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TRAUMATIC ENCOUNTERS:
LITERATURE, THE HOLOCAUST, AND THE HUMAN SUBJECT

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Paul Eisenstein, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1996

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Walter A. Davis, Adviser
Professor Marlene Longenecker
Professor Debra Moddelmog

Approved by
Walter A. Davis
Adviser
Department of English
ABSTRACT

It has become almost a commonplace to argue for a limit-point in any attempt to bear witness to the Holocaust. That point is the reality of the Holocaust itself--i.e., "the way it was." Though this claim is clearly of relevance to various artistic forms that would represent it, my study argues that the case is otherwise for the human subject, that the gap between symbol and real is not the last moment of an ethics of memory but the first. Outside the order of language is precisely the "real" of the Holocaust, and it can be "witnessed"--but only by risking that encounter in which one repeats the trauma and loses all identity. As the experience in which one truly bears witness, this encounter with the real ought neither be deferred (in the manner of deconstructionist practice), nor made the basis of a higher form of communal identity (in the manner of liberal democratic claims concerning universal human rights).

Which forms, then, repudiate these alternatives? Which forms, then, best place their own identities and the identities of their readers at risk? I note two formal options available to the work of art that would bear witness: the dream-like, hesitant idiom of the ineffable and the "absolute" form. The first of these forms is exemplified by Claude Lanzmann's Shoah and its repeated encircling of the
sites of destruction. Lanzmann's repetitions are read against the more conventional narrative strategies and resolutions of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*. The second of these forms is exemplified by the twelve-tone method of musical composition employed by Adrian Leverkühn in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, and by the "Encyclopedia" form deployed by Momik Neuman in David Grossman's *See Under: Love*. The exaggerated, totalizing gestures that underlie these forms suggest a return to Hegel in order to articulate an ethics of memory. By employing and deploying an absolute ordering principle--by assuming the position of Absolute Knowledge--Leverkühn and Momik Neuman thereby place themselves--and ourselves--at risk to the unnameable outside, at risk to the truly traumatic encounter.
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VITA

June 28, 1967 ................  Born-- Columbus, Ohio

1989 ........................ B.A., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

1991 ........................ M.A., The Ohio State University

1991-present ................ Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: English
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At Treblinka, the Germans hung a sign over the entrance to the gas chamber. It had once hung near the door of a Polish synagogue, perhaps one of the ones—the Jews having been "resettled" elsewhere—that became a furniture shop, or a movie theatre, or a heap of ashes. Accounts tell us that it was a dark, heavy curtain, and that its Hebrew inscription bore words to this effect: \textit{Zeh Hashaar LeHashem Tzadikim Yavohoo Bo}, "this is the gate through which the righteous pass." The claim that what happened to those who passed this gate exceeds what can be said about them has become almost a cliche, but the claim is nonetheless true. The infirm were escorted directly from Treblinka's railway platform to the "hospital" where they were executed. The fit, on the other hand, were made to run to the place of their death, naked, in columns of five, with their hands in the air. Sometimes, an attendant told them to hurry, the water was getting cold. Some of the victims prayed just prior to the gas. Sometimes, gas was not dispensed at all: a pump sucked air out, inducing asphyxiation by other means. Treblinka's gas chamber had a Star of David adorning the wall of its front gable: it stands, like the images rendered above, at the
place of a great divide—between the reality we can engage using words and symbols and the real which involves engagement of another kind. On this side of the star, we inhabit still the order of language; we exchange words with others, we ask ourselves what the last moment on the other side must have been like. On this "other side," however, no need exists for such a question. The real is the point outside the order of language for this reason: there, nothing is lacking; one has no need for an other to whom one might address a word. This is why the real of Treblinka—"the way it was"—poses the challenge that it does to the forms and narrative conventions of artistic representation: to know Treblinka from the inside, to touch its real, is to experience no gap between self and other; it is, in short, to experience the collapse of the social order itself, to experience dying. Because the order of artistic representation depends fundamentally on this order—on the existence of others—it is for this reason at loggerheads with the real of history. "Remembering in the real" is thus the most individual and personal of acts. Elie Wiesel gave this logical contradiction its best expression when he said that "a novel about Treblinka is either not a novel or not about Treblinka" (8).

That this unattainable "real"—antithetical to all ordinary reality—is the proper object of historical inquiry means, among other things, that remembering the victims of Treblinka entails precisely the risk of losing one’s grip on reality, and on the consistency of one’s social identity.
When Lacan, in his first *Seminar*, says that "the real, or what is perceived as such, is what resists symbolization absolutely," his point is not that the real is never approached or even apprehended. On the contrary, the real can be encountered—but only at the price of symbolization itself, of one's relations with others, of everyday reality and everyday words. "In the end," Lacan asks, "doesn't the feeling of the real reach its high point in the pressing manifestation of an unreal, hallucinatory reality?" (66-67).

It is just this claim that marks the break between Lacanian psychoanalysis and the practice of deconstruction, a practice that, even if not explicitly, continues to inform a number of theoretical and artistic approaches to the Holocaust. Strict deconstructionist readings may no longer be frequently performed, but its ethos has been internalized on a number of critical fronts. Armed with the recognition that, as Derrida once put it, "everything in language is substitute" (Of Grammatology 235), the project of this ethos lies in the proliferation of signs and in the endless deferral of the point of nondifference—the endless deferral of the real. Derrida is no doubt correct to note the necessity of this deferral for the subject to remain in and for language; on this point, he and Lacan are in strict agreement. The point at which they diverge, however, concerns the course of action that follows from this recognition. What Derrida discourages is, quite simply, that practice which might culminate in traumatic, irreducible encounters with the real: the experience of an "unreal, hallucinatory reality" that is, we
might say, the real of history and of self, and that for Lacan is not only possible for the subject, but is the moral imperative of the subject's ethical—or memorial—striving. Lacan makes this clear in the Ethics seminar when he equates ethics with the death drive itself: only the persistent drive to attain the real of history—at the risk of subjective dissolution, of symbolic death—involves us in real, ethical attempts to bear witness.

Why is symbolic death necessary for memory in the real? Because the symbol is always on the side of the social, it always remains at one remove from a certain radically "un-social" experience—the last living moments, for instance, of those who perished in the death factories of Poland and elsewhere. If these "last moments" are routinely invoked as the absolute limit of our attempts to witness, if they stand as so many examples of a "particular" not to be subsumed by a totalizing concept, such invocations seem to me to require a key qualification: the "last moment" is the limit only insofar as we remain within the symbolic order, the order of

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1This striving for the ultimate object—the object whose absence both creates the subject and leaves it divided—is desire as such. To give it up is to accede to the "reality principle," a move that, according to Lacan's Ethics seminar, betrays the first ethical proposition of psychoanalysis: "the only thing one can be guilty of is giving ground relative to one's desire" (321).

2Adorno is perhaps the exemplar of this argument. His Negative Dialectics takes up the relation between thought and the Holocaust, and insists that conceptual thought respect those "extremities"—i.e., those "(particulars"—that elude it. Artistic form, for Adorno—and this is the basis for his critique of Hegel's "Absolute Knowledge"—ought not seek to totalize because this is only and always a move of reconciliation that does violence to the particular. Below, I hope to show just the opposite: that the form which exaggerates its attempt to totalize in fact reveals the futility and desperation of such efforts.
the signifier. In *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi is no doubt correct to insist that the discourse of memoir—because its relation to the real, i.e., the fate of the "drowned," is one only of proximity—is "a discourse 'on behalf of third parties'" and therefore inconsistent and incomplete. "We, the survivors," Levi writes, "are not the true witnesses" (83). But the matter of memory is not confined merely to discourse. Certainly, as long as one is talking about the Holocaust, or communicating or representing some aspect of it to others, one does not stand in relation to history as a true or complete witness. As writer of memoir, Levi, to his credit, does nothing to solve this predicament. In this regard, he endures what those would-be fascists could not: that a part of the being of history always refuses to be turned over to the field of speech, that "all cannot be said": "The destruction brought to an end," Levi writes, "the job completed, was not told by anyone, just as no one returned to describe his own death" (84). This is, however, not the last word pertaining to the act of memory but the first. For if we are willing to put in jeopardy our very position within discourse, our very relations with others, the "true witness"—i.e., the one who remembers the Holocaust in the real—is a possibility. The ethical import of Levi’s claim ought not rest simply with its deconstructionist insight: that when speaking about the Holocaust, the limit that undergirds one’s subject position must always be foregrounded and qualified. If this is, for many contemporary theories, today considered the ethical
gesture par excellence, it is a gesture that in the last instance remains conservative, maintaining the subject’s position within the symbolic and not putting that very position itself at risk. This is why we, as subjects trying to bear witness to the real of the Holocaust, must desire the experience of the socio-symbolic order’s suspension, the loss of our moorings in a network of circulating signs. Without this imperative, the large number of survivor’s stories now urgently being recorded are deprived of their "real" ability to collapse the distance between us and them. When remembering means only listening to the stories, when remembering is limited to "honoring" the dead by keeping the memory of the victims alive, when it is subsumed under slogans like "Don’t forget" or "Don’t let it happen again," our attending to the Holocaust remains within the order of the symbol. The aim of such remembering is to preserve the memory of the victims--an aim that preserves something else in the process: the position of the witness within language. In this way, it betrays its fundamental assumption: that we are not now living in the time of the Holocaust. If I could say in a phrase what the project of this book is, it would be to commit ourselves to the experience of our time--the time of today--as the time of the Holocaust.

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3The culminating product of such urgency is Steven Spielberg’s Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, set up in the aftermath of Schindler’s List. The Foundation hopes to collect and record 150,000 stories by the end of the decade. (See: Bernard Weinraub, "Spielberg Recording Holocaust Testimony," New York Times 10 Nov. 1994: C22.)
This irreducible experience, however, is precisely what Derrida denies, despite an eloquent articulation of its contours:

we are exposed, absolutely without protection, without problem, and without prosthesis, without possible substitution, singularly exposed in our absolute and absolutely naked uniqueness, that is to say, disarmed, delivered to the other, incapable even of sheltering ourselves behind what could still protect the interiority of a secret. There, in sum, in this place of the aporia, there is no longer any problem. (Aporias 12; his italics)

Because lines like these share so clearly with Lacan a recognition of aporia—or real—as the location or place where we need not speak, Aporias is one text to which we might turn to note the deconstructionist stance toward the place of the real. Derrida's attitude toward the site of the aporia is not atypical: he refuses and prohibits the drive toward it. For Derrida, the moment of that drive's fruition—i.e., symbolic death—would kill the aporia by suspending the temporal plane that is its condition of possibility. In the experience of this suspension, there is for the subject no "next moment"—the existence of which must be maintained in order to keep open the subject's horizon of experiential possibility, and to avoid the siren call of a "metaphysics of presence." This accounts for the deconstructionist suspicion: symbolic death eliminates the aporia in the act of realizing it. There is, as Derrida puts
it in the line I've cited above, "no longer any problem."
Derrida refers to the aporia as "the difficult or the
impracticable, here the impossible, passage, the refused,
denied, or prohibited passage, indeed the nonpassage"
precisely for the dissolution of temporal and spatial realms
that it entails:

the event of a coming or of a future advent which
no longer has the form of the movement that
consists in passing, traversing, or transiting. It
would be the 'coming to pass' of an event that
would no longer have the form or the appearance of
a pas: in sum, a coming without pas. (8)

This state wherein there is no future is a state Derrida
rules out for the subject. Nor is the subject to seek it
out. The ethical credo implicit in Aporias would seem to be
this: act in such a way so that aporia always remains a
possibility for you, so that your death is always an event
still to come. Condemned to the status of perpetual
possibility, the actual aporetic experience is indefinitely
delayed.

