Rage Is the Subtext

Derwin, Susan

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In 1943 Jean Améry was arrested in Belgium for his participation in the Resistance Movement during the German occupation of the country. In an effort to extract information from Améry (he had none), the Gestapo tortured for him several days then deported him to the Auschwitz death camp.\(^1\) Twenty-four years later, spurred by the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt, Améry began to write about his torture in the Nazi prison camp established at the Belgian Fort Breendonk and in Auschwitz. Apropos of the first essay he composed, on the topic of the intellectual in the concentration camps, Améry stated, “[O]nce a gloomy spell appeared to be broken by the writing of the essay on Auschwitz, suddenly everything demanded telling,” and “everything” demanded to be told in the first person: “Soon the method also asserted itself. If in the first lines . . . I had still believed that I could remain circumspect and distant . . . I now saw that this was simply impossible. Where the word ‘I’ was to have been avoided completely, it

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1. In Auschwitz, Améry worked as a clerk in the I.G. Farben factory. As the Soviets approached, he was evacuated, first to Buchenwald and then to Bergen-Belsen. After liberation, he worked as a journalist and eventually began writing works of philosophy and literature. In 1976 he published an exploration of suicide, and two years later, he took his own life by overdosing on sleeping pills. “Jean Améry (Hans Maier) (1912–1978),” Wollheim Memorial, http://www.wollheim-memorial.de/en/jean_amry_hans_maier_19121978.
proved to be the single useful starting point.” Améry’s reflections express the sense of catalyzing release that writing instigated. Now in command of a language in which to tell “everything” in the first person, Améry newly experienced himself as the subject of his own history.

A parallel sense of empowerment, figured as the provisional dissolution of a blockage, emerges in French Resistance member Robert Antelme’s account of his early efforts to bear witness to his concentration camp imprisonment. After his arrest in Paris on July 1, 1944, Antelme was deported, first to Buchenwald then to Gandersheim. After the end of the war, François Mitterand discovered him, barely alive, in the Dachau concentration camp. Reflecting on the condition of survivors during their first days of freedom, Antelme recalls the internal obstacles they faced. Seized by a “frantic desire to describe” their experience, Antelme writes that “No sooner would we begin to tell our story than we would be choking over it.” Words literally became stuck in Antelme’s throat because, according to Antelme’s wife, Marguerite Duras, though the war had ended, Antelme effectively remained a prisoner to his body’s demands. In her journal Duras expressed her sense that those demands were monopolizing Antelme’s identity:

He has gone and hunger has taken his place. Emptiness has taken his place. He is giving to the void, filling what was emptied: those wasted bowels.

... For two weeks, three, I watched him eat with unremitting pleasure... Sometimes his pleasure made me weep too. He didn’t see me. He’d forgotten me.

As Antelme’s recovery proceeded through different stages, his recognizable self returned. The process of healing included bouts of isolating aggression. Duras writes,

I can see it now, a thick stick, made of some dark wood. Sometimes it’s as if he’d like to lash out with it, hit walls, furniture, doors—not people, no, but all the things he meets....


It’s as if he’d like to lash out, as if he’s blinded by a rage through which he has to pass before he can live again.⁵

Duras’s formulation of Antelme’s rage as something he had to pass through during this period “before” living suggests that rage subsumed his being (as his body initially had). She describes how, in this state, Antelme once exploded in a café: “I see him now, shouting, banging on the ground with his stick. I’m afraid he’s going to smash the windows. The waiters look at him in consternation, almost in tears, speechless. And then I see him sit down, and sit there for a long while in silence.”⁶

Two years after his rescue from Buchenwald, Antelme wrote *The Human Race*, an account of his concentration camp imprisonment. He dedicated the book to his twenty-four-year-old sister, Marie-Louise, who had died of consumption on the very day of the armistice, while she was being flown from Ravensbrück to Copenhagen. Duras relates, “Once the book was written, finished, published, he never spoke of the German concentration camps again. Never uttered the words again. Never again. Nor the title of the book,” and about Marie-Louise, Duras notes, Antelme “never mentions her, never utters her name.”⁷ Reminiscent of the silent coda of rage that filled the café, Antelme’s posttestimony silence can similarly be understood as freighted with rage, thereby attesting to Duras’s perception “It’s in that silence that the war’s still there.”⁸

