 1944, when approximately 435,000 Jews were sent to Auschwitz within a few weeks. Such activities required his initiative and reflected his ambition. Contrary to the impression that he was a banal bureaucrat or an indistinct cog in the Nazi machine, Eichmann was never merely an obedient underling who followed orders, a characterization that was central but unsuccessful in his trial defense.

After World War II, Eichmann fled to Argentina, where he and his family lived under the name of Klement. As early as September, 1957, German sources tipped Israeli officials as to his probable whereabouts. Yablonka's narrative indicates that the Israelis responded cautiously, hoping that the Germans would extradite and try him. In 1960, when it became clear that the Germans would not act, Haim Cohen, Israel's attorney general at the time, authorized the capture and abduction. The Mossad snared Eichmann on May 11, 1960, and he arrived in Israel on May 22. At least for a time, those actions made Israel vulnerable to international criticism for violating Argentina's sovereignty.

After lengthy interrogation of Eichmann, which was carried out by Bureau 06, a police unit led by Avraham Zellinger and Avner Less, the trial started on April 11, 1961. Defended in the Jerusalem district court by the German lawyer Robert Servatius, Eichmann faced a fifteen-count indictment for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and, significantly, crimes against the Jewish people, a category that had not previously been used in postwar tribunals. Gideon Hausner, Israel's attorney general, was the chief prosecutor. The case was heard by three Israeli judges: Binyamin Halevi and Yitzchak Raveh from the district court, with Supreme Court justice Moshe Landau presiding. The testimony concluded on August 14. Four months later, on December 15, the judges found Eichmann guilty as charged and sentenced him to death. His execution by hanging took place at 1:00 A.M. on June 1, 1962. Eichmann's body was cremated. The ashes were scattered over the Mediterranean Sea, beyond Israel's territorial waters but not beyond Israeli identity and Jewish consciousness.

Although *The State of Israel vs. Adolf Eichmann* necessarily provides the background outlined above, Yablonka's book is not a history of the Holocaust, a biographical study of Eichmann, a thorough account of the clandestine operation that led to his abduction, or even a detailed, day-by-day

account of the trial itself. Instead, Yablonka concentrates on the context, meaning, and significance of the eight-month judicial proceedings.

Yablonka examines the Eichmann trial from three perspectives. First, there are questions about what she calls its “public-legal dimensions,” which include, for example, issues about where the trial would be held, how the judges were appointed, and which witnesses were chosen. Second, she assesses the trial’s impact, a difficult task because Israeli society is multifaceted and complex. Surmounting the difficulties, some of Yablonka’s best work is done in the chapters devoted to this part of her project, especially when she shows how Holocaust survivors were crucial in the trial’s development, deeply affected by it, and—for the first time—warmly embraced by Israeli society during and after the proceedings. Third, Yablonka assesses what she calls the “historic-legal discourse” about the Eichmann trial. Was it merely a “show trial”? What contributions did the trial make to study and memory of the Holocaust? Overall, her work not only presents the main Israeli figures in the proceeding—investigators, prosecutors, witnesses, and judges—but also explains how the trial promoted a deepened Israeli awareness of the Holocaust’s significance.

The trial opened with a dramatic speech by prosecutor Hausner, who told the judges that he was not alone in bringing the case against Eichmann. “I am joined,” he emphasized, “by six million prosecutors.” Referring to the Holocaust’s victims, Hausner told the court that “their blood cries out, but their voices are unheard.” Hausner’s insistence that he would speak on their behalf signaled that the trial’s scope would not focus narrowly on specific actions taken by Eichmann but would broadly document the Holocaust and Eichmann’s role in it.

At the time of the trial, Israel’s population numbered about two million. Yablonka notes that one-quarter of them were Holocaust survivors. Although relatively few had any direct contact with Eichmann, his actions affected many of them immensely. Consequently, the trial put the Israeli survivors in the spotlight as never before. Previously many of them had been active in commemoration activities, including the 1959 campaign that produced the law establishing a national Holocaust Remembrance Day, but overall the survivors’ place in Israeli life was both less visible and less appreciated than it came to be during and after the Eichmann trial.

In the 1950’s, the survivors worked to re-create their lives, to raise children, and to build the State of Israel. Those concerns could not erase the Holocaust’s trauma, but its expression was repressed. At the same time, an Israeli majority tended to have ambivalent attitudes toward the survivors. Those attitudes ranged from scarcely noticing the survivors to seeing them as “immigrants on whom fortune had smiled” or, especially with regard to



Adolf Eichmann, in the booth on the left, listens as he is sentenced to death by the Israeli court on December 15, 1961. (USHMM, courtesy of Israel Government Press Office)

those who were not identified with partisan resistance or ghetto uprisings, viewing them as people whose survival raised the accusing question, later understood to be misinformed and out of place, “Why didn’t you resist?” Furthermore, the place of Holocaust survivors in Israeli society had been complicated by legal actions preceding the Eichmann case.

Enacted in 1950, the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law provided the foundation for the Eichmann trial, but in the 1950’s the law reflected the fact that some survivors were accused of Holocaust complicity, if not collaboration, with the Germans. In the 1950’s, Yablonka observes, “several dozen Jewish survivors were prosecuted in Israel” under this statute, “but not a single German. Until, that is, Adolf Eichmann was captured and tried.” The most dramatic case, known as the Kastner trial, was a 1954-1955 proceeding in which it was decided that Dr. Rudolf Kastner, who headed the Hungarian Jews’ rescue committee in 1944, had engaged in dealings with the Germans, Eichmann among them, to save a few privileged Hungarian Jews at the expense of the larger population. In January, 1958, that finding was overturned, but too late for Kastner, who had been assassinated at his home in Tel Aviv the previous March. Eichmann’s name surfaced prominently in the Kastner trial, but he was far

from its focal point, which concentrated instead on allegations about Jews that increased the ambivalence about Israeli survivors prior to Eichmann's trial.

The decision to focus broadly on the Holocaust during the Eichmann trial meant that documentary evidence would be augmented by survivor testimony. For the first time in Israel or elsewhere, survivor testimony about the Holocaust was widely shared in public and in depth. Of the 101 persons who were chosen as witnesses, all but 9 were Holocaust survivors. Nearly all the survivors came from Israel, and most were carefully selected so that their testimony, which needed to be articulate and moving, described extensively the Holocaust's ghettos, camps, massacres, death marches, and resistance activities as well as its vast geographical scope. Although the 750 seats in Jerusalem's Bet Ha'am (House of the People) hall went not to the general public but mostly to journalists and diplomats, and despite the fact that the absence of television in Israel in 1961 meant that the first-ever filming of an Israeli trial was not accessible to most Israelis, the press and radio gave the trial wide coverage in the State of Israel. For the Israeli people, says Yablonka, and to some extent for Jews worldwide, the testimony of survivors such as Rivka Yoselewska, Moshe Beisky, the writer Yehiel Dinur, and the artist Yehuda Bakon "came to represent the Holocaust itself."

In Yablonka's judgment, the survivors' testimony built "a living bridge between 'there' and here." As Israeli empathy for the survivors' suffering grew, the survivors helped Israelis and Jews in the Diaspora to understand that the Holocaust was not catastrophic in some general way but that what had happened in Europe was profoundly a part of Israel's history and the legacy of every living Jew, for Eichmann and his peers intended the utter destruction of the Jewish people and their traditions. The Eichmann trial intensified Jewish solidarity, the view that Israel was an essential haven against anti-Semitism and future threats to the Jewish people, and a commitment to Holocaust education, which had not been a high priority in Israel. The trial's most significant results also included the perception that the nations of the world had not intervened directly on behalf of Jews during the Nazi period. That conviction meant that the State of Israel could never entrust its security to another country. The Eichmann trial was a cathartic moment, a time when "attitudes of alienation and shame toward the Holocaust faded away" and when the Holocaust became increasingly powerful in Israeli consciousness, particularly among the nation's youth. As the Israeli poet Haim Guri put the point on September 10, 1961, a few weeks after the survivors' testimony had concluded, it was as though "the Holocaust has happened now."

Eichmann's conviction and execution did not bring closure. The trial left Israelis asking themselves whether Jews in the Yishuv, the prestatehood Jewish community in Palestine, had done their best to help Europe's Jews during the Holocaust. Regretting the important information that was lost, Yablonka wonders why, even after Eichmann's conviction, historians were denied access to him. Moreover, what about the trial itself? What kind of proceeding was it? Yablonka emphatically rejects the criticism that it was a "show trial," but she also contends that the proceedings cannot simply be called a "criminal trial." Hausner had made clear early on that the trial, in addition to seeking to carry out justice (which Yablonka understands to be the object of a criminal trial), would have the educational, ethical, and political goal of bringing "people in Israel and the world closer to the enormity of the calamity."

Nevertheless, the proceedings were far from a show trial. The trial was not staged, and Yablonka credits especially the integrity of the Israeli judges, including those on the Supreme Court who heard Eichmann's appeal after the district court pronounced its verdict and sentence. Significantly, she suggests that written documentation weighed more heavily with the judges than the survivors' testimony, which the judges heard with great respect but not without criticism. Furthermore, in show trials the defendants are usually innocent. As research continues, Eichmann's role as a Holocaust perpetrator becomes increasingly evident.

Yablonka concludes that the Eichmann trial is best called a "historic trial," a term coined by the Israeli press while the proceedings were under way. It remains historic because the trial enabled the Holocaust to "become an integral part of Israel's national identity." Related to that outcome, a gnawing question persists about the Holocaust itself. "How," asks Yablonka, "could it have taken place in broad daylight?" *The State of Israel vs. Adolf Eichmann* does not answer that question, but the book stimulates thoughtful reflection about it.

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—John K. Roth

STILL ALIVE

A HOLOCAUST GIRLHOOD REMEMBERED

AUTHOR: Ruth Klüger (1931-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Weiter leben: Eine Jugend*, 1992 (English translation, 2001)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: Memoir

This account of Klüger's childhood in Nazi-occupied Vienna, her internment with her mother in three concentration camps, and their escape at the war's end is an unsentimental exploration of the author's family relationships and the implications of having survived the Holocaust as well as an attempt to address common assumptions about the Holocaust.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Ruth Klüger (b. 1931), a Holocaust survivor

Alma Hirschel (1903-2000), Ruth's mother

OVERVIEW

Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered is the English version of Ruth Klüger's *Weiter leben: Eine Jugend*, published in Germany in 1992. Klüger writes in *Still Alive* that the work is neither a translation of *Weiter leben* nor a completely new book; rather, it is a complementary work. *Still Alive* is organized in four sections. The first two follow the geography of Klüger's life from her childhood in Vienna through internment with her mother, Alma Hirschel, in the Jewish ghetto Theresienstadt (also called Terezín), the death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Christianstadt/Gross-Rosen, a forced-labor camp. The third section describes their escape from Christianstadt and postwar life, and the fourth tells of Klüger's emigration to the United States in 1947, her ensuing depression, and her struggle to make the transition to American life and college.

An epilogue included in both *Weiter leben* and *Still Alive* describes Klüger's long recovery from a head injury she incurred while visiting Göttingen, Germany. During her recuperation, Klüger began to recall more of her Holocaust experiences and felt inspired to address a memoir to Germans. *Still Alive* appends an account of Alma Hirschel's death in 2000.

As a child, Klüger was forbidden to appear in certain public places or to associate with Gentiles, and she wore on her clothing the required yellow Star of David, which she knew marked her as a target on Vienna streets. When Klüger was eleven years old, she and her mother were transported to the Jewish ghetto Theresienstadt (her father had fled Austria for Italy and then France, but would not survive). In 1944, Klüger and Hirschel were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Narrowly escaping execution in the gas chambers there, they were selected for transfer to the forced-labor camp Christianstadt, an extension of Gross-Rosen. Klüger was chosen largely because of another female inmate's intervention when she appeared before the selecting Nazi officer. When Soviet troops advanced into Germany and Christianstadt's prisoners were marched out of the camp, Klüger and Hirschel escaped and joined German refugees fleeing the Russians on foot. After liberation, the two women lived in Staubing, Germany, then emigrated in 1947 to the United States.

Still Alive is in many ways a departure from typical Holocaust memoirs. Klüger's childhood was difficult and her family relationships were strained, especially between herself and her mother. Klüger writes of Hirschel's courage and determination, but also of her seeming heartlessness and paranoia. On their arrival in Auschwitz, Hirschel suggested to twelve-year-old Klüger that they commit suicide by running into the electric fence surrounding the camp.

In describing her escape from Christianstadt, Klüger notes that although she and her fellow inmates gained their freedom, they were surrounded by Germans who had lost everything and were now hopeless refugees. Later, when Jews were housed in the former homes of Germans, Klüger was as aware of their losses as she was of her own freedom. *Still Alive* is unusual among Holocaust memoirs in this empathy for postwar Germans. Klüger further declines to describe the liberating soldiers as rescuers; having left the camp before they arrived, Klüger felt she received no help from them and that their mission was not to rescue the Jews.

Klüger explores whether anything positive may have come from the Holocaust and the camps. She counters her own anger at this idea, unable to dismiss this formative part of her childhood as a complete loss. Although Nazis limited or halted education for Jews, Klüger read classic literature independently, and she recited poetry and composed poems in her head during her internment. She experienced a happiness and sense of belonging in Theresienstadt, where she had the opportunity to learn from political and literary Jews, something that had not been available to her in Nazi-occupied Vienna. These experiences helped form Klüger's adult identity as a writer, a scholar, and a Jew.

Pointing out that Holocaust atrocities are amply covered elsewhere and easily researched, Klüger does not discuss details of Nazi persecution; instead, she focuses on what it means to have survived and what she believes as an adult about the Holocaust. She argues that death camps remade as tourist attractions are so unlike the camps in operation that visitors cannot imagine the reality. She attributes her survival primarily to luck, dismissing the theories she encounters in conversations with young people: that death camp survivors are made somehow holy by the experience or, conversely, were hard-hearted enough to sacrifice others for their own sake.

Klüger frequently interrupts her own narrative to reassess her experience, once even second-guessing what she had written the night before. Klüger asks hard questions of herself as well as of her readers, often anticipating and arguing with their imagined responses. She re-creates conversations with young Germans, American students, and friends, probing for degrees of honesty or ignorance in their attitudes and assumptions, and shows how her everyday life has always been defined by the fact of her past. Klüger works toward opening dialogues that could include her experience and her childhood and more freely explore the gaps that remain between memory, history, and reality.

During the 1980's, Holocaust memoirs gained in popularity in the United States, yet Klüger chose to write *Weiter leben* in German, published it in Germany, and dedicated the book to her German friends. Issued in 1992, shortly after German reunification (which took place in 1990), *Weiter leben* was a best seller in Germany, where critics viewed Klüger's choice of German language and publication as a sign of reconciliation and peace achieved. The book was critically viewed as the work of a German writer (although Klüger was an American citizen born in Austria) who was in a sense returning to Germany and German culture. Many readers did not see Klüger's work as the author's attempt to reclaim her connection to Germany or lay to rest discussions of the past; on the contrary, Klüger hoped to encourage more dialogue about the Holocaust and Germany's role in the persecution of the Jews.

In 2001, Klüger published *Still Alive*, her own English translation of *Weiter leben*, in the United States, dedicating the book to her mother. Because their difficult relationship features prominently in the book and Hirschel did not read German, Klüger delayed publication of an English version until after her mother died in 2000. Reworking her text for an American audience that would include her own children, Klüger omitted many references to German literature that tied the original more closely to German literary traditions. She also wrote more forgivingly of her mother;

Still Alive's final chapter describes Hirschel's death in California and ends on a hopeful note of reconciliation between generations.

Klüger identifies herself as an unbelieving Jew, taking her Jewish identity from her Holocaust experience although she never held religious beliefs. Jewish women were not supposed to record history or participate in the storytelling that defines the Jewish experience. As an Austrian, a woman, and a Jew, in this work Klüger breaks silences imposed on her by culture, nationality, family, and religious convention.

Critical praise for *Weiter leben* placed Klüger alongside such highly regarded authors of the Holocaust as Elie Wiesel and Primo Levi. The book received a number of literary prizes, including the Foundation of French Judaism's Prix Mémoire de la Shoah and the Thomas-Mann-Preis (Thomas Mann Prize).

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—Maureen Puffer-Rothenberg

THE SUNFLOWER

ON THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF FORGIVENESS

AUTHOR: Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Die Sonnenblume*, 1969 (English translation, 1970)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Memoir; philosophy; religion and spirituality

Wiesenthal's story of an encounter with a dying and repentant Nazi soldier prompts a debate on the nature of forgiveness.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005), a concentration camp inmate

Arthur, Wiesenthal's secular and cynical friend from prewar days

Josek, Wiesenthal's religious and serious new friend from the camps

Karl, a Schutzstaffel (SS) soldier who was dying from wounds received at the Russian front

Bolek, a Catholic seminary student imprisoned in Mauthausen concentration camp

Maria S——, Karl's mother, who survived the war

OVERVIEW

A brief encounter with a dying soldier of the Nazi Schutzstaffel (SS) haunted Simon Wiesenthal so completely that he began a discussion of his experience more than twenty years later—a discussion that led to the publication of *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. The book consists of a brief account of one incident in Wiesenthal's life followed by a section titled "The Symposium," a collection of scholarly responses to that account.

The story begins in the spring of 1943, when Wiesenthal was a prisoner in a Nazi labor camp in Lemberg (L'viv), then part of Poland. A work detail brought Wiesenthal to Lemberg's Technical High School, where he had once studied for a Polish diploma in architecture; the school had been converted into a military hospital. While he was working, Wiesenthal was taken aside by a nurse and brought into the school building, where the former dean's office had been converted to a sickroom with one patient, a dying SS man named Karl.

Karl had asked the nurse to bring him a Jew—any Jew—so he could seek forgiveness for atrocities he committed on the Russian front. Begging Wiesenthal to listen, Karl told how he grew up in a religious family but then joined the Hitler Youth and the SS, destroying his relationship with his father. In Dnipropetrovsk in the Ukraine, he helped burn alive three hundred Jewish civilians, a supposed retaliation for the deaths of thirty Germans from Russian time bombs. Karl remained haunted by the murders—especially by the sight of a child shot in his father’s arms—until he was fatally injured in combat. Karl begged Wiesenthal for forgiveness, so he could die in peace. Wiesenthal, also haunted by the many deaths he had seen, reflected for a long time, believed the SS man was genuinely repentant—and walked from the hospital room without saying a word.

Upon returning to the camp, Wiesenthal discussed his experience with two friends, Arthur and Josek. In most discussions, the irreverent Arthur and the devout Josek took opposite sides, with Wiesenthal attempting reconciliation. In this case, the conflict was entirely internal for Wiesenthal, who wondered if he should have offered Karl forgiveness. Arthur and Josek agreed that walking away was the correct response, but for different



Simon Wiesenthal. (AP/Wide World Photos)

reasons. Arthur agreed because he rejoiced at the German's death, whereas Josek believed it would have been morally wrong for Wiesenthal to forgive a crime of which he was not a victim; Josek also felt that deathbed repentance was not enough to make up for the man's participation in genocide.

Wiesenthal continued to wonder if he had done the right thing. He found another viewpoint in the Mauthausen concentration camp during the last days of World War II. Bolek, a fellow inmate and priest in training, asserted that Wiesenthal should have forgiven, that any display of repentance justified absolution, and that Wiesenthal could have served as a representative of the Jewish community because Karl had no opportunity for further atonement. His conversation with Bolek left Wiesenthal more and more reflective, although each held to his original position.

Even after liberation, Wiesenthal was haunted by the memory of the SS soldier. He sought out Karl's mother and explained that he had heard from Karl before he died, but he did not relate any of the confession, allowing her to continue believing that her son was a good boy who simply became mixed up with the SS. Karl was not born a murderer, Wiesenthal acknowledged, but neither were the war criminals he hunted. During their trials, he questioned whether the young SS man would have been so repentant had he survived the war, but he still wondered whether he was correct to withhold forgiveness. He wrote his story down and asked others what they would have done in his place.

The answers comprise the bulk of *The Sunflower*. The revised 1997 edition of the book contains fifty-three responses, many newly written. Ten responses remain in the later edition from the original English publication of 1970, and three are from the 1981 German edition. The 1997 collection of responses comes from a broader field than do the collections in previous editions. Comments from Sven Alkalaj (of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Dalai Lama, Dith Pran (from Cambodia), and Desmond Tutu reflect the importance of the Holocaust to contemporary problems and concerns of justice and reconciliation in the wake of new genocides. The responses tend to divide along religious and professional lines, with Christians and non-Jewish spiritual leaders saying that forgiveness was in order and academics and Jews maintaining that Wiesenthal was in no position to forgive. The debate is only partially religious, however (Wiesenthal himself often wonders whether God was "on leave" during the Holocaust); it focuses more on whether some deeds are unforgivable and on whether humanity is improved by forgiveness, if not by forgetting. The one response from a perpetrator, Albert Speer, is not so much an answer as an expression of gratitude for Wiesenthal's empathy, as even Speer questions whether forgiveness is possible.