Now, why is this necessarily the deconstructionist
position? The answer lies in what appears to be a consistent
refusal to seek that hallucinatory experience that is outside
the order of the signifier: an anxious experience of the
supplement itself. In short, Derrida refuses to see this
experience of being disjoined from any signifier as anything
other than a product of linguistic differences, and as such
impervious to "deconstruction." As Derrida puts it in his
brief discussion of Lacan in Positions, like psychonanalysis, deconstruction "situates" that which escapes or resists the symbolic, but without having its articulations participate in a "closure that shelters the question of writing":

the concept of castration is indissociable from that of dissemination. But dissemination situates the more or less that indefinitely resists--and equally situates that which resists against--[
 . . ] what Lacan calls [
 . . ] the order of the 'symbolic.' Escapes it and disorganizes it, makes it drift, marks its writing, with all the implied risks, but without letting itself be conceived in the categories of the 'imaginary' or the 'real.'
(84)

For Derrida, then, the one position that cannot be deconstructed is the possibility of deconstruction itself. This is why "spectrality" (i.e., "living-on," "surviving," "ghosting," etc.) is, in Aporias and elsewhere, Derrida's non-reducible category, and it is also why Derrida claims that Lacan's Imaginary-Symbolic-Real triad is relevant only within the onto-theological system that he, Derrida, challenges.4 The case, however, would seem to be just the opposite: that the legitimate insistence on difference, dissimulation, dissemination, etc. is pertinent only within the order of language or representation (i.e., the symbolic order) whose consistency Lacan, via the real, puts into

4 In Positions, Derrida claims: "I have never been convinced of the necessity of this conceptual tripartition. It is pertinent only within the system that I put into question" (84).
question. Thus, Derrida's famous declaration in Of Grammatology that "the supplement is always the supplement of a supplement. One wishes to go back from the supplement to the source: one must recognize that there is a supplement at the source" (304) appears true only insofar as one rules out the possibility of an experience outside of language, the hallucinatory--or aporetic--experience of symbolic death in which the subject grasps the supplement itself and suffers the loss of the symbol. The fact that the drive toward such a place might entail a kind of death that would leave no trace, the utterly absolute and anonymous death, for instance, of one about whom afterward no one speaks, might suggest a motive for Derrida's insistence on the impossibility of an aporetic experience "in the real." The one who undergoes that experience risks a senseless death--a death whose "cause" cannot be made intelligible within a socio-symbolic order of meaning, a death that leaves no trace. Derrida's refusal of the aporetic as such is implicit in his notion that every death leaves a trace, that even death harbors writing within it. Thus the aporetic is always to be endured on this side of the real, within language: "the aporia can never simply be endured as such. The ultimate aporia is the impossibility of the aporia as such" (Aporias 78; his italics).

Thus, there is for Derrida never death, only dying. This forms the basis of Derrida's critique of the "problematic closure" in Heidegger's existential analysis of death: "In Being and Time, the existential analysis does not want to know anything about the ghost or about mourning" (Aporias 60).
The implications of this insistence on aporetic impossibility for historical memory are significant, for the chapters that follow will claim that the act of memory depends upon a reversal of the Derridean injunction against the aporia as such. Indeed, my claim here will be that the experience of aporia is possible—though not of course as something which brings into focus an essence that links us all—and not to be deferred. This requires just the sort of experience that the deconstructionist move always seems to postpone: the experience of the symbol's absence—i.e., the loss of reality that comes with a grasp of the supplement itself. If bearing witness to the Holocaust requires one to "remember in the real," that requirement entails nothing less than an unyielding desire to experience or repeat its trauma: a persistent drive toward the possibility of detaching oneself from the symbol in order to gain the supplement. The supplement thus becomes not that "excessive" or elusive entity whose acquaintance we postpone within symbolization through a multiplicity of forms and viewpoints. This is, as we shall see, the formal strategy of D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*, which is in fact only a strategy designed to keep us open to more and more viewpoints, more and more positions within discourse. If this strategy empowers us to see the many-sidedness of history, it also has us remaining at one remove from the real of the Holocaust, guaranteeing our place within language and within a social order. This is, by contrast, a guarantee that, we shall also see, Claude Lanzmann in *Shoah* attempts to suspend when—in a Tel Aviv
barbershop rented for the occasion—he pushes Abraham Bomba (a man who once cut the hair of those about to be gassed) to repeat his trauma in front of the camera. Lanzmann's film, unlike Thomas's novel, insists that the subject's act of memory always seek to take place on two related planes—within symbolization and without. The subject's act of memory would thus appear to correspond to the two ethical attitudes formulated by Lacan: an ethics of desire (memory within symbolization) and an ethics of the drive (memory in the real). Lacan characterizes the first by a repeated encircling of the traumatic real, by a refusal to identify with that "real" object or place (Thomas's Zion) which appears to house the truth about us—i.e., by a refusal to betray or give ground relative to your desire. An ethics of the drive however, because it entails the experience of the real itself, entails a loss of desire in toto. It is, for this reason, marked by an act of overidentification with that "real" object so that the subject experiences the void that it masks. The aim of this ethical position is not self-consciousness but self-dissolution.6

Because it seeks always to maintain for the subject the possibility of further signifying, because its practice involves the ceaseless multiplication and reconfiguration of

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6These attitudes are far from being as discrete as it might at first appear, for it is the act of repeated encircling that often produces—in an instance of recognition—the point of overidentification. For a concise articulation of the shift in Lacan from an ethics of desire to an ethics of the drive, see Slavoj Zizek, "The Sublime Theorist of Slovenia: Peter Canning Interviews Slavoj Zizek." Art Forum 31 (1993): 84-89. This shift, as it pertains to the matter of artistic form, informs the claims—at the close of this chapter—about the options left to art when the Holocaust is its subject.
signs, the practice of deconstruction would appear to enable the subject to evade this more fundamental trauma. This is an evasion that lurks, for instance, beneath Dominick LaCapra's claim that "working-through" the Holocaust depends on an acknowledgement of the multiple "subject positions" involved in transferential relations with it. In *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, LaCapra says that "working-through requires the recognition that we are involved in transferential relations to the past in ways that vary according to the subject-positions we find ourselves in, rework, and invent" (64). History is, in this sense, fundamentally social: the role of the historian, in LaCapra's words, "is not a full identity but at most a subject-position that should be complemented, supplemented, and even contested by other subject-positions" (10). On one level, such claims are clearly part of a "post-modern" challenge to the stability of history and historical inquiry. LaCapra, like many poststructuralists, has rightly dispensed with the unified subject who was once the knower of a rational and transparent history: "Nowhere more than in discussions of the Holocaust," LaCapra writes, "do positivism and standard techniques of narrowly empirical-analytic inquiry seem wanting. How the historian should use language with reference to the subject-positions that he or she occupies and is attempting to forge is a pressing issue with no prefabricated or pat solutions; the issue cannot be obviated through a reversion to type" (47). This kind of recognition enables LaCapra, among other things, to see
trauma as the repressed dimension of redemptive historical narratives, as well as to note various blindspots in contemporary accounts of the Holocaust and those thinkers now irrevocably associated with it (e.g., Paul de Man, Martin Heidegger, etc.). At a deeper level, however, LaCapra (like Derrida) seems to give no place to the temporary experience of the temporal order itself—the subject's possible, hallucinatory "loss of reality" that might put "subject position" itself in jeopardy in its transferential relation to history or the Holocaust. In LaCapra's argument, in other words, everything up to but not including subject position is to be risked in the engagement with history. Only by exempting from ultimate danger "subject position" itself can LaCapra counter what he sees as one of the less appealing products of poststructuralism: that "quasi-theological situation in which problems lose all specificity by being everywhere and nowhere—a situation that easily lends itself to apologetic uses" (210). LaCapra mentions, in this context, reactions to Paul de Man's World War II journalism and the question of Heidegger and the Nazis—reactions which have at times, he claims, "involved the reiteration of modes of reading and interpretation that abet the tendency to trope away from specificity to reprocess problems in terms of reading technologies that function as discursive 'cuisinarts'" (210). LaCapra's overarching argument is that the Holocaust must be relentlessly "historicized": the historian must implicate her subject-position in the very object of her inquiry. And to throw subject position itself
in to the mix is to perform an ahistorical move; it is, indeed, to displace the Holocaust "onto such general questions as language, nomadism, unrepresentability, silence, and so forth" (210).

One of the several theorists in LaCapra's book guilty of such displacement is Slavoj Zizek. Zizek, precisely because he does put subject position in jeopardy, would seem to make acts of studying or bearing witness to any particular historical situation all so many attempts to grasp the same traumatic real kernel. LaCapra takes exception, for instance, to Zizek's universalization of the existence of concentration camps--in the Holocaust, in Stalinist Russia, in the United States after Pearl Harbor, in the Boer War--as evidence of "the same traumatic kernel in all social systems" (206). If Zizek insists, as he does in *Enjoy Your Symptom!*, that "transference is not a kind of of 'theater of shadows,' where we settle with past traumas in effigia, it is repetition in the full meaning of the term, i.e., in it, the past trauma is literally repeated, 'actualized'" (102), this is for LaCapra the argument for a kind of blind and circular drama of "acting-out" that is never moved beyond. It is here, perhaps more than anywhere else, that we see how someone

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For a similar critique of this displacement, this "troping away from specificity" and the universalization of individual self-division-- "Is it so difficult for the modern consciousness to admit that the idea of the divided self, of a spirit alienated from itself, is itself a recent artifact--that the image of the Jew as congenitally alien is not itself congenital, but rather an historical contrivance, nourished conscientiously in the romantic notion of alienation by volunteer poets and philosophers from nineteenth-century Germany, France, and England?" (254)-- see Berel Lang, "Writing-the-Holocaust: Jabes and the Measure of History," 245-260.