As a child, psychiatrist Robert Krell evaded capture by the Nazis in The Hague by going into hiding. At one point during an interview for a documentation project, Krell’s interviewer asked him to describe what he was feeling; Krell could not respond. He recalls, “I tried to tell her of my rage, then became mute. I was unable to speak. My silence seemed endless. Words would not form. My mind felt trapped. It was a brush with the darkness within me, a hint of what lies there.”⁹ The futility of Krell’s attempt to communicate his rage points to the strong inhibition dogging even survivors disposed toward self-disclosure. While Améry did not

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⁵. Ibid., 64.
⁶. Ibid., 64–65.
⁷. Ibid., 65.
name a specific emotion as responsible for his twenty-four-year gloom, his description of torture’s legacy as “resentments [that . . . ] have scarcely a chance to concentrate into a seething, purifying thirst for revenge” suggests the presence of a similar inhibition which, in Améry’s case, foreclosed action and instead produced “resentments.”

In a paper he delivered on the difficulties besetting concentration camp survivors forty-five years after liberation, psychoanalyst Henry Krystal notes, “[A]mong the aftereffects of the Holocaust that made psychotherapy very difficult for the survivors was . . . the problems of continuing aggression of an intensity that could not be handled in psychotherapy.” This very intensity may account for why, according to Krell, “[R]age seldom is expressed for it is seldom asked about. Who can deal with it?” Antelme’s experience indicates yet another reason the survivor’s rage is avoided: a response whose possible outlet and object is the immediate environment, rage has the potential to implicate the present community in the survivor’s suffering, thereby posing a challenge to the community’s supportive capacities and intentions. In this context one might also consider how theoretical discussions of trauma that focus strictly on past events and circumstances may serve to forestall consideration of rage, which requires thinking about the survivor’s relation to the present world. Here one could cite as representative statements such as Cathy Caruth’s, that the “singular possession by the past . . . has become a central characteristic of the survivor experience of our time.” Dori Laub’s discussion of the exigency of testimony similarly foregrounds the past, referring to the survivor’s need to bear witness, “unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself.”

Sociologist and psychoanalyst Jeffrey Prager, writing on trauma, opens up possibilities for thinking about the survivor’s rage in terms of his or her relation to the present social environment. Prager distinguishes his work from that of theorists who place exclusive emphasis on the past as the locus of the victim’s trauma, noting,

While a prior, overwhelming experience or horrific event—a moment described as inflicting upon the sufferer a wound (Van der Kolk, et al.)—is a defining condition for trauma, even that depends on its post-hoc remembering. Nonetheless, contemporary trauma research and theory tend not

10. Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits*, 40.
to emphasize trauma’s negotiated relation between subsequent re-visits and prior experience, but give primacy to the events or experiences of the past, seeing them as driving all subsequent effects.\textsuperscript{14}

Prager calls attention to the ways in which both past experience and the \textit{present} social world are implicated in the survivor’s traumatic suffering:

Psychological trauma is characterized, on the one hand, by the memory of a person or people who profoundly exploit the victim’s vulner-
ability and, on the other, by the memory of those who disappoint by failing to offer necessary protections, who fail to defend against suffer-
ing. . . trauma \textit{indicts in memory the victim’s intimate community}—principally mother, father or other caregivers—who, at the time of such overwhelm-
ing experience, is felt to have failed to protect the victim (italics added).\textsuperscript{15}

To address the relationship between the present social world and the sur-
vivor’s traumatized state, Prager recurs to D. W. Winnicott’s writings on the early life-sustaining fantasies of the self:

Trauma shatters a fantasy of omnipotence: the destruction of the victim’s sense that because of the perfection of the world, all is possible and anything can be achieved. Omnipotence depends on the environment that encourages the person to believe in his dependence on a benign world-in-place to provide for his or her needs. It is a seamless world that, as Winnicott (1971, 12) puts it, never asks “did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?” In place of posing the question, the environment sustains the illusion that the individual omnipotently creates the world that provides for him.

