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Introduction: "After" Testimony - Holocaust Representation and Narrative Theory

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INTRODUCTION

"After" Testimony

Holocaust Representation and Narrative Theory

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In a few years, there will be no living survivors of the Holocaust. Although many commentators have acknowledged this fact, few have made sustained efforts to draw out its full implications. Will the disappearance of the last witness affect the way public discourse deals with the Holocaust? Will the Holocaust become, perhaps for the first time, truly "past history"? How will writers and filmmakers who may have no personal connection to the event engage with that history: what kinds of stories will they tell, and will they succeed in their effort to keep the public memory of the event from being lost? Indeed, what has allowed some narratives of the Holocaust produced over the past half-century to survive and become "classics"? And will these same properties ensure their survival in the future? What can we learn from the recent history of Holocaust narratives, both fictional and nonfictional?

These were among the starting questions for the research project that forms the basis for this book, and implicit in them are some more specific issues that we believe will be crucial for the new period of Holocaust narrative and Holocaust criticism.[1] When we ask, "What kinds of stories?" or "How do stories live beyond their immediate moment, and what can we learn from previous works?" we are in part asking questions about aesthetics. But since these questions concern the Holocaust, we are also necessarily asking about the relation between aesthetics and ethics, and about the relation between aesthetics and transmission. At least since Theodor W. Adorno's famous (and often misunderstood) claim that "writing poetry after Ausch-

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witz is barbaric,"[2] scholars and others have been justifiably concerned with the ethics of aestheticizing the Holocaust. At the same time, one of the lessons of the past half-century is that the narratives that endure, and that have the greatest chance of transmitting the story to future generations, all possess a significant aesthetic dimension. Responding to this characteristic feature of Holocaust narratives, the essays in this volume all address in some way the interrelation of ethics and aesthetics. Some also address, implicitly or explicitly, the issue of politics, whether in relation to the role of Holocaust narrative in the political and social history of Israel or in relation to the representation of Nazi perpetrators in fiction. Because the political uses of Holocaust narrative, both in Israel and elsewhere, have been amply discussed and debated in recent years, they are not the principal subject of this volume. At the same time, the essays are informed by our contributors' awareness of what the last few decades of cultural theory have convincingly demonstrated; namely, that the aesthetic and the political—whether defined in terms of gender, class, race, or nation—are deeply intertwined.

These sixteen wide-ranging essays comprise discussions of literary works (from early testimony to contemporary memoirs and fiction, with a heavy emphasis on the latter), biography, film, and photography, and they represent narratives from numerous national and cultural locations—Germany, England, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Israel, Japan, Norway, and the United States. We have included discussions of some works that have long been in the Holocaust canon, but we have particularly emphasized outstanding works of literature and film that are not (or not yet) well known internationally, including very recently published works.

The word "after" in our title merits further discussion. As we have suggested, it refers first of all to the historical fact that we are nearing an age "after testimony," an age where first-person accounts by Holocaust survivors will no longer be forthcoming. But "after" also has another meaning, referring not to chronology but to artistic creation: a painting "after" Michelangelo is one that situates itself self-consciously in a position of imitation or homage. Using the word in conjunction with "testimony," we shift its meaning slightly: the phrase seeks not to describe artistic imitation but rather to suggest that all works dealing with the Holocaust must in some way come to terms with the historical reality that the accounts of survivors have tried to communicate. In that broad sense, all works relating to the Holocaust that deserve our attention, even the most speculative or experimental novels or films, are bound by a certain obligation to the history referred to in those testimonies. But to come "after" also implies an obligation to the future: in that respect, this volume is turned toward thinking about the future of Holo-

caust narrative and about the afterlife of Holocaust narratives in different cultures.

The Question of Aesthetics in Holocaust Literature and Criticism
A Brief Overview

In the years immediately following World War II and the return of survivors from Nazi concentration and labor camps, the overwhelming need appeared to be to testify, independently of considerations of art or artfulness. As many witnesses stated, they lived only for the day when they could tell the world about the unimaginable horrors they had experienced—and many also feared that no one would believe them or, worse still, that no one would care. In *The Drowned and the Saved,* Primo Levi tells of a recurrent nightmare that he and many other survivors experienced (and that he had already mentioned in his first book, *Survival in Auschwitz*), of attempting to tell their stories but finding that no one believed them, not even their own families (12). Indeed, despite the large number of testimonies that were published in the years immediately following the war, their reception was not encouraging. Levi's own *Se questo è un uomo* (*If This Is a Man* [*Survival in Auschwitz*]), first published in 1947, did not attain a wide readership until its reprinting in 1958 and did not attain the primary place it has today in the Holocaust canon until the 1960s. The historian Annette Wieviorka has shown that in France, the first large wave of testimonies was soon followed by responses of "no more!" (*Déportation et génocide*). What Wieviorka later called "the era of the witness" did not actually begin until the early 1960s, when the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem inaugurated the era of Holocaust awareness that is still with us and that has brought us countless survivor accounts, both written and oral, as well as innumerable works of fiction and film by both survivors and others born after the events of the Holocaust.