The question is broader than the forgiveness of just one perpetrator; there is enough guilt to go around. Even before the Nazis, the Technical High School was a hotbed of anti-Semitism. Student gangs would declare a "Day Without Jews" and attack any Jewish students who dared to show up. Wiesenthal reflects that although only 20 percent of the students were anti-Semites, the rest of those in the school population were too cowardly or indifferent to oppose them. The labor camp prisoners also experienced indifference as they passed through Lemberg on their work details. Wiesenthal once saw a former acquaintance on the street who only looked surprised that he was still alive. The townspeople ignored the Jews, knowing that they were doomed. The theme of bystanders recurs in *The Sunflower* when Wiesenthal visits Karl's mother and assures her that he believes she did not know about the Nazi genocide. Wiesenthal reflects that many Germans, like Karl's mother, said they did not support the Nazis but kept quiet for fear of the possible actions of their neighbors; this network of fear permitted atrocities.

A second theme in the book is that of anonymity and recognition. The sunflowers of the title are planted on the graves in a military cemetery that the Lemberg prisoners pass on their way to work. Wiesenthal envies the dead soldiers their sunflowers, expecting that his own end will find him lying in an anonymous mass grave. Arthur is less impressed, seeing the sunflowers as something that will die unless tended and replanted, or at most as a symbol of German romanticism. Wiesenthal, however, cannot forget these spots of daylight connected to graves—the sunflowers cause Karl's death to stand out in his mind from the anonymous daily deaths in the camps.

Wiesenthal's book of discussion invites discussion, so it has been adopted widely in courses at both the high school and university levels. It has also served as a starting point for broader philosophical considerations of forgiveness. *The Sunflower* offers a widely accessible entry point for discussions of Holocaust memory, reconciliation, and differing views on forgiveness. The focus on this one incident in Wiesenthal's life reveals his careful attention to individual acts rather than to blanket condemnation and illustrates that the man known for bringing Nazis to justice was not unconcerned with mercy. Wiesenthal himself is said to have regarded *The Sunflower* as his most important book, perhaps because it invites the reader into the story, continuing to keep Holocaust study relevant.

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—Laura Shumar

SURVIVAL IN AUSCHWITZ

THE NAZI ASSAULT ON HUMANITY

AUTHOR: Primo Levi (1919-1987)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Se questo è un uomo*, 1947 (*If This Is a Man*, 1959; revised as *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, 1961)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Memoir; religion and spirituality

In his first published book, Levi presents a compelling account of life in a Nazi concentration camp, revealing the horrors of the camp and describing how he survived his ordeal, both spiritually and physically.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Primo Levi (1919-1987), an Italian writer and Auschwitz prisoner
174517

Steinlauf, another prisoner at Auschwitz

Alberto, Levi's closest friend in the concentration camp

Null Achtzehn, a doomed prisoner

Lorenzo, an Italian civilian worker who shared his food with Levi

Henri, a crafty survivor in the camp

Elias Lindzin, another prisoner, a powerful dwarf

OVERVIEW

In *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1989), Julian Barnes writes in reference to Théodore Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) that in the modern world catastrophe is transmuted into art:

A nuclear plant explodes? We'll have a play on the London stage within a year. . . . War? Send in the novelists. . . . We have to understand it, of course, this catastrophe; to understand it, we have to imagine it, so we need the imaginative arts. But we also need to justify it and forgive it, this catastrophe, however minimally. Why did it happen, this mad act of Nature, this crazed human moment?

Rebelling against the attitude that Barnes describes so well, Theodor Adorno declared, "To write poetry after Auschwitz would be barbaric."

Yet, like Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, the survivor feels compelled to tell his story. Moreover, in the case of the Holocaust, there is a moral imperative to let the world know what happened. In Primo Levi's final work, *I sommersi e i salvati* (1986; *The Drowned and the Saved*, 1988), a Schutzstaffel (SS) officer tells the inmates of a concentration camp, "However this war may end, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world will not believe him." Holocaust survivor, novelist, and memoirist Elie Wiesel has called his own writing a *matzeva*, the Hebrew word for a tombstone erected to the memory of the dead.

Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* is also a *matzeva*. The original work begins with Levi's poem "Shemà" (1946). Echoing the Jewish credo from Deuteronomy, chapter 6, the poem states,

Vi comando queste parole
Sculpitere nel vostro cuore
Stando in casa andando per via

"And these words I command you to carve in your hearts when you are at home or walking in the street." And to those who fail to heed these words, Levi adds a curse: "May your house fall apart/ May illness impede you/ May your children turn their faces from you."

To tell of his eleven months in a Nazi concentration camp, Levi draws heavily on the *Inferno* book of Dante's *La divina commedia* (c. 1320; *The Divine Comedy*, 1802). His allusions to and quotations from Dante show the hellish nature of what Levi calls the Lager (the German word for "camp"), but they also serve another function. The Italian title of Levi's book and the title of the original English translation pose the question of what it means to be human. *Survival in Auschwitz* deals not only, or indeed primarily, with physical survival but also with preserving one's humanity.

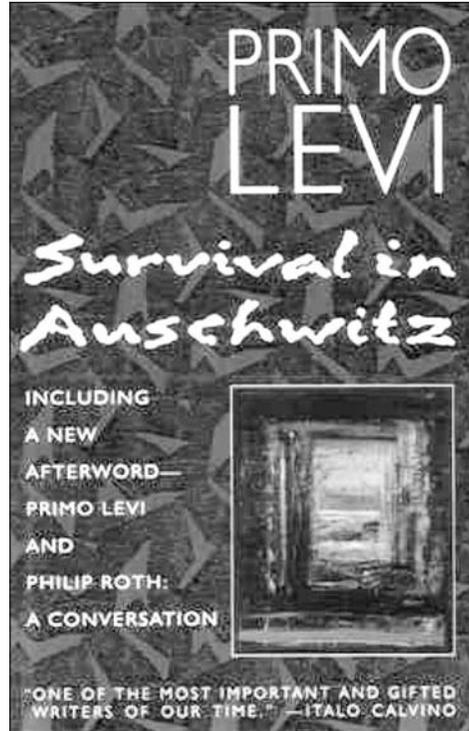
Levi succeeded in surviving in large part through luck, as he repeatedly notes. Captured in Italy by the German army in December, 1943, he arrived in the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz in February, 1944. By that time the Nazis were running low on slave labor and so were allowing their Jewish prisoners to live longer than had been the case earlier in the war. Levi also was fortunate in finding Lorenzo, a compassionate civilian worker who gave extra food to the starving prisoners. Levi's training in chemistry—the field in which he had received a bachelor's degree in 1941—secured him a post in the Chemical Kommando that eventually sheltered him from the cold and the hard manual labor that killed so many others. In addition,

he fell ill just as the Germans abandoned the camp, so he was left behind when the healthier prisoners were forced to march away. Those people would die or be killed en route.

Just as the pilgrim Dante is saved by the poet Vergil in *The Divine Comedy*, so Levi was also saved by Dante and the Western culture he represents. In language the more chilling for its scientific detachment, Levi shows that the Nazis sought to destroy the Jews not only physically but also spiritually. Arriving at the Lager, they were stripped of their possessions, their clothes, their hair, even their names. What the Germans could not remove was the culture Levi brought with him. In

the central chapter of *Survival in Auschwitz*, “The Canto of Ulysses,” Levi recites canto 26 of *The Inferno* to another prisoner as they go to fetch the midday soup. Levi concentrates on the speech Ulysses makes to his mariners: “Fatti non foste a viver come bruti/ ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza” (You were not born to live like beasts but to pursue worthy deeds and knowledge). In the kitchen, Dante’s poetry yields to the announcement that the day’s soup is *Kraut und Rüben* (cabbage and turnips). The chapter ends with the final words of Ulysses, “infin che ’l mar fu sopra noi richiuso” (until the ocean closed over us). Italian humanism is drowned by German barbarism—but Dante has the last word nonetheless.

Throughout his book, Levi emphasizes the importance of refusing to live like beasts. Within a week of his imprisonment, Levi has stopped washing himself. Steinlauf, an Austrian prisoner, teaches him the importance of maintaining a semblance of humanity in such an inhuman place. One must wash even with dirty water, dry oneself with one’s dirty shirt, and polish one’s wooden clogs that will be filthy again by the end of the day. Lorenzo sustains Levi not only with food but also with evidence that kindness still exists. When Levi passes the exam that secures him a place in



the camp's chemistry lab, he gains more than physical comfort. He recognizes that he is not just prisoner 174517 but also the Primo Levi who graduated from the University of Turin *summa cum laude*.

The alternative to this spiritual survival is to become like the prisoner known as Null Achtzehn (zero eighteen) from the last three numbers of his tattoo. This man's only identity is his number, one symbolizing his fate. The numerical values of the two letters of the word for "life" in Hebrew, *chai*, add up to eighteen. The Lager has negated Null Achtzehn's life. Others live on, such as the cunning, heartless Henri and the brutal Elias Lindzin, but they, too, are among those Levi calls "the drowned."

Survival in Auschwitz ends with a diary of the ten days between the German abandonment of the Lager and the arrival of the liberating Russian army. The form of this section is crucial because it demonstrates the end of the mentality of the Lager. Levi says that in the Lager "history had stopped." The phrase for "never" was "tomorrow morning." Although *Survival in Auschwitz* proceeds chronologically, time passes unmarked. Levi wonders, "How many months have gone by since we entered the camp? How many since the day I was dismissed from Ka-Be [the infirmary]?" Now the prisoners have reentered history. The diary also records the changes in the behavior of the inmates once the Germans leave. Before, the rule had been to eat all one's own food and try to get others' rations as well. Now the prisoners offer Levi and two others extra food in exchange for their foraging. These men have reasserted their humanity.

Se questo è un uomo was rejected by the prestigious Italian publisher Einaudi in 1947 because consulting editor Natalia Ginzburg believed that the public would not want to read Levi's account. She was right. Published by Franco Antonicelli in an edition of twenty-five hundred copies, it sold only nineteen hundred, although it received favorable reviews. A decade later, Einaudi reversed its decision, and the book has remained in print ever since. It has become widely used in schools, has been translated into various languages, and has been the subject of many scholarly studies as a landmark among writings about the Holocaust.

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—Joseph Rosenblum

THE TEREZÍN REQUIEM

AUTHOR: Josef Bor (1906-1979)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Terezínské rekviem*, 1963 (English translation, 1963)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Historical fiction

In the summer of 1944, as Adolf Hitler's "final solution" to the Jewish problem nears its climax, Raphael Schachter, a talented young conductor, produces a magnificent performance of Verdi's Requiem at the Terezín concentration camp. The Requiem is performed for Adolf Eichmann and other Nazi officials shortly before Schachter and the five hundred musicians are taken away from Terezín to the ovens of the death camps.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Raphael Schachter, a sensitive orchestra conductor

The Old Beggar, a lover of music and Schachter's adviser in preparing the *Requiem*; also known as "The Court Councilor"

Francis, a tenor and a Jewish cantor

Annemarie (Maruska), a Bavarian soprano

Elizabeth, a formerly famous mezzo-soprano

Elizabeth's husband, crippled during the "Night of Broken Glass"

Meisl, a cellist

Josef, a bass

Betka, a mezzo-soprano who replaces Elizabeth

Mephistopheles, a chimney sweep, a bass who replaces Josef

Roderich, a cantor's son and a tenor, one-quarter German, formerly in the German army

Haindl, a Schutzstaffel (SS) officer

The camp commandant

Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962), chief architect of the "final solution"

OVERVIEW

In the summer of 1944, as the German army begins to suffer shattering defeats, Adolf Eichmann converts the Terezín ghetto, in central Europe, into a disguised assembly camp for the newly constructed Birkenau exter-

mination camp. Among the Jews at Terezín is Raphael Schachter, a brilliant young conductor who decides to embark on a study of the Giuseppe Verdi *Requiem*. Schachter is attracted to the project by the incredible availability of talent at Terezín, where the Nazis have assembled thousands of artists to promote the image of Hitler's "model" camp. He is also drawn to the *Requiem* as a prayer for the dead that may comfort the prisoners of the concentration camp and help him answer profound questions about the meaning of life and death for Jews under Nazi rule.

Coached by a half-deaf, old beggar (who later turns out to be a musical genius), Schachter begins to assemble his choir and soloists. Chief among them are Francis, a cantor from Galacia who sings tenor; Maruska, a delicate soprano who has witnessed unspeakable Nazi atrocities; and Elizabeth, a famous mezzo-soprano whose crippled husband is the choir's first audience.

Because the Nazis are concealing the actual purpose of Terezín, they lead Schachter and his musicians to believe that they will be secure there. Nazi officials provide sheet music and instruments, confiscated from Jews all over Europe. They remove all the inhabitants of the local hospital and turn it into a rehearsal hall. They reassure all the musicians that they will not be separated. The performers rejoice in the hope that they will be spared the fate of their fellow Jews in the camps.

This confidence is shattered when the injured and disabled who have been evacuated from the hospital are taken away, and their relatives in the choir follow them to their doom. Schachter must start assembling musicians all over again. New soloists miraculously appear, including Roderich, the son of a Jewish father and a Roman Catholic mother who unknowingly sent him to Terezín for his own protection when the German army drafted him. Roderich finds the choir rehearsing while he is running away from Haindl, a particularly vicious Schutzstaffel (SS) officer whom he has insulted and actually struck. Haindl cannot find his victim as Roderich blends into the choir, and Schachter is delighted to have found a tenor who can replace the departed Francis. On the eve of the performance, however, Roderich appears again, distraught with fear. This time he cannot escape Haindl and the torture and death he knows await him. He asks Schachter to lead the choir in one last chorus for his sake and sings his solo in a trembling voice—his own farewell to his friends and fellow Jews.

At last Schachter succeeds in assembling a company of singers, and the premiere of the *Requiem* takes place before an audience of Jewish inmates. Eichmann himself arrives to inspect the camp, and the commandant summons a performance for the Nazi officials. Schachter's final gesture of defi-

ance is to alter the last bars of the *Requiem*, “Libera Me,” from Verdi’s original soft whisper to a thundering drum roll, proclaiming the Jews’ powerful longing for freedom. It is the last performance for Schachter and his musicians. The Nazi command keeps its promise not to separate the *Requiem* performers, and they are all led away to the ovens together.

The overwhelming theme of *The Terezín Requiem* is the search for meaning in a world of unspeakable evil. Schachter ponders the purpose of his enterprise as he coaches the soloists in the various parts of the *Requiem*, always interpreting Verdi’s prayers for the dead as pleas for his fellow victims. The final cry, “Libera Me,” becomes a call for freedom, not only from the terrors of hell but also from the earthly hell of the death camps.

Schachter, as Bor’s voice, is also preoccupied with expressing the meaning of Judaism as a means for understanding good and evil. He chooses the *Requiem* as an attack on Hitler’s ideas of pure and impure blood—“Italian music with a Latin text, Catholic prayers, Jewish singers . . . studied and directed by an unbeliever.” Yet it soon becomes apparent to Schachter that Verdi’s Catholic sensibilities must be reinterpreted to make the *Requiem* meaningful to a Jewish audience. Jewish theology teaches that good and evil, rewards and punishments, take place here on earth, among the living. Verdi’s Catholic concept of eternal retribution, as described in the “Dies Irae” portion of the *Requiem*, no longer means a Day of Wrath at the Last Judgment, but God’s righteous anger, which is already sweeping over the Nazi empire in Europe and will exact historical justice in this world. Hell is no longer an otherworldly region to be feared after death; rather, it is the living hell that is the camps.

Finally, *The Terezín Requiem* explores the question of how the powerless may respond to evil. Even at Terezín, where death is always waiting, Schachter and his musicians create meaning through their art. Roderich, the tenor, chooses to sing a last verse with the choir when he finds out that he is to be tortured and killed. Schachter himself rewrites the last verse of the *Requiem* to remind his listeners and his fellow inmates that they have not forgotten their desire for freedom. *The Terezín Requiem* is a reminder that human beings matter even in the shadow of certain death.

Josef Bor, himself a survivor of three death camps, wrote *The Terezín Requiem* as a tribute to the five hundred Terezín musicians who did not live to tell their stories. As Israel Knox points out in the introduction to *An Anthology of Holocaust Literature* (1968), in which part of *The Terezín Requiem* is reprinted, the books of the Six Million are “a sort of cemetery,” and in reading them “we are reciting *Kaddish* [the Jewish prayer for the dead] for those who left none to say it for them.”

Like other Holocaust memoirs—Elie Wiesel’s *Un di Velt hot geshvign*

(1956; *La Nuit*, 1958; *Night*, 1960), Primo Levi's *Se questo è un uomo* (1947; *If This Is a Man*, 1959; revised as *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity*, 1961), Fania Fénelon's *Sursis pour l'orchestre* (1976; *Playing for Time*, 1977)—Bor's book makes the unthinkable real by telling the story of a small group of people whom the reader comes to know as individuals. Studied in a history book, the sheer magnitude of the Holocaust may seem unreal, but in the story of Raphael Schachter, the reader encounters a vivid character with feelings and aspirations. As Schachter and the others meditate on the meaning of evil, the existence of God, and the nature of history, they become real people who can be believed, admired, and mourned.

Although it was not written primarily for adolescents, *The Terezín Requiem* is one of a small number of Holocaust memoirs that can be read and appreciated by young people whose only knowledge of the Holocaust comes from history books. The issue of appropriateness is an especially difficult one where Holocaust literature is concerned. Young readers may not be developmentally ready for graphic descriptions of torture and crematoria; yet, it is essential that they learn about the camps and ovens as they really were. Bor's book is a good choice for the mature young adult reader; although the horrors are suggested, the focus of the novel is on the humanity of Schachter and his musicians. The book is tragic, even shocking, but never grotesque.

Critics have debated the value of historical memoirs over fictional accounts of the Holocaust, and some have concluded that, in this particular case, history is so powerful that it is a profanation to fictionalize it. Bor's book partakes of both approaches, starting with real characters known to the author and embellishing with details to bring the story to life. Like Viktor Emil Frankl's powerful memoir *Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (1946; *From Death-Camp to Existentialism: A Psychiatrist's Path to a New Therapy*, 1959; revised and enlarged as *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, 1962), *The Terezín Requiem* ultimately celebrates the greatness of the human spirit—that a prisoner could compose a work such as Verdi's *Requiem* and sing it in the midst of unfathomable evil. Most of all, in memorializing Schachter, Bor has created his own *Requiem*, not only for the Terezín musicians but also for all those who perished without graves in the ovens of the Holocaust.

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—Rita M. Kissen

THE TEXTURE OF MEMORY

HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS AND MEANING

AUTHOR: James E. Young (1951-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1993

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Arts; current affairs

This volume contributes to an understanding of memory as a social activity by looking at Holocaust memorials and monuments in Germany, Austria, Poland, Israel, and the United States and discussing the ways in which public art reflects national myths, ideals, and experiences.

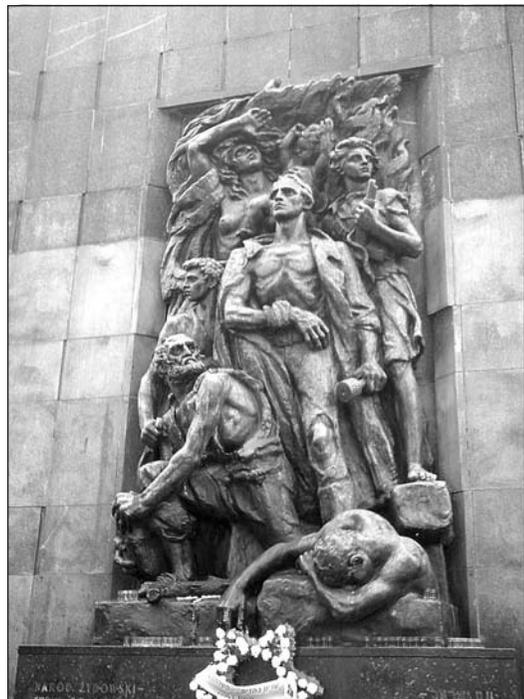
OVERVIEW

Building on the concept that memory is not neutral, as theorized by Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora, current scholars recognize that cultures remember their pasts in different ways. The cultural importance of memory for Jews in particular has its roots in the biblical book Deuteronomy, where the Jews fleeing Egypt are instructed to write a book in remembrance of the defeat by their enemy, Amalek. Scholars have found that nations remember their pasts in different ways too, and that is the overarching argument in James E. Young's *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, which looks at the memorialization of the Holocaust in Germany, Austria, Poland, Israel, and the United States. The work focuses primarily on the political and historical significance of public art rather than on its aesthetic qualities, and Young concludes that the national myths and ideals of each country are reflected in its public memory of the Holocaust.

In Germany, Young sees a country in conflict with its past. Evidence of that conflict is found in the unconventional monuments of a number of German artists. One example is the vanishing work, Monument Against Fascism, designed by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz. This memorial tower was erected in 1986 in Harburg, Germany, and descended into the ground in 1993. All that is left visible is the top surface of the monument, symbolizing that memory fades over time. Young also observes that even conventional forms of public commemoration of the Holocaust in Ger-

many are often paradoxical. For example, at the former site of the Dachau concentration camp, town officials welcome visitors to the place while they apologize to the visitors about the place. This underscores the complex memorial tasks faced by Germans as they struggle with both their Nazi past and the difficulty of facing that past at the same time.