. . . But traumatic ruptures promote the \textit{premature} destruction of omnipotent dependency. They yield, in memory, an experience of the community’s failure to indulge the illusion that the world is there to gratify me. The living of life in the shadow of this failure means that trauma cannot be placed in the past tense: the fear of its present-day return, as Winnicott (1974) describes, shapes the person’s relationship to the future.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Jeffrey Prager, “Jump-Starting Timeliness: Trauma, Temporality and the Redressive Community,” in \textit{Time and Memory}, ed. Jo Alyson Parker, Michael Crawford, and Paul Harris (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 230 (italics in original).
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 234.
\end{itemize}
Departing from D. W. Winnicott’s representation of a pretraumatic “seamless world,” Prager links trauma to the destruction of the dependent self’s enabling fantasy of omnipotence: “Independence is a life-long process in which omnipotence is ‘tamed’ though never fully eliminated. Through the life-course, the world ever remains an expression of one’s own centrality and pre-eminence, though maturation typically mutes the fantasy on the pathway toward the world’s disenchantment.” In tracing the essence of traumatic experience to the premature destruction of the fantasy of omnipotence, Prager brings to the fore the crucial communal condition of the self’s existence. It becomes evident that the necessity of entertaining a fantasy of omnipotence requires the community’s protective presence; given that the fantasy remains operative long after the end of childhood, so, too, does the community’s responsibility for preserving the social conditions under which the fantasy can be sustained.

In his consideration of the permanent existential devastation that torture wreaks, Améry departs from a claim that underscores the custodial nature of the social bonds that give rise to the constitutive fantasy of omnipotence. Améry writes, “The expectation of help is as much a constitutional psychic element as is the struggle for existence.” This expectation is an inborn assumption we hold that the other will aid us. According to Améry, it is not only in critical situations that the self comes to know the other as a provider of relief: a person establishes his or her earliest relationships on the assumption that the world exists to alleviate the self’s discomfort. By way of example, Améry considers the situation of a sick child: “Just a moment, the mother says to her child, who is moaning from pain, a hot-water bottle, a cup of tea is coming right away, we won’t let you suffer so! . . . In almost all situations in life where there is bodily injury there is also the expectation of help; the former is compensated by the latter.” The child moans, and this moan is a communication to the mother. Like every other human cry of pain, it is an address. It conveys the child’s expectation of help. It makes no difference whether the mother can actually provide a material remedy for the child’s pain; the child’s very expectation of help compensates for its suffering. Whether consciously or not, the child who cries out in pain, like the wounded soldier on the battlefield, assumes that someone will come to its aid, that it will not be left alone to suffer. The presence of the other is crucial in such situations of need, because without it, the self

17. Ibid., 236.
18. Améry, At the Mind’s Limits, 28.
19. Ibid., 28–29.
experiences its suffering body as its enemy. If pain chains the mind to the body, the expectation of help reassures the self of its reality in another’s mind. This assumption enables suffering persons to see themselves from the position of the other, to access a perspective on themselves outside of their suffering bodies and thereby to retain a sense of themselves as more than mere bodies.