Not surprisingly, critical works about Holocaust literature did not emerge until the 1970s, by which time a considerable body of Holocaust writing, both fictional and nonfictional, was available for discussion. However, the question of aesthetics—and its relation to ethics, for the two were seen from the very start as inextricably connected in this domain—arose earlier. Adorno's pronouncement in 1949 about the "barbarity" of writing poetry after Auschwitz influenced much of the critical discourse to follow. Fifteen years later, in an article in *Commentary* that was among the first critical discussions of

Holocaust literature published in English, A. Alvarez seemed to be responding to Adorno when he defended art as a *means* to greater ethical consciousness: "from the fragile, tentative, individual discriminations of art emerge precisely those moral values which, if understood and accepted, would make totalitarian atrocities impossible" (65). Alvarez, relying on modernist criteria of irony and understatement, considered Elie Wiesel's *Night*—which was already acquiring a foundational status in Holocaust literature after its translation into English in 1961—as less than an artistic success, because it indulged too much in "rhetoric." Alvarez much preferred the bitterly ironic works of Tadeusz Borowski and Piotr Rawicz, both of them camp survivors who had published acclaimed fictional works based on their own wartime experiences.[3] One could argue that Wiesel was simply using aesthetic strategies that Alvarez did not value, for *Night* is a highly stylized work in many ways. However one evaluates these individual works, the larger point is that discussions of aesthetic success and its relation to ethical, even historical, awareness (Alvarez sees great art as somehow being able to prevent further atrocities) were present in critical reflections on Holocaust writing from the very start.

Perhaps even more significantly, questions of aesthetics also preoccupied many survivors who were seeking ways to write about their experiences—even as those experiences provided a warrant for their turn to aesthetics. Jorge Semprun, a survivor of Buchenwald and the author of several acclaimed novels and memoirs about the Holocaust, has explained that he refrained for many years after the war from writing anything at all. He did not want to write a "straight" testimony, for he was convinced of the paradox that only the artifice of literary writing, which allows for invention and for various kinds of "poetic license" in addition to factual reporting, could convey the truth of that experience.[4] Wiesel, who is known for a statement that is quoted almost as often as Adorno's, "A novel about Auschwitz is not a novel, or else it is not about Auschwitz," has nevertheless written novels in which Auschwitz figures prominently, represented in the memory of the survivor protagonist.[5] Still, whether provocatively defending the right to artifice like Semprun, or adopting a more ambivalent stance like Wiesel—or like Charlotte Delbo, who, in her highly poetic memoir *None of Us Will Return,* often reflects on the impossibility of fully conveying the truth of the camp in language—writers who are also survivors can rely on the authority of their lived experience to vouchsafe their "right" to aesthetic expression. Sara Horowitz has pointed out that in debates about aesthetics and Holocaust representation, many who acknowledge that testimonial writing can have an aesthetic dimension also argue that the aesthetic dimension of fiction about the Holocaust renders it

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unreliable and open to suspicion.[6] The authority of a survivor allays some of that suspicion.

Lawrence Langer was the first literary scholar to offer, unapologetically, a book-length study of Holocaust writing as art—what he called a literature of atrocity. In *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (1975), Langer argued vigorously against theorists like Adorno (as he was understood at the time) or George Steiner, who in his 1967 book *Language and Silence* had expressed deep distrust of anything that could be construed as an aestheticizing of the horrors of the Holocaust. Langer, contesting the idea (which he attributed to Steiner) that since language is incapable of capturing those horrors, silence about them is preferable (a version of Wittgenstein's famous dictum that "about that which cannot be spoken of, one must be silent"), proposed to study precisely the "aesthetics of atrocity" (22). He took as his corpus literary works by writers who had lived through the Holocaust, either as survivors of persecution (ranging from camp survivors like Wiesel or Semprun to children who had lost their parents or their whole families, like Yakov Lind or André Schwarz-Bart) or as bystanders or even soldiers in the German army (like Heinrich Böll). These writers, Langer argued, had produced memorable literary works based on their own experiences, succeeding in transmuting a horrendous, incomprehensible reality into verbal art.