Young discusses Austria within the book's section on Germany because he sees striking similarities between German and Austrian public memories of the Holocaust insofar as both countries have had to confront their crimes. One difference, however, is that whereas Germany has been very conscious of the past, Austria has been mostly ambivalent about it. Looking at Austrian Holocaust memorials in Mauthausen, Graz, and Vienna, Young finds examples of memory without too much pain. For instance, he observes that, like Dachau, the museum and grounds at Mauthausen are meticulous. A sanitized landscape greets visitors; few signs indicate the atrocities that occurred there. Also in ways similar to Dachau, the experiences of criminals, prisoners of war, and political prisoners are emphasized at Mauthausen. The site contains memorial sculptures of twenty different homelands of the victims; only one of these is dedicated to the Jews. Young notes that the most outstanding work in the sculpture garden is the one dedicated to Soviet prisoners of war. The Jewish experience is sub-



The Ghetto Heroes' Memorial in Warsaw, Poland, commemorating the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A wreath has been placed at the base of the monument.

sumed under the more general experience. Acknowledging the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust is one of the challenges of art memorializing the genocide.

After studying the former sites of death camps in Poland, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, and monuments in the Polish countryside, Young concludes that public memory of the Holocaust in Poland tends to gloss over the overwhelming number of Jewish victims. For instance, at the site of the former concentration camp Majdanek, the annihilation of Jews is discussed as part of the total number of Poles killed. Moreover, because Jewish and Christian symbolism is integral to the collective memory of the Holocaust in Poland, the question of how to incorporate the Christian cross and the Star of David was a dilemma at the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial site. Young notes that Holocaust commemoration is further complicated in Poland because, although few Jewish people currently live there, a growing tourism industry draws many Jewish visitors to the memorial sites.

In his analysis of Israeli memorial forests, monuments, kibbutzim, museums, and state holidays, Young finds that the public memory of the Holocaust in Israel tends to highlight armed resistance and often links Israeli soldiers to Eastern European resistance fighters. Israeli public art also places the Jewish Diaspora and the return to a homeland within the context of Jewish history. For example, at Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust memorial and research center established by the Israeli government in 1953, Israeli citizenship was granted to all Jews killed in the Holocaust. In this way the museum ties Eastern European Jewry to Israeli Jewry and thus connects the lives of all Jews before, during, and after the Holocaust. Viewing the totality of Jewish history through the lens of the Holocaust is another problematic aspect of memorial art.

Turning to the United States, Young focuses on monuments and museums in New York City, Denver, Dallas, Tucson, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Washington, D.C., and Liberty State Park in New Jersey. He notes that public art in the United States often universalizes the Holocaust, a tendency that is in keeping with American principles of democracy. For instance, he points out that the official reasons for establishing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., were to honor the American liberators of the death camps, to recognize the United States as a homeland for Holocaust survivors, to acknowledge American unwillingness to act as the genocide was taking place, and to promote human rights. In the United States, the destruction of the Jews thus provides lessons for preventing future genocides. This intended message is another complex aspect of public memorials to the Holocaust.

Public efforts to memorialize the Holocaust started soon after World

War II and are ongoing. Memorials are found in many forms and in many places. Some are large-scale museums; others are simple plaques. Some are built on the actual sites where atrocities were perpetrated; others are in locations far from those places. *The Texture of Memory*, which was awarded the 1994 National Jewish Book Award in the Holocaust category, illuminates some of the important issues in Holocaust remembrance and addresses the physical, ideological, spatial, and temporal aspects of memory. Especially valuable is the volume's international comparative scope. By comparing the public art dedicated to the Holocaust in five countries, his discussion enhanced by dozens of photographs, Young makes it clear that public memory depends on time as well as on locale and national interests. Given that memory is a social phenomenon, the public commemoration of the Holocaust is best understood as an expression of how nations remember their pasts and what they consider important to transmit into the future. Given that memory is dynamic, the question of how this will change over time and in other areas remains an open one.

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—Rosemary Horowitz

“THIS WAY FOR THE GAS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN”

AUTHOR: Tadeusz Borowski (1922-1951)

FIRST PUBLISHED: “Proszę państwa do gazu,” 1948 (English translation, 1967)

GENRE: Short fiction

SUBGENRE: Social realism

This story presents in harsh detail the daily routines and horrors of the Auschwitz concentration camp as it explores the issue of what human beings can and will do to survive.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

The narrator, a Polish inmate at Auschwitz

Henri, a French inmate at the camp and the narrator’s friend

OVERVIEW

In his story “This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen,” Tadeusz Borowski describes in harsh detail, through the first-person narrator, the daily routines and horrors of the Auschwitz concentration camp. The opening scene is a surreal picture of thousands of men and women, naked, waiting through the heat and boredom until another transport arrives to carry thousands of Jews to the gas chambers. Like the narrator’s friend Henri, many of the inmates are members of the Canada Kommando, the labor gangs who work at unloading the transports. Henri and the narrator are introduced as they discuss the transports while lying in their barracks, eating a simple snack of bread, onions, and tomatoes. The transports mean survival. As the guards look the other way, the laborers can “organize” food and clothing from the piles of personal possessions collected from the Jews on the way to their deaths. As Henri states, “All of us live on what they bring.”

The monotony is finally broken by the approach of a transport. For the first time, the narrator joins Henri as part of the labor gang heading to the station. The station is “like any other provincial railway stop” except that the regular freight here are those sentenced to the gas chambers. While the

laborers wait, Henri barter with a guard for a bottle of water, on credit, to be paid for "by the people who have not yet arrived." As the freight cars pull into the station, the desperate cries for water and air from the prisoners crammed into the cars are quickly silenced by the gunfire ordered by an officer annoyed by the disturbance.

Once the doors are opened, the prisoners surge toward the light like a "multicolored wave." The Canada Kommando members work feverishly, taking bundles from the crowd, separating those destined for the labor gangs from those headed for the chambers, loading trucks marked as Red Cross with the dazed prisoners. In sharp contrast to the mayhem on the ramps, a Schutzstaffel (SS) officer, with calm precision, marks off the new serial numbers, "thousands, of course."

A more odious task yet remains for the laborers as they are ordered to clean out the dead and dying from the cars. The narrator describes the trampled bodies of infants he carries out "like chickens." He begins to be affected by the terrors. At first intensely tired, he slips into a confused and dreamlike state as he sees the scenes repeated over and over. His own feelings of helplessness and terror turn to disgust and hatred for the Jews themselves—for, as he tells Henri, he is there, acting so brutally, only because they are.

Just as the last cars leave, the tired laborers hear a whistle, and "terribly slowly" a new transport pulls in. The cycle of atrocities begins anew. Now the Kommandos are impatient and brutally rip the bundles from the prisoners and hurl them into trucks. The scenes of horror intensify as a mother tries to abandon her children in the hope of making the labor gangs (for all mothers and their children are gassed together). A couple locked in each other's arms, "nails in flesh," are pulled apart "like cattle." In the cars are seething heaps of bloated corpses and the unconscious. The narrator can no longer overcome his mounting terror and runs blindly away from the horror. Henri finds him and tries to reassure him that one becomes seasoned to the work, as has Henri himself. There is another whistle and the "same all over again" begins, but slowed by night. There are the same motionless mountains of bodies in the cars, the same cries of despair. The narrator can no longer bear the repulsion he feels, and he vomits. However, with the vomiting, the narrator rids himself of all the horrors he has witnessed. He suddenly sees the camp as a "haven of peace" for its inmates and realizes that he and his fellow prisoners survive, that "one is somehow still alive, one has enough food." He is seasoned. As the labor gangs finish their ungodly work and prepare to return to the camp, the narrator remarks how the camp will be fed by this transport for at least a week, how this was "a good, rich transport."

Tadeusz Borowski drew on his own experiences as a prisoner at Auschwitz and Dachau for his stories on camp life. This, the first, published shortly after his release, graphically gives testimony that people are capable of doing anything to other people. More troubling is the realization that ordinary people, good people, will do anything to survive. The inmates of the camp learn to survive by assisting in the atrocities. For the Canada Kommando, the piles of plunder—jewelry, money, gold—taken from the nameless thousands are not as precious as the pair of shoes or can of cocoa that they can “organize.”

By using a first-person narrator (one never given a name), the author clearly identifies himself with the responsibility and guilt to be shared by all. The narrator senses his responsibility when he lets his disgust turn to anger at the thousands who go passively to their deaths. He is forced to act inhumanly to survive as a human. As often noted, the narrator is both executioner and victim. He suffers the knowledge of his collaboration. Borowski called his stories on the concentration camps “a voyage to the limit of a particular experience.” That experience is the realization of what a person can and will do to survive.

The true horror of Borowski’s experience is the routine of the collaboration in the atrocities. He has his narrator speak with the detached, objective voice of a reporter in most of the story. The phrases are simple and direct; the incredible brutality of the events needs no commentary. “I go back inside the train; I carry out dead infants; I unload luggage; I touch corpses.” The normalcy of events is heightened by the descriptions and actions of the SS officers and guards. Against the backdrop of feverish action left to the camp inmates, the SS officers “move about, dignified, businesslike.” They discuss the routines of their lives—children, family—as thousands are routinely executed. There is nothing out of the ordinary taking place there at Auschwitz.

Several key images appear in the story. Food—the bare essence of survival—is a recurring motif. The narrator is first seen eating “crisp, crunchy bread,” bacon, onions, and tomatoes. The Greek prisoners find rotting sardines and mildewed bread; as Borowski simply states, “They eat.” The gangs rest with vodka, cocoa, and sugar “organized” from the transport. Even the bodies of the dead, trampled infants, are described as chickens. As the gangs return to camp, they are weighed down by the “load of bread, marmalade, and sugar” that they collected. Food as the image for survival occurs throughout Borowski’s Auschwitz stories.

Another recurring image in these stories is that of insects. The mindless drive to eat and live surfaces in humanity as well as in insects. The Greek prisoners sit, “their jaws working greedily, like huge human insects.”

What Borowski calls the "animal hunger" of the camps drives them to eat whatever is available.

The relentless machinery of the transports and the corresponding helplessness of the prisoners are seen in the author's use of the wave simile. Borowski describes the prisoners of the first transport as a wave of "a blind, mad river." Nothing can stand in its way. However, it is not an isolated phenomenon. The last transport also discharges its freight, which is like a wave that "flows on and on, endlessly."

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—Joan A. Robertson

TIME'S ARROW

OR, THE NATURE OF THE OFFENSE

AUTHOR: Martin Amis (1949-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1991

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Historical fiction

In this novel, the life of a fugitive Nazi physician is narrated in reverse, with the result that the Holocaust finally makes sense.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Tod T. Friendly, a Nazi doctor who adopts a new identity in the United States after World War II

Herta, Tod's German wife

Irene, one of Tod's many sex partners

Nicholas Kreditor, a Nazi sympathizer in New York

Rosa, a twelve-year-old servant in Portugal

Uncle Pepi, the chief Nazi doctor at Auschwitz

OVERVIEW

Time's Arrow: Or, The Nature of the Offense begins in a Massachusetts hospital at the deathbed of a seventy-five-year-old doctor known as Tod T. Friendly. The rest of the book is an extended flashback to the life he is departing, but what distinguishes Amis's eighth novel from the conventional format of biographical retrospection is the fact that the entire story is narrated in reverse, effect preceding cause, later coming before sooner. The entire short book is a novelistic form of palindrome. On an inspection tour of the Nazi death camp Treblinka, the narrator of the story notices that the hands of a clock in a railway station are painted to a permanent 13:27—"But time had no arrow, not here." Otherwise, although the book opens with an assertion of circularity ("What goes around comes around"), *Time's Arrow* is shot in a straight line, backward. When Tod eats dinner, dessert precedes soup, and food is lifted out of the mouth and onto the plate. A toilet becomes the seat of a peculiar ritual in which fecal matter rises from the bowl and goes into the bowels. Sanitation workers deliver

garbage, and adults snatch toys away from children. "Good-bye" initiates a conversation; "hello" terminates it.

Amis toys with inverting individual words and sentences—"Aid ut oo y' rrah?" says a pharmacist to her customer, who deciphers more effortlessly than the reader this topsy-turvy universe's reordering of "How are you today?" The narrator concedes "that most conversations would make much better sense if you ran them backward." They at least seem less banal. Amis does run them backward, but, after a few initial flourishes, the novel makes do with a normal verbal sequence in the service of recounting statements and actions in reverse chronological order. Time's arrow is shot from target to bow.

"Tod Friendly"—the name signifies the oxymoron of amiable death—is the last of the pseudonyms that Odilo Unverdorben, also known as "Hamilton de Souza" and "John Young," adopts after fleeing the Nazi defeat in Europe. Before his abrupt departure, he participates in the gassings and sadistic experiments at Auschwitz. Abandoning a wife and child in Germany, he initially settles in Lisbon. In 1948, at the age of thirty-one, he establishes a new identity for himself in the United States.

Time's Arrow is narrated by an alter ego of the fugitive Nazi, a disembodied consciousness that comes alive as his double is about to die. While the patient is pulled from the brink of extinction by the force of retrospective narrative, another consciousness is born, a doppelgänger puzzled by the identity to which he finds himself yoked. As he begins experiencing Tod's life backward, he has "the sense of starting out on a terrible journey, toward a terrible secret." It is this historical innocent, a modern Candide, who tells the story, and he is more puzzled than the reader about where it is headed. "It just seems to me that the film is running backward," he declares. Even in flashbacks, cinema has no tense but the present, and *Time's Arrow*, too, lacks the privileged perspective of the preterite. It wants the comfort of temporal distance between awareness and event. Its narrator—and its reader—is the puzzled spectator of an unmediated life that is in the process of revealing its secrets.

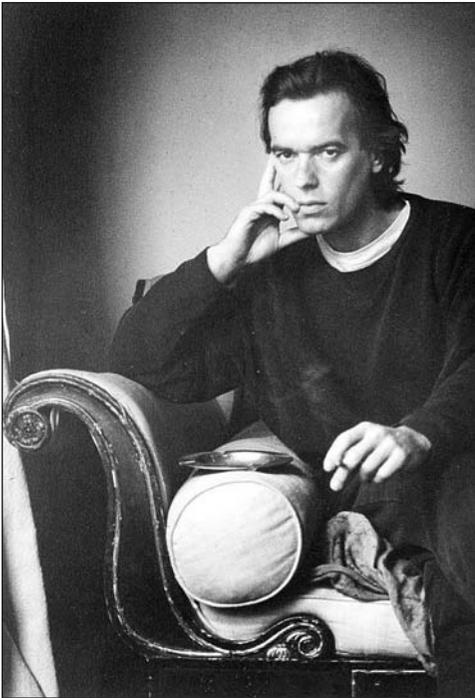
After backing off his deathbed, Tod becomes increasingly active as he grows younger—even as his name changes from Friendly to Young—with each successive page. The inverted course of his career takes him from Massachusetts to New York to Portugal to Italy to Poland and Germany and through several assumed identities. As Odilo Unverdorben, his latest/earliest name, he marries a German named Herta, but marriage and fatherhood do not deter him from sexual exploits. Irene, one of many women he beds in America, surmises his secret before the narrator does. The narrator does not know quite what to make of cryptic comments on the weather

sent once a year to the doctor from New York, but the reader suspects that their author, who calls himself the “Reverend Nicholas Kreditor,” is a Nazi sympathizer who is eager to keep his confederate safe from the clutches of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Forced to accompany Friendly/Young/de Souza/Unverdorben back over baffling ground, the reader is frustrated. “When is the world going to start making sense?” asks the narrator, just before it does, in the fifth of the novel’s eight chapters.

In the curious chronology by which physicians seem to cause affliction because patients are cured before their visit and ill afterward, the reader has trouble understanding the point of anything. It is only when Tod arrives at his terrible secret, Auschwitz, that his experience seems meaningful. Nothing before or after—as far back as his birth in Solingen, where Adolf Eichmann, too, was born—seems as purposeful as his role in the Holocaust. As a protégé of “Uncle Pepi,” a Mengelesque demon of death, Unverdorben—whose name is German for “innocent, pure”—tortures and terminates the camp’s hapless inmates. The reader recoils in horror, but the narrator is relieved that, at last, the world at least makes sense. Seen in reverse, the de-extirpation of the Jews, their dispersion out of concentration camps, becomes perfectly logical. Described in detail is the happy

process of removing victims from mass graves, restoring gold fillings to their teeth and breath to their lungs before transporting them back to the homes from which they were wrenched. Further on, Unverdorben’s idyllic courtship of Herta coincides with the lifting of restrictions on Jews.

“But this was our mission, after all: to make Germany whole,” concludes the narrator, who, in retrospect, does. “To heal her wounds and make her whole.” Seen in reverse, Unverdorben pursues the ambitious and laudable project of creating the Jewish people. Rather than a mass murderer, the Nazi executioner becomes a demiurge:



Martin Amis. (Cheryl A. Koralik, 1990)

"Our preternatural purpose? To dream a race. To make a people from the weather. From thunder and from lightning. With gas, with electricity, with shit, with fire."

It is a common refrain in both fiction and nonfiction that genocide defies reason and expression. Amis's contribution to the vast literature of the Holocaust is the premise that when—and only when—the Holocaust is viewed backward, it makes consummate sense. Nothing else in Unverdorben's fugitive days does. Projected backward, doctors routinely cause, rather than cure, illness and pain. "Put simply," says the narrator, who sees patients enter healed and emerge sick, "the hospital is an atrocity-producing situation. Atrocity will follow atrocity, unstopably. As if fresh atrocity were necessary to validate the atrocity that came before." In contrast to the hospitals where Unverdorben works incognito after fleeing the Nazi defeat, the concentration camp restores life, health, and meaning. "The world, after all, here in Auschwitz, has a new habit," marvels the narrator. "It makes sense." By comparison, the postwar United States in which he takes refuge is seen as a puzzling but pleasant place, a land of the bland.

Money: A Suicide Note (1984) and *London Fields* (1989)—outrageous lampoons on the decadence of modern civilization—established Amis, who is the son of author Kingsley Amis, as the enfant terrible of contemporary English fiction. *Time's Arrow* is another tour de force, and Amis has been criticized by some for appropriating the Holocaust, one of the most dreadful events in history, for his literary showmanship, as though the bravura of the book were an affront to the memory of the murdered six million. Writing in *The Spectator*, Julie Burchill faulted Amis for attempting to "perform a party trick on a mountain of skulls." Others have taken offense at what they regard as his cynical attempt to trivialize atrocity in order to produce a clever book.

Discomfort with *Time's Arrow* is a more pointed version of an old complaint: that the Holocaust was such ineffable horror that any artistic appropriation of it is a sort of sacrilege. To impose literary form on and derive aesthetic pleasure from the Nazi crematoria strikes some as grotesque in a way that dramatizing the anguish of Oedipus and Lear does not. Yet to declare the most traumatic of human experiences off-limits is genuinely to trivialize art, to reduce it to the mere picturesque. The alternative that Amis offers to tracking evil backward is living in an American Lethe—"washing-line and mailbox America, innocuous America . . . affable, melting-pot, primary-color, You're-okay-I'm-okay America." The terse, pointed narrative of *Time's Arrow* is an antidote to historical amnesia, and Amis's use of reverse narration is more than a stylish stylistic gimmick. It is an ingenious conceit that defamiliarizes the genocidal savagery, forcing

the jaded reader to encounter the torture and slaughter as if for the first time. *Time's Arrow* magnifies the horror while ostensibly dispelling it. The novel also obliges one to savor the strangeness of the world outside Auschwitz. "It's all strange to me," says the narrator, alter ego not only for a Nazi fiend but for the reader as well. "I know I live on a fierce and magical planet, which sheds or surrenders rain or even flings it off in whipstroke after whipstroke, which fires out bolts of electric gold into the firmament at 186,000 miles per second, which with a single shrug of its tectonic plates can erect a city in half an hour." What awesome and awful secrets are exposed when one surveys this world from omega to alpha!

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—Steven G. Kellman

TOUCH WOOD

A GIRLHOOD IN OCCUPIED FRANCE

AUTHOR: Renée Roth-Hano (1931-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1988

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Diary; young adult literature

By describing her childhood experiences and those of her family during World War II, Roth-Hano sensitizes young readers to the ways in which the war affected the lives of Jewish children.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Renée Roth (later Renée Roth-Hano; b. 1931), a girl who must hide from the Nazis during World War II

Denise Roth and

Lily Roth, Renée's younger sisters, who shared in all of her wartime experiences

OVERVIEW

Through her book *Touch Wood: A Girlhood in Occupied France*, Renée Roth-Hano effectively provides insights into the terror that spread through France and into the lives of a modest Jewish family with the advance of the Nazi regime. Roth-Hano describes how she and her family were affected by the gradual application of anti-Semitic laws that forbade them to own certain commodities or to shop when or where they wanted and that forced them to wear the yellow Star of David on their coats—restricting, in effect, their entire existence. She describes how they were forced to leave a comfortable home in Alsace to live in a cramped and dingy apartment in Paris and how she and her sisters were sent to hide with nuns in Normandy. Thus Roth-Hano provides young readers with a history of the Nazi invasion of France as seen through the eyes of a child.