The situation of torture deprives the victim of this mediated experience of self. Améry writes, “Frail in the face of violence, yelling out in pain, awaiting no help, capable of no resistance, the tortured person is only a body, and nothing else beside that.” When the boundaries of the body are broken, so too are the sufferer’s ties to society, which asserts its presence by overseeing the preservation of those boundaries. Winnicott’s discussion of anxiety in the earliest stage of life enables us to formulate why the assault upon the victim’s physical borders harks back to this early stage and in so doing undermines the assumption of the inviolability of those borders. According to Winnicott, anxiety in an infant is not “separation anxiety; it relates to quite other things, and is, in fact, anxiety about annihilation.” This anxiety refers to an experience that predates ego-integration and the attendant demarcation of intersubjective borders. In this earliest stage of life, “[t]he alternative to being is reacting, and reacting interrupts being and annihilates. Being and annihilation are the two alternatives.” Torture returns the self to the earliest alternatives: being or annihilation. According to Améry, it “blots out the contradiction of death and allows us to experience it personally.”

To have experienced and survived death-in-life through the hand of his fellow man turned “antiman” was for Améry tantamount to outliving his own murder, the implications of which were devastating. He writes, “The experience of persecution was, at the very bottom, that of an extreme loneliness. At stake for me is the release from the abandonment that has persisted from that time until today.” Such an experience of abandonment was specific to a loss of trust, which Améry described as

21. Améry, At the Mind’s Limits, 33.
23. Ibid., 47.
24. Améry, At the Mind’s Limits, 34.
25. Ibid., 40.
26. Ibid., 70.
the certainty that by reason of written or unwritten social contracts the other person will spare me—more precisely stated, that he will respect my physical, and with it also my metaphysical, being. The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of my self. My skin surface shields me against the external world. If I am to have trust, I must feel on it only what I want to feel.

At the first blow, however, trust in the world breaks down. The other person, opposite whom I exist physically in the world and with whom I can exist only as long as he does not touch my skin surface as border, forces his own corporeality on me with the first blow. He is on me and thereby destroys me. . . . If no help can be expected, this physical overwhelming by the other then becomes an existential consummation of destruction altogether.27

A “defenseless prisoner of fear,”28 Améry was left with an enduring sense of “foreignness” that could not be compensated subsequently through any kind of human communication.29 Still, Améry’s own experience indicates that a certain psychic reorganization, necessary even to acknowledge this permanent state of foreignness, could and did occur in the wake of torture. Prager’s discussion of possible “relief” for the survivor points to the necessity of the community’s involvement if this reorganization is to occur, a necessity he traces to the ongoing dependence of the self on the world-supported fantasy of omnipotence:

Unlike those who suggest that traumatic relief depends on a person’s return in memory to his or her unassimilated past in the form of representing and speaking it in an affect-laden language, it is, rather, the restoration of a community that has disappeared and a re-engagement with an experience of a providing-world that enables moving-on. Relief derives not monologically by reclaiming one’s past through its representation, but dialogically by presently describing to a listener or to a community of listeners who are willing and capable of understanding both the breach that is now occurring and its likely origin in prior disillusionment.

. . . In the same way that psychological trauma is a function of a social community that failed, trauma’s repair requires the social recuperation of omnipotence after its premature destruction, in the face of those who

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27. Ibid., 28 (italics in original).
28. Ibid., 40.
29. Ibid., 39.
In this fraught situation, the survivor requires the support and protection of the very community, actual or "entrusted," that may be held responsible for the trauma of abandonment. Given this, we can understand the efficacy of the survivor's wordlessness: it serves "to protect those loved ones from the anger felt by having been...forsaken," and it can be a means of not losing the community once again. Krell's experience attests to the costliness of the survivor's silence. At the same time, for the survivor to articulate feelings of rage over prior abandonment carries its own hazards, insofar as expressing those feelings runs the risk of attenuating healing bonds to the community. How, then, does the survivor negotiate the conflicting needs, on the one hand, not to consign rage to an implosive wordlessness and, on the other hand, to avoid the recurrence of traumatic abandonment, which the expression of rage might precipitate?