Langer did not study literary works by writers who had no personal memory of World War II and the Holocaust, for the simple reason that there were no such works to speak of when he was writing his book. In addition, a number of great books by survivors had not yet been written. For example, Semprun, whose autobiographical novel about deportation, *Le grand voyage* (1963), had been immediately translated and was included in Langer's and other studies, published a beautiful memoir about Buchenwald only much later, sixty years after the events (*L'écriture ou la vie* 1994 [*Literature or Life*]). The Hungarian Auschwitz survivor Imre Kertész's brilliant autobiographical novel *Fatelessness* (*Sorstalanság*) was published in Hungary in 1975, but was not translated into English until 1992 and did not become widely known until after Kertész had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2002. The unavailability or international invisibility of works written in "minor" languages—including works that later become internationally canonized—affects Holocaust literature as it does any other.

After Langer's pioneering work, Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi and James Young (who studied with Ezrahi in Israel) wrote extensive studies in the 1980s that have become standard references for students of Holocaust literature.[7] We see here a phenomenon of generations that concerns critics rather than writers: neither Ezrahi, born in the United States during World War II, nor

Young, born almost a decade after the war ended, has a personal biographical connection to the Holocaust. Indeed, Young prefaces his book by noting that it arose from his realization "that none of us coming to the Holocaust afterwards can know these events outside the ways they are passed down to us" (vii). Young's work subsequently moved on to the study of Holocaust memorials in Europe and the United States, and to the complex issues of visualization and transmission they involve.

The study of Holocaust memory has now become an immense field in its own right (part of an even larger field of memory studies inaugurated in 1984 by the collective project directed by Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*), and much of it is concerned with what Marianne Hirsch has called post-memory, which is precisely a "passed down" memory inherited by those who were born after the events and can have no personal recollection of them.[8] The issues raised by transmission culminate in problems of pedagogy, as the Holocaust becomes an institutionalized area of study in both secondary and higher education. The collective volume published in 2004 by the Modern Language Association, *Teaching the Representations of the Holocaust,* coedited by Hirsch and Irene Kacandes, is simultaneously an excellent guide for teachers, an assessment of the contemporary state of Holocaust studies, and a wide-ranging examination of current and recurrent issues of Holocaust representation in different media and genres, especially history, prose fiction, photography, and film.

Meanwhile, the question of aesthetics in Holocaust representation has continued to be posed in renewed and challenging ways. In 1982, *Probing the Limits of Representation,* the important collective volume edited by Saul Friedländer (who is a child survivor of the Holocaust and the author of the beautiful memoir *When Memory Comes,* in addition to his acclaimed work as a historian of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust) brought together historians and literary scholars to "probe the limits of representation." In 1992, the collaborative work by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony,* brought together the perspectives of a practicing psychoanalyst (Laub too is a child survivor of the Holocaust) and of a deconstructionist critic to examine some of the ways in which witnessing functions in therapeutic as well as artistic settings. Rounding off the progression of influential works that happened to appear at ten-year intervals, in 2002 an exhibition organized by the Jewish Museum in New York became a *cause célèbre* for several weeks, prompting numerous and conflicting responses in the press as well as some demonstrations outside the museum. Titled "*Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art,*" the exhibition (curated by Norman L. Kleeblatt and accompanied by a catalog with the same title) presented visual works and installations by thir-

teen artists from the United States, Europe, and Israel, all of them born in the 1950s or later; all the works focused in controversial ways on figures of Nazis. As Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi wrote in her catalog essay (one of six essays by well-known scholars of the Holocaust), this was perhaps "the most daring exhibit ever mounted by the Jewish Museum"—not only because of the transgressive presence of this crowd of "Nazis" within the museum's walls but also because of the unusually demanding personal engagement that was required on the part of the spectator ("Acts" 17–18). Indeed, the visitor to the exhibition was constantly challenged to judge the appropriateness as well as the aesthetic success or failure of works ranging from a Lego model of a concentration camp to a pseudo-kitschy visual biography of Hitler's mistress Eva Braun. As Ezrahi points out, there were no "correct" ways to confront this work, which illustrated in particularly striking fashion the indissociability of aesthetic from moral issues in art about the Holocaust.

An important recent approach to Holocaust literature and film puts the Holocaust in relation with other traumas, whether personal or historical. *In Present Pasts* (2003), Andreas Huyssen shows how discussions and debates about Holocaust memorials have influenced the construction of other memorial sites unrelated to the Holocaust, such as the Memory Park in Buenos Aires or the projected 9/11 memorial in New York City. Janet Walker, in her 2005 book *Trauma Cinema,* argues that trauma theory can productively span both historical documentaries about the Holocaust and films about incest. Michael Rothberg, in his 2009 book *Multidirectional Memory,* examines and theorizes the ways in which postcolonial literature and the literature of decolonization intersect with Holocaust writing and film.[9] Other recent works reconnect in new ways with the reflections and debates about aesthetics that have been a constant preoccupation of Holocaust criticism. Thus Brett Kaplan states on the very first page of her 2007 book *Unwanted Beauty* that her subject is the highly fraught one of "aesthetic pleasure in complex and multivalent texts" about the Holocaust. The apparently contradictory notion that beauty in Holocaust works is both "unwanted" and beneficial to deeper understanding is one that Kaplan shares with a number of other recent theorists—such as Ernst Van Alphen, whose 1997 book *Caught by History* argued strongly for the value of innovative contemporary art about the Holocaust—and indeed with a whole line of earlier critics as we have tried to suggest.