The book is divided into two parts: The first half depicts the years 1940 and 1941, the time Roth-Hano spent in Paris, while the second half concentrates on her time in Flers, Normandy, from 1942 to 1944. Each chapter consists of a series of diary entries from a specific year, the first one beginning

on August 22, 1940. Renée is nine years old and living with her parents, two sisters, and a grandmother in a small apartment in Paris. Already, prohibitions against Jews are in place, and Renée angrily reflects on the happy life that they had in Alsace and the restrictions under which they live in Paris. Readers feel the frustration that Roth-Hano experiences as a child as she sees her life dramatically change without understanding why.

The diary entries continue with Renée's experiences at her new school in Paris and the formation of new friendships. These ordinary childhood experiences, however, are overshadowed by the increasing Nazi presence. Renée questions with a child's innocence the meaning of "Judaism" and why it would inspire such hatred. She stares with horror at anti-Semitic slogans written on buildings and learns not to trust anyone who is not "one of us"—Jewish. As family and friends begin to disappear, Renée's parents force themselves to send Renée and her sisters away to a Catholic women's residence in Flers, Normandy, where they reside under the protection of nuns.

Once in Normandy, Renée and her sisters convert to Catholicism as part of their disguise. In learning about Catholicism, however, Renée must struggle to reconcile her Jewish heritage with the Catholic faith, questioning her beliefs and upbringing. She must also endure infections that will not heal, perpetual hunger, and devastating bombings that force the girls to leave the residence and seek shelter with farmers in the surrounding area. After the girls spend months living in barns and sleeping on straw, the Allies finally arrive. Renée and her sisters are reunited with their parents, emerging no longer children but survivors.

In her preface, Roth-Hano states that *Touch Wood* is not the work of a historian, yet her experiences and impressions combine to form a historical text that re-creates Paris and Flers during World War II. Roth-Hano wrote this book with the intention of portraying the hate-filled climate of the time and the terror that increasingly engulfed and altered the lives of her and her family. She was successful in conveying the essence of her experiences through her use of diary entries. Although written many years after the war, they are effective in giving a sense of immediacy to the events taking place and involving the reader directly in the author's life.

In her self-portrayal, Roth-Hano does not place herself in the position of an extraordinary or heroic child. Instead, she is quite honest in relating her petty jealousies and childishness as well as her moments of pride and outrage at the predicament of the Jews. She is careful in making her emotions and reactions those of a child and not the reflections of an adult.

Roth-Hano describes the events occurring at the time by the ways in which they affect her childhood. The Germans invade France, so she must

move from Alsace to Paris, start a new school, and make new friends. Increasingly strict laws are applied against Jews, so she is unable to go to films or visit with a friend and must wear a yellow star. Jews are being deported and “relocated,” so she must leave her parents and live in Normandy, convert to Catholicism, and have her curls cut off because of lice. The Allies approach and Flers is destroyed, so she must live in barns. The Allies arrive, so she walks through a minefield in order to meet them. The Nazis surrender, so she is reunited with her family, although now she approaches them as a young adult. This narrative style gives the novel credibility as a child’s diary while also offering a unique view of the war.

As with much young adult literature, one of the major themes found in *Touch Wood* is that of growing up. The normal progression from childhood to young adulthood is significantly altered in Roth-Hano’s case, however, with the advent of the war. At the beginning of the novel, Renée is a somewhat petulant nine-year-old who is being forced to step outside her sheltered existence and acknowledge the cruelty of humankind; as she says after reading clippings derogating Jews, “I know how ugly and mean people can be.” Although increasingly aware of the events occurring around her, she is not old enough to understand their cause or implication, caught at an age between her younger sisters who are “too young to worry about anything for long” and her “troubled parents.”

While still in Paris, Renée maintains some semblance of a normal life, yet all of her experiences are overshadowed by the fact that she is Jewish. Renée, who had never had reason to question her identity as a Jew or otherwise, is suddenly confronted with a hatred so strong that her entire existence is threatened. As a result, she is forced to mature in order to survive, quickly moving toward young adulthood.

It is in Normandy that Renée makes the final break with childhood. Separated from her parents, she learns to accept the responsibility for herself and for her sisters that she had previously resisted. This is most clearly shown when Renée runs out of the shelter during an Allied bombing to find her youngest sister, Lily, and bring her to safety. At the end of the book, it is clear that Renée has crossed the line into young adulthood.

It is also in the second part of the book that the theme of religion is clearly brought forward. Renée finds herself both suspicious of and attracted to the Catholic faith while at the same time questioning her role as a Jew. In accepting Catholicism, she believes that she is betraying her family and thus herself. Although the issue is never clearly resolved, Renée proceeds by finding a compromise between the two.

As in most Holocaust literature, pervasive throughout the book is the question, Why? Why did the war occur? Why was there such hatred of the

Jews? Why did it take so long for the world to discover what was happening and take action? In *Touch Wood*, however, the question is put forward with a child's innocence, and it is all the more tragic for that.

Although Roth-Hano is not a writer by trade, her book was well received by reviewers of *Booklist*, *School Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly* on its publication. *Touch Wood* is a moving reflection of, as its subtitle states, a girlhood in occupied France. Although elements appear in the book that are familiar in other Holocaust literature, Roth-Hano's experiences remain fresh and individual, providing yet another perspective on the Jewish plight during World War II. *Touch Wood* helps to broaden the view provided by such books as Anne Frank's *Het Achterhuis* (1947; *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 1952) and Clara Isaacman's *Clara's Story* (1984). Especially interesting is the French setting of *Touch Wood*, given that most Holocaust novels take place in Germany or Poland.

The child's perspective and voice used throughout the novel make it uniquely suited for a young adult audience. It provides a more easily accessible method of approaching the subject of the Holocaust than traditional history texts, creating a basis for further exploration into the causes and effects of World War II.

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—Barbara Carol Calderoni

TZILI

THE STORY OF A LIFE

AUTHOR: Aharon Appelfeld (1932-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Kutonet veha-Pasim*, 1983 (English translation, 1983)

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Allegory

This allegorical novel uses character types that serve as symbols of various aspects of Jewish life to explore the loss of faith among Jews and their fate during the Holocaust years.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Tzili Kraus, a Jewish child abandoned by her parents when they flee to escape murdering soldiers

Mark, a forty-year-old man who lives with Tzili for a time

Katerina, a woman for whom Tzili works

Linda, the woman who saves Tzili's life

OVERVIEW

Tzili: The Story of a Life is an allegorical history of the faith and fate of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. The novel first traces the efforts of a poor family to ignore its Jewish heritage and assimilate into the Austrian culture. The father and mother demand secular academic excellence of their children while abandoning their cultural and religious Jewish heritage, including its emphasis on Jewish education and values. The focus then shifts to Tzili Kraus, the youngest child, whose anomalously innate ties to Judaism symbolize the strength of the archetypal pull to faith and the enduring nature of Judaism, traceable to its strong advancement by a selected few.

The novel opens with the narrator's observation to the reader:

Perhaps it would be better to leave the story of Tzili Kraus's life untold. . . .

Her fate was a cruel and inglorious one, and but for the fact that it actually happened, we would never have been able to tell her story.

Tzili, symbolic of the quiet, abandoned Jewish faith, spends her first seven summers and falls on the dry, dusty soil in the small plot of earth behind

the family's shop. Ignored because she is peaceful and undemanding, Tzili spends her days alone and at dusk is brought inside the house, where she is also ignored, as conversation focuses on the academic achievements of her intellectually gifted older siblings. When Tzili is seven, she proves herself to be a poor student and is berated by her family and ridiculed by her peers, especially since her dullness is considered an unusual trait among Jews.

Failing to goad Tzili into academic superiority, her parents hire an old, unsympathetic man to tutor their "feble-minded" child in Judaism. Even in this, the child does not excel, leading the old man to despair "why it had fallen to the lot of this dull child to keep the spark [of Sabbath and prayer] alive." Nevertheless, just as Tzili keeps the spark of Judaism alive, Judaism keeps Tzili alive:

[The old man's visits] filled her with a kind of serenity which remained with her and protected her for many hours afterward. At night she would recite, "Hear, O Israel" aloud, as he had instructed her, covering her face.

Upon hearing news of an imminent siege, the Kraus family flees the village, leaving Tzili behind to "take care of their property for them." Lying among barrels in the shed and covered with sacking, the child sleeps undiscovered throughout the night of slaughter and wakes to find herself alone. Guided by intuition, Tzili leaves town and wanders to a riverbank, where she meets an old, blind lecher who mistakes her for one of the many daughters of Maria, the Gentile town whore, who is popular with Jew and Gentile alike. Tzili assumes this fortuitous identity, which, along with her quiet stoic strength, allows her entry into the safe but brutal peasant community and enables her to survive the ensuing Holocaust years without being put into a camp. She learns what has happened to her town from a conversation between the blind man and his daughter:

"They chased the Jews away and they killed them too."

"All of them?"

"Yes."

"And their houses?"

"The peasants are looting them."

"What do you say? Maybe you can find me a winter coat?"

After wandering for many days, Tzili works first for Katerina, a prostitute, who walked the streets with Maria and shared the same men with her. Now Katerina is sick and demanding, and when she throws a knife at Tzili because the girl is unwilling to support the two of them by prostitution,

Tzili leaves the warmth and femininity of the house to wander alone in the cold and without regular food for many weeks. She then begins working for an aged peasant couple whom she finally leaves because the old man tries to compromise her, and, as a result, his wife beats Tzili continuously.

The young girl then joins a Jewish camp escapee, Mark, who abandoned his wife and two children to their unknown fate because they were afraid to climb through a narrow aperture and escape the camp with him. Because of Tzili's Aryan features, she is able to procure food by bartering Mark's family's clothing, which he took with him when he escaped. Almost two years elapse, and Mark becomes increasingly morbid and guilty about his past. At fifteen, Tzili becomes pregnant, and Mark, discontent with only food, demands that Tzili procure cigarettes and liquor for him with the clothing. One day he tells Tzili that he is going to town by himself; he leaves and never returns. Tzili once again is abandoned.

Tzili resumes her wandering, bartering Mark's clothing for food. When the clothes are gone, she works for another peasant family, who beat her until she is bruised and swollen, as if they want "to tear the fetus from her body." Tzili leaves to wander alone again.

She is amazed to discover that her aimless path has led her in a circle, and she is again near Katerina's house and the place where she and Mark stayed. When the war ends and dazed survivors of camps can be seen walking across the land, Tzili joins a group of liberated Jews who have hopes of reaching Italy. Ill and weak because of her pregnancy, Tzili has difficulty keeping up with the petty, quarreling people who spend their nontravel time playing cards and gambling with one another. In their despair over the past, about which no one can talk, and because they appear to have no future, several survivors commit suicide. Another man, who exhorts the group to repent and return to their Father in Heaven, is tricked into leaving the group. Yet Tzili fears, even more than her nights in the forest, the survivors—thin, speechless, and withdrawn persons upon whom a "kind of secret veiled their faces."

Although Tzili is quiet and almost unnoticed, when she becomes too sick to continue, surprising help comes from Linda, a former cabaret dancer, who demands that the group stop for Tzili, and from a merchant, who constructs a stretcher on which Tzili is carried the rest of the way. As if ensuring her survival has been the sole purpose of their journey, they carry Tzili aloft in triumph and with the roar "We are the torch bearers." Finally, the small band of survivors reaches Zagreb, and as soon as the "torch bearers" reach the town of security, food, and provisions supplied by American agencies, they refuse to shoulder their burden any longer and lay the stretcher in the shade. The merchant finally succeeds in summoning an

ambulance to carry Tzili away, but he runs after the vehicle, begging in vain to be taken too because "the child is alone in the world."

The fetus, a product of guilt and a reminder of years of horror, is dead, and in a makeshift barracks hospital, Tzili undergoes surgery, now totally alone. Tzili's parents and siblings, reminders of assimilation and pre-war secular and materialistic aspirations, are never seen again after they abandon Tzili, and the reader assumes that they have been victims of the slaughter.

Yet Tzili, symbol of the spark of the Sabbath and Judaism that her family had abandoned, survives the Holocaust, the dreadful years, as well as surgery and its excruciating aftermath. Again with the help of Linda, who complains to Tzili that the survivors now ignore her because they have "shiksas" (non-Jewish girls) to entertain them, Tzili and Linda board a ship that appears to be bound for Palestine to begin a new life.

Tzili, the protagonist of this novel, stands alone in her story, both literally and symbolically. Her youth is shaped by a major conflict within the Jewish culture of the time, which pits the strong attempt of many Jews to escape persecution by means of attaining intellectual superiority and, with it, assimilation into the Gentile majority against the emotional pull of the legacy of Judaism, which they have rejected. In contrast to these assimilated Jews, there is the true-to-life Tzili, who symbolizes the innocence, simplicity, and goodness of the Torah and of the Jewish faith. Because she is considered feeble-minded and therefore incapable of intellectual superiority and assimilation, only she is taught the basic tenets of Judaism. When her family faces its most fearsome challenge, the murdering soldiers, they leave Tzili and her symbolic Torah and faith behind. Saved as if by a miracle when she sleeps through the slaughter, given a safe identity, and provided with help when she most needs it, Tzili, the person and the symbol, survives to build a new life in Palestine. Tzili realizes, however, that "she would remain alone, alone forever," and if anyone would ever ask her where she was and what happened to her during the years of horror, she would not reply.

All the other characters, representations of both Jewish and non-Jewish character types, serve as vehicles to describe Tzili as a person and as a symbol. Katerina, the prostitute with pretensions to culture and femininity, gives Tzili shelter in exchange for hard work and increasingly demanding tasks. Like Maria, who is only mentioned in the text, she states that she prefers the Jews to all other lovers because they are kind, generous, and always take a woman to a fine hotel. Yet the picture of the Jew who is valued for his generosity and kindness but is despised for the legacy that has given him those attributes is as ironic as Tzili, symbol of the Torah and the faith

that are abandoned except for times when there is nowhere else to turn.

Mark, the gray-faced, forty-year-old man who helps and is helped by Tzili, is also a character type, consumed with guilt after having left his wife and child behind when they refused to take the chance to escape camp. He, too, is the product of an assimilation-seeking family whose father put inordinate pressure on his wife and children to be able to speak flawless German and who corrected Mark's mother in front of people when she made errors. The Torah is not part of Mark's life, but Tzili gives him comfort and companionship in the darkest period between his escape from the camp and his return to almost certain death. When Mark deserts Tzili, she is devastated, and, like his mother, child, and wife, she searches for him and sees him in her dreams for months until she realizes that he is lost to her forever.

Linda, the fat cabaret dancer, is a mixture of types—the common, low-class woman exhibiting uncommon, high-principled action. She left her Gentile landowner-lover when one year of the war still remained. Although he hid her from the Germans, she regarded his brutality as worse than life in a camp, where she entertained her fellow prisoners with song and dance. In spite of her common occupation and appearance, she respects Tzili enough to stop the band of survivors and insist that Tzili be cared for and taken with them. Although the unnamed merchant performs the last favors for Tzili by caring for her during the final leg of the journey to Zagreb and by obtaining medical help for her when it appears that she may die, it is Linda who meets Tzili after she leaves the hospital and accompanies her to Palestine. Ironically, when they find more interesting diversions with the women of Zagreb, the “torch bearers” among the survivors who carried Tzili aloft abandon her in spite of the merchant's pleas. Presumably, many of them never get the opportunity for rebirth that is accorded Tzili and Linda.

The irony of pursuing assimilation is the central theme of *Tzili*, as Aharon Appelfeld explores the loss of faith among Jews and their fate during the Holocaust years. Although the characters are people who surely existed, they assume even larger dimensions as character types during the Holocaust and as symbols of Jewish life. As in many of his other novels, themes of the abandoned child, the cruel and insensitive father-man, travel, and the freedom afforded by forests are important elements.

The theme of dedication to the Torah and the natural simplicity of the good Jewish life are embedded in the symbolic Tzili. Her lost baby, a mere fetus to the doctor but joy and hope to Tzili, symbolizes the death of the innocent, conceived during chaos of the soul and the world and destroyed by deprivation and neglect. The destruction of Jewish life, even from the womb, begins with the old peasant woman, who, although not aware that

Tzili is Jewish, beats the girl as if to destroy the life within her. Even the liberated Jews, unable to plan for the future because of past experience, cling only to the diversions of the minute, such as card playing and gambling, and do not heed the necessity for rededication and preservation of new life. Literally and symbolically, they wander through deserted areas, like the tribes of Israel wandered with Moses, in an attempt to cleanse themselves in preparation for entry to the Promised Land.

Until Linda forces the survivors to aid Tzili and what she represents, the band stumbles forward in fear but not in hope. Only when they carry Tzili aloft on a stretcher, like the Jews carrying the Torah from the destruction of Solomon's Temple, do they regain strength and purpose. Still, they remain blind to the regenerative power of faith and dedication to others when they abandon the stretcher at the first possible moment and again pursue empty worship of the Golden Calf.

The allegory reveals that life is empty and meaningless without the direction that the Torah provides. The pursuit of temporal goals such as secular academic superiority (for example, the case of Tzili's siblings and also that of a former student who kills himself after liberation) or the pursuit of petty successes such as wealth or beauty is not lasting and does not help when trouble comes. Underscoring this important theme is the camp survivors' obsession with their former diversion of playing cards and gambling; life is an empty series of card games—each played, ended, and forgotten. Although at a superficial level the novel concerns the suffering of a young girl as she matures during the Holocaust, it is actually an allegory of the meaning of life, even a parable about how life should be lived.

Appelfeld's style in this novel is straightforward, but the work's poetry of description and imagery reach the reader and evoke objective correlatives with great emotional appeal. For example, Appelfeld describes the day after Tzili meets the small band of camp survivors:

The sun opened out. The people unbuttoned their damp clothes and sprawled on the river bank and slept. The long, damp years of the war steamed out of their moldy bodies. Even at night the smell did not disappear. Only Tzili did not sleep. The way the people slept filled her with wonder. Are they happy? Tzili asked herself. They slept in a heap, defenseless bodies suddenly abandoned by danger.

Appelfeld's choice of words and sentence structure expand this brief novel into an epic because of the multitude of images and meanings the reader is impelled to envision and pursue.

Tzili, Appelfeld's third novel to appear in English translation, shares

some characteristics with his first two novels, *Badenheim*, *hamzah ir nofesh* (1975; *Badenheim 1939*, 1980) and *Tor-ha-pela'ot* (1978; *The Age of Wonders*, 1981), but adds a dimension that makes it possibly the most rewarding of any of Appelfeld's novels. Like *Badenheim 1939*, *Tzili* focuses on a description of Jewish society in prewar Europe and the immersion of that society into a Holocaust for which it was not prepared and which it failed to acknowledge, even in the face of reality. Like *The Age of Wonders*, *Tzili* introduces a strong autobiographical element, pre- and post-Holocaust segments, and the tempering of pessimism by the survival of youth. Appelfeld's use of dreamlike hallucinatory allegory in *Tzili*, however, sets it apart from his other novels, and the minimalist approach places an even greater responsibility on the reader to interpret meaning while multiple levels of interpretation are added to each word and scene.

Tzili includes some of the images that Appelfeld established in his earlier novels and that he later carried into his other novels, but some images are conspicuously absent. The prewar assimilated Jewish society remains a major focus, as do the abandoned child and the ugly father. Yet *Tzili* finds refuge in homes and among non-Jews as well as in the forest, and although travel is omnipresent, there are no trains to remind the reader of the approach of the Holocaust. Further differentiating this novel from Appelfeld's other works is his use of words ("Germans," "murdering soldiers," "screams and shots," "camp survivors") that evoke the images of the Holocaust without its mention. In previous works, he avoided such words, instead implying the Holocaust in various other ways.

Tzili belongs to the category of Appelfeld's work that includes pre- and post-Holocaust segments and indicates that youth returning to Judaism can survive. Yet where the focus on youth has been secondary in other novels, here it is the major focus in a symbolic mode that links that youth (*Tzili*) with the spirit of Judaism itself. Appelfeld has said that *Tzili* is a form of autobiographical memory. Perhaps that would best explain its haunting effect, for the author is recounting a personal experience rather than an observed one.