In an observation about a phenomenon common to his work both as a psychoanalyst treating survivors and as an interviewer for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Dori Laub alludes to an extraordinary moment of communication, linked to the metaphorical register of testimony, that implicitly speaks to this question:

It seems to me that in addition to what is manifestly said...there is another, a more subtle melody. A cue is dropped, barely heard...The patient may dismiss it or pass over it in silence; yet there are times in which it is as though a cord [sic] is struck and an internal chorus, a thousand voices are set free. The other melody, that subtler music, then emerges, suddenly resounding loud and clear. It has always been there, center-stage, waiting to be liberated from its captivity of silence. It is as though a secret password has been uttered, in the expectation that it be passed over once again; a word by which the patient names himself and asks against all odds for a reciprocal identification. Only this time I responded. And only this time, when I was present enough to recognize and hear the password, could the door be opened and the hidden voice emerge and be released.

31. Ibid., 237.
Laub’s description of what might be characterized as the supplement to witnessing via “another, a more subtle melody” enables the formulation of a concept of testimony as the occasion of a transmission, separate from, yet dependent upon, testimonial diegesis. Laub’s own metaphoric language calls attention to the emphatically figural register of this transmission: the “other melody, that subtler music” that indirectly lends form to potentially destabilizing emotions. I understand the liberation that Laub refers to as resulting from this oblique form of disclosure, which transmutes these emotions through their transfer to a communicative space external to the self. Such relaying of emotion through figuration may also account for the reparative impact of art, noted in Krystal’s observation that “survivors were treatable . . . in exceptional cases, if they were especially endowed with literary or artistic talents that permitted them to develop or reconstruct damaged functions.”

A conception of testimony as engaged in such transfer informs Primo Levi’s retrospective reflections on the writing of his first work, *Survival in Auschwitz*. Forty years after the testimony’s appearance, Levi notes, “I had written those pages without a specific recipient in mind. For me, those were things I had inside, that occupied me and that I had to expel: tell them, indeed shout them from the roof-tops.” That Levi has no one in mind when bearing witness, that he shouts to no one in particular (just as Antelme wanted to lash out against “all the things,” rather than against people), reveals two distinct but related ideas about the trauma of social abandonment. First, that it belatedly triggers volatile emotions in the survivor that hark back to the earliest stage of development, before the differentiation of the subject from the object through the formation of the unconscious. Of this period Winnicott notes, “The events of these earliest stages cannot be thought of as lost through what we know as the mechanisms of repression, and therefore analysts cannot expect to find them appearing as a result of work which lessens the forces of repression.” Levi’s retrospective characterization of bearing witness as an *expulsion* and a *shouting* is thus an apt characterization of testimony, insofar as it underscores its distinctness from “work which lessens the forces of repressions,” that is, from psychic working-through, whose goal

33. Krystal finds the motivation for externalization “to be in the dealing with infantile aggression,” “Trauma and Aging,” 87. Améry’s description of torture as an imposed return to an experience of abandonment associated with infantile trauma bears out Krystal’s hypothesis.
34. Ibid., 97.
Another Melody

is the overcoming of resistances. The second idea indicated by Levi’s need to unburden himself to no one in particular concerns the requirements for recovering from the trauma of social abandonment: so that the “shouting” force of buried rage does not trigger defensiveness in its receivers, bearing witness involves bringing things into the light of day but not necessarily so that they will be recognized by others.

As Améry’s experience suggests, the transformation of rage through narrative-making is a means by which a testimonial “I” can constitute itself in the wake of social abandonment and thereby renew its sense of agency. Bearing witness is of healing consequence, insofar as it forges a shield that protects both the survivor and the community from an upsurge of nonprocessable emotion. Améry alludes to this sheltering dimension of testimony in the following statement: “It would be totally senseless to try and describe here the pain that was inflicted on me. . . . If someone wanted to impart his physical pain, he would be forced to inflict it and thereby become a torturer himself.” If the only recourse open to the survivor for conveying prior suffering is inflicting it on others, then the primary goal of testimony must not be to communicate to others the raw experience of suffering, for this would turn the survivor into a torturer and hence estrange him or her from the community.