Berel Lang, in his introduction to one of the first major collective volumes about Holocaust literature, *Writing and the Holocaust* (1988), wrote that the main premise behind that collection of essays was "that there is a significant relation between the moral implications of the Holocaust and the

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means of literary expression. . . . .What constraints, whether in the use of fact or in the reach of the imagination, are imposed on authors or readers by the subject of the Holocaust? How does that subject shape the perspectives from which it is viewed . . . ? Is the enormity of the Holocaust at all capable of literary representation?" (2–3). These questions are still relevant today, but our questions in this volume focus not on "whether" Holocaust representation is possible, or ethically permissible, for the former question has been settled once and for all by the huge number of works that continue to be produced about the Holocaust, and the latter question is argued all over again each time some "trespass" occurs, as exhibitions such as "Mirroring Evil" and myriads of other controversial films, literary works, and public events testify. The question, therefore, is not whether but *how: how is it done, how has it been done most effectively,* so that it can reach readers who have neither personal nor familial nor historical nor geographical connections to the event? In a sense, this is the question that literary interpreters are always asking about works of literature, whether they deal with the Holocaust or any other subject. But the stakes involved are higher when it comes to literature that deals with historical events that still matter to readers. The Holocaust is one such event, perhaps the principal such event of the twentieth century.

The Contributions of Narrative Theory

The area of literary studies that has devoted the most rigorous attention to questions about the techniques of representation, especially representation through storytelling, is narrative theory. Narrative theory begins not with the development of its well-known toolbox of analytical concepts but with the observation that storytelling is a distinctive way of making sense of our experiences of the world, particularly our experiences of time, process, and change. Narrative, whether fictional or nonfictional, whether in print, paint, or pixels, has the capacity to offer us explanations about our experiences that often elude other modes such as expository descriptions, abstract arguments, or statistical analyses. Narrative depends on both selection (any narrative implicitly says "out of all the events that happened during this period and all the people involved in those events, these are the ones that matter most") and detailed attention to what is selected. At the same time, narrative combines its focus on concrete details with an interest in their broader significance: narrative implicitly or explicitly thematizes its characters and events. Furthermore, narrative engages us on multiple levels—intellectually, emotionally, ethically, aesthetically. In addition, narrative is a highly flexible

mode of expression, one that is open to all kinds of subject matter and that can bend its usual forms in order to meet the special demands of extraordinary experiences.

Narrative theory sees questions about the *what* of representation (events, characters, and their settings) as closely related to questions about the *how* (who tells the tale, whose perspective is employed, how the events are ordered, and so on). Furthermore, over the last forty years, the field has sought to be responsive to both narrative's explanatory power and its flexibility. As a result, narrative theorists have developed a very rich set of concepts for analyzing just about all elements of narrative, even as they have developed several distinct and productive approaches (structuralist, rhetorical, feminist, cognitive) to the various deployments of those elements. Thus the field has both expanded its capacity to analyze the formal dimensions of narrative and found ways to connect those analyses with narrative's other dimensions. Contemporary narrative theorists are interested, for example, not just in identifying distinct combinations of vision (who sees or perceives) and voice (who speaks) but also in analyzing the ethical, affective, and aesthetic consequences of a given narrative's deploying a particular combination in a particular context.

We are aware that any mode of representation, even one as powerful as narrative, will at times seem inadequate to our efforts to respond to the Holocaust. *In Reading the Holocaust,* Inga Clendinnen notes that all her studying and thinking about the event gave her no sense of "accumulating comprehension. . . . I could not frame the kinds of questions that would let me make the human connections—connections with both perpetrators and victims—which lie at the root of all purposeful inquiry" (3). This critical humility is one of the reasons why Clendinnen's study is a significant contribution to attempts to grapple with the apparent incomprehensibility of the Holocaust. The narrative artists whose work is discussed in this volume frequently demonstrate a similar kind of humility. These authors approach the topic of the Holocaust with trepidation, yet they also show remarkable courage and perseverance in their efforts to come to terms with something that may remain at least partly incomprehensible even after years of study. Narrative proves to be a great resource in these attempts, even, paradoxically, when it comes up against the limits of its ability to explain. Precisely because it is such a powerful mode of exploration and explanation, narrative can take those involved in its production—author, narrator, character, reader—to a point where the comprehension of experience threatens to disintegrate into fragments. At the same time, in many Holocaust narratives the author's and narrator's motivation to narrate seems to be prompted partly by such a

quality of loss and absence—a blank that, because it both suspends conventional causality and draws attention to the underlying but ultimately elusive events of the Holocaust, demands to be filled in, or rather, since that is not possible, identified, addressed, and explored.