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who is clearly not a classical deconstructionist is nonetheless thoroughly implicated in its fundamental theses. Rather than arguing for that experience which goes beyond mere remembrance, rather than arguing for "repetition in the full meaning of the term," LaCapra remains at one remove from the trauma by always remaining within a subject position constructed by language. If this guarantees the specificity of particular historical problems, it also guarantees the meaning and consistency and agency of the identities of those involved in "working-through" history. Those that "work-through" history do not reach that fundamental impasse between symbolic and real. Instead, the process of working through develops what LaCapra calls "more desirable tensions or modes of interaction in social life" (222). LaCapra has in mind here a regenerated notion of the "carnivalesque, whereby impasses are somehow played out and existing norms or structures periodically transgressed" (222). (The "carnivalesque," he says, "is one aspect of Jewish culture that warrants recovery and reaffirmation" [222].) Rather than undergoing that impasse, then, which would expose the radical insufficiency--i.e., the radical senselessness or "stupidity"--of subject position itself, LaCapra's

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8 In the conclusion of LaCapra's book, the experience of repeating or reliving trauma "in the full sense of the term" is seen to be without "constructive ethicopolitical possibilities"--i.e., it appears as only a "lucidly theorized" option. See Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma, pp. 205-224.

9 For a similar, more extended, endorsement of the carnivalesque and the possibilities it contains for representations of the Holocaust--"the antiworld of carnival, with its gross rejection of what is, is integral to freedom" (227)--see Terrence Des Pres, "Holocaust Laughter?", 216-233.
theoretical framework defers it, in favor of the circulation, reworking, and carnivalesque transgressions of such positions. This is why he prefers "working-through" to "acting-out": "working-through" would seem to postpone that experience after which we appear to ourselves as not the substantial subjects we thought we were, after which all of our activity appears as so many (obsessional) attempts to erase the division at our core. This appears to be one of the surreptitious benefits of "working-through," the goal of which is not aporia as such but rather "careful mediation." The Derridian undertone here is apparent, for mediation is the meaningful activity of differential relations. Indeed, aporia is for LaCapra the antithesis of "working-through" for reasons that are reminiscent of Derrida's. Aporia qua hallucination exposes the senselessness of identity that the very onset of transferential (i.e., differential) relations seeks to conceal in its positing of what Lacan called the subject supposed to know.¹⁰ The aporia as such does not merely, as LaCapra suggests, reverse a binary opposition: it is that experience of the void which the binary opposition itself is a defense against. The multiplying of transferential configurations, remaining as it does within relations with others, appears as only so many attempts to stave off this recognition.

¹⁰For this point—"Transference is unthinkable unless one sets out from the subject who is supposed to know" (253)—see Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 230-260.
This sort of "deconstructionist" evasion might become clearer if we consider a paradigmatic instance of it in a contemporary novel about the Holocaust: Emily Prager's *Eve's Tatoo*. The premise of the novel is not without potential: its hero (Eve Flick), having read about and seen photographs of victims of the Holocaust, decides--on her fortieth birthday--to take on the identity of a woman she has seen in one picture who looks exactly like her. Eve does this initially by having the identification number (500123) she has seen tattooed on the forearm of the woman in the picture--Eve christens this second woman "Eva"--tattooed on her own forearm as well. This attempt to "become" one of the victims--to put oneself in the position of experiencing, if only temporarily, the collapse of the social order and of one's identity that they experienced--is the direction for memory to take. It is an ethic of memory that seeks to "go all the way" in order to collapse the distance between us and them, to recognize that our time is also the time of Auschwitz, Treblinka, Maidenek, etc. That Eve takes up this direction at the very time in her life in which she feels her identity breaking down would seem to suggest that Prager's novel also understands the necessity of this breakdown for genuine historical memory. Eve highlights this seeming connection in the rationale she gives to her lover-partner, Charles Cesar:

'Listen, Charlie,' she said. 'I woke up one morning before my fortieth birthday and I felt like nothing and no one. I felt like I had lost everything I could possibly need and none of it meant anything.
I felt like I had lost my fire, you know. I couldn't think of a single place on the globe I wanted to travel to. I felt trapped.' (50)

This anxiety is why, at first glance, Eve's act is so intriguing: it seems to be part of an already-begun collapse, an already-begun encounter with the real. Eve stands on the verge of an existential recognition that would enable her to strike deep into the heart of the lives and fates of the women about whom she has read. To put this in terms of the real, she stands on the verge of repetition in the full sense of the term.

If for us this precipice is the thing that would enable the repetition of the Holocaust's trauma, the remembering of it "in the real," it is not, however, the point at which Prager is comfortable keeping her central character: the dead are to be remembered not by (re-) experiencing their symbolic death--by undergoing a removal from the order of language identical in kind to the one that they suffered--but by being kept alive. Thus Eve's act does not hasten her progress toward some existential recognition; it does not install her in the primordial circle of acting-out that must be endured. It is instead the means by which she will pull herself out of the circle. Her focus is not on the victims as dead, but on the victims as alive: "What responsibility," Eve says to Charles Cesar at one point, 'do you and I have to a mound of skeletons in a mass grave murdered before we were conceived? None. But to the people those skeletons once were? Infinite'" (34). This is perhaps
the clearest expression of the limit that circumscribes Eve's attempt to "become" victim, to take on the identity of the nameless who perished. As long as memory involves keeping the victims alive, it must always remain firmly within symbolization, never venturing into the real. It is thus not surprising that Prager has her character acting on a strategy for bearing witness that appears to be "deconstructionist" at its core: the telling of a number of stories in various social settings where she is asked about the tatoo. Culled from her readings, Eve proceeds to repeat a number of stories with "Eva" at their center. This is Eve's Tatoo's program for bearing witness: remembering the Holocaust means producing, reworking, and proliferating various narratives of it. At birthday parties, at Smokers Anonymous meetings, in bed with a lover--these are all so many opportunities for Eva to engage herself and others with the trauma of the Holocaust by telling its various stories. Eve's stories of "Eva" pretend to occupy the position of the real, but as such, they become referents which solidify--instead of sundering--community:

Everyone had identified. For a few minutes the tatoo had jolted them from the lethe of middle-class life and they suddenly looked not sophisticated or cynical, not fed up or bored, not played-out or wired, just human, exposed, their expressions softened with an empathy they would never have acknowledged that they could feel. (29)
For Prager, the responsibility of memory lies only within the province of symbolization, not also in the experience of its collapse.

The refusal to reach that point at the end of the line where "acting-out" is recognized as the only option left, where the absolute discrepancy between knowledge and being is recognized, vaporizing the external object that one was "working-through"—this is what underlies both the deferral of resolution that drives Prager's narrative and the representation of its achievement in that narrative's finale. Thus, though the end of Eve's Tatoo arrives at a closure antithetical to deconstructionist practice—Eve discovers the "actual" story of the woman in the photo and is able to resume normal romantic relations with Charles Cesar—the novel does not completely cut ties with the practice it has exemplified for much of the book. It is here that we might articulate a link between deconstructionist and liberal democratic practices in terms of their relation to the real. If the first postpones that encounter which severs one's tie to the social, the latter believes it can be brought about while radically underestimating its real costs—existence within symbolization. This underestimation is evident on two related fronts. First, Eve considers the absence of the real as merely a problem of knowledge. Second, she presumes that the acquisition of the missing knowledge is only what lies between her and a life of happiness and equilibrium. Eve's attempt to grasp or piece together what is ostensibly the real of the Holocaust is, in this sense, like a number of
related liberal democratic practices: it is driven by a covert desire to put her life back in balance. The "real" of the Holocaust that she does manage to grasp, for this reason, can only be regarded as already a socializing one, giving her identity—once beset by the anxiety of existence itself—the security it craves. When Prager reveals on the novel’s final page Eve’s real reason for getting the tattoo—she had found a yellow star in Charles Cesar’s belongings, and thinking he was a Jew, was struck by the notion that "if we were living in Nazi Germany, I’d be barred by law from loving you" (194)—the liberal democratic understanding of Nazism seems clear: Nazism and Nazi law are figured as "external" hindrances to what would be otherwise normal, healthy, human relations.

Because the real exists outside all symbolization, it cannot in this way be made to serve as a socializing agent. The acquisition of the real—despite popular advertisements to the contrary—is not the ticket to serenity and

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11 "He [Charles Cesar] had moved back in and their life together was back to being as idyllic as life can be with someone you love in New York City. Mingus settled himself on Charlie’s lap. The cat was perpetually smiling now that the aura in his home was restored to equanimity" (181).

12 A similar dynamic pertains to another contemporary, acclaimed novel about the Holocaust: Sherri Szeman’s The Kommandant’s Mistress. There, Rachel’s "murder" of the Kommandant—after the war—for whom she was horribly forced to serve as "mistress," appears also to clear the way toward normal, balanced relations between her and her husband, David. What had been the principle obstacle to such relations—i.e., Rachel’s refusal of family versus David’s belief that having a family is one way of "defeating" the Nazis—is at the end of the novel removed. David has brought home a little girl whom they will adopt, and Rachel believes she has reached the point where "Now, at last, I might finally tell him everything, so he would understand, so the words wouldn’t be between us anymore, so things could be the way he wanted them to be" (252).
satisfaction. The real is not the broker of perfect unions; it is, on the contrary, that hard kernel which would satisfy desire so completely, one would no longer even inhabit a world of others. That the real story which Eve recovers serves only to put her life back in balance thus illustrates a critical point. The humanist fantasy of *Eve's Tatoo* is the fantasy of fascism itself: both endorse the notion that what stands in the way of real balance and stability—whether at the level of the social, or the national, or the sexual—might be identified and definitively eliminated. This is the *raison d'etre* of fantasy: it is a way of coping with the inability of such relations to gain full possession of themselves, to become harmonious wholes. Thus, despite clear differences at the level of content (the enunciated), liberal democracy and fascism are joined on the level of fantasy (the enunciation): for both, the loss of the real is not strictly necessary, and can be remedied. This is why for the fascist, "loss of the real" is converted into "theft of the real," and why for the liberal democrat, a restoration of inalienable, universal human rights is posited as the means toward realizing a much-trampled but still inviolable, "real" social contract. Both fantasies construct scenarios wherein the fundamental loss might be reversed.