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—June H. Schlessinger

THE UPSTAIRS ROOM

AUTHOR: Johanna Reiss (1932-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1972

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: Autobiography; children's literature; young adult literature

Reiss's autobiographical account of hiding from the Nazis in Holland during World War II vividly shows young readers the Holocaust through the eyes of a Jewish child.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Annie de Leeuw (later Johanna Reiss; b. 1932), the author as a child

Ies de Leeuw, Annie's father

Sophie de Leeuw, Annie's mother

Rachel de Leeuw, Annie's oldest sister

Sini de Leeuw, Annie's older sister

Gerrit Hannink, a family friend whose family hides Annie and Sini for two months

Johan Oosterveld, a farmer whose family hides Annie and Sini for two and one-half years

Dientje Oosterveld, Johan's wife

Opoe Oosterveld, Johan's mother

OVERVIEW

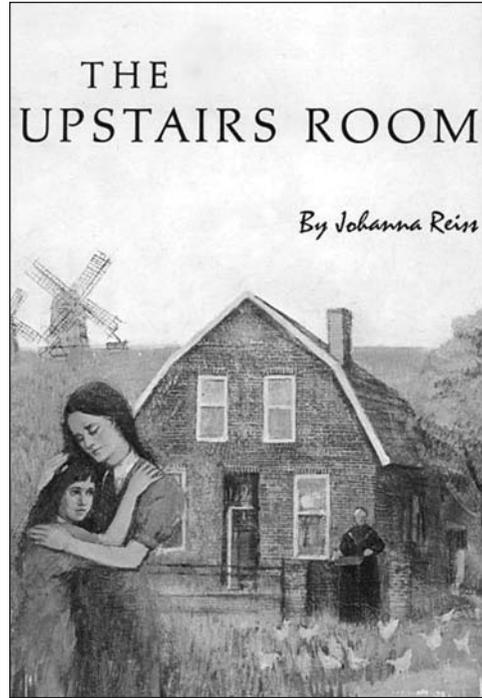
Johanna Reiss's story serves as both a history of the German occupation of the Netherlands, which lasted from 1940 to 1945, and a portrait of the writer as a young girl who survived the Holocaust. During this tragic time, Nazis slaughtered six million European Jews and millions of other victims. A short foreword states Reiss's desire to write a simple, human book about this part of her childhood; a brief introduction then sets the scene, giving the historical context for World War II in Europe.

In twelve chapters, Reiss chronicles her experiences during the war. Her story begins in 1938; she is a six-year-old listening to the radio news report about Kristallnacht, the night of terror that marked the beginning of the end for six million Jews. Her father, a cattle dealer, realized the danger of

living in Winterswijk, Holland, less than twenty minutes from the German border; however, her mother, an invalid, denied that Dutch Jews were endangered even when they heard that German Jews were trying to escape to Winterswijk. Within a few months, Annie's uncle and aunt escaped to the United States. Mrs. de Leeuw still stubbornly refused to leave her home.

The next three years of tragic events that led to the family going into hiding in October, 1942, are seen through Annie's eyes. Adolf Hitler invaded Poland in September, 1939, then Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. Soon after Holland was invaded on May 10, 1940, notices in the marketplace declared a series of oppressive restrictions on Jews, denying them jobs and ostracizing them from society. By the time Mr. de Leeuw was ready to ignore his wife's protests and take his family to the United States, it was impossible to get the required papers. In October, 1941, the de Leeuws moved to a new house built outside Winterswijk; shortly thereafter, Nazi soldiers rounded up Jewish men in the town, taking them to a concentration camp. Mrs. de Leeuw, hospitalized for her severe headaches, died soon after the family went into hiding in October, 1942, after they were told they would be transported to a work camp. Annie (now ten) and Sini (twenty) moved in with the Hannink family in Usselo. Rachel (twenty-five) joined a family forty miles from Usselo, and their father hid with a family near Rotterdam.

After only two months with the Hanninks, Annie and Sini moved to the Oostervelds' farmhouse in Usselo, supposedly only for a week or two, until Hannink could be certain that a German soldier who had followed him had not become suspicious. When Hannink failed to return for the girls, however, Johan Oosterveld, a poor farmer, promised to hide them for the war's duration, despite his wife's constant fear for their own lives. For the next two and one-half years, Annie and Sini endured the bad times as they



waited out the war. Their most terrifying moments were spent cramped in the hiding place Johan built behind shelves in an upstairs closet. Once, when German soldiers searched the house for Jews, they clung to each other, barely breathing, only inches from the soldier on the other side of the partition. During another frightening time, German soldiers quartered in the house saw Annie when she slipped downstairs. Despite it all, the girls survived to welcome Canadian soldiers who liberated Usselo on April 1, 1945. The Oostervelds' neighbors admired their courageous act of saving Jews and risking their own lives.

A short postscript mentions the sisters' reunion with their father in Winterswijk. Years later, Annie came to the United States. To conclude, Reiss describes her visit with Johan, Dientje, and Opoe (then ninety-two) in the late 1960's. Showing her two daughters the hiding place, Reiss cried, overwhelmed by the memories.

Those painful memories of a childhood lost inspired *The Upstairs Room*. In her brief foreword, Reiss explains that she wanted to create a book about the people in her life during World War II. A note about Reiss in the back of the book quotes her as saying that she did not think her experiences, which she wanted to preserve for her two daughters, would take more than a week to record. Her children could not believe that she spent more than two years hiding in that upstairs room they saw with her; even Reiss admits she almost could not believe it all happened. Yet because it did, she decided that she had to tell her story to the next generation in the fervent hope that the Holocaust would never happen again. The events and emotions were so powerful and overwhelming that Reiss found it exhausting to write for more than two hours at a time. The book took three years to write—not only because of the painful memories but also because Reiss had never written a book and because she was writing in English rather than her native Dutch.

Although she did not plan a book about history, her narrative has historical significance. Her short introduction summarizes the forces that meshed to create the Holocaust. Although World War II began when Germans invaded Poland in 1939, Germany's social and economic turmoil after World War I sowed the seeds for Hitler's rise to power and his use of the Jews as scapegoats for all of Germany's problems. Acknowledging the horrible suffering of millions of people the world over, Reiss focuses her attention on the Jews of Holland, with her family a microcosm of the larger human drama.

Reiss's approach is both informative and emotional. Certainly her subject has instructional value, especially if one believes that those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it. The book does not bitterly condemn the Nazis or those who refused to save innocent lives; rather, it cele-

brates the good in the human heart. Reiss's preface states that the Oostervelds were not heroic, but human—people with both weaknesses and strengths. Yet everyday people who do courageous and admirable acts that endanger their entire families' lives are indeed heroes. People such as the Oostervelds were not famous political or social activists, but they acted righteously for a just cause.

The Upstairs Room portrays a complex period of history in an understandable manner. While Reiss's purpose was to write a simple book, she undoubtedly invented dialogue to fit her remembrances some twenty-five years earlier and to make the Holocaust subject appropriate for her audience. Reiss describes the sounds of terror when German soldiers stormed the stairs toward the family's hiding place: loud, ugly voices and loud footsteps of boots. Those Nazi boots trampled millions of childhoods, but Reiss's biography is a triumphant testimonial to the survival of a few lives saved from the smoke and ashes. In another particularly insightful passage, the horrors of the death camps became real when Annie read an underground newspaper's account of how people were murdered there. Given soap, they were packed into a "shower room" so tightly that the steel door could barely close. It was not water that was turned on, but gas. After fifteen minutes almost everyone was dead. Then the bodies were burned in ovens. Thus a few short sentences describe the horror in words a ten-year-old reader can understand, although a child may not be able to grasp the magnitude of the Holocaust. To further their understanding of this almost inexplicable subject, young adult readers may want to compare *The Upstairs Room* with other Holocaust fiction and biography. The happy ending of *The Upstairs Room* is even more poignant when one considers those who were not as fortunate.

The book was named a Newbery Honor Book in 1973; it was also named an American Library Association Notable Children's Book and Jane Adams Peace Association Honor Book, and it received the Jewish Book Council Juvenile Book Award and the Buxtehuder Bulle, a German award for excellence in children's books. The historical authenticity, realistic narrative, and uplifting moral values of *The Upstairs Room* make it a valuable contribution to young adult biography.

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—Laura M. Zaidman

THE WALL

AUTHOR: John Hersey (1914-1993)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1950

GENRE: Novel

SUBGENRE: Historical fiction

This novel in the form of a diary chronicles the experiences of a wide-ranging cast of characters within the setting of the Jewish ghetto established by the Nazis in Warsaw.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Noach Levinson, a professional historian and self-appointed archivist of Polish Jewry whose fictive diary constitutes the text of the novel

Dolek Berson, an assimilated Polish Jew who gradually changes from a charming drifter to a determined resistance fighter

Rachel Apt, the daughter of a wealthy Warsaw jeweler who becomes Dolek's lover after he loses his wife

Halinka Mazur, Rachel's beautiful sister

Stefan Mazur, Halinka's husband and a member of the Jewish ghetto police

Henryk Rapaport, a famous leader of the Jewish Socialists and an ardent opponent of Zionist ideology

Hil Zilberzweig, the middle-aged leader of a Zionist youth organization who is induced to make peace with Rapaport through Rachel Apt's mediation

Lazar Slonim, a young Socialist who undertakes a hazardous mission to determine the fate of Jews deported from Warsaw

Fischel Schpunt, the ghetto clown whose antics amuse both the Jews and the Germans

Benlevi, a distinguished jurist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize who evades his responsibilities to the Jewish community by leaving Warsaw with a Uruguayan passport

OVERVIEW

John Hersey's intent in *The Wall* is to relate in fictional form the martyrdom of the Jews who lived in Warsaw during World War II, and the text of

the novel is purported to consist of selections from a very extensive diary originally written in Yiddish that was kept by a historian named Noah Levinson. Even though the diary and the historian are equally fictive, the novel reads very much like an authentic historical chronicle.

As published under the title of *The Wall*, the diary begins with the German occupation of the Polish capital in the fall of 1939 and concludes with the razing of the entire ghetto by Schutzstaffel (SS) troops as part of the suppression of the revolt that occurred there in the spring of 1943. So assiduous was Levinson in his role of chronicler that the almost daily entries recorded over this period of three and one half years reached a total of more than four million words. This diary, as well as a vast quantity of other documents assembled by Levinson, allegedly was buried within the confines of the Warsaw ghetto for safety's sake. Even though Levinson is supposed to have died of pneumonia nearly a year after the destruction of the ghetto while hiding out in the "Aryan" sector of Warsaw, he reportedly left detailed directions pertaining to the location of the archive with several trusted individuals who duly recovered it at the war's end.

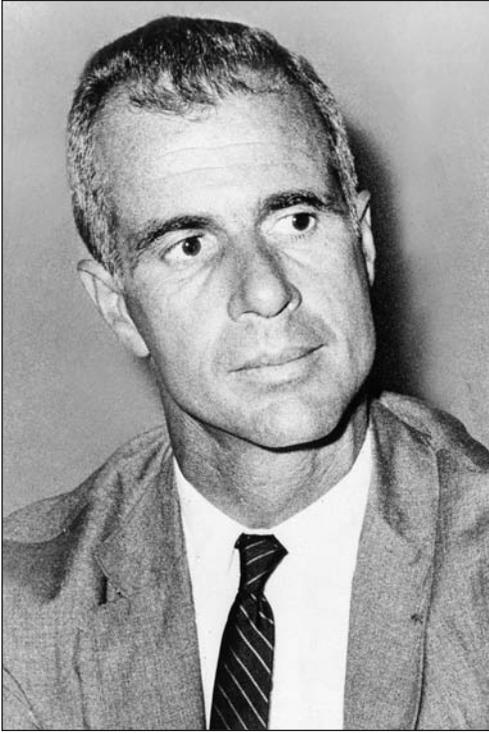
The fictive archivist Levinson, it should be noted, had a historical counterpart in the person of Emanuel Ringelblum. As founder of the ghetto archives, this heroic scholar struggled to find and preserve Jewish documents for posterity. While his own writings are far less extensive than those attributed to Levinson by Hersey, the content of Ringelblum's wartime journal, titled *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto* (1974), closely parallels the historical events fictionalized in *The Wall*. At the time of the German conquest of Poland, the area of Warsaw that was to become the site of the ghetto was inhabited by 240,000 Jews and 80,000 Gentiles. In the fall of 1940, the Nazis ordered the Gentiles to leave the area; at the same time, some 140,000 Jews from other sectors of Warsaw were compelled to move in. The ghetto was then sealed off by an eight-foot wall, and the death penalty was decreed for any Jew who ventured outside as well as for any Gentile who dared to harbor or assist a person of Jewish ancestry. The number of Jews residing within the ghetto eventually grew to 430,000 as an influx of deportees from different regions of Poland and from other European countries more than replaced those who died from hunger and disease.

Although the mass extermination of European Jewry actually got under way shortly after the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, it was not until approximately a year later that the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto began in earnest. The ghetto's inhabitants were told that they were to be resettled in the East, but the journey turned out to be a short

one: a trip of some fifty miles to the gas chambers set up in the death camp of Treblinka. As soon as the true nature of the transfer action became known, the disparate political and religious factions within the ghetto banded together and agreed to the formation of a military unit to be known as the Jewish Combat Organization (ZOB). The climax of the unit's armed resistance came when the ZOB opened fire on the Germans and their Ukrainian and Lithuanian auxiliaries as they entered the ghetto on the morning of April 19, 1943. By that time, the total number of inhabitants had dwindled to 60,000, but the poorly armed members of the ZOB still managed to thwart the enemy for nearly a month. There was never any hope of victory, except for the spiritual triumph that comes from dying with honor. The last part of *The Wall* itself is devoted to the details of the planning and execution of this act of insurrection and constitutes an eloquent tribute to its heroic grandeur.

In the prologue to *The Wall*, the anonymous editor of Levinson's diary states that the version he has prepared for current publication consists of only one-twentieth of the more than four million words to be found in the original notebooks. In order to achieve such a drastic reduction in length, he decided to concentrate on those entries that pertain to the fortunes of a group of individuals belonging to three families, whose respective surnames are Berson, Apt, and Mazur. These families are eventually compelled to live together in a single apartment, owing to the lack of housing within the ghetto. They also take in three other persons as roomers—a rabbi, a former social worker, and Levinson himself. It is ironic that Levinson experiences the joys of family life for the first time as an adult by virtue of this arrangement, and he develops genuine affection for all members of this extended family. For this privilege, Levinson comes close to feeling gratitude toward the Nazis, who have made it all possible.

Because of this newly acquired vantage point, Levinson becomes privy to much intimate information concerning other members of the "family" and is thus able to delineate with great authority the varying ways in which these individuals respond to the increasingly brutal conditions of life inside the ghetto. Levinson witnesses the gradual transformation of Dolek Berson from a man with little purpose in life to a self-sacrificing guardian of the Jewish community. Rachel Apt, in contrast, is depicted throughout Levinson's diary as constant in her dedication to the welfare of the ghetto's inhabitants. Halinka Apt, perhaps owing to her great beauty, always had a tendency to be more engrossed in personal affairs than her sister, but she grows in stature as the novel progresses, until she is almost as heroic a figure as Rachel herself. Their father, Mauritz Apt, proves himself to be a moral failure and earns the



John Hersey. (AP/Wide World Photos)

contempt of both his daughters when he engages the services of a plastic surgeon for the sake of replacing the fore-skin that was removed at the time he was circumcised as an infant and leaves the ghetto with documents identifying him as a Gentile.

As conditions in the ghetto grow more dire, other individuals find themselves in situations that test their virtue to the utmost. Particularly poignant is the dilemma that confronts Halinka's husband, Stefan Mazur. Having become a member of the Jewish ghetto police, he is obliged to bring four persons to the railroad yard for transfer to Treblinka each day during the period of resettlement. Fail-

ure to fulfill his quota will lead to the deportation of his own wife. To save Halinka's life, he tries to get his own parents to volunteer to go to Treblinka. After failing to get either of them to consent, Stefan abducts Berson's ailing wife out of sheer desperation so that he might meet his quota. He himself dies shortly thereafter under somewhat mysterious circumstances amid the confusion caused by a bombing raid on the city of Warsaw by Russian aircraft.

Some entries in *The Wall* pertain to incidents involving characters who are not part of Levinson's "family." In choosing which of these episodes to include, the editor decided to focus on individuals who survived the destruction of the ghetto, reasoning that readers would be more likely to be interested in the few who survived than in the many who perished. At the end of the novel, forty-three people, including a Polish guide, make their way together out of the ghetto through the sewers into the "Aryan" sector of Warsaw. Although this hazardous trip is supposed to take no more than seven hours, unforeseen difficulties on the "Aryan" side make it necessary that the group remain in the sewers for an additional twenty-four hours. It is during this delay that Levinson conducts some of his most

revealing interviews and is able to clarify many situations that had previously puzzled him. With the sole exception of Dolek Berson, who is inadvertently left behind as the result of the haste with which the Polish rescue party departs, all who participate in the escape succeed in reaching the safety of a thick forest located just outside the city. As if to emphasize the activist sentiments of the survivors, the editor concludes the volume with the query made by Rachel Apt upon reaching the woods, "Nu, what is the plan for tomorrow?"

In one sequence in the novel, five days after the outbreak of the uprising in the ghetto, Levinson delivers a speech from within a bunker on the great Yiddish writer Isaac Leib Peretz under the auspices of the Jewish Cultural Organization. In the course of this talk, Levinson attempts to formulate a definition of Jewishness that is broad enough to encompass the Hasidic rabbi Baal Shem Tov as well as Albert Einstein. To this end, he cites the words that appear in the conclusion to a volume of essays by Peretz, in which Jews are warned against shutting themselves up in a spiritual ghetto: "Ghetto is impotence. Cultural cross fertilization is the only possibility for human development. Humanity must be the synthesis, the sum, the quintessence of all national cultural forms and philosophies."

Peretz's noble sentiment stands in stark contrast to the narrow nationalism espoused by the ideologues of the Third Reich. As a case in point, one need only consider the definition of a Jew that the Nazis invoked to determine who was to be incarcerated within the ghetto. According to the entry in Levinson's diary dated October 25, 1940, a Jew is officially defined as "any man who has had at least three Jewish grandparents, or two grandparents provided (1) he is active in any Jewish communal organization or (2) he has a Jewish wife." Because this definition is based on racial rather than religious criteria, those Polish Jews who had converted to Christianity also found themselves compelled to live inside the ghetto. Two such Christians of Jewish ancestry whose stories Levinson includes in his diary are a father and son named, respectively, Jan and Wladislaw Jablonski. Despite the fact that the son had received an exclusively Roman Catholic upbringing, he quickly comes to accept new Jewish identity once he takes up residence within the ghetto. His father, whose conversion to Roman Catholicism had been based on sincere conviction, remains steadfast, however, in his adherence to his adopted faith. Irrespective of these differences, both eventually die at the hands of the Germans. The tragic fate of the Jablonskis makes it abundantly clear that the definition of Jewishness is not a matter that Jews can expect to resolve exclusively among themselves.

Even though *The Wall* did not win the Pulitzer Prize in fiction, as did Hersey's solitary previous novel, *A Bell for Adano* (1944), it garnered several other major literary awards. Hersey's moral earnestness and thorough research received almost unanimous praise from the critics. Those reviewers who expressed reservations pertaining to the efficacy of the novel found fault chiefly with its journalistic technique. Because similar charges had been leveled against *A Bell for Adano*, Hersey took the trouble of clarifying his views on the function of historical fiction in an article titled "The Novel of Contemporary History," which appeared in the November, 1949, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* a few months before the scheduled publication of *The Wall*. There, he explains, the primary aim of this type of fiction should be to "illuminate" the human beings caught up in historical events rather than the events themselves. In this respect, Hersey's purpose in writing *The Wall* was no different from that which motivated him to publish the nonfictional work bearing the title *Hiroshima* (1946).

The Wall and *Hiroshima*, which differ greatly in terms of both length and complexity, are regarded as Hersey's finest achievements in their respective genres. *Hiroshima* is a short work organized around Hersey's own interviews with six survivors of the atomic holocaust that struck the city on August 6, 1945. *The Wall*, in contrast, is a novel of more than six hundred pages containing innumerable individual diary entries that are allegedly culled from interviews that Levinson conducted with twenty informants over a period of three and one-half years. When all these entries are added to those for which Levinson himself is solely responsible, there are more than fifty characters whose identities the reader needs to remember. Despite this burden, a close reading of *The Wall* is a richly rewarding experience that few contemporary novels can match in terms of wisdom and compassion.

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—Victor Anthony Rudowski

WAR AGAINST THE WEAK

EUGENICS AND AMERICA'S CAMPAIGN TO CREATE A MASTER RACE

AUTHOR: Edwin Black (1950-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 2003

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

This history of the development of eugenics activism in the United States argues that the American eugenics movement was partly responsible for the Nazi mass murders during World War II.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Charles Benedict Davenport (1866-1944), an American zoologist and eugenics activist who founded the Station for Experimental Evolution of the Carnegie Institution, the Eugenics Record Office, and the Eugenics Research Association

Harry Hamilton Laughlin, a colleague of Davenport and a eugenics activist

Carrie Buck, a young woman who was sentenced to be sterilized by Virginia law and who made a historic, unsuccessful appeal of her sentence to the U.S. Supreme Court

Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, a German physician and eugenicist who maintained connections with Davenport, Laughlin, and American eugenics organizations

Josef Mengele (1911-1979), an assistant of Freiherr von Verschuer, whose eugenics research at Auschwitz made him a notorious war criminal

Edwin Katzen-Ellenbogen, a Polish-born American citizen and physician who was active in the American Eugenics Research Association and later became a prisoner at Buchenwald, where he allegedly collaborated with his Nazi captors

OVERVIEW

The word "eugenics," from Greek words for "wellborn," was coined by the English scientist and pioneer in statistics Sir Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, who developed the evolutionary theory of natural selec-

tion. Galton suggested that it might be possible to direct natural selection by encouraging marriages among people with desirable traits. Galton made some effort to obtain information on inherited traits, gathering data on family traits through questionnaires collected by his Anthropometric Laboratory at London's International Health Exposition. Galton's interest in eugenics remained largely theoretical, however, and he confessed that it would be a long time before scientists had enough knowledge to direct evolution. He also maintained that eugenicists should stress "positive eugenics," matings between people with valued characteristics, and avoid "negative eugenics," the practice of preventing reproduction by people judged to be mentally or physically inferior.