As the following essays demonstrate, authors writing about the Holocaust often subject conventional forms of narrative to unusual and even extreme transformations: they distort chronology, offer fragmented stories, leave conspicuous gaps in what would otherwise be coherent accounts, and experiment with relations between vision and voice and between representations of individual and collective consciousness. They also adapt familiar techniques such as unreliable narration to their distinctive purposes. Even as these techniques emphasize their authors' difficulty in coming to terms with the Holocaust, they simultaneously challenge—and often place a considerable interpretive burden on—their audiences. In this way, the authors' efforts to find the appropriate aesthetic forms of representation raise questions about the ethics of their relationship to their audiences. The authors inevitably address an ethics of the told (in their attention to the specific experiences of perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and others), while their techniques also direct attention to the ethics of their telling.

The traumatic events of the Holocaust are not only unusually difficult to comprehend; they are also ones in which the links among history, memory, and narrative are particularly strong and insistent. As Dominick LaCapra writes in *History and Memory after Auschwitz,* "the traumatic event has its greatest and most clearly unjustifiable effect on the victim, but in different ways it also affects everyone who comes in contact with it: perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, resister, those born later" (8–9). There is, notes LaCapra, an "effect of belatedness" (9) linked to the Holocaust, an effect observable in several of the narratives discussed in this volume, underlying and influencing the ways in which they are presented. One aspect of this belatedness is that at a point in time when the last survivors are passing away, we realize there is still too much we do not know. A related aspect is that only recently, after a period of latency, has it become possible to identify and analyze significant elements of the Holocaust, not least elements pertaining to perpetrators and bystanders, that were earlier too painful to talk about. As a way to respond to both aspects of this belatedness, many authors have turned to the resources of narrative fiction, and their work has a prominent place in this collection.

The contributors to this volume would all agree with Lang's point that "there is a significant relation between the moral implications of the Holocaust and the means of literary expression," but they work by induction in

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order to explore the specific relations proposed and developed in the narratives they analyze. The contributors all draw on one or more concepts from narrative theory—ranging from focalization to the fiction/nonfiction distinction and from generic plot structures such as the bildungsroman to the ethics of unreliable narration—as they pursue their particular inquiries, but these concepts enable rather than control the move from the details of representation to the larger conclusions about their ethics and aesthetics. The role of narrative theory in these essays is not to determine their conclusions but rather to provide ways of seeing and meeting the challenges implicit in the various ways that the narratives under discussion come to terms with the extraordinary events of the Holocaust.

The Shape of This Book

As noted above, this collection addresses a broad spectrum of Holocaust narratives and a correspondingly broad set of issues about the aesthetics and ethics of representation. At the same time, the essays speak with and to each other in various explicit and implicit ways. We have organized them into three distinct groups that reflect some overarching interests among the contributors, but we see the boundaries between the groups as permeable rather than rigid. The essays in the first group, "The Powers and Limits of Fiction," all focus on how writers have adapted the resources of fictional narrative in their efforts to address one or more aspects of the Holocaust. Those in the second group, "Intersections/Border Crossings," all examine how artists have found it necessary to cross traditional boundaries—between testimony and imagination, the verbal and the visual, or some other conventional divide—in their efforts to represent distinctive experiences of the Holocaust. The essays in the third group, "The Holocaust and Others," all discuss the relationship between the Holocaust and another significant historical event or another cultural context.

The opening essay, J. Hillis Miller's "Imre Kertész's *Fatelessness:* Fiction as Testimony," poses some of the key questions discussed in the volume overall: Is it possible to bear witness to the Holocaust in a work of fiction, even autobiographical fiction? If so, how? Miller's careful reading of Kertész's use of character narration for ironic and other effects answers the question in the affirmative and opens *Fatelessness* to other readers. As Miller notes in a concluding point, this autobiographical fiction may "contribute to the creation of a community of readers who may, if not know, at least not forget, Auschwitz" (49). The questions Miller raises about the efficacy of fiction

as a response to the Holocaust appear in different ways in the other essays of part I. In "Challenges for the Successor Generations of German–Jewish Authors in Germany," Beatrice Sandberg considers the difficult challenges faced by the successor generations of Jewish writers in Germany. One such challenge—forcibly present in the work of Esther Dischereit—is the problem of identity and narration in postwar societies in which the perception of the past gradually changes. As the narratives discussed by Sandberg helpfully remind us, Germany does not dispose of a common memory, since the population has to live with a traumatized memory of the war in general and the Holocaust in particular.[10] Sandberg's essay highlights the fact that, although all post-Holocaust Germans can be said to have traumatized memories, the nature and consequences of the remembered trauma are different for Jews than for non-Jews. Variants on this problem are observable in many countries, including France, where, as Philippe Mesnard shows in "Recent Literature Confronting the Past: France and Beyond ," novelists born decades after the war but writing about that period reproduce specific narrative schemas that fit into the wider movement of memorialization in which the Holocaust occupies a central place.