That a felt lack of harmony and balance are necessities internal to the social order, that the social exists only

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13Lacan's claim that "there is no sexual relationship" is one way of exposing the desire for completion that drives the fantasy, and it might be extended to relations on the level of society or nation. Or, in Slavoj Zizek's words, "There is no social relation" ("The Sublime Theorist of Slovenia" 84).
insofar as something is excluded from it, that this excluded quality (the real) is only to be grasped at the cost of that order—these are recognitions denied both in Eve’s achievement of real relations with her lover and in the Nazi quest for a nation marked by similar relations. This is what Hitler had in mind when he said that Germany must become again "for Germans": a "Real Germany" is possible, and it depends only on materializing an external figure that is the "cause" for its current absence. This "cause," of course, is no more singular than it is entirely symbolizable—which is precisely the predicament that the anti-semitic construction of the Jew seeks to redress. As the comprehensive signifier that unifies all those sites where the symbolic is experienced, on the ground so to speak, as failing to correspond to the real itself, the ideological figure of the Jew performs the role of what Lacan, in the *Psychoses* seminar, calls the point de capiton (i.e., the quilting point). For Lacan, the quilting point is simply a signifier that is invented, a "remedy for a world made up of manifold terrors," a means for replacing "innumerable fears by the fear of a unique being" (266-67). Lacan has in mind the traditional belief in God, but his insight is no less applicable to anti-semitism—what we might call the traditional belief in the Jew. There, the figure of the Jew "quilts" together a number of contingent phenomena in order to invest those contingent phenomena with some hidden meaning. This sort of quilting operation, as Slavoj Zizek has noted, is the fundamental gesture of an anti-semitic
ideology: it transforms, by means of a purely formal conversion, a number of inconsistent, disparate, unsymbolizable elements--i.e., "manifold terrors"--into so many manifestations of the same ground. In this gesture, the Jew is thus called upon to serve as the name that enables a regime to account, in a coherent narrative, for all those instances wherein identity is experienced as something incomplete and marked by lack. In *Tarrying with the Negative*, Zizek notes this decisive feature:

the designation 'Jew' does not add any new content: the entire content is already present in the external conditions (crisis, moral degeneration. . .); the name 'Jew' is only the supplementary feature which accomplishes a kind of transubstantiation, changing all these elements into so many manifestations of the same ground, the 'Jewish plot.' (149)

That this formal conversion only concretizes a lack internal to the notion of a national identity--this is what accounts for the paranoia that came increasingly to drive the fantasy: the anti-semitic construction of the Jew was at one and the same time the construction of a figure who was to be killed, but who could never finally die. This is why anti-semitism became more severe where there were the fewest Jews, why the

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14 In *For they know not what they do*, Zizek makes the obvious claim that follows from this: that the Jew was Hitler's *point de capiton*. This gesture works in the service of the fantasy of reversing the loss of the real: "The simple evocation of the 'Jewish plot' explains everything: all of a sudden 'things become clear,' perplexity is replaced by a firm sense of orientation, all the diversity of earthly miseries is conceived as the manifestation of the 'Jewish plot'" (18).
more Jews that were annihilated—the more they disappeared—the more they were said to be executing their secret, international conspiracy.

Does not a similar dynamic pertain to the close of Prager's novel? Can the real of the Holocaust itself function first as the impediment to normal relations—Charles Cesar leaves Eve after she gets the tattoo—and later as the cement for such relations? Is the balance realized there a model for a kind of "humanistic" union between Jew and Gentile, for shared experience and healthy human bonding? Or does it partake of the fantasy that the real is possible without paying for it with the whole of one's symbolic identity? The answer to these questions, it seems, is linked concretely to the extent to which one acknowledges that the primary object of Nazi aggression was the necessity of dissatisfaction—the symbolic order's constitutive imbalance and incompletion. It has been by no means an uncontested question: what was it specifically that the Nazis wished to destroy? Where, precisely, is the site of their trespass? For those who ground the human subject in a notion of moral agency, the answer is clear: Nazism is a violation of the moral order itself, of the rights of other human agents, of the social contract and its democratic values (e.g., freedom, consensual agreement, human rights, etc.)—an assault, in other words, on the very origins and tenets of liberalism. Richard Wolin perhaps gives this view its ultimate expression when he writes, "The fascist program, whose ideological origins date from the counter-revolutionary doctrines of the
early nineteenth-century (Bonald, de Maistre, etc.), was above all bent on forcibly extirpating the liberal-democratic heritage of the French Revolution" (xvi). One of the dimensions of the evil, in this view, lies in the way fascism transforms notions of conflict. No longer is conflict something which exists between autonomous, moral agents capable of articulating their grievances. It is instead felt to exist between the moral agent and an antagonizing, imperative fate that threatens him—and that is then defused by eliminating other moral agents. On these terms, the Nazi crime lies in the failure to recognize the essential freedom of a multiplicity of others. "At its most heartfelt base," Harold Kaplan writes in a recent book called Conscience and Memory: Meditations on a Museum of the Holocaust, "the Nazi attack was against all forms of pluralism—racial, ethnic, religious, political, and cultural. Democracy, internationalism, egalitarianism, freedom—these formed the precise antithesis" (51). Nazism, for Kaplan, is but the extreme instance of "the power concept [which] eliminates negotiation, consensus, dialogue, agreement" (99).

Kaplan's intentions, like those of most liberal democrats, are no doubt in the right place, but his argument that conscience is fascism's primary target—"the fuhrer principle was obviously a device to erase conscience [. . . .] Brute power recognizes its primary enemy" (169)—seems to rely on a meaning of "conscience" that is somehow separable from the symbolic network of meanings in which it is inscribed. In such reliance lies the liability of his
argument, for would it not have been—and indeed was it not—fruitless to present the Nazi regime with the claim that their program of annihilation contradicted the imperatives of conscience. In the Nazi symbolic structure, the annihilation of Jews was strictly consonant with the realization of conscience's real imperatives.15 A similar rejoinder might be made to the final implication in Eve's Tatoo: the Nuremberg laws were not so much actions antithetical to love as attempts to secure it against unsymbolizable forces, against what, after Lacan, we might call the deadlock of desire. Thus, the conflict that is the legacy of the Holocaust would seem not merely to involve two substantial parties—e.g., Nazism vs. the order of conscience. It would concern, rather, the fight against that traumatic unsubstancial kernel which constitutes social relations at the same time that it bars their rational organization or completion. Again, this way of accounting for the Holocaust renders plain the manner in which liberal versions of democracy appear to share in the fantasy of fascism—again despite obvious differences in the content of their utterances. Both aim, quite simply, to rid the world of its imbalance, to master its foundations, to restore an essential value to each and every individual human life. This is why,

15Himmler's famous speech at Posen in 1943—"Most of you know what it means to see a hundred corpses lie side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand. To have stuck this out and—excepting cases of human weakness—to have kept our integrity, that is what has made us hard. In our history, this is an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory" ("Himmler's Summation" 133)—might be considered in this light. It is not that the Nazis about which Himmler speaks "had no conscience"; it is that their conscience was even more severe.
according to Kaplan, "one has to say that the Holocaust is a lesson in positive democracy" (177). It is the Holocaust that is invoked as an exemplary instance of the trampling of human rights—rights that would be the foundation of a valid world order. The Jew here becomes, if retroactively, the bearer of these rights:

It would have been grotesque at the time for the Jews to see themselves as the chief ideological enemies of Nazism. But now, after the Holocaust, we must give more credit to Nazi belief, even if Jews were selected to spearhead democratic values in order to deface them [. . . .] Even if the Jews were pathetically innocent of leading opposition to Hitler, should we not now accept that imputed representation of liberal humanist and democratic values? (173)

Kaplan's view here mitigates the contingency or groundlessness of the quilting point. This is the crux of the liberal democratic position: the quilting point that guarantees meaning in a society is not to be seen as a purely arbitrary signifier, installed by us and thus without the capacity to heal the world. On the contrary, it is said to represent some real substance. Thus, Hitler's claim that conscience is the business of the Jew is, for Kaplan, to be
taken seriously. Kaplan cannot admit the total meaninglessness of Hitler's point de capiton because he would have to admit the meaninglessness of his own and all others. By conferring, if retroactively, some substance on the anti-semitic construction of the Jew, Kaplan is able to hold on to the possibility of a quilting point--call it democracy, egalitarianism, pluralism, whatever--that has an integrity capable of cementing the social contract. To be sure, the Jew is certainly not the quilting point for most liberal democrats. But by giving a substance to his quilting point, Kaplan nonetheless exemplifies the liberal democratic position. If there is a gap between ideal and real, between the social contract and the actual socius, it is not one that cannot be filled. So it is, Kaplan writes, that "the doctrine of human rights appears as if to fill a void in democratic values" (179). In this view, there does exist a referent which all of us agree to recognize by a certain name, which has a value that is irrefutable, and which guarantees the meaning and consistency of rational communication. The social order itself appears here as the shared experience of this referent: a fellow member is one who, when I speak, "knows what I mean."

It is by no means the case that this liberal democratic

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16 For a similar retroactive, etiological account of anti-semitism which posits a "positive" cause for the murder of the Jews--"It is not, I believe, as deicide, as 'God killer,' that the Jew has been loathed and feared in the Christian civilization of the West (although that hideous attribution does play its part). It is as inventor of God; it is as spokesman for and remembrancer of an almighty, all-seeing, all-demanding Deity. It is because Judaism has kept man awake" (164)--see George Steiner, "The Long Life of Metaphor: An Approach to the 'Shoah,'" 154-171.
position has nothing to teach us. Kaplan has rightly identified the void at the core of democratic values; his mistake consists in fingering actual actors he takes to be the source of that void, and then in seeking to replace those actors with exemplars of universal human rights. This suggests the point at which liberal democracy and totalitarianism converge: both refuse a society split from itself, marked by an "excess" that it cannot incorporate. As Renata Salecl puts it in *The Spoils of Freedom*:

> The discourse of universal human rights thus presents a fantasy scenario in which society and the individual are perceived as whole, as non-split. In this fantasy, society is understood as something that can be rationally organized, as a community that can become non-conflictual if only it respects 'human rights.' (127)

The proper rejoinder to the fantasy is simply that this void is internal to democracy and democratic values themselves: the will of the people is not something that can be realized in actuality, for it is, in fact, all the time beset by contingencies that impede efforts to determine it definitively. Far from something to bemoan, democracy's insecure position--it is without a definitive Master to guarantee its self-possession and smooth functioning--is a sign of its radicality. "The essence of democracy," Salecl says, "is that it can never be made to the measure of concrete human beings: the basis of democracy is the subject as pure empty place [. . . .] As soon as we try to fill it
out with concrete, 'human,' content, we risk falling into totalitarianism" (119). In their Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe make a similar point, insisting on the notion of "antagonism" as constitutive of a "radical democracy": "This moment of tension, of openness, which gives the social its essentially incomplete and precarious character, is what every project for radical democracy should set out to institutionalize" (190). What a radical democracy entails is thus a recognition antithetical to the carrying out of Holocausts: there is something in the social and in the identities we assume within language that cannot be managed.