The readings that follow explore how the power of testimony resides in its capacity to ward off such displaced repetitions through a process of externalizing symbolization that aids the survivor and the community in their joint endeavor to “live with incurable vulnerabilities.” Bearing witness can thus be understood as a procedure of holding, in a double


38. Améry, At the Mind’s Limits, 33.

sense: as a protective holding-back of volatile emotion and as the creation of a holding space within which these emotions are submitted to symbolic transfiguration.\textsuperscript{40}

Four of the chapters that follow consider texts that are either written by survivors or written from a survivor’s perspective. In each, holding, in the double sense discussed above, leads to the consolidation of a voice that enables the narrator/subject to regain agency. The fifth chapter, on Liliana Cavani’s film \textit{The Night Porter}, explores the relation between Nazi genocidal rage and \textit{failed} narrative processes of containment and externalization. In this regard the film analysis can be considered a counterpoint to the other readings in this study, each of which underscores the socializing and restorative effects of narrative practices of containment. Even with its different focus and emphasis, Cavani’s film, like the written texts considered here, engages the question of how the narrative reconstruction of past trauma participates in the management of present feelings that stand to interfere with the survivor’s establishment of a sense of agency in the present.

Chapter 1 analyzes the memoir of one of the most prominent historians of Nazi Germany today, Saul Friedländer, who as a child during World War II was hidden in France, while his parents were deported and murdered in Auschwitz. Friedländer characterizes his childhood as situated at a remove from the events of the Holocaust and sees himself as having lived “on the edges of the catastrophe . . . separated . . . from those who had been directly caught up in the tide of events.”\textsuperscript{41} His first effort to come to an understanding of these distant events took the form of a literary endeavor: shortly after the end of the war, he tried, unsuccessfully, to write a poem based on stories he had heard about the camps. More than three decades later, he produced \textit{When Memory Comes}, a text whose intricate rhetorical patterning reveals its childhoods roots in Friedländer’s literary imagination. Reading the discontinuities in the narrative structure in relation to Friedländer’s traumatic separation from his parents, the chapter traces an unconscious fantasy of parental rescue that enables Friedländer to tolerate avowedly unplumbed responses to his parents’ deaths.

\textsuperscript{40} For an excellent discussion of textual procedures of distanciation in testimonial narratives that pose obstacles to the recipient’s becoming “a participant and co-owner of the traumatic event” (411), see Patricia Yaegar, “Testimony without Intimacy,” \textit{Poetics Today} 27, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 399–423.

\textsuperscript{41} Saul Friedländer, \textit{When Memory Comes}, trans. Helen R. Lane (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 155.
Chapter 2 focuses on two renowned works by Primo Levi: *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Drowned and the Saved*. The combination of anguished introspection and critical self-distance characteristic of Levi’s testimonial writing has made him a compelling figure for both specialists and non-specialists interested in the experience of Holocaust victimization. My reading of Levi’s work considers the personal stakes of Levi’s philosophically oriented analysis of victimization gleaned from his firsthand experience. I focus on Levi’s discussions of the “drowned,” or *Muselmänner*, the name given to the most abject concentration camp prisoners. Whereas other readings have followed Levi’s lead and invoked the category of “the drowned” as a neutral analytic tool, my reading concentrates on the metaphoricity of the category itself, tracing its origin to specific experiences Levi had in Auschwitz. When considered within the affective economy of Levi’s writing, the images of “drowned” men and women in Levi’s texts acquire psychological significance as containers for dissociated feelings of rage. Levi’s death, a possible but unproven suicide, upset his public image as a survivor whose limpid eloquence reassuringly attested to the endurance of “the human spirit.” The concluding part of the chapter considers Levi’s reception of Jean Améry’s writings, specifically, Améry’s contemplation on suicide, in relation to the figure of the *Muselmann*, not in order to contribute to further speculation about Levi’s death but to trace certain affinities between the two writers, whose intellectual and spiritual differences have heretofore been emphasized, including by Levi himself.