In the United States, Galton's work inspired activists who put his ideas into practice. Chief among these was Charles Benedict Davenport, who earned a doctorate in biology at Harvard University and taught zoology at Harvard and at the University of Chicago. Davenport managed to secure funds from the Carnegie Institute to set up a Station for Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor, New York, in 1904. That institution would be devoted to finding ways to direct evolution.

In order to pursue this goal, Davenport obtained additional support from the widow of railroad magnate E. H. Harriman and created the Eugenics Record Office (ERO), which would register the genetic histories of American families, identifying desirable and undesirable hereditary strains. In 1913 the eugenicists, led by Davenport, created the Eugenics Research Association (ERA), which was dedicated to research and to promoting laws and policies. Two of the most prominent members of the ERA were Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, best-selling authors who had published books arguing that the white race was threatened by the hereditary influences of inferior nonwhites.

Many of the important figures in American social and intellectual history were involved in the eugenics movement. Margaret Sanger, the feminist campaigner for birth control and founder of Planned Parenthood, had ties to the movement. Henry Goddard, the pioneer of intelligence testing who coined the word "moron," was also connected to it.

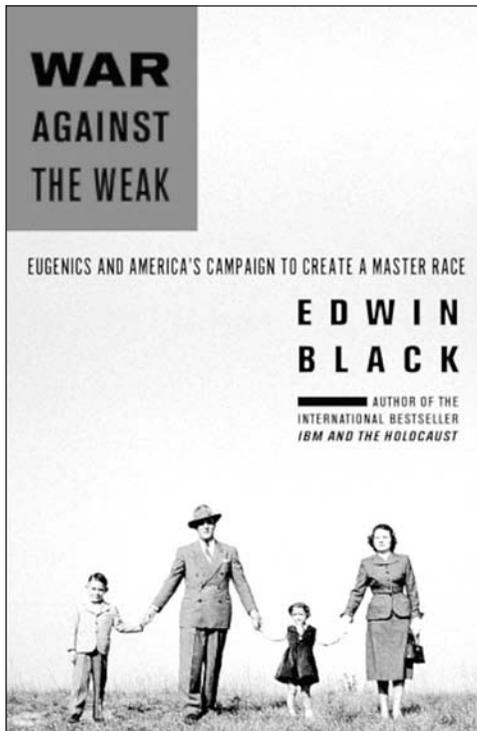
Davenport's chief lieutenant in the crusade for eugenics was Harry Hamilton Laughlin, an ambitious teacher who met Davenport while attending a summer biology class at Cold Spring Harbor. When Davenport founded the ERO, he obtained permission from the generous Mrs. Harriman to make Laughlin the head of the office. Laughlin was a tireless promoter of the cause of eugenics. With the support of U.S. Secretary of Labor James J. Davis, in 1923 Laughlin set out on a six-month tour of Europe to encourage U.S. consular officials to obtain information on the supposedly

hereditary characteristics of European nations that would be sending immigrants to the United States. Laughlin also acted as a consultant to Congressman Albert Johnson, chair of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. Although Laughlin's statistics on the intellectual superiority of northern Europeans sparked some scorn in the press, the eugenics activist played a part in the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, which established a quota system for accepting immigrants that heavily favored people from northern and western Europe.

In *War Against the Weak*, journalist Edwin Black documents the impact of the eugenics movement on the treatment of the native-born population of the United States. The "weak" in the title of his book refers to people considered undesirable for a number of reasons. Members of racial minorities, the poor, and unemployed rural people living at the margins of an urbanizing society could all be seen as products of inferior family stock. Supporters of negative eugenics managed to have laws permitting sterilization of the supposedly unfit enacted in twenty-three states.

The most famous sterilization case was that of Carrie Buck in Virginia. With the advice and help of Laughlin, eugenics activists in Virginia managed to get the state to pass a law allowing the sterilization of individuals

in situations in which there had been three generations of mentally impaired people in a family. On somewhat slender evidence, Buck, her mother, and her small child were all classified as "feebleminded." Buck was ordered to be sterilized. Objections to her having more children concentrated on her inability to support herself and on the illegitimacy of her child. These two facts were related, as she had lived with a family who had used her as a servant and then sent her away after she became pregnant, apparently as a result of being raped by a member of that family. Buck acquired supporters, and she appealed her case all the way



to the U.S. Supreme Court. In words that became famous, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes declared that "three generations of imbeciles are enough," and the Court accepted the legality of forced sterilization.

The influence of the American eugenics movement, according to Black, extended far beyond the borders of the United States. Black argues that the United States became the center of worldwide eugenics activities and, ultimately, contributed to the Nazi Holocaust in Germany during World War II. The First International Congress of Eugenics, held in London in 1912, was dominated by ideas developed in the United States. German scientists and physicians promoting eugenics maintained close associations with the ERA, the ERO, and Laughlin. American eugenics journals published and praised the work of the Germans, even when this work had heavy anti-Semitic overtones. Even more serious, American organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation provided funding to German race biology, both before and after Adolf Hitler rose to power.

One of those who received Rockefeller money was Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, a medical researcher interested in identifying hereditary traits through studies of twins. Verschuer maintained personal and professional ties with American eugenicists even after World War II, although these ties were strained by the accusations of involvement in war crimes that had been made against him. The notorious Josef Mengele, who conducted his own barbaric twin studies at the death camp at Auschwitz, was Verschuer's good friend and assistant. Black gives disturbing descriptions of Mengele's activities at Auschwitz, although he does not suggest that there was any American involvement in these activities.

In the story of Edwin Katzen-Ellenbogen, Black presents a fascinating case of an individual connection between the American eugenics movement and the German death camps. Katzen-Ellenbogen was a physician and psychologist who had been born in Poland and migrated to the United States in 1905. Although he maintained that his religious background was Catholic, he actually came from a Jewish family. He married in the United States, became an American citizen, and held a variety of prestigious positions, including that of lecturer on abnormal psychology at Harvard University. Katzen-Ellenbogen, also a charter member of the ERA, returned to Europe in 1915 and remained there for the rest of his life. During World War II he was identified as Jewish by the Germans, who placed him in the Buchenwald concentration camp. There he became a favored prisoner because of his medical skills and because he shared the racial and eugenics views of his captors. Inmates of Buchenwald later charged that Katzen-Ellenbogen had collaborated with Nazis in the cruelties of the camp. After the war, he was tried for war

crimes and sentenced to life imprisonment, later reduced to twelve years on grounds of his poor health.

Black maintains that the science of genetics has roots in eugenics that are often unrecognized. After World War II, attempts to direct biological evolution were tainted by their association with racist ideology. Still, Cold Spring Harbor, where Davenport had established his headquarters, went on to become a prestigious center of genetic research. James Watson, who along with Francis Crick discovered the double-helical structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), studied at Cold Spring Harbor, and it was there that he gave the first public presentation on DNA structure in 1953.

According to Black, many of the dangers to humanity posed by eugenics can also be found in genetic research. The possibility of discrimination against disfavored groups on the basis of DNA information is a major problem of scientific ethics. Furthermore, Black claims, DNA identity banks created by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement organizations around the world are beginning their work at the same point that the Eugenics Record Office began, with attempts to identify people with hereditary tendencies.

Through the pages of this interesting and detailed volume, Black demonstrates that the American eugenicists had many professional and organizational ties with individuals in Germany who were active in the Holocaust. However, he may overestimate American responsibility. Some of the connections he makes between the American eugenics movement and the Nazis amount to charges of guilt by association. The fact that Freiherr von Verschuer communicated with the Americans and received support from them does not make American organizations responsible for the actions of Mengele. Moreover, it is misleading to characterize eugenics activities as "America's campaign." While the eugenicists were an energetic group, they were opposed by much of American popular opinion. In addition, the Holocaust probably had its most important roots in Germany itself. For example, the evolutionary biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) played a significant part in the development of the concept of "race hygiene" in Germany; Black does not mention Haeckel.

Ultimately, Black does not offer convincing evidence that American eugenics played a decisive role in the Holocaust. He does, however, recount a shameful and important part of American social and scientific history.

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—Carl L. Bankston III

WHY DID THE HEAVENS NOT DARKEN?

THE "FINAL SOLUTION" IN HISTORY

AUTHOR: Arno J. Mayer (1926-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1988

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

Revising previous scholarship, Mayer reassesses and reinterprets the Nazis' genocide against the Jews during World War II.

OVERVIEW

The tenth anniversary of Adolf Hitler's ascent to power in Germany fell on January 30, 1943. That milestone called for Nazi celebration, but the days of the Third Reich were numbered. Although unprepared to admit that fact at such an early date, Hitler did know that the tide had turned in his war for *Lebensraum* (living space) in Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia.

When World War II began with the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and especially as the decisive onslaught against Soviet Russia followed on June 22, 1941, Hitler exuded confidence that his Thousand-Year Reich would soon be fully established. Eighteen months of warfare on the eastern front—its violence, arguably, more atrocious and far-reaching than any known before—changed his tone. Concern for the survival of an old Europe, more than the creation of a new one, came to the fore as Hitler urged his tenth-anniversary listeners to comprehend that Germany must prevail or "bolshevism, coming from the east, will sweep over the Continent."

Arno J. Mayer, a professor of European history at Princeton University, locates the "final solution"—the Nazi euphemism for a program to settle the so-called Jewish question—in the vicissitudes of Hitler's war aims. Nationalistic, imperialistic, ethnocentric, and racist all at once, those aims, Mayer stresses, were part and parcel of a fanatically anti-Communist ideology. It found Jews at the heart of "bolshevism," the most virulent threat that Hitler saw conspiring to thwart his dreams. Typically, Hitler and the Nazis spoke of "Judeo-bolshevism," reifying communism and the Jewish people into a single entity. Although not immediately, and never without

fits and starts, the Nazi regime would evolve and escalate toward making that entity the target for a twentieth century crusade. While more excessive, it would be reminiscent of the Church's zeal to "cleanse" Europe and the Holy Land of Jewish and Muslim "infidels" nearly a millennium ago.

Mayer's book—elegantly written but, unfortunately, lacking source notes to help those who want to track his arguments further—takes its title from that earlier crusade. An eleventh century chronicle kept by a Jewish survivor, Solomon bar Simson, describes the savagery inflicted on Jews in the German city of Mainz in May, 1096. This Church-sponsored mass homicide prompted him to lament, "Why did the heavens not darken and the stars not withhold their radiance, why did not the sun and moon turn dark?" If he got no answer, neither does Mayer put the question to rest. Rightly letting it linger, Mayer provides instead an interpretation of the "Judeocide"—his preferred name for the Holocaust or the so-called final solution—as comprehensive, provocative, and controversial as any heretofore.

Mayer himself narrowly escaped the Judeocide. A native of Luxembourg, he was a Jewish boy of fourteen when the German Blitzkrieg swept through much of Western Europe in May, 1940. Mayer and his family fled to France, then to Morocco and Portugal, before obtaining the papers that gave them safe passage to the United States in early 1941. Not every member of Mayer's family was so lucky. His maternal grandparents, for example, were deported to Theresienstadt (also known as Terezín), a concentration camp near the Czech city of Prague. Mayer's grandmother survived, but his grandfather perished there in December, 1943.

Personal experience, including time in the U.S. Army from 1944 to 1946, during which Mayer interrogated German prisoners, eventually combined with his scholarly expertise in European history to compel him to write this book. Similar factors have driven other historians—including Raul Hilberg and Yehuda Bauer, to cite only two of the most prominent examples—to probe the Holocaust. Even as Mayer's work draws on previous scholarship as well as his own archival research, however, its revisions yield an account that differs substantially from all the others.

The book does so, first, because of its comprehensive scope. Mayer not only contextualizes the Judeocide by making it a function of "Nazi Germany's dual resolve to acquire living space in the east and liquidate the Soviet regime" but also situates the European theater of World War II in a larger twentieth century framework and compares that entire configuration with other tumultuous times in Western civilization—specifically, the First Christian Crusade of 1095 to 1099 and the Thirty Years' War that ravaged Europe from 1618 to 1648.

By means of such large-scale historical comparisons, which are an important part of Mayer's "overarching interpretive construct" to explain the horrors of the "final solution," the author argues that events akin to the Holocaust had already happened. The period from 1914 to 1945—from the onset of World War I to the end of World War II—was one of general crisis that violently convulsed Europe and indeed the world. The seventeenth century had seen European Protestants and Catholics pitted against each other, their protracted strife assuming hideous proportions. A similar scenario unfolded three centuries later, reaching its climax in a fiery, latter-day "religious" crusade as Hitler and the Nazis went forth to destroy the "Judeo-bolshevik" infidel and to secure the dominion they claimed the Third Reich deserved.

If nothing exactly like the Judeocide had happened before, Mayer thinks the differences are insufficient to legitimate the claim that the enormity of Jewish plight under Hitler was "absolutely unprecedented, completely *sui generis*, and thus beyond historical reimagining." Nor was the destruction of the European Jews a process essentially modern or controlled primarily by cool, bureaucratic rationality. Such elements did play a part; for example, the coordinated railroad transports that took Jews from all over Europe to concentration camps and especially to killing centers in German-occupied Poland were a vital means to the end. Mayer finds elsewhere, however, "the underlying motor forces" that propelled Europe into the "final solution."

The name that Mayer eventually applies to the Nazi state and its enterprises—the Behemoth—sums up in a word his interpretation of those forces and their "final solution." A behemoth grows and becomes a beast of monstrous size and power. Less than completely self-conscious and self-controlled, not knowing in advance all that it can do, such a creature acts with a vengeance nevertheless. Crucially important, moreover, rage results when its claims are resisted, and the fury intensifies when its paths are blocked.

The German Behemoth that eventually committed Judeocide did not start with that intention. This view Mayer both shares with and ultimately pushes further than do others who dispute an alternative theory, namely, that the destruction of the Jews was dominant in Nazi plans from the very first. Linking them with bolshevism from the beginning, the Hitler state certainly detested Jews. In the 1930's, however, Nazi policy was less murderous than committed to forcing Jewish emigration through punitive law and police-state terror. In the meantime, even higher among Hitler's priorities was preparation for nothing less than a holy war in the east that would simultaneously provide land and resources for German renewal and do away with communism's profane power.

With the successful invasion of Poland in September, 1939, Nazi Germany controlled about 1.8 million of that nation's huge Jewish population. The remainder—Mayer estimates about 1.4 million—found themselves under Soviet authority. This was the result of a secret partition agreement attached to the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact that was announced on August 23, 1939, by the very powers that would be locked in total war less than two years later.

Poland served as a staging ground for the German onslaught against Soviet Russia, which began in late June, 1941. Meanwhile, the Polish Jews—who, because of their geographic location, would be hit hardest by the Judeocide—were not yet in their direst straits. Uprooted, expropriated, ghettoized, conscripted for labor, starved, plagued by disease, tortured, and shot—racked every day in these ways and more, the Polish Jews did not yet have a sealed fate because German plans for a massive Jewish relocation remained in play. Once Hitler's armies headed into Soviet territory, however, the future for Poland's—indeed for Europe's—Jews changed drastically and disastrously.

While Mayer's views at this juncture are still not too far removed from earlier historical accounts, the divergence becomes more marked, and much more controversial, in what follows. Consider, for example, "Operation Barbarossa," which was the Germans' code name for their crusade against Soviet Russia and its "Judeo-bolshevism." This was no ordinary military campaign. Unlike combat on the western front, devastating as it was, the struggle in the east was conceived as a holy *Vernichtungskrieg* (war of extermination) to be fought without restraint. Blinded by their ideology, which took the enemy to be inferior Slavic *Untermenschen*, the Germans overestimated their own strength and underestimated the resistance they would encounter. Thus, although timed and executed to blitz the Soviets, Operation Barbarossa, Mayer argues, "stalled and miscarried." Already in late August, 1941, Hitler and his military leaders recognized that "Barbarossa had misfired." Toward the end of September, the Germans would conquer Kiev, but that victory was momentous partly because of its Pyrrhic qualities. Having taken severe losses by the end of 1941, the Wehrmacht bogged down in the notorious Russian winter still west of Moscow. According to Mayer, it had become clear that the Germans could not vanquish Soviet Russia.

If "the turning point of Nazi Germany's bid for continental hegemony" had been reached at least a year before the battle of Stalingrad in late 1942—just one of Mayer's debatable revisions—a turn of another kind had been taken as the claims of Hitler's holy war were resisted and its paths blocked. With escalating rage the Behemoth increasingly found conve-

nient victims on which to vent its fury. They were the millions of Jews trapped behind the German lines. If Moscow and Leningrad would not fall, the Jewish carriers of bolshevism most assuredly would do so without mercy. These were the circumstances in which mobile killing squadrons called *Einsatzgruppen* did their worst to the Jews—with extensive cooperation from the German army, plus auxiliaries from the Ukraine and Romania—at places such as Babi Yar, a ravine near Kiev in the Ukraine. This was also the situation in which Reinhard Heydrich followed orders and convened a conference in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee on January 20, 1942, to organize the “final solution.”

Heydrich’s orders, which came from Hermann Göring on July 31, 1941, referred to the “final solution of the Jewish question” but left that concept open to interpretation. Subsequently, the Wannsee Conference endorsed a program of extermination through forced labor. In doing so, it broke new ground, because Heydrich directed the focus of the conference to all of Europe’s Jews and not just to those in Germany, Austria, and the eastern territories. Still, claims Mayer, the Wannsee Conference was not “definitive” because it occurred when the Third Reich’s war and Jewish policies were both in “extreme flux.”

Evidence on the latter point existed at Chełmno, the first of several camps established by the Germans in Poland for the primary purpose of killing Jews with little regard for their labor potential. There, more than a month before Heydrich convened the Wannsee Conference, the systematic murder of Jews had already begun. Overall the German policy toward Jews, murderous though it was in one way or another, had not merged—and, according to Mayer’s analysis, never did—into one single-minded path. Intensely competing philosophies persisted in the Nazi hierarchy, their rivalry waxing and waning in particular with the exigencies and emotions of war on the eastern front.

One line of thought, more nihilistic than the other, was exterminationist. It held sway not only at Chełmno but also at Belżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka, three other major killing centers—operational in the spring and summer of 1942—where more than one million Jews were effectively dead as soon as rail transportation delivered them. Mayer believes that “the extermination sites defy explanation,” a judgment whose full credibility depends on his discounting a widely held alternative view, namely, that Nazi anti-Semitism was at once more intrinsically exterminationist and less closely linked to anticommunism than he claims.

In any case, a second line of thought—it could be found in the Wannsee proceedings—was more functionalistic than the first. This view was productivist, stressing the ever-increasing need for labor to support a war ef-

fort that sapped German manpower. Jews deemed unable to work—the sick, the young, the elderly, and most of the women—were useless. They could be dispatched with impunity. Working Jews to death was also appropriate, but such “hyperexploitation,” as Mayer calls it, had to extract work before death.

These two lines of thought—sometimes at odds, sometimes complementary—did not sort themselves out neatly, but Mayer suggests that the functionalist-productionist view dominated. Thus, at Majdanek and Auschwitz, for example, forced-labor brigades and gas chambers simultaneously were stocked and replenished—especially by Jews—as “selections,” supervised by Nazi doctors, separated those who were fit to work from those who were not. In July, 1944, the Soviets’ Red Army liberated Majdanek, which was in eastern Poland near Lublin, but the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz continued to function at full capacity. Although by any objective reckoning Germany had lost the war, Mayer emphasizes that the Germans, desperately unbalanced though their judgment may have been, still sought labor to back their last-ditch military efforts. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews, in particular, lost their lives in the labor selections that continued at Auschwitz until late 1944. After that, prisoners were evacuated to the German interior, partly to remove atrocity’s evidence but also to man German production to the bitter end. When Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz in late January, 1945, Mayer reports, they found only 7,000 infirm inmates, but when British and American forces took Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and Dachau less than four months later, they found nearly 100,000 prisoners, mostly Jews and just barely alive, including many who had been force-marched from Poland to these camps on German soil.

Arno Mayer stakes a claim to turf of his own in the historiography of the Holocaust. That ground’s firmness, however, will remain in dispute, for if his revisionism clarifies the “final solution,” his work also makes it more blurred. The blurring occurs because Mayer’s arguments leave dubious whether the so-called final solution ever became all that final. If Nazi might took a Behemoth’s form, it is not surprising that its intention toward the Jews never achieved a precise and single focus but instead remained somewhat diffuse, varied, and even conflicting. Such multiplicity did produce Judeocide, but that may be quite different, Mayer implies, from the goal of destroying Jewish life root and branch wherever the Behemoth could track it down. Contrary to many interpretations of the Holocaust, Mayer’s suggests that the Judeocide, while it did not lack an exterminationist bent, was primarily a genocidal “hyperexploitation” combined with the mass death incurred in the wake of a fanatical but failing holy war

against communism. If so, Judeocide differs more in degree than in kind from other onslaughts that have been visited on defenseless people by their tormentors.