We have here returned to the limit--what some have called the "second commandment"--that pertains to symbolic acts of memory: there can be no strict relation or identification between the real of the Holocaust and any of its "graven images." The "excess" that disturbs our social identity cannot be known within the confines of those social identities. How then should the Holocaust be symbolized, if such symbolizations are neither to pretend directly to represent the real, nor perpetuate a logic of proliferation that postpones the encounter with it? How is one to stage within language the traumatic encounter with that which lies outside of it? How best to expose the inconsistency of the social reality in which we speak? In the pages that follow, two ethical positions--derived from the two positions formulated by Lacan above--for artistic form emerge. Both expose themselves to the real which is necessary for "real"
remembering—one by repeatedly encircling the real that cannot be symbolized, the other by exaggerating the power and the totality of its symbolic efforts. This first form is one marked by an idiom of the ineffable—an idiom whose dream-like paradoxes and arrangements and temporality attempt to convey what Edith Wyschogrod has called "the unique linguistic situation of the death-world" (30). If, as Wyschogrod argues, new syntactic and semiotic possibilities usually follow from enriching experiences, then, in the context of depleted experience—like those in the camps, for instance—"the linguistic process itself must reflect this shrinkage": "a systematic effort is made to create confusion in regard to accepted, taken-for-granted meanings by developing opposed meanings in order to produce the widest possible discrepancy between alleged and actual significations" (30). The minimalism of this form, in the attempt to land squarely on the gap between symbol and real, dramatizes those repetitions which announce the futility of signifying desire without giving ground relative to that desire, a form that persists in marking the inaccessibility and ineffability of the real. The monotony of its repetitions is antithetical to a logic of proliferation, for what is at issue is not so much new configurations or multiple viewpoints, as much as the desire that underwrites the very possession of a viewpoint. Lacan says as much in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis when he writes:

The real has to be sought beyond the dream—in what the dream has enveloped, hidden from us, behind the
lack of representation of which there is only one representation. This is the real that governs our activities more than any other and it is psychoanalysis that designates it for us. (60)

The paradigmatic example of a form which gets us to experience the real by refusing to give ground relative to its desire, by staging again and again its collisions with the nameless and by "shrinking" its linguistic possibilities, is Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*. Lanzmann's embrace of that dream-like idiom of the ineffable in the effort to symbolize the Holocaust, however, is far from the only instance of such an embrace.¹⁷

The second ethical position—what I shall call the "absolute form"—differs from that of Lanzmann's in a key respect: on the level of form, it is interested less in gesturing again and again to what it cannot represent, than in taking to an exaggerated extreme what it can. If Lanzmann's form refuses to identify with any particular facet of the Holocaust that might stand in for the real of the Event, the absolute form adopts an alternate strategy: it overidentifies with a particular facet. "The Complete Encyclopedia of Kazik's Life" at the end of David Grossman's *See Under: Love* perhaps best exemplifies this act of

¹⁷ Indeed, this minimalist idiom is by far the dominant one in extant attempts to represent the Holocaust. Elie Weisel's *Night*, a book of about one hundred pages, was in its first draft ten times as long. From the poetry of Paul Celan and Charlotte Delbo, to the novels of Cynthia Ozick and Aharon Appelfeld, to the voices of those videotaped testimonies collected at the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, the principle characteristic is the attempt, in Lawrence Langer's words, "to make certain silences audible, creating the paradox of the audible silence" (18).
overidentification. Grossman's form in the final section of
the novel does not seek to throw into question the
consistency of his object--i.e., the life and death of an
individual victim of the Holocaust--but rather takes up that
object as the most consistent thing imaginable: he takes
that life as the object of an encyclopedic exposition. The
absolute form, in this way, does nothing to conceal its
position as the "absolute" determiner of its particular
contents. Indeed, far from acknowledging the limited nature
of its particular perspective, the absolute form proceeds as
if its perspective were in fact complete, as if its
perspective were universal. This is, as I hope to show
shortly, not the product of wishful thinking, but is, on the
contrary, the result of a Hegelian recognition: that
individual perspectives qua so many modes that belong to
consciousness are, each and every one of them, universal.
The absolute form thus seeks to involve itself and its reader
not in a kind of conversation among different discursively-
produced positions. On the contrary, it takes its mode of
symbolizing to its extreme--holding nothing back--in order to
place its position at risk not from other points within
symbolization, but from the real that is outside all
symbolization. The artistic form that symbolizes absolutely
does not maintain a kind of divide between finite and
infinite, between symbolic and real, for this divide itself
is recognized as a position within thought. For the work of
art truly to open itself up to what is infinite--i.e., to
what is real--it must then become absolute within the order
of thought. It must, like the compositional method of Adrian Leverkuhn and the Encyclopedic arrangement of baby Kazik's story by Momik Neuman, organize--without impunity--its contents in a comprehensive, totalizing way.

At first glance, any attempt to join a notion of the absolute with the Holocaust will surely appear dubious. Was not the Holocaust itself the product of a kind of absolutist thinking? Did not the Nazis believe themselves endowed with a kind of absolute knowledge that enabled them to determine who should live and who die? Would not an "absolute form" in which all particulars are rigidly determined from above by a kind of master-principle only reproduce the gesture of fascist thinking? Such questions are evidence of the fact that Hegel has replaced Nietzsche in the attempt to unearth the philosophical underpinnings of totalitarianism. Absolute Knowledge--and not the will to power or the "Overman"--is now suspected of having had its hand in Auschwitz and a number of other barbarisms.\(^{18}\) This very suggestion is implicit in Adorno's critique of Hegel's insistence that the subject

\(^{18}\) If it is true that, as Camus claimed, in 1957 in The Rebel, that "we shall never finish making reparation [to Nietzsche] for the injustice done to him [by National Socialism and those who associate Nietzsche's thought with it]" (75), this failure has not been for lack of trying. Indeed, today, the link between the dictator and the over-man has been thoroughly deconstructed. The same cannot be said for the Absolute Spirit. This shift is evident in the suspicion of Hegel evinced by dominant post-structuralist thinkers and by their simultaneous embrace of Nietzsche for the latter's break from traditional metaphysics. Gilles Deleuze's Nietzsche and Philosophy (1962) is perhaps the first and clearest example of this shift. There, Deleuze says, "We will misunderstand the whole of Nietzsche's work if we do not see 'against whom' its principle concepts are directed. Hegelian themes are present in this work as the enemy against which it fights" (162). According to Deleuze, "There is no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche" (195).
occupy the place of the Whole: Absolute Knowledge subsumes all particulars within it and in this way, to use Adorno's phrase, "cuts short" dialectics. It is, in Adorno's view, an instance of final or supreme mastery, of ultimate rationalism, and in Negative Dialectics likened to the very strategies of the SS: "If thought is not measured by the extremity that eludes the concept, it is from the outset in the nature of the musical accompaniment with which the SS liked to drown out the screams of its victims" (365). A similar suggestion forms the basis of the charge against Adrian Leverkuhn and his twelve-tone method of musical composition: the composer elects a series of notes, and the most arbitrary of universal principles determines the order in which they are to be played. There are, as Adrian says at one point, no longer any "free" notes. Hyper-rationality teeters into its opposite; the particular gets trampled. The radicality of the absolute form, however, lies not in the superior position it seems to grant to its creator or its rationality. On the contrary, it resides in its ability to make plain what has been true all along: that when we open our mouths to designate this or that particular entity, we are all the time speaking from the position of the Whole. Adorno's critique of the universal would thus appear to be misplaced, for the very meaning of his critique rests upon a universal ground. In other words, his very insistence that thought measure itself by what eludes it--because that insistence is fundamentally a thought--is no less the product of an absolute position. This is, in Hegel's lesser Logic,
the basic insight of phenomenology: "thought is the universal in all acts of conception and recollection" (37). It is, as Hegel says, "the agency of thought [that] gives universality to particular contents" (32). In other words, it is the agency of thought that allows particular contents to mean. When Hegel claims that what counts as an object can only be determined by a subject--e.g., "The 'I' is as it were the crucible and the fire which consumes the loose plurality of sense and reduces it to unity" (69)--his point is not that the subject knows everything there is to know. On the contrary, his claim is merely an argument for the "idealistic" nature of all positive reality. Thought, or the universal, is thus not that which harms or threatens to engulf the particular--as it is for Adorno and others--but is, rather, the absolutely real ground for everything positive in the world. The very designation of something particular is merely an instance of universality. The universal is thus not to be repudiated as that which acts violently toward

19 If Hegel's language is sometimes violent in his depiction of this determination--e.g., "the positive reality of the world must be as it were crushed and pounded, in other words, idealized" (Logic 69)--what is nonetheless beneath the surface in Hegel's account is the extent to which this "absolute" grasp of positive reality opens one up to a negative reality, the real, wherein there is no "I" at all.

20 Adorno, as much as any other thinker in this century, calls attention to the horror of what is "positive in the world," but he fails to see this attention as itself the product of an Absolute position. Thus, there is, for Adorno, a "unity that cements the discontinuous, chaotically splintered moments and phases of history--the unity of the control of nature, progressing to rule over men, and finally to that over men's inner nature (Negative Dialectics 320), but this is a unity complicit in the domination and cruelty. In Adorno's words, "No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb [. . .] It is the horror that verifies Hegel and stands him on his head."
particulars; the particular emerges only in so far as it has always already been touched by what is universal, in so far as it has reached the level of thought.

Hegel makes the particular's dependence on the universal clear at the close of the Sense-Certainty section of the Phenomenology. There, he says that the sensuous particular cannot be reached by language—for Hegel "the work of all thought"—because language belongs to consciousness which is inherently universal. The attempt to actually "say" a particular entity would result in either that entity's crumbling away or in the speaker's inability to complete his description. Again, Hegel's point is this: that any reference to a particular—even the particular that eludes our finite mind—is still the product of the Whole. Any meaningful designation of a particular only indicates what is universal about it: "When I say: 'a single thing,' I am really saying what it is from a wholly universal point of view, for everything is a single thing" (66). The entirety of Hegelian phenomenology rests on this point: for the particular to be grasped, thought must have already gone beyond it.

As Hegel puts it, "The Here that is meant would be the point; but it is not: on the contrary, when it

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21 Hegel: "Now language is the work of thought: and hence all that is expressed in language must be universal" (Logic 31).
22 Nor is the Kantian recourse to unmediated intuition any less dependent on the universal. In his Hegel's Idealism, Robert Pippin explains: "We must admit that there is no way in which the intuited particular, or formally characterized domain of intuited particulars, can play a cognitively significant role except as already minimally conceptualized particulars. Always involved in such judgments is my having taken this to be this-such, even in a quite minimal or highly abstract way ('this thing here, now')" (85-86).
is pointed out as something that is, the pointing-out shows itself to be not an immediate knowing [of the point], but a movement from the Here that is meant through many Heres into the universal Here" (64). Were this not the case, any utterance designating a particular could never complete its task; its very capacity to designate is thus linked precisely to its universality, because were an utterance really to correspond to an "immediate knowing"--i.e., really to be truly singular--it would simply be another particular which exists--like those entities it is to designate--only at the level of sense. This is why immediate knowledge is an oxymoron of sorts: whatever is known immediately cannot be a meaningful object of knowledge. The exercise by which sound emerges from our mouths would thus not be a "pointing-out," but rather a purely mechanical gesture, a series of phonetical sounds completely without meaning. When Lacan, in the second Seminar, says that "the symbolic order from the first takes on its universal character"--"It isn't constituted bit by bit. As soon as the symbol arrives, there is a universe of symbols" (29)--he is only rearticulating this Hegelian point. The meaning of our words are inseparable from the whole, or universality, of the discourse in which they are put.