In contrast to the other readings in this study, chapter 3, an analysis of Liliana Cavani’s film *The Night Porter*, explores the externalization of rage through violent action rather than its tropological transformation. I consider the film’s plot, which concerns a sexual relationship between a former SS officer and a former female concentration camp prisoner, as an objectified fantasy emanating from the psyche of the Nazi protagonist. Pursuing the logic of the fantasy, the film reveals how, within the Nazi imaginary, victims were positioned as screens upon which the perpetrators projected a rage born of a psychic incapacity to tolerate, much less protect, their own vulnerability. Unlike studies of the relationship between Nazism and symbolic language that focus on the dehumanizing and animalizing rhetoric of anti-Semitism, my analysis of the film suggests that the Nazis’ victimization of the Jews and others, though “justified” through explicitly and intentionally dehumanizing metaphors, was underwritten by an intolerance of a fundamentally human condition of vulnerability whose only “solution” was the production of victims who
were made to embody that condition and whose destruction promised release from it.

Chapter 4 focuses on the controversial Holocaust narrative *Fragments*, whose author, Binjamin Wilkomirski, fraudulently claimed to be a child survivor. Whereas previous analyses of Wilkomirski and his text have largely been concerned with the symptomatic cultural significance of the debacle, and in particular with the stature accorded to victims in contemporary culture, I call attention to ways in which certain of the positions adopted by critics bespeak a transferential identification with survivors that is problematic, insofar as it has led to the dismissal of the significance of survivors’ favorable responses to the text. In view of these responses, I advocate for the narrative’s enduring value as a piece of writing that captures something authentic about the experience of persecution, and I offer a reading of the narrative on this basis. Following the text’s intricate symbolic logic, I trace a movement of displacement and reversal harking back to a trauma of abandonment that resolves into a masochistic rage against the self.

If the tropological operations of Levi’s writing transform the *Muselmann* into an image of abject internal otherness, for novelist Imre Kertész, the *Muselmann* serves as a figure through which to explore the challenges that confront the survivor after liberation. Gyorgy, the narrator of *Fatelessness*, undergoes an ordeal that parallels Kertész’s own history of persecution. Reading the novel’s conclusion alongside D. W. Winnicott’s theory of creative apperception, I discuss how Gyorgy manages an aggression that threatens to sabotage his preeminent desire to rejoin the community that had stood by while he was deported. The chapter also presents Kertész’s reflections on the relationship between the writing of testimonial fiction and the survivor’s reawakening to the possibility of love.

The authors whose works I consider were readers of one another. As was already mentioned, toward the end of his life, Levi was in conversation with the writings of Améry; in *The Drowned and the Saved*, he also criticized Cavani’s *The Night Porter*, as did Friedländer. Kertész wrote his first novel prompted by other survivors’ accounts.42 While underscoring their common experiences of improbable survival and incalculable loss, my study is meant to suggest that the intellectual currents running between these authors also conducted shared experiences of more intimate, if inarticulate, effects of victimization.

In addition to the possible reasons already discussed for the scant attention paid to the survivor’s rage, timing may also have played a role. Produced in the tailwinds of the catastrophic events, when the reconstruction of communal ties and the fostering of individual and collective continuity were of pressing concern, the vast corpus of critical studies on Holocaust representation has understandably been dedicated, for the most part, to the poetics and politics of mourning and commemoration, and to the intergenerational transmission of trauma. It is therefore not surprising that a response to victimization associated with estrangement of the self from the other writ large did not figure in these critical works emerging from the shadows of persecution and individual and collective loss.43 Addressing this lacuna in Holocaust studies, the following chapters are intended to bring to the fore a previously unremarked reason for the psychologically and existentially reparative impact of bearing witness: its ability to diffuse volatile affect. Perhaps as well the following chapters will be relevant to the study of other traumatic aftermarts that call for the management of potent emotion. The high suicide rate among U.S. veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan would seem to confirm the need for such further inquiry.