Mayer's major contribution to the historiography of the Holocaust—certainly important, possibly lasting—is likely to be his insistence on contextualizing Judeocide within Hitler's anticommunism and the early demise of German war aims on the eastern front. This outlook is also as controversial as it is insightful, however, because it leaves open the paradoxical possibility that a quick and decisive German victory over Soviet Russia would have threatened Jewish survival much less than the German defeat that happened instead. Such an implication is sufficient to make Mayer's view profoundly arguable, for his analysis does suggest that the German Behemoth truly approached Judeocide only as Operation Barbarossa and its desperate successors went awry on the eastern front. Rage and fury directed against Jews as the unholy carriers of bolshevism do help to account for their destruction, but even when supplemented by Mayer's adroit appeals to hyperexploitation of Jewish labor, that emphasis will seem insufficient to those who rightly stress the more inherently exterminationist disposition of the Nazis' fundamentally racist anti-Semitism, which ultimately sought to lay killing hands on all Jews—children, in addition to women and men—as much as it could do so.

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—John K. Roth

THE WILKOMIRSKI AFFAIR

A STUDY IN BIOGRAPHICAL TRUTH

AUTHOR: Stefan Maechler (1957-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: *Der Fall Wilkomirski*, 2000 (English translation, 2001)

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRES: History; journalism

Maechler presents a riveting account of his investigation of Fragments, by Benjamin Wilkomirski, a Holocaust memoir that was first hailed as a masterpiece and then attacked as a fraud.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Benjamin Wilkomirski (Bruno Grosjean; b. 1941), author of a controversial Holocaust memoir

Eva Koralnik, Wilkomirski's literary agent

Daniel Ganzfried, a Swiss journalist who was the first in print to repudiate *Fragments*

Eli Bernstein, an Israeli psychiatrist and close friend and supporter of Benjamin Wilkomirski

Verena Piller, Wilkomirski's life partner

Karola, a Holocaust survivor who contradicts Wilkomirski's use of her story in *Fragments*

Stefan Maechler (b. 1957), a historian assigned by Wilkomirski's publisher to investigate the authenticity of *Fragments*

OVERVIEW

In 1995, *Fragments*, a short Holocaust memoir written in a staccato style, was published in Germany. Benjamin Wilkomirski, its author, presented his account as virtually a verbatim report of his fragmentary memories of a childhood at two concentration camps, Majdanek and Auschwitz, both in Poland. Wilkomirski made no claims for his book as literature; indeed, he emphasized that he could provide only a literal picture of the shards of his memory. These shards, however, were absolutely authentic, he maintained. They had remained a vivid part of his life and had been uncorrupted by his subsequent experiences.

Shortly before publication of *Fragments*, another publisher alerted Wilkomirski's publisher that Wilkomirski's claims were, at the least, open to doubt, but the power of his story and Wilkomirski's own affirmation that he had researched his life over several decades overrode any qualms his supporters had, and then the reviews and public response seemed to ratify and strengthen his case. Eva Korálnik, Wilkomirski's literary agent, had a distinguished history of publishing Holocaust survivor literature, and her own troubled childhood background resonated with Wilkomirski's story, especially his account of how he discovered in Poland that he was related to the Wilkomirski family and took their name as his own after the war. He received honors from both Jewish and psychological organizations that were impressed with the sincerity of his writing and with his efforts to assist other Holocaust survivors in recovering and articulating their memories.

Then, in 1998, journalist Daniel Ganzfried wrote a series of articles pointing out that Wilkomirski could not document a single one of his experiences as a Holocaust victim. Indeed, Ganzfried believed Wilkomirski had assumed a false identity—that in fact he was Bruno Grosjean, an adopted child of a Swiss couple, the Dössekers. Ganzfried had obtained documents that seemed to clinch his case. Other journalists also began to cast doubt on Wilkomirski's memoir, and his publisher and agent felt compelled to employ Stefan Maechler, a historian of the Holocaust, to investigate the sources of *Fragments*. Remarkably, Wilkomirski was also a party to the investigation and promised to cooperate fully with the historian's inquiry.

Maechler's book emulates, in so far as is possible, the process of his research. He begins with "The Story of Bruno Grosjean," an opening chapter that basically confirms Ganzfried's research and adds even more details from Maechler's investigation, including accounts of his interviews with Bruno's (Binjamin's) mother's brother, which help Maechler to pin down how Bruno came to be adopted by a Swiss family. At this point, it is not clear how Wilkomirski could possibly maintain he is not Bruno Grosjean.

Maechler next presents "Wilkomirski Tells His Own Story," a compelling defense culled from Wilkomirski's own words in letters and in interviews with Maechler and others. Wilkomirski points out that many children of the Holocaust were given false identity papers and to this day cannot definitively reestablish their identities. What is more, Wilkomirski does not deny having been brought up by the Dössekers; rather, he claims that he was the child exchanged for Bruno Grosjean and given Grosjean's identity papers. Other discrepancies and contradictions in *Fragments* are

just that, Wilkomirski asserts—that is, they are the stumbling, incomplete efforts of a man attempting to reconstruct past events that bewildered and traumatized him as a child.

Rather than challenging Wilkomirski and simply presuming he is a liar—as Ganzfried did—Maechler explores “the origins of *Fragments*,” a memoir he sees as growing out of a childhood that was indeed harrowing and that led to the story of a boy who lost his mother at the age of four and then found himself at the mercy of an abusive adoptive parent, Frau Dösseker, who assaulted his identity in ways that led Bruno to identify with the Jewish survivor children of the Holocaust. In other words, the thesis that Maechler tentatively advances in this section is that Bruno Grosjean had to find a story and an identity that provided a more vivid and satisfying explanation of his sense of victimization and loss.

“A Global Literary Event,” the next section of Maechler’s book, is a brilliant analysis of how the press, many readers, and organizations contributed to belief in the story of Binjamin Wilkomirski. Holocaust survivors, for example, embraced him because his story articulated so many of their own horrifying experiences. Israeli psychiatrist Eli Bernstein (not a Holocaust survivor) was impressed with Wilkomirski’s behavior and knew him years before his book was published. Bernstein observed Wilkomirski living the life of a Holocaust survivor. Similarly, Verena Piller, Wilkomirski’s life partner, observed how he shuffled his feet at night in bed as he relived the terrifying scenes of concentration camps where rats had gnawed at his limbs. How could so much involuntary affect—some of it occurring in Wilkomirski’s sleep—be fraudulent, his intimates wondered. At the same time, Maechler points out that there were doubters from the beginning. One reviewer close to Wilkomirski’s agent and publisher expressed her reservations in private but could not bring herself to challenge his overpowering story in print. Others, such as Holocaust scholars Lawrence Langer and Raul Hilberg, were skeptical, the latter pointing out that Wilkomirski almost certainly could not have been in both Majdanek and Auschwitz. Other details rang false as well. For example, as Hilberg noted, there were no rats in the camps. The need to believe, however—especially among Holocaust survivors whom Wilkomirski sought out—suppressed skepticism. Jewish organizations were moved by his story and afraid of what challenging it might do in a climate that now included Holocaust deniers. Certain psychologists prized Wilkomirski’s memories as another triumph of recovered memory in child abuse cases. All of these different individuals and groups unwittingly conspired to make *Fragments* “a global literary event.”

Then in “The Plunge into the Abyss—Autobiography or Fake?” Mae-

chler comes full circle to squarely face the brutal but accurate process by which Daniel Ganzfried exposed the inauthenticity of *Fragments*. Ganzfried's case becomes more and more compelling as Wilkomirski is pictured withdrawing from public debate, taking refuge in the intensity of his feelings but failing to provide any fresh documentation or even a better rationale for believing his claims. Indeed, Wilkomirski begins to say that he never demanded from readers that they believe his story; in other words, *Fragments* was a true record of his memories but was never meant to be taken as a verifiable historical document. Perhaps most detrimental to Wilkomirski's case is Maechler's frequent mention that Jerzy Kosinski's novel *The Painted Bird* had had a profound influence on Wilkomirski's decision to write *Fragments*. Kosinski had also asserted that his novel was his own experience, and, like Wilkomirski, he began to abandon his autobiographical avowals as soon as his story began to be contested.

"Tracking Down the Truth—The Historical Research," the climax of Maechler's investigation, explodes Wilkomirski's case for himself. No one in the community or in the Dösseker family can remember the exchange of boys that involved Benjamin Wilkomirski taking on Bruno Grosjean's identity. Even worse, Karola, the woman whom Wilkomirski says he befriended in Majdanek and later saw again in a Kraków orphanage, repudiates *Fragments* and tells Maechler that Wilkomirski has stolen her Holocaust story for his own purposes. Her testimony is especially damning because Wilkomirski has told Maechler all along that he cannot divulge Karola's whereabouts because he does not want to involve her in controversy. Wilkomirski himself claimed to have had to honor her objections by changing Karola's name to Mila in his story.

In two concluding sections, "The Truth of Biography" and "The Truth of Fiction," Maechler confronts what remains of significance in *Fragments* now that it has been exposed as a fraud. On one hand, he argues that the book is authentic insofar as it renders the inner turmoil that Benjamin Wilkomirski, otherwise known as Bruno Grosjean, genuinely experienced during the war years and their aftermath. What is more, because Wilkomirski steeped himself in histories of the Holocaust and befriended its survivors, his book includes a considerable quotient of authentic narrative about the Holocaust experience. On the other hand, Maechler is aghast that such a mediocre literary work should have stirred readers so profoundly. Nothing in the style or structure of the book merits the high praise or awards it received. Indeed, Maechler goes so far as to suggest that as soon as the reader realizes the book is a fiction, much of its power is attenuated. Yet here he may underestimate the book, since his own research shows that Holocaust survivors and others have continued to believe in the worth

of Wilkomirski's perceptions even as they concede he may not have been a Holocaust survivor.

Fragments itself is included in Maechler's book, so readers will be able to make their own determination about the story's strength as an evocation of the Holocaust experience for a child. In some ways, Maechler's fine book might have been improved by putting *Fragments* first—exposing first-time readers to the experience of the story and then allowing them to analyze it. Similarly, as soon as Maechler approaches the section "Tracking Down the Truth," he relegates many of Wilkomirski's comments on Maechler's research to the footnotes—a not-so-subtle suggestion that Wilkomirski's defense is now a secondary matter, given that his story cannot possibly be true. It might have been better if Maechler had included another section consisting of Wilkomirski's rebuttal, however weak, which would have paralleled the second section, "Wilkomirski Tells His Own Story."

Aside from these tentative reservations, it must be said that Maechler has produced a masterpiece fully justifying his subtitle, *A Study in Biographical Truth*. Maechler provides not only detailed notes that authenticate every aspect of his investigation but also numerous descriptions of his informants; in addition, he clearly explains how he went about conducting his research. The result is that he establishes an authentic record while also accounting for what is inauthentic, thereby showing how closely related the truth of biography and the truth of fiction can be.

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Lifton, Betty Jean. "Wilkomirski the Adoptee." *Tikkun* 17, no. 5 (September/October, 2002): 77.

Maliszewski, Paul. "A Holocaust Fantasy." *Wilson Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Summer, 2002): 109.

Suleiman, Susan Rubin. "Charlatan or Madman: What a Study of a Literary Hoax Can't Decide." *Forward* 105, no. 31 (June 8, 2001): 10, 14.

—Carl Rollyson

A WORLD AT ARMS

A GLOBAL HISTORY OF WORLD WAR II

AUTHOR: Gerhard L. Weinberg (1928-)

FIRST PUBLISHED: 1994

GENRE: Nonfiction

SUBGENRE: History

This exhaustively researched and brilliantly written history of World War II provides a global perspective on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES:

Winston Churchill (1874-1965), the prime minister of Great Britain, 1940-1945

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the chancellor of Germany, 1933-1945

Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), the president of the United States, 1933-1945

Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), the leader of the Soviet Union, 1927-1953

OVERVIEW

The history of World War II still haunts the modern imagination. As the veterans of the war gradually pass away and even the boundaries fixed by the conflict break down, the world continues to live in the shadow of the greatest and most destructive struggle it has ever known. As anniversaries of the most memorable battles come and go, people remember the heroism of the soldiers who liberated Europe and Asia from barbarous, formidable foes. At the same time, all must ponder the casual brutality of a war that was waged as much against civilians as against soldiers and in which the number of noncombatant dead far outnumbered those in uniform. Finally, there is the memory of the Holocaust, a scientific attempt to exterminate an entire people, an unforgettable, almost incomprehensible reminder of the bottomless evil that can lurk in the hearts of the most unassuming men and women.

A number of histories of World War II have appeared since its fiftieth anniversary in 1989. Perhaps the best is Gerhard Weinberg's *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*. Weinberg writes with the authority

of a master historian. He can justly claim to be one of the world's leading experts on the period of World War II. He is the winner of a Pulitzer Prize for his two-volume history of Adolf Hitler's diplomacy; he also discovered and edited Hitler's long-lost second book. In researching his massive history of World War II, Weinberg mastered a voluminous secondary literature, and he displays a thorough familiarity with the most recent scholarship on the war. Weinberg also prepared for his history by working extensively in American, British, and German archives, giving his work the originality and freshness that come from challenging accepted conventions.

Few historians can match the breadth of Weinberg's knowledge. Yet even more important for the success of his history is Weinberg's moral conviction. Weinberg's book, for all its scholarly apparatus, is a passionate work. It is all too easy when writing of the past, and especially of past wars, to fall into a bland objectivity that obscures rather than illuminates the vitality of the subject. This sort of history substitutes process for insight. Descriptions of military campaigns become painstakingly accurate catalogs of marches and regiments. Numbers and acronyms abound. The names of commanders become talismans. Lost in these dry narrations is the heart of any real interest the past possesses. Submerged under minutiae is the human drama of events, the ebb and flow of experience. Any sense of the meaning of the action described is missing.

Traditionally, the very best history has been a moral as well as scholarly endeavor. Weinberg realizes this. Although, of necessity, he paints in broad strokes and on an enormous canvas, he never lets people become buried under the flow of facts, and he repeatedly reminds his readers of the moral issues underlying the war. Weinberg's moral compass raises his history to the level of high literature as well as accomplished scholarship.

World War II, states Weinberg at the outset, was Hitler's war. He dismisses assertions that the war was simply an extension of World War I, or an escalation of Japan's assault on China or the Spanish Civil War. Weinberg does not see World War II as the product of amorphous economic or sociological trends. He also discounts notions that the war was a consequence of the burdens placed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. In fact, he argues that Germany emerged from World War I in many ways stronger than its victorious rivals; it remained united, with its industrial base unscathed. In 1919, however, Germany was bounded by small and exhausted powers. German grievances about the Treaty of Versailles soon found a ready audience in the West, and in the years following 1919 most of the onerous provisions of the settlement were watered down or canceled. Hitler made brilliant use of the revisionist mood concerning the

treaty, but only as a mask for his own objectives. Weinberg argues persuasively that a Germany crippled by the peace of 1919 could hardly have come within a hair of conquering the Western world. If Germany possessed the capability to launch another bid for empire two decades after the failure of its first attempt, however, it did so only because of the efforts of one man. Without Hitler, Weinberg argues, there would have been no World War II. Hitler willed the war, worked actively to bring it about, and then used it to deepen and extend his revolutionary geopolitical and racial ambitions.

Weinberg's understanding of the origins of World War II is crucial to the moral power underpinning his work. This most devastating of all wars was not some cataclysm brought on by forces beyond human control. It was the result of human agency. Even the history of a process as vast as World War II is still, for Weinberg, the story of people and the consequences of their actions. *A World at Arms* is not marred by a false objectivity. While he is careful never simply to sermonize, Weinberg passes judgment on his variegated cast of characters. His measure is not frivolous or idiosyncratic; his standards are those traditionally regarded in the West as encoding personal and social decency.

Given this foundation, Weinberg's critical treatment of Hitler is not surprising, nor is his portrayal of the German dictator particularly original. All mainstream histories in the West denounce Hitler. Weinberg's presentation differs from the general picture only in details of fact and analysis.

His originality emerges more clearly in his depiction of the men around Hitler, especially the German generals. It has been the historical fashion to extol the military acumen of Hitler's commanders while deploring the cause in which they fought. Following the line taken by these men in their memoirs, most historians have blamed Hitler for the faulty military decisions taken during the war and have exculpated his leading generals from guilt in Nazi atrocities. Weinberg shatters this cozy and widely accepted picture. Drawing on his familiarity with German archives, he demonstrates that Hitler's generals were hardly the spotless professionals of military legend. He proves that most of these commanders cooperated willingly in carrying out Hitler's orders regarding Jews and other categories of people rendered "subhuman" by Nazi ideology. Hitler guaranteed their loyalty through a massive program of monthly bribes. Among many vignettes of the same sort, Weinberg describes how the celebrated tank commander Heinz Guderian scoured German-held Eastern Europe for an estate that Hitler could confiscate for him. Not only did these generals collaborate more heartily with Hitler than they were later willing to admit, but, Weinberg argues, they also pioneered on the Russian front a form of

warfare that abandoned all the traditions and laws of civilized combat. They embraced Hitler's vision of a racial war, designed ultimately to cleanse the East of all non-Germans. They abetted the attendant horrors wreaked on civilians and prisoners by their soldiers, bestirring themselves only, for form's sake, to forbid their men to send home photographs of massacres. They persistently underestimated their enemies, especially the Soviets, because of their ideological preconceptions about Germany superiority.

Weinberg does not neglect to trace the consequences of National Socialist racial and eugenic theories, from the early campaign to kill mentally retarded and physically disabled patients in German hospitals to the "final solution" visited on Europe's Jews and others deemed unworthy of existence in the Third Reich. Given the sad history of the period, *A World at Arms* is, of necessity, a catalog of atrocities. Although the Germans bear the brunt of his moral indignation, Weinberg records the crimes of the Japanese, Soviets, and other participants in the war. Weinberg does not excuse the Western Allies from judgment, but his sense of the moral calculus of the struggle is best summed up at the end of his book, when he observes that, horrendous as was the cost of the war, an Axis victory would have been even worse.

A major strength of Weinberg's study is its truly global perspective. Many histories of World War II treat the European and Pacific theaters as separate conflicts, confining the treatment of events in each theater to alternating chapters. This serves to clarify narration at the expense of the lived experience of the war. No military campaign of World War II was waged in isolation. Political and military leaders were compelled to recognize the consequences of actions in one part of the world on the course of events in another. Allied leaders in particular always had to balance the respective needs of their forces in the Atlantic and the Pacific. Indeed, Weinberg argues, a major factor explaining the victory of the Allies was their superior sense of the strategic interconnections between various theaters of the war. Consequently, Weinberg takes great pains to trace the interdependence of events on both sides of the globe.

This methodological approach pays off handsomely in illuminating the significance of many events and decisions of the struggle. The result is a number of surprises for readers accustomed to more traditional histories of World War II. Weinberg reveals the previously unheralded fact that the Japanese, who were not at war with the Soviet Union, refused to interfere with American Lend-Lease convoys to Vladivostok. Despite the fact that the Americans were delivering vital supplies that were helping the Soviets savage their German ally, the Japanese never attacked the convoys, for fear

of bringing on another war they could ill afford. Thus in the northern Pacific the Americans and Japanese coexisted in a perverse harmony.

In another instance, Weinberg revises conventional accounts of the significance of the Battle of Guadalcanal, which is usually portrayed as the turning point in the land war against Japan, the first victory in the island-hopping campaign that would doom the Japanese empire. Weinberg demonstrates that this battle had a truly global significance. At the same time that the Japanese were throwing men and ships against the Americans on Guadalcanal, Erwin Rommel's German and Italian troops had driven within striking distance of the Suez Canal. The British position in the Middle East hung on the supply line running through the Red Sea. The Germans implored the Japanese to move naval forces into the Indian Ocean and cut the British Red Sea lifeline. This was entirely within Japanese capabilities; they had already successfully raided the area. Yet the Japanese, blind to the global implications of their actions, chose instead to commit their reserves to the ultimately unsuccessful battle for Guadalcanal, throwing away the strategic opportunity of linking up with the Germans and driving the Allies from the Mediterranean Basin.

Another signal advantage of Weinberg's global perspective is his respectful treatment of nations often covered only in passing in histories of World War II. Italy, Hungary, Romania, China, and other nations played important roles in the conflict, and the record of their activities sheds much light on the policies of the more powerful combatants. For example, it was Polish intelligence that, before the war, solved the riddle of the German enigma code-making machine. By turning their findings over to the Western Allies, the Poles made a major contribution to the defeat of Germany.