The totalizing practice that might follow this recognition, then, would do nothing to confirm the superior position of the Absolute Spirit. It would, on the contrary, make explicit what has been implicit all along: the precariousness of the universal, and the pathetic, ridiculous
desperation that underwrites its securing of particulars. In other words, when the Universal subsumes individual particulars, the Universal is telling us something about itself as well—and exaggerated acts of totalizing make its message unmistakable: the Universal itself is not all; it, too, is marked by lack, and looking for that which might make it complete. Try as it might to symbolize the cause responsible for its lack, its project is doomed to fail because that cause cannot be symbolized. This is why, though we speak all the time from the position of the absolute, it is significant whether or not we take it up absolutely: to do so is to expose the manner in which even the universal Law that structures the order of language lacks stability and substance; not to do so is to maintain the natural, essential universality of that Law—to keep that law itself from encountering the real. Gillian Rose, in Hegel Contra Sociology, is thus right to note the disservice done to Hegel by those who would separate his method from his "system."²³ Absolute knowledge, Rose argues, means only this recognition: that what are "apparently 'universal' laws turn out to be the fixing of particularity" (183). The other is recognized finally for what it is: not a "real" object to be acquired, but a condition of the whole of the symbolic order itself. Though he has been routinely misread on just this point, Hegel is the one who makes this clear. "The self-knowing

²³The distinction between Hegel’s radical "method" and his conservative "system" is for Rose itself a conservative one: "Hegel’s thought has no social import if the absolute is banished or suppressed, if the absolute cannot be thought" (Hegel Contra Sociology 42).
Spirit," Hegel says on the final page of the Phenomenology, "knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit" (492). This is the Absolute Spirit's point of reconciliation: not an experience of harmony, but rather the realization that the lack of satisfaction that is our condition humaine is due not to external factors, but to the constitution of the subject itself. "The consummation of the infinite End," Hegel writes in the lesser Logic, "therefore, consists merely in removing the illusion which makes it seem yet unaccomplished" (274). Thus, the position taken up by the absolute form is not a static, transcendental postion of substantial knowledge. It entails not a pure comprehension of the object. Nor does it portend the resolution of all contradiction in some final synthesis. On the contrary, it represents that position wherein one finally comes clean about the impossibility of total knowledge, wherein one experiences the abyss between all that we are able to signify and the real itself. Only by showing the manner in which a universal system arbitrarily organizes the meaning of particular symbols, is it possible to dramatize the defects of that system, and to place it at risk to what bars its consistency: the real.

Absolute Knowledge is the subject's knowledge of the impossibility of its self-coincidence: the subject gains consistency only in its opposition to itself. Absolute knowledge does not thus subsume all particularity, it recognizes particularity as its very lifeblood--not some element alien to its consciousness and to be overcome. The
result is a ceased quest for some unchangeable Being--i.e., the real--as an actual existence; one gives up the notion that the vanished "real" can become a social reality. In the Phenomenology, Hegel again makes this clear:

Consciousness, therefore, can only find as a present reality the grave of its life. But because this grave is itself an actual existence and it is contrary to the nature of what actually exists to afford a lasting possession, the presence of that grave, too, is merely the struggle of an enterprise doomed to failure. But having learned from experience that the grave of its actual unchangeable Being has no actuality, that the vanished individuality, because it has vanished is not the true individuality, consciousness will abandon its quest for the unchangeable individuality as an actual existence, or will stop trying to hold on to what has vanished. Only then is it capable of finding individuality in its genuine or universal form. (132)

Hegel's point is that the real has no actuality within symbolization, and that attempts to symbolize cannot hope to produce the Signifier capable of comprehending the whole of a particular historical event. The "absolute knowledge" that all such enterprises are doomed to fail leads to the "absolute form": that form which no longer conceals the whimsy and the weakness of its ordering principle. This ordering principle is taken up absolutely by the human
subject so that he might enter that place of the real where one finds one’s individuality in its genuine form. This discovery, Hegel would appear to say, cannot be achieved by holding back within symbolization, by acknowledging the limitation of an individual perspective, for this position leaves the Law guaranteeing symbolic relations untouched. Memory remains within the realm of the symbol—in the conversation involving different, discursively-produced viewpoints—without exposing the universality of that realm as a necessary fiction. The absolute form, on the other hand—as revealed by Adrian Leverkuhn and Momik Neuman—lays bare the necessity of the fiction by revealing the purely performative nature of any universal Law. It deploys, in plain sight, an ordering principle in all of its arbitrariness in order to make the following point: that the very social reality in which we live is no less the product of such an arbitrary deployment, that our very identities as social creatures are no less dependent on a force whose ways and means make no sense. Its use of such a principle in this way radically differs from the absoluteness of the fascists: no Nazi would tell you that the vision of a Third Reich is merely a non-sensical, purely performative quilting point that does nothing to confer essence upon his symbolic identity and the identity of his countrymen. Overidentifying with the quilting point is thus perhaps the attitude which most undermines the point where fascism takes hold: it exposes the ridiculousness or stupidity of the principle which enables us to make any sense of the world. It reveals
the Law as something we institute. Brought out in this way, we see the "universal" Law for what it is: a contingent institution that marks the defect of the whole. This is why in the chapters that follow Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus and David Grossman's See Under: Love stand as the means whereby to critique the forms of Steven Spielberg and D. M. Thomas. If the latter two seek to conceal, or hold back, any ultimate exercise of absolute authority, Mann and Grossman have at their culminations, the unabashed exercise of it.
CHAPTER 2

SHOAH v. SCHINDLER'S LIST:
THE CASE FOR A TRAUMATIC AESTHETIC

At bottom, it has been an aesthetic taste that has hindered mankind most.
--Nietzsche

Seek the ceaselessness of the return, effect of disastrous instability.
--Blanchot

It has become, in conversations concerning the historical person of Oskar Schindler, almost a commonplace to note the point of our fascination with him: not just the incomprehensible success of his method, but more precisely, the inscrutability of his motive. Although Schindler himself tried after the war to give a self-evident rationale for his actions—"If you saw a dog going to be crushed under a car," he is said to have claimed, "wouldn't you help him?" (Miller 118)—the desire informing those actions seems much less self-evident to us. Far from providing the ground for a "universalist moral outlook,"¹ for a shared sense of humanity,

¹This is the hypothesis of Norman Geras, against Richard Rorty's invocation of the "parochial" motivations behind Jewish rescue (e.g., "They [the Jews] were Belgians, Danes, Italians, etc., just like us"). Rorty cites evidence of "parochial" motivations in order to suggest the absence of universal foundations; Geras cites rescuers whose rationale suggests the presence of those very foundations. See Geras, Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind, pp. 7-46.
the desire informing Schindler’s actions escapes complete explanation. Something enigmatic in it persists. This enigmatic quality is, on one level, what establishes Schindler’s life as an object of interpretation in the first place. Schindler, we might say (after Lacan), has a relation to his "Thing"—that alien and elusive kernel of otherness that divides him in two, and that cannot be grasped. This is, for Lacan, a division that has no viable remedy within symbolization: within language, the Thing—like the real—"is to be found at the most as something missed" (Ethics 52). If for Lacan this miss condemns the work of art to an insoluble impasse—"to a certain extent," he says, "a work of art always involves encircling the Thing" (Ethics 141)—this is not for a him a fate to bemoan. The elusiveness of the Thing is not only the work of art’s first recognition—i.e., its impetus—but also its last, its absolute recognition of the very condition of its possibility.

It would seem to be the case, then, that a failure to comprehend the relation between Oskar Schindler and his Thing would not be an instance of failure in the ordinary sense. Failure in the ordinary sense would be relevant only in the context of a teleological concept of art—that concept which takes the impenetrability of its object as starting-point only. In extant artistic treatments of Schindler, commitment to this concept has been well-nigh universal. Jon Blair, for instance, laments his own film’s inability to crack the enigma of Schindler. In his 1984 Thames Television documentary Schindler, Blair reproduces Schindler’s
articulation of motive—"he saved all the Jews he could because he couldn’t stand all the killing; he gradually came to feel he must do something"—but remains uncomfortable with his own film’s reliance on it: "I have to accept that’s what he felt [. . .] But I always felt it was a weakness in my film that I couldn’t explain Schindler’s motivation" (Gritten 23). Thomas Keneally, too, articulates a similar predicament: "You add up all the elements—the expediencies and the decency—and you don’t get the sum of what happened" (Miller 118).2 The crowning example of this concept, however, is perhaps Steven Spielberg’s Schindler’s List, adapted from Keneally’s novel. Spielberg himself has made it clear that the film’s driving force, its point of initial fascination, lay also in the elusiveness of "the sum of what happened," the elusiveness of its hero’s desire. This mystery was, Spielberg recalls, scriptwriter Steven Zaillian’s point of approach in adapting Keneally’s novel to screen: "He approached it as the Rosebud theory—the mystery as to why Schindler did what he did. Why would a German Catholic industrialist, a member of the National Socialist party, a womanizer, a bon vivant and cynic, sacrifice everything he was and all the money he ever made to save Jews? That became the story" (Gritten 9).

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2Keneally’s novel, however, does endorse a "cause" for Schindler’s heroism: his witnessing of the German Aktion in Cracow, and specifically, his identification with the "little girl in red" (i.e., the "scarlet child"). In the novel, that the Aktion is taking place without regard for her, is for Schindler a sign of the SS’s lack of shame. Keneally reports Schindler’s claim that from this day on, "[he] was now resolved to do everything in [his] power to defeat the system." (See Keneally, Schindler’s List, pp. 126-133.) The narrative of Spielberg’s film borrows this "cause" from Keneally.

48
If on one level this is but the latest in a series of articulations of the enigma that pertains to Oskar Schindler's Thing, on a deeper level, Spielberg could almost be said to be making a formal statement about his own relation to the Thing as well. Indeed, in the aftermath of Schindler's List, what critics of the film have sought tirelessly to discover is the motive for the transformation which Schindler's List itself represents in Spielberg's career: why has the master of make-believe, the master of escapism, the man who has directed four of the ten top-grossing films of all time, now decided to enter the realm of historical atrocity in a serious way? This striking incongruity was manifest in the headlines of popular media, from the Los Angeles Times's declaration of "A Stirring Departure [. . .] Atypical Spielberg" to Premier's questioning of Spielberg's capacity to "shed the habits of a lifetime" in order to give the story of Schindler "the grittiness it needs." As another headline in the Times put it, "Grim. Black and White. . . Spielberg?" As was the case with Schindler, it appears that the desire of the hero himself has "become the story." This homology, in my view, is significant for our understanding of the film for two reasons. First, more than merely suggesting a fruitful parallel between the questions concerning motivation that pertain to Schindler and Spielberg, a parallel emerges on the level of the answer to the question--an answer not unrelated to an intention apparent in nearly every one of Spielberg's films: to embody, and come to terms with, some alien Thing
that threatens, from within, the consistency of the self.
(This formless threat takes the shape of a shark in *Jaws*, of extra-terrestrial creatures in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *E.T.*, of the metallic limb in *Hook*, of the dinosaur in *Jurassic Park*, of the Ark of the Covenant or the Holy Grail in the *Indiana Jones* trilogy, and so on.) Why is the enigma of Schindler's identity so compelling for Spielberg? Why must it be emplotted and not encircled? Because it is Spielberg's own enigma as well, and because narrative plot affords him the means to resolve it. It is the presence of this enigma that explains Spielberg's consistent linking of the film with his deepened commitment to a Jewish identity.³ If identity was once for Spielberg something inconsistent, marked by the presence of a disturbing, alien, "ethnic" object (i.e., "Jewishness") that is a source of shame, *Schindler's List* changed all that. Indeed, identity is now for Spielberg an exercise in self-possession, a source of balance and pride.⁴ Just as the question of Schindler is only the catalyst for Spielberg's film--and not the object it is condemned to encircle--so, too, it would seem, is the question of Spielberg's identity as a Jew.