Not surprisingly, the perpetrators of the Holocaust have offered little testimony about their participation in it, but fiction writers have combined history with acts of the imagination to represent the perpetrators' perspective. These representations often involve the interplay of reliable and unreliable narration, as Susan Rubin Suleiman and James Phelan demonstrate in their respective essays, "Performing a Perpetrator as Witness: Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*" and "The Ethics and Aesthetics of Backward Narration in Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*." Amis's and Littell's novels set out to capture, albeit in very different ways, the psychology and motivations of those who participated actively in the Nazi genocide. While Suleiman analyzes the layered aesthetic and ethical performances of Littell and his first-person narrator, a former SS officer who looks back on his participation in the Holocaust and World War II, Phelan examines the aesthetic and ethical consequences of Amis's decision to use "backward" narration to tell the story, from death to earliest consciousness, of his chosen protagonist, a Nazi doctor who worked at Auschwitz.

The first three essays of the second part, "Intersections/Border Crossings," shift the focus from fiction to nonfiction as they discuss examples of testimony, biography, and family memoir. In "The Face-to-Face Encounter in Holocaust Narrative," Jeremy Hawthorn analyzes testimonies by Holocaust survivors (including Charlotte Delbo and Primo Levi) and a fictionalized account by Auschwitz survivor Tadeusz Borowski, all of which include rep-

resentations of dramatic one-to-one interactions between a victim and one or more perpetrators or others. Hawthorn finds a range of human behavior in these encounters, but each point on the range deepens the reader's understanding of their sometimes complex, sometimes brutally simple, ethical dimensions. In "Knowing Little, Adding Nothing: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Remembering in Espen Søbye's *Kathe, Always Lived in Norway,*" Anniken Greve discusses Søbye's biography of a young Jewish girl born and bred in Oslo, who was deported to Auschwitz at the age of fifteen and killed on arrival. Emphasizing Søbye's distance from the events he recounts, Greve argues that, paradoxically, it is fundamental to the biography's recognition of Kathe Lasnik's individuality that she remains largely unknown to the reader. Different solutions for dealing with gaps in the historical record are explored in Irene Kacandes's "'When facts are scarce': Authenticating Strategies in Writing by Children of Survivors." After discussing a number of such strategies, Kacandes concludes that memoirs of children of survivors provide valuable examples of attempts to use our imagination to advance our understanding about what the persecuted experienced and how they felt about that experience.

The last four essays of part II move beyond verbal narrative to consider various intersections between the verbal text and visual image. In the context of the concerns of this volume, a significant question about visual images is whether—and if so, to what extent and in what ways—they possess a narrative dimension. The same question can be asked about other visual objects such as memorials—does an abstract memorial like Peter Eisenman's 2005 *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin, a photograph of which we feature on our cover, contain a narrative element? One could certainly suggest several narratives implied by the labyrinthine design of the gray stones that cover close to an acre of ground in the center of the city, and even more so by the photograph of a single human figure with a red umbrella among the stones. But the designers of the memorial also included a more explicit form of narration by supporting the stones with an underground Information Center that presents the historical narrative of the Nazi regime's racist policies from 1933 to 1945 and then focuses on individual families and life stories to convey the experience of persecution.

Photographs often possess an intrinsic narrative element, especially when they evoke historically or affectively significant sites or personages. As viewers we tend to link a photo of, say, the gate of Auschwitz, with its infamous inscription "Arbeit macht frei" ("Work liberates you"), to what happened to the many prisoners who went through that gate. Moreover, as Marianne Hirsch has shown in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmem-*

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ory, family photographs—not least one of a child, woman, or man murdered by the Nazis—may preserve ancestral history and perpetuate memories. In her contribution to this volume, "Objects of Return," Hirsch traces the role of objects and photographs in reviving memory and analyzes the plot engendered by return journeys to lost homes as well as the promises of revelation such journeys hold out—and ultimately do not fulfill. Jakob Lothe, in "Narrative, Memory, and Visual Image: W. G. Sebald's *Luftkrieg und Literatur* and *Austerlitz,*" demonstrates that the incorporation of visual images into written narratives about the Holocaust, whether fictional or nonfictional, can have wide-ranging thematic, aesthetic, and ethical consequences. Lothe considers *Austerlitz* as a strangely compelling fiction whose oblique rendering of the Holocaust insists on this particular event's historical veracity while at the same time demonstrating the crisis and unavoidable shortcomings of human memory.