Weinberg writes with grace and clarity. He moves effortlessly from one front of the war to another, never losing the reader as he navigates through a daunting welter of circumstance. His analyses of events and judgments of persons display a skill and wisdom won through studying history for more than forty years. His revision of reputations is at times startling. Winston Churchill, in large part because of the literary brilliance of his memoirs, has long enjoyed the reputation of being a masterful war leader who early recognized the threat of Soviet imperialism. Weinberg does not question Churchill's greatness, but he does record the frequently erratic nature of Churchill's military judgment and his efforts to conciliate the Soviets. On the other hand, Weinberg goes far to rehabilitate the diplomatic reputation of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who has often been criticized for being unrealistically "soft" on Joseph Stalin. He argues that from the start Roosevelt had a clear-eyed view of the Soviets, but he preferred to wait un-

til American military power had grown before dealing with Stalin, so he could negotiate from strength.

Insights such as these make *A World at Arms* a perpetually stimulating account. Weinberg's study will long be the standard one-volume history of World War II.

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Reynolds, David. "Over There, and There, and There." *The New York Times*, February 20, 1994, p. A13.

Weinberg, Gerhard L. *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

—Daniel P. Murphy

APPENDIXES

MORE HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

Listed below are many works pertaining to the Holocaust and recommended for students of literature, history, human rights, and Judaica, including the titles overviewed in *Magill's Choice: Holocaust Literature* (marked with an asterisk). The titles that appear here are the most commonly known titles for these works in English; dates represent the works' first publication dates, whether in English or another language.

ANTHOLOGIES AND BOOKS ABOUT HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

- | | |
|--|---|
| Bloom, Harold, ed.
<i>Literature of the Holocaust</i> (2004) | Patterson, David, Alan L. Berger, and Sarita Cargas, eds.
<i>Encyclopedia of Holocaust Literature</i> (2002) |
| Ezrahi, Sidra DeKoven
<i>By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature</i> (1980) | Riggs, Thomas, ed.
<i>Reference Guide to Holocaust Literature</i> (2002) |
| Horowitz, Sara R.
<i>Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction</i> (1997) | Rosen, Philip, and Nina Apfelbaum, eds.
<i>Bearing Witness: A Resource Guide to Literature, Poetry, Art, Music, and Videos by Holocaust Victims and Survivors</i> (2002) |
| Kokkola, Lydia
<i>Representing the Holocaust in Children's Literature</i> (2003) | Schlant, Ernestine
<i>The Language of Silence</i> (1999) |
| Kremer, S. Lillian, ed.
<i>Holocaust Literature: An Encyclopedia of Writers and Their Work</i> (2003) | Schwarz, Daniel R.
<i>Imagining the Holocaust</i> (1999) |
| Lang, Berel, ed.
<i>Writing and the Holocaust</i> (1988) | Sicher, Efraim, ed.
<i>Breaking Crystal</i> (1998)
<i>The Holocaust Novel</i> (2005)
<i>Holocaust Novelists</i> (2004) |
| Langer, Lawrence L.
<i>Admitting the Holocaust</i> (1995) | Vice, Sue
<i>Holocaust Fiction</i> (2000) |
| Leak, Andrew, and George Paizis, eds.
<i>The Holocaust and the Text</i> (2000) | Yudkin, Leon L., ed.
<i>Hebrew Literature in the Wake of the Holocaust</i> (1993) |
| McGlothlin, Erin
<i>Second-Generation Holocaust Literature</i> (2006) | |
| Patterson, David
<i>The Shriek of Silence</i> (1992) | |

DRAMA

- Fuchs, Elinor, ed.
Plays of the Holocaust (1987)
- George, Emery
Iphigenie in Auschwitz (2001)
- Gilroy, Frank D.
"Getting In" and "Contact with the Enemy" (2000)
- Goodrich, Frances, and Albert Hackett
The Diary of Anne Frank (1956)
- Hochhuth, Rolf
*The Deputy** (1963)
- Lebow, Barbara
A Shayna Maidel (1984)
- Miller, Arthur
Broken Glass (1994)
*Incident at Vichy** (1965)
Playing for Time (1980)
- Nelson, Tim Blake
The Grey Zone (1998)
- Pascal, Julia
The Holocaust Trilogy (2000)
- Silberman, Brian
Manifest (2003)
- Skloot, Robert, ed.
The Theatre of the Holocaust (1982-1999)
- Sobol, Joshua
*Ghetto** (1984)
- Taub, Michael, ed.
Israeli Holocaust Drama (1996)
- Watts, Irene N., ed.
A Terrible Truth: Anthology of Holocaust Drama (2004)
- Weiss, Peter
The Investigation (1965)
- Wiesel, Elie
The Trial of God (1979)

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND COMIC BOOKS

- Croci, Pascal
Auschwitz (2003)
- Eisenstein, Bernice
I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors (2006)
- Kubert, Joe
Yossell (2003)
- Spiegelman, Art
*Maus: A Survivor's Tale** (1986)
*Maus II: A Survivor's Tale—And Here My Troubles Began** (1991)

JUVENILE AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

- Adler, David A.
Hilde and Eli, Children of the Holocaust (1994)
The Number on My Grandfather's Arm (1987)
*Our Golda** (1984)
- Atkinson, Linda Mae
*In Kindling Flame: The Story of Hannah Senesh, 1921-1944** (1985)
- Bachrach, Susan D.
Tell Them We Remember (1994)
- Bauer, Yehuda
A History of the Holocaust (2001)
- Bitton-Jackson, Livia
I Have Lived a Thousand Years (1997)
- Chaikin, Miriam
A Nightmare in History (1987)

Denenberg, Barry
One Eye Laughing, the Other Weeping
(2000)

Greenfeld, Howard
After the Holocaust (2001)

Lawton, Clive A.
Auschwitz (2002)

Lowry, Lois
*Number the Stars** (1989)

McElroy, Lorie Jenkins
Voices of the Holocaust (1997)

Matas, Carol
*Daniel's Story** (1993)

Meltzer, Milton
*Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust**
(1976)
*Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved
Jews in the Holocaust* (1988)

Reiss, Johanna
*The Journey Back** (1976)
*The Upstairs Room** (1972)

Richter, Hans Peter
*Friedrich** (1961)

Rochman, Hazel, and Darlene Z.
McCampbell, eds.
Bearing Witness: Stories of the Holocaust
(1995)

MEMOIRS, DIARIES, AND LETTERS

Appelbaum-Jurman, Alicia
Alicia: Memoirs of a Survivor (1989)

Berg, Mary
Warsaw Ghetto: A Diary (1945)

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich
*Letters and Papers from Prison** (1953)

Czerniakow, Adam
The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow
(1979)

Delbo, Charlotte
*Auschwitz and After** (1970-1971)

Rogasky, Barbara
Smoke and Ashes (1988)

Rossel, Seymour
The Holocaust (1981)

Roth-Hano, Renée
*Touch Wood: A Girlhood in Occupied
France** (1988)

Schmittroth, Linda, and Mary Kay
Rosteck
People of the Holocaust (1998)

Sender, Ruth Minsky
The Cage (1986)

Sherrow, Victoria
The Blaze Engulfs (1998)

Shirer, William L.
*The Rise and Fall of Adolf Hitler** (1961)

Stadtler, Bea
*Holocaust: A History of Courage and
Resistance* (1973)

Volavková, Hana, ed.
I Never Saw Another Butterfly (1942-
1944)

Fénelon, Fania
*Playing for Time** (1976)

Frank, Anne
*The Diary of a Young Girl** (1947)

Friedländer, Saul
When Memory Comes (1978)

Glazar, Richard
Trap with a Green Fence (1992)

Greif, Gideon
We Wept Without Tears (1999)

Hart, Kitty

*Return to Auschwitz: The Remarkable Story of a Girl Who Survived the Holocaust** (1981)

Hillesum, Etty

*An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943** (1981)

Kantor, Alfred

The Book of Alfred Kantor (1971)

Kaplan, Chaim Aron

Scroll of Agony (1981)

Klein, Gerda Weissman

All but My Life (1957)

Klemperer, Victor

*I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1942-1945** (1995)

Klüger, Ruth

*Still Alive: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered** (1992)

Kofman, Sarah

Rue Ordener, Rue Labat (1994)

Langer, Lawrence L.

Versions of Survival (1982)

Leitner, Isabella

Fragments of Isabella (1978)

Levi, Primo

*The Periodic Table** (1975)
*Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity** (1947)

Minco, Marga

Bitter Herbs (1957)

Nyiszli, Miklós

Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account (1947)

Ringelblum, Emanuel

Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto (1952)

Szpilman, Władysław

*The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945** (1945)

Tec, Nechama

Dry Tears (1982)

Ten Boom, Corrie

*The Hiding Place** (1971)

Urman, Jerzy Feliks

I'm Not Even Grown Up: The Diary of Jerzy Feliks Urman (1991)

Wiesel, Elie

*All Rivers Run to the Sea** (1994)
*And the Sea Is Never Full: Memoirs, 1969-** (1996)
*Night** (1956)

Wiesenthal, Simon

*The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness** (1969)

Wolman, Ruth E.

Crossing Over (1995)

NONFICTION

- Améry, Jean
*At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities** (1966)
- Angier, Carole
*The Double Bond: Primo Levi—A Biography** (2002)
- Arendt, Hannah
*Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil** (1963)
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WEB SITES

The sites listed below were visited by the editors of Salem Press in 2007. Because URLs frequently change or are moved, the accuracy of these addresses cannot be guaranteed; however, long-standing sites, such as those of museums, national organizations, and universities, generally maintain links when sites move or upgrade their offerings.

HOLOCAUST HISTORY

General

About.com: The Holocaust

<http://history1900s.about.com/library/holocaust/blholocaust.htm>

About.com's Web pages covering twentieth century history include a section about the Holocaust. The section features about seventy articles on various aspects of the Holocaust, information on Anne Frank, a glossary, a time line, Web links, and photographs.

The Jewish Virtual Library: The Holocaust

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/holo.html>

This "wing" of the Jewish Virtual Library features numerous articles and other information about the Holocaust, which can be accessed through an alphabetical listing of titles. The articles include information about such topics as the political structure of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, Jewish ghettos, concentration camps, the Nazis' euthanasia program, Nazi book burnings, and Holocaust denial. A chronology of Jewish persecution from 1932 through 1945 is also available.

Spartacus Educational: Holocaust

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERholocaust.htm>

This is one of the excellent Web sites created by Spartacus Educational, a British organization that aims to provide Internet-based lessons for teachers. The site consists of five major sections, each with several pages of information that contain links to other pages within the site. The section titled "Nazi Germany and the Holocaust" features numerous articles that provide a history of the Holocaust, including articles about the Jews in Germany, anti-Semitism, the Nuremberg Laws, and Jewish ghettos. "Con-

centration and Extermination Camps” offers general information about the camps as well as several pages of information about specific camps. The “Guilty” section provides profiles of prominent Nazis and others who were responsible for the so-called final solution, “Victims” features profiles of ten people who were killed or survived the Holocaust, and “The Resistance” offers profiles of individuals who defied the Nazis.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<http://www.ushmm.org>

The museum, located in Washington, D.C., maintains a Web site that provides an exceptional range of materials about the Holocaust. One of the site’s most informative features is the Holocaust Encyclopedia, which can be found in the “History” section. The encyclopedia includes more than five hundred articles about a wide range of Holocaust-related topics. In addition, the “Research” section provides a list of frequently asked questions, an authoritative biography, Web links, and a survivors’ registry.

Yad Vashem

<http://www.yadvashem.org>

Yad Vashem, the memorial to Holocaust martyrs and heroes in Jerusalem, Israel, maintains one of the world’s largest repositories of materials about the Holocaust and provides access to these materials on its Web site. Among the site’s contents are photographs of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, information about other camps, and resources for studying Elie Wiesel’s *Night*. The site’s Holocaust Resource Center enables users to retrieve photographs, diaries, letters, documents, testimonies, maps, and other material about anti-Semitism, the Nazis’ rise to power, the Jews in Nazi Germany, and other aspects of the Holocaust.

Anne Frank

Anne Frank Center USA

www.annefrank.com

The Anne Frank Center USA is a nonprofit organization that creates and distributes educational programs aimed at promoting the message of tolerance. The organization’s Web site features excerpts from Frank’s diary, photographs of Frank and her family, and time lines chronicling Frank’s life and the rise of Nazism.

Anne Frank Museum, Amsterdam

<http://www.annefrank.org/content.asp?pid=1lid=2>

The building in Amsterdam where Anne Frank and seven other people

hid from the Nazis is now a museum. The museum's Web site presents a great deal of information, including a chronicle of Frank's life, excerpts from her diary, and photographs of Frank, her family, and the others who were in hiding together. The information is available in Dutch, German, French, Spanish, and Italian as well as in English.

Book Burning

When Books Burn

<http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/burnedbooks/indexpage.htm>

This site was created in conjunction with an exhibit at the University of Arizona Library about the 1933 Nazi book-burning campaign. The site provides an overview of the campaign, a time line, the original German and an English translation of Joseph Goebbels' speech justifying the burning, a list of slogans (in both German and English) that were chanted by the German Student Association members who burned books, and lesson plans for teaching about the book burning.

Concentration and Extermination Camps

Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi State (PBS)

<http://www.pbs.org/auschwitz>

This companion site to a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary series about the Auschwitz concentration camp contains interactive maps, blueprints, and photographs of the Auschwitz complex. It also features an explanation of the Nazi concentration camp system, a map of Europe that enables users to locate specific camps and learn more about each one, and another map that allows users to locate and learn about Jewish ghettos in Europe. In addition to biographies of statesmen, prominent Nazis, and Holocaust victims and survivors, the site presents a time line of Holocaust-related events from 1917 through 1963, a glossary, a list of Web links, and a bibliography.

The Forgotten Camps

<http://www.jewishgen.org/ForgottenCamps>

This online examination of the Nazi camp system was created by Vincent Châtel, the son of a Belgian Holocaust survivor, and Chuck Ferree; it is hosted by JewishGen, Inc., a Jewish genealogical site. The site features the histories of lesser-known, or "forgotten," Nazi camps in Belgium, the Netherlands, and other countries. It also chronicles the history of several major extermination and concentration camps and provides lists of all of the camps in Europe as well as a list of the major companies that were in-

volved with the camps. One section describes a “normal” day for camp inmates; another contains the testimony of camp survivors and liberators. The site also features a time line, a list of frequently asked questions, a bibliography, and Web links.

Memorial and Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau

<http://www.auschwitz-muzeum.oswiecim.pl/html/eng/start/index.html>

In 1947, a museum and memorial opened in Poland on the grounds of the former Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp. The museum’s Web site provides text and photographs to chronicle the history of the camp from its establishment through its liberation, including details about the crematoria, gas chambers, and other features of the complex. The site also provides a time line of historical events that occurred in the town of Oświęcim (Auschwitz).

Sobibor: The Forgotten Revolt

<http://www.sobibor.info>

This site was created by Thomas “Toivi” Blatt, one of the several hundred prisoners in the Sobibór extermination camp who revolted and escaped on October 14, 1943; Blatt also has written two books about Sobibór. His Web site outlines the history of the camp, focusing on the revolt and escape by the Jewish inmates and the Nazis’ subsequent reaction to these acts of defiance.

Holocaust Victims and Survivors

Children of the Holocaust

<http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/pp.asp?c=arLPK7PILqF&b=249685>

This site, part of the Web site for the Museum of Tolerance, provides biographies and photographs of children who were murdered in the Holocaust.

Deaf People Trapped in Hitler’s Holocaust

<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/WorldAroundYou/holocaust/index.html>

This special online issue of *World Around You*, the magazine of Gallaudet University’s Laurent Clerc National Education Center, focuses on the Nazi persecution of deaf people. It includes memoirs of several deaf people who were subjected to this persecution as well as information about German sterilization and eugenics programs, which targeted people with all kinds of disabilities, including deafness.

Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies

<http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/homepage.html>

The archive, maintained by the Yale University Library's Department of Manuscripts and Archives, contains more than 4,300 videotaped interviews with Holocaust witnesses and survivors.

Jehovah's Witnesses: Courageous in the Face of Nazi Peril

http://www.watchtower.org/library/g/1998/7/8/article_01.htm

This page from the Jehovah's Witnesses Web site reprints an article that originally appeared in one of the organization's publications. The article describes how Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted by the Nazis.

Lost Lives: Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals in Vienna, 1938-1945

<http://www.ausdemleben.at>

This site is an online version of an exhibition mounted in Vienna, Austria, in 2001, about the Nazi persecution of homosexuals in that city. The exhibition of official and private documents was created by Homosexuelle Initiative Wein, an Austrian gay and lesbian rights organization, and mounted outdoors on fourteen columns. The night before the exhibit was to open, vandals tore eleven of the columns out of the soil, but the damage was repaired and the exhibit opened to large crowds. The online version of the exhibit contains both English and German text.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Victims of the Nazi Era, 1933-1945: Handicapped

<http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/handic/handicpbklt.pdf>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Victims of the Nazi Era, 1933-1945: Homosexuals

<http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/hms/homosbklt.pdf>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Victims of the Nazi Era, 1933-1945: Jehovah's Witnesses

<http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/jehovahs/jwbklt.pdf>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Victims of the Nazi Era, 1933-1945: Poles

<http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/poles/poles.pdf>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Victims of the Nazi Era, 1933-1945: Sinti and Roma ("Gypsies")

<http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/roma/RomaSBklt.pdf>

The museum has prepared five brochures about non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust that are available online in PDF versions. In addition to gen-

eral information about the persecution of the handicapped, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Poles, and Gypsies, each brochure features photographs and individual case histories.

USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education
<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/vhi>

The Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education was established in 1994 by film director Steven Spielberg to collect and preserve the video testimony of Holocaust survivors and witnesses. The interviews it has gathered—more than 52,000 interviews with people from fifty-six countries and in thirty-two languages—may be viewed on this Web site, and the site provides a testimony catalog that enables users to search data contained in the video testimonies. Available also are lessons for teachers and students.

The United States and the Holocaust

America and the Holocaust

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust>

This site is a companion to a PBS documentary film on the response to the Holocaust in the United States. It includes a time line that chronicles the American response from 1933 through 1945, maps, information on significant people and events, a transcript of the film, transcripts of interviews conducted for the film, about thirty primary source documents, a bibliography, and a teacher's guide.

Warsaw Ghetto

Dignity & Defiance: The Confrontation of Life and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto

<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=ivKVLcMVIIsG&b=476127>

This section of the Simon Wiesenthal Center Web site provides a history of the Warsaw ghetto. It includes a map of the ghetto and essays about ghetto life, medicine, culture, and other topics. In addition, a chronology is provided, along with a fact sheet, a glossary, a bibliography, and a filmography.

Women and the Holocaust

Daring to Resist: Three Women Face the Holocaust

<http://www.pbs.org/daringtoresist/index.html>

This site was created in conjunction with a PBS documentary film about

three teenage girls who defied the Nazi genocide: Faye Schulman, a photographer and partisan fighter in what is now Belarus; Barbara Robdell, a ballerina in Amsterdam who obtained food and transportation for Jews in hiding; and Shulamit Lack, who acquired a safe house and false papers for Jews escaping from Hungary. In addition to biographical information about each woman, the site includes a time line, Web links, and a teacher's guide.

Women and the Holocaust: A Cyberspace of Their Own

<http://www.womenandtheholocaust.com>

This site, which provides a compendium of information about women and the Holocaust, is dedicated to the memory of women who were murdered by the Nazis and those who survived. The site includes poetry written by survivors; reviews of books and films about Holocaust survivors; memoirs and testimonies from survivors; essays, papers, and speeches on Holocaust-related topics by women academics; an examination of women survivors who also were mothers; and a reprint of "Women of Valor," an article originally published in the *Journal of the Center for Holocaust Studies*.

HOLOCAUST LITERATURE

Holocaust Denial Literature: An Additional Bibliography

<http://york.cuny.edu/~drobnick/holbib2.html#general>

John A. Drobnicki, a professor and head of reference and electronic resources at York College of the City University of New York, has compiled this online bibliography of Holocaust denial literature. It is organized by categories, including general works denying the Holocaust; Holocaust revisionism in the United States, Canada, and other parts of the world; Web sites and videocassettes devoted to denial of the Holocaust; and reviews, critiques, and refutations of Holocaust revisionist books.

Holocaust Memoir Digest

<http://www.holocaustmemoirdigest.org>

The *Holocaust Memoir Digest* is a three-volume set containing detailed summaries of published Holocaust memoirs by Elie Wiesel, Nechama Tec, Gerda Weissman Klein, and others. The project was created under the auspices of the Holocaust Resource Center of the Jewish Foundation in London, Ontario, Canada. The project's Web site provides three search engines that enable users to retrieve descriptions of the memoirs contained in the digests, information regarding twenty-six Holocaust-related topics, and information about specific places. It also features a study guide, maps of major concentration camps, and a bibliography.

Holocaust Pages

http://www-english.tamu.edu/pers/fac/myers/holocaust_pages.html

This collection of resources for the study of Holocaust literature has been compiled by D. G. Myers, associate professor of English and religious studies at Texas A&M University. It includes a chronology, a lexicon, bibliographies, Web links, primary documents, and English-language texts of Holocaust-related poetry and early Holocaust fiction.

Literature of the Holocaust

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/holhome.html>

Al Filreis, Kelly Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, has compiled this collection of articles, book reviews, survivor memoirs, Web links, and other materials about the Holocaust and other instances of genocide.

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