³Perhaps the ultimate instance of this link has come with Spielberg's January 1996 donation of a part of the profits of *Schindler's List*--$1.6 million--to Brandeis University for the purposes of, according to press releases, "giv[ing] young men and women an opportunity to explore and define their Jewish identity." See Weinraub, "Spielberg Recording Holocaust Testimony," C22.

⁴For the link between *Schindler's List* and the history of Spielberg's relation to Judaism, see Ansen, "Spielberg's Obsession," pp. 113-116, and Weinraub, "Steven Spielberg Faces the Holocaust," pp. 1, 28. Ansen makes, but does not explore, the connection in this context between *Schindler's List* and the "alien" presence in *E.T.*

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The homology is significant for a second reason as well, and this reason pertains to the governing aesthetic of Spielberg's film--specifically, Spielberg's belief in the magical power of art. "Every time we go to a movie," he has said, "it's magic, no matter what the movie's about" (Richardson 93). Indeed, that the mystery of Spielberg has "become the story" would in fact seem to participate in one of Schindler's List's deepest, unconscious, designs: in the conflation of film-as-magic with the historical act of improbable rescue. In this equation, the makers of film enjoy a position identical to that of Schindler, Raoul Wallenberg, and others: all of them "save" Jews. That the last frame of Spielberg's film carries a dedication to former Time Warner chairman Steven J. Ross--the man who gave Spielberg his start in Hollywood--is, in this light, far from a superficial addition irrelevent to Schindler's List's deeper message. On the contrary, it suggests that Spielberg's film is as much about empowering the medium of movies as it is about the Holocaust. Spielberg, himself, has unwittingly revealed this connection in his insistence on the "uncanny" similarity between Ross and Schindler:

Steve Ross gave me more insights into Schindler than anybody I've ever known [. . .] If Schindler were alive today, he would be running Time Warner. Before I shot the movie, I sent Liam all my home movies of Steve. I said, 'Study his walk, study his manner, get to know him real well, because that's who this guy is. (Richardson 70)
We might say here, in light of this connection, that Schindler's List represents less of a rupture in Spielberg's career than it does a point of continuity. Spielberg is coming to nothing new in his approach of Schindler because he knew a "Schindler" before he ever became acquainted with the life of the real one. This move crucially collapses the line between the "saving" power of film and the real, historical saviors whose lives are brought to the screen in order to bolster that power.5

Hollywood, and Spielberg more specifically, performs a certain "magical act" imagined to be homologous to Schindler's. Or as John H. Richardson puts it, "magic, finally, is what draws Spielberg to Schindler. And unites them, though one is a hero and the other just an artist" (93). Richardson's qualification deserves emphasis, especially in light of the story he proceeds to tell: of the one scene Spielberg needed to shoot at Auschwitz (of the "Schindler-women" and children whose train is supposed to go to Brinnlitz and to Schindler's factory there, but who arrive at Auschwitz instead) and the World Jewish Congress's refusal to permit it. It is a scene necessary to the performance of Schindler's "magic"--his taking of these women and children out of Auschwitz--and Spielberg is able to match it. A replica of the camp is built just outside the gate of

5 The makers of Schindler's List have tried to demonstrate the material validity of this literal equivalence. Thus, this claim of Branko Lustig, one of the movie's producers, concerning the casting of Polish extras: "'We were like Schindler in many ways. . . feeding people. . . paying them money they wouldn't ordinarily make, giving them something worthwhile to do [. . .] We had to organize to know who our people were. . . just like he did'" (Galbraith F1).
Auschwitz: the train will be filmed coming out of Auschwitz to a ramp that has been built outside of it. "Movie magic," Richardson says, "will make it seem that the train was arriving" (93).

II.

The spectre of this fake camp—and the train arriving at it—forms a perfect contrast with an anecdote concerning Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, the film which, despite Miriam Bratu Hansen's recent claim, remains the work of art dealing with the Holocaust by which all others must measure themselves. In the shot of the approach to Treblinka, Lanzmann has Henrik Gawkowski—one of the Poles who actually conducted the locomotive to the camp—at the head of an imaginary train of cars as the locomotive reaches the ramp. As the train comes

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6 Hansen's claim is that the opposition between *Shoah* and *Schindler's List* "does not yield a productive way of dealing with either films or the larger issues involved" (294) because it only polarizes the positions of intellectual and popular viewer. For Hansen, the opposition rehearses the "familiar tropes of the old debate on modernism versus mass culture" (296), thus denying the possibility of "a popular modernism" as well as insight into that (new) space of "public memory" which *Schindler's List* carves out and inhabits (Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Schindler's List is Not Shoah: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," 292-312). My point here will simply be that *Shoah* does indeed give us insight into the larger issues involved and into the (new) discourse of public memory, precisely because it stands as a critique of that new discourse. The antagonism between the two films, it seems to me, is inevitable. If the use of *Shoah* to critique Spielberg's film seems unfair to the latter, if it misses some of its nuances, a bracketing of the antagonism is no less unfair to *Shoah*. The antagonism is less a question of "high" versus "low" than it is—as Hansen herself suggests—"shed[ding] light on how the popular American fascination with the Holocaust may function as a screen memory (Deckerinnerung) in the Freudian sense, covering up a traumatic event--another traumatic event--that cannot be approached directly" (311). Hansen mentions in this respect the genocide of Native Americans, the Middle Passage, and the Vietnam War. The dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan seems also a strong candidate.
to a halt, he looks back at the camera and makes the famous "sign" of death, the gesture simulating the cutting of one's throat (this gesture is referenced in Spielberg's film, when one of the women on the train to Auschwitz peers through a crack in the boxcar and sees a boy working in a field who performs the same gesture, no doubt Spielberg's sign of homage to Lanzmann). In the final shot of the sequence, the front of the locomotive fills the entire field of the camera's vision. This is, however, just the reverse of the way it was: Gawkowski--and Lanzmann confesses to knowing this--pushed the cars instead of pulling them; he would have not looked back, but rather forward. Unlike Spielberg, Lanzmann bemoans his magical reversal: "This is the point," he says, "which will be my shame forever [. . .] He did not pull them, he pushes them. Well, it's a trivial detail, maybe, but for me its very important" ("Seminar" 90).

Why is this anecdote so crucial? Lanzmann's goal is clearly not "the way it was," not the "once upon a time" that, according to Benjamin's "Theses," is a sign of the historicist's desire to separate the time of the event from the time of its telling. Because such a separation lends itself to notions of continuous, progressive history--with subject on one side, and history on the other, and both as discrete, self-contained entities--Benjamin urges a collapse of this distinction. "History," he insists, "is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now" (261). Filming entirely in the present, relying exclusively on the testimony
of living witnesses, Lanzmann's goal is precisely to establish a "presence of the now"—a presence that Benjamin says "is shot through with chips of Messianic time." Messianic time is here that register in which the whole of history would be known, but because that register entails the dissolution of the subject, only its "chips" can be offered. These "chips" reside, indeed, in "the way it was" but only for the purpose of experiencing that knowledge as a limit or deadlock, as the point where one can engage the Holocaust and still retain one's identity.

Herein lies the contrast between the function of detail in Shoah and the function of detail in those sites of what Miriam Bratu Hansen calls "public memory in contemporary media culture" (294). In Shoah, detail pledges allegiance not to historicism, but to those chips of Messianic time—those little pieces of the real (Lacan)—that point to the void beneath history: they sever one's link to the social, forcing that encounter with the real of time itself. This is why Lanzmann says that "There was more truth for me in this trivial confirmation, in this small detail, than in any kind of generalization about the question of evil. This is to tell you what I am interested in" (91). In other words, what is important for Lanzmann about the details is not so much whether or not they are true—a determination that is always a socializing or symbolizing activity—as much as it is whether or not they are real. What these two anecdotes reveal then is the difference between historicism and messianism. If the former guarantees a socius in which emplotted
histories have their meaning sustained, the latter seeks to bring about that temporary experience of the real of time itself—what I have called in Chapter 1 "remembering in the real"—wherein one has profoundly "non-historical" and "un-social" experiences, wherein one loses the capacity for symbolization.7 Trauma is here experienced in its ultimate moment—as unbound. What Benjamin's historian experiences in his blasting open of the continuum of history is precisely contact with that messianic, real, kernel which is necessarily excluded in order for there to be history at all.8 Lanzmann's commitment to detail is driven by a desire to bring about contact with this excluded, "messianic" kernel. This contact cannot be spoken; it can only be "acted-out"—i.e., repeated "for real." This is why, in perhaps the film's most discussed scene, Lanzmann places Abraham Bomba in a Tel Aviv barbershop, gives him a pair of scissors, and asks "Can you imitate how you did it" (115)—all as prelude to the questions Lanzmann will ask him about what it was like to cut the hair of those about to be gassed in Treblinka. The

7 This would be the context in which to regard Shoah's empiricism: not merely the attempt to note the survival of empirical evidence—the "survival of the referent in its sign" in Robert Brinkley and Steven Youra's recent formulation—and to build a community of witnesses around what can be witnessed. Brinkley and Youra are right to note that the possibility of bearing witness might be more alarming than its impossibility, but bearing witness for them always remains within language and the social. (See Brinkley and Youra, "Tracing Shoah," pp.108-127.)

8 For the link between this kernel and history—"This kernel of the Real [. . .] is radically non-historical: history itself is nothing but a succession of failed attempts to grasp, conceive, specify this strange kernel"—see Zizek, For They Know Not What They Do, pp. 99-103.
set-up pushes Bomba to the point of breakdown. Spielberg's commitment to detail--because it exists only on the level of preparation and never as an object of inquiry in the film itself--seems part of a different artistic ethos. Never does Schindler's List pause over its details. With the makers of the film on one side and such details on the other, they appear more as obstacles to be overcome than instances of narrative disruption. In this way, detail for Spielberg serves a radically different function: it furthers a historicist telling of a sequence of events designed to build community. The irony, of course, is that the narrative of Schindler's List--with its transport to Israel and depiction of a community of Schindlerjuden (and offspring) in the film's culminating scene--is the more manifestly "messianic" film.

III.
The experience of failure that forms the basis for Shoah's critique of historicism might be linked directly to this statement of Nietzsche's in Will to Power:

9For this, and for his "invasive, near-to voyeuristic questions," Lanzmann has been criticized. See, for instance, Nora Levin, "Some reservations about lanzmann's shoah," pp. 91-93.