Unsurprisingly, filmic narratives of the Holocaust have predominantly adopted a documentary approach. Yet, as Anette H. Storeide and Janet Walker show, the "documentary" element of these narratives is frequently shaped in the service of ethical and political ends. As Walker observes in *Trauma Cinema,* "the more closely one studies the documentary and fictional modes, the more obvious it becomes that 'pure documentary' and 'pure fiction' are heuristic categories" (24). In her essay in this volume, "Moving Testimonies: 'Unhomed Geography' and the Holocaust Documentary of Return," Walker maps the transposition and transmission of Holocaust testimonies generationally, across a geographical distance, and into the audiovisual space of the moving image. Storeide, in her essay "*Which* Narrative of Auschwitz? A Narrative Analysis of Laurence Rees's Documentary *Auschwitz: The Nazis and 'the Final Solution,'*" assesses Rees's effort to establish a widely accepted narrative of Auschwitz sixty years after the Holocaust. Focusing on the combination of documentary strategies and dramatized scenes, Storeide interprets Rees's documentary as a "docudrama" and points out both its successes and its limitations.

As the essays in the third group show, our understanding of the Holocaust is inevitably, and increasingly, colored by other significant historical events and by cultures and societies not directly involved in the crime committed by the Nazis. In "From Auschwitz to the Temple Mount: Binding and Unbinding the Israeli Narrative," Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, taking her cue from Adorno's often-quoted statement, considers aspects of "the barbaric" by exploring forms of border crossing in the context of recent Israeli politics. She traces a move in public rhetoric from a narrative of boundaries to a narrative of sacrifice and then elaborates a model of self–other relations that is

based not on rigid categories leading to violence but rather on a variety of negotiated, ultimately comic possibilities. She finds these possibilities exemplified in the Hebrew poetry of Dan Pagis, in the fiction of David Grossman, and, most pointedly, in her revisionist reading of a central text in the Hebrew Bible, the *Akeda* or binding of Isaac. Grossman's work is examined in a somewhat different perspective relating to Israeli society by Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, in "The Melancholy Generation: David Grossman's *Book of Interior Grammar.*" Erdinast-Vulcan argues that though ostensibly not "about" the Holocaust, Grossman's 1991 novel in fact challenges the normalizing drive of a post-Holocaust society that needed to suppress its recent traumatic past and reinvent itself in order to survive.

The two last essays of the volume explore different yet related aspects of memory and memorialization. In "Fractured Relations: The Multidirectional Holocaust Memory of Caryl Phillips," Michael Rothberg shows how the contemporary novelist and travel writer Caryl Phillips uses various narrative means to bring together the histories of the Holocaust, slavery, and colonialism. Rothberg argues that Phillips's project is not to establish an equation between black and Jewish history but rather to highlight similar structural problems within those histories and in the missed encounters between them, thus producing a version of "multidirectional memory." Anne Thelle also links the Holocaust, an event that occurred at the center of Europe, to another culture. In "Hiroshima and the Holocaust: Tales of War and Defeat in Japan and Germany—A Contrastive Perspective," Thelle analyzes the ways in which Japan's narratives of the bombing of Hiroshima have contributed to a repression of other war narratives, like those of Japanese wartime aggression. She argues that Japan's embrace of the narrative of victimization has significantly influenced its self-understanding and postwar identity, and has resulted in a radical difference in the world's perceptions of Japanese and of German aggression during World War II.

We offer this diverse yet unified collection as a contribution to the ongoing current reflections on the Holocaust's implications for contemporary history and for contemporary thinking about culture and aesthetics. Geoffrey Hartman has noted that there can be "no statute of limitations" on research or interpretation involving the Holocaust: closure in this area is neither possible nor desirable, at least not now or in the foreseeable future (*Longest Shadow* 4). In the realm of artistic representation, this absence of closure allows for invention and renewal as antidotes against the clichés and triteness that threaten Holocaust art as much as any other: "even so estranging an event as the Shoah may have to be estranged again, through art," Hartman writes (53). We agree. Hartman's work—he was a well-known scholar

of English Romantic poetry before he turned his attention to problems of Holocaust representation and Holocaust memory—demonstrates another important truth about many of the essays in this book: one need not be a "Holocaust specialist" in order to become passionately engaged in the problems posed by Holocaust representation.[11] And just as the Holocaust has become ever more part of a "global memory," an event whose significance goes far beyond any single group or nation, we believe that Holocaust narratives can become the ground for ever-widening reflections on the relation between ethics and cultural production.

Notes

1. The project first took shape as part of a yearlong international research group on narrative theory and analysis, led by Jakob Lothe at the Centre for Advanced Study in Oslo. Some members of the group had already worked extensively on problems relating to the Holocaust; others were just starting. As the project developed into a collective volume, we invited some of the most distinguished contemporary scholars of the Holocaust to contribute to the book; the full group met for a three-day conference in Berlin in June 2007, where drafts of all the projected essays were discussed in detail, and where the group also discussed the overall design of the volume. We are pleased to know that other scholars are also addressing the questions associated with "after testimony." A conference held in Paris in June 2009, for example, focused on how to write the history of Holocaust literature with the passage "from witnesses to inheritors" ("Des témoins aux héritiers: une histoire de l'écriture de la Shoah" conference organized by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, June 5–6, 2009). The proceedings will be published, edited by Luba Jurgenson and Alexandre Prstojevic.

2. Adorno first wrote the sentence in 1949 in his essay "Cultural Criticism and Society," published in 1951. The lapidary style and categorical tone of the statement no doubt contributed to its ubiquity in later critical discourse; Adorno himself reiterated and qualified his assertion several times in subsequent years. For a careful reading of these iterations, see Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism,* 34–56.

3. Borowski's collection of short stories, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen,* was published in English (translated from Polish) in 1967, but the title story that Alvarez comments on had appeared in *Commentary* in July 1962; the work has been part of the Holocaust canon for many years. Rawicz's *Blood from the Sky* (*Le sang du ciel*), published in French in 1961 and in English in 1964, dropped out of sight for many years but is now the object of serious study in France.

4. See Semprun, *L'écriture ou la vie* (*Literature or Life*), which contains the fullest exposition of his views about the necessity of artific . Semprun's first work was the autobiographical novel *Le grand voyage* (*The Long Voyage*), published in 1963.

5. See, for example, *Dawn* and *The Accident.* While the action of these novels takes place after the war, the hero (very much modeled on Wiesel himself) is haunted by his memories of the camp. The statement about novels and Auschwitz, first made in 1975, has been widely quoted (e.g., in Horowitz, *Voicing the Void,* 15), and reiterated by Wiesel

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himself with some variations. In his essay collection *A Jew Today,* Wiesel goes so far as to say that "there is no such thing as Holocaust literature . . . the very term is a contradiction" (197). He implies that survivors can at least attempt to communicate their experience, but that those who have not lived through it cannot possibly imagine or "reinvent" it (198). Th s is of course a highly debatable assertion.

6. *Voicing the Void,* 5–7. Horowitz's introductory chapter offers a wide-ranging discussion of some of the same issues we are concerned with here.

7. Ezrahi, *By Words Alone* (1980); Y oung, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (1988). It is noteworthy that the fi st serious studies of Holocaust literature were all written in English, despite the fact that the works they discussed were most often translated from European languages. The academic study of Holocaust literature has taken considerably longer to become established in some of the countries where the most important literary works were written. In France, it is only in the last decade or so that scholars have started devoting serious attention to Holocaust literature, and there are no university departments devoted to Holocaust studies. In Germany, Holocaust studies have been predominantly historical, but research centers such as Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen (http://www.kwi-nrw.de/home/kwi.html) focus on narrative memories of the war and on the Holocaust in Germany, as well as in a European comparative perspective. The Arbeitsstelle Holocaust-Literatur at Giessen University has done important work charting and defini g the concept of "Holocaust Literature," and the research activities of the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture at Leipzig University include studies of literary Holocaust memory (http://www.dubnow.de/index.php?id=2&L=1).

8. Hirsch, *Family Frames* and a forthcoming book of essays, *The Generation of Postmemory.* On Holocaust memory, see (among many others) Bal et al., eds., *Acts of Memory;* Hartman, *Th Longest Shadow,* and Hartman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrance;* Huyssen, *Present Pasts;* Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies;* Robin, *La mémoire saturée;* Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War;* Wieviorka, *Era of the Witness* (*L'ère du témoin*); Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget;* Levi and Rothberg, eds., *The Holocaust,* especially 189–226.

9. Both trauma studies and postcolonial studies would deserve extensive discussion insofar as they have appropriated—and been appropriated by—Holocaust studies.

10. Looming large in Holocaust studies, the issue of traumatized memory offers rich and varied illustrations of the reciprocal relationship between memory and narrative. One indication of the complexity of traumatized memory of the Holocaust is that for the individual concerned, it can be linked to and prompted by memories of all those involved in the event, including perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. See Hilberg, whose 1992 book makes systematic use of this tripartite distinction; Vetlesen, especially 1–13 and 235–57; and the studies of Holocaust memory referred to above.

11. Hartman, born in 1930 in Frankfurt, is a child survivor of the Holocaust who was sent on a children's transport to England when he was nine years old. He has explained that he chose deliberately to be "future-oriented" (*Longest Shadow,* 19) rather than dwell on his past experiences; it was not until the late 1970s, after he had been teaching English at Yale for many years, that he became involved in Holocaust studies, becoming a founder and director of Yale's Fortunoff Videoarchive of Holocaust Testimonies.

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