10The quintessential example here concerns the skull caps Spielberg employed in order to film with accuracy the scene of the women in the gas chamber at Auschwitz: "Make-up artist Christina Smith worked with hair designer Judy Cory to devise a new bald cap for the Schindler women to wear in the scenes filmed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, when they were forced to have their heads shorn. The existing technique did not meet the needs of Schindler's List. 'Steven wanted to be able to shoot extreme close-ups with the actresses in their bald caps and present designs did not permit such shots,' says Cory. 'Therefore, we designed and produced an entirely new kind of cap, with a new construction method that fit them not only to the actress' head, but neck as well'" ("Production Information" 8).
One is an artist at the cost of regarding that which non-artists call 'form' as content, as 'the matter itself.' To be sure, then one belongs in a topsy-turvy world: for henceforth content becomes something merely formal--our life included. (433)

The need for an art willing to recognize this cost, to enact and to sustain a recognition of the "mere formality" as the contents of our lives, is something Lanzmann's film Shoah has experienced at a deep level. About this Lanzmann has been insistent. "When one deals with the destruction of the Jews," he says, "one has to talk and to be silent at the same moment" (Felman 266). "One must maintain a protected region like the eye of the hurricane" ("From the Holocaust to the 'Holocaust'" 139).

In its five hundred and sixty-one minutes, Shoah inhabits this delicate dialectic of speaking and holding silent, of maintaining a protected region in the act of encircling it. For Lanzmann, the work of art must not conceal the anguish of its collisions with what it can never learn, with the questions assigned by history for which there are no answers, with the chasm that puts the camera in the thrall of impossible decisions. Lanzmann's obsessions in Auschwitz make this clear:

I was absolutely obsessed in Auschwitz. It is very obvious in Auschwitz. There is a big sorting station, with many rails coming from everywhere, and suddenly you have this unique one which leads to the big gate of Birkenau, the bird of death. It
was very difficult to film this. I remember I was walking without the camera, asking myself: 'At which moment did it start to be too late?' Of course, when the gates of the camp are passed it is already too late. When they were on the train it was already too late. When they boarded the train in Drancy or in Salonika it was already too late. When was it not too late? . . . I know that I was obsessed with these questions. I was asking myself: 'How to transmit these questions?' . . . all the questions of content were immediately questions of technique and questions of form. ("Seminar" 89-90)

Lanzmann's question about the questions—how to transmit them?—leads straight to the rationale Adorno gives, in Negative Dialectics, in support of his "new" categorical imperative: arrange thought and action so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen. Adorno says, "When we want to find reasons for it, this imperative is as refractory as the given one of Kant was once upon a time. Dealing discursively with it would be an outrage, for the new imperative gives us a bodily sensation of the moral addendum" (365). Adorno, too, here stands in support of the messianist's quest for that bodily experience which is "non-historical" and "un-social"—that experience from which discursivity represents a flight. This bodily experience, Shoah reveals, depends on the repudiation of certain ways of filming. When one of his cameramen proposes shooting by helicopter the village of Chelmno (where, on
December 7, 1941, the first Jews were gassed--assembled in the town's church and driven in gas vans to their graves in the near forest), Lanzmann is able to see such a move as the most inauthentic way of addressing what are for him the most important questions: "How to give the physical feeling of the village? Of the distance between the village and the forest? What is going on inside the forest, the church, the castle? All these parameters, which are the truth of Chelmno, which are the reality of Chelmno" (94). His reply to the suggestion to shoot from the sky is, of course, 'Never. There were no helicopters for the Jews when they were locked in the church or in the castle. This would have been a crime--a moral and artistic crime. What is the meaning of seeing things from the sky? This is a point of view of God, which is not mine'' (94).

A rejection of the "solution" offered by the point of view of God, as if there were at least one Other who saw it all, places one immediately back in the (subjective) realm of obsessions and traumatic encounters. At Auschwitz, at Treblinka, at Chelmno, these encounters are traumatic for Lanzmann because each aesthetic possibility is also the place of an impossibility, of the deadlock between shot and countershot that cannot be stitched up. Wanting to capture a real that resists captivity, Lanzmann can make decisions only that he (and his viewer) are forced to return to again and again: "I made against myself some decisions which are arbitrary...[but] if things are done well the core of the film is discovered and comes back" ("Seminar" 82). The
Lacanian echo here is precisely to the point, for the core of his film is precisely the real of the Holocaust, and the real, in Lacan's famous phrase, always returns to the same place. Thus Lanzmann's "arbitrary decisions" are neither those of God, nor those of the artist trying to disguise himself as such in order to be done with returning. What he has understood is that the returning never ends because in each approach to the events, and to the places of destruction, each decision of the representor, each prior form or framework, is revealed to be inadequate. In this inadequacy, this "disastrous instability" (Blanchot), is the fundamental antagonism that makes the encounter between artistic representation and mass murder a traumatic one. History, as Shoah constitutes it, is the bodily sensation of leaving and returning, and leaving and returning, and leaving and returning.

This antagonism is the core whose ceaseless return a traumatic aesthetic must dramatize, even at the cost of eleven years and three hundred and fifty hours of film. It is an antagonism that cannot be transcended. As Lanzmann puts it:

It happened to me to be stuck for days, even for weeks, during the construction of Shoah because I am a stubborn man. When you climb a mountain, when it is a premiere on the north face, you have to invent the way because there is no way already made, and it happens that you are stuck and you cannot go on. It happened to me during the editing
of the film, to be stuck and to decide that I would stop until I could find the proper way. And there were not several ways, there was only one. But in order to access this unique way, one had to examine all the possibilities and to give every possibility its own chance. This means that it was killing work, not only for the possibilities but for me, too. (83)

Shoah's compulsion to repeat is, in this light, far from its reproach. It signifies, on the contrary, its desire to remain in and for language. Repetition is Lanzmann's way of remembering of the Holocaust that refuses to bind, or master, its trauma. Each repetition exhausts not only the filmmaker, but the old concepts and comforts of witnessing displayed by the Nazis as well. Granting every possibility its own chance is "killing-work" in this second sense also: it kills those forms that the old Nazis employ for remembrance by keeping those forms alive. Lanzmann has said as much in one of his statements of intent: "I wanted to kill the Nazis with my camera, or rather, preserve them with my camera, preserve them for all to see" (Siskel 10).

IV.

Why is it necessary that Shoah act out its obsessions? Why must it repeatedly encircle its elusive object? Because only such a method provides the possibility of experiencing that object in the real. Lanzmann's "hysterical" attempt--to give body to a lack or void--is thus also not its reproach.

62
This is one of the points behind Lacan's discussion of the four discourses: if hysterical discourse is that which is marked by a demand for answers from the Master, such discourse at the same time testifies to the fact that it is not master of its own discourse. That the hysteric only repeats his demands can finally produce only this insight: that the Master cannot produce the necessary knowledge, the point of view of God, the final binding of the trauma. Lanzmann has said that "the film is an incarnation, a resurrection" (Felman 214), but the sentiment is not meant in its ordinary sense. What is being resurrected are not the dead bodies of Jews for the purposes of restoring life to them; on the contrary, the body Lanzmann wants to resurrect is the body that re-experiences its death, that remains dead. This body is as much the body of the murdered Jew as it is the body of the witness, a point made evident in Lanzmann's hallucinations while shooting the stones at Treblinka:

I was possessed and I hallucinated. I have filmed these stones of Treblinka camp for days and days in every season, because the seasons are very important in this film. . . . And I remember my camera man telling me, 'But you are insane! We have already hundreds of shots of those stones, what you want to do with it? These are only stones!' But the stones were for me the killed Jews, the human beings. I had nothing else to film except the
stones, and I filmed them with such a feeling of emergency that they became for me the human beings.  
(Felman 257)

History is refused in the symbolic so as the better to touch its trauma in the real. The way the stones "become" human beings for Lanzmann reverses crucially the usual process of memorialization, wherein monuments and memorials "represent" the dead, keeping the memory of them alive. Rather than "representing" the dead of Treblinka, the stones Lanzmann encounters must become them, and this can take place only in the moment in which one's entire symbolic system is suspended--i.e., in the real, in the moment of possession or hallucination. Only in this moment do the stones become the human beings as absent human beings, as "the killed Jews."

Such a moment cannot be cathartic because during it, I am literally nothing. If this is one of the moments Lanzmann's film wants to bring about in its viewers, it is also why he has said that his work offers "no opportunities for crying" ("Holocauste" 8). The core of Shoah that keeps "coming back" is antithetical to such discharge; it wants instead an encounter with the void in which one loses the consistency of one's identity. This is why time itself, in Lanzmann's film, is continually brought back to the "not-time" that underlies it. That ideologies of all stripes

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"This is the moment of authentic existential recognition--i.e., Lanzmann's "feeling of emergency" is the mark of one's being-towards-death. The hallucinatory moment brings Lanzmann together not only with the dead Jews as dead, but with himself as dead as well: "I made this film with a relationship to death, to my own death" ("Tape T-700, Testimony of Claude L.")
embrace chronological narratives of history has precisely to
do with the avoidance of a time not our own--the time in
which each Jew experienced his or her death: in its
strictest sense, this would be time of the messiah. This is
the sentiment that lies behind Lanzmann's denunciation of
chronological narrative: "[i]t is nothing but a succession of
befores and afters [. . .] death always occurs at its
appointed time, that is to say, without violence and without
scandal. The 6 million Jews did not die in their own time and
that is why any work that today wants to render justice to
the Holocaust must take as its first principle the fracturing
of chronology." "The issue," Lanzmann writes,
is like a work of art and possesses another logic
and another mode of narration: if, for example,
one wants the spectator to be touched to the heart
by the scandal of the Evian Conference, Evian
should not appear in the film in its actual
chronological position within the unfolding of the
twelve-year history of Nazism. On the contrary, one
must start with the end, with the night of December
7, 1941, when the 900 Jews of Kolo in the county of
Konin near Lodz had the privilege of being the
first to be gassed in the Final Solution in the
woods near Ruszow. In my film, the Final Solution
is to be sure not the endpoint of the narrative,
but its point of departure: the scandal of Evian
will only appear with all its force if the gas
trucks are already in action and if the spectator
is seized by the vertigo of the acceleration of history: only three years elapsed between Evian and the first gassings of the Jews in the Wartheland. ("From the Holocaust to the 'Holocaust'" 137)

Lanzmann's critique of chronology exposes the way in which even (and precisely) scrupulous renderings of historical realities avoid a more fundamental truth. If history within symbolization is indeed like a work of art—possessing another logic and another mode of narration—then dramatic representations committed to strict verisimilitude and chronology would seem to be dubious. Such representations would be so not because their content is full of illusions, but because they ignore this "other logic" and this "other mode of narration," because they are themselves never seized by the vertigo of the acceleration of history that is a sign of one's having encountered the real. This is why, as Slavoj Zizek insists, ideology must be disengaged from the "representationalist" problematic, from the distinction between true and false consciousness: "The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel" (The Sublime Object of Ideology 45).

The traumatic encounter with the real kernel is the truth that the historian must liberate, and Lanzmann's filming at Treblinka, and at virtually every other site in the film, attempts to do just this. Footage of Nazi speeches
and rallies, or even of Jews in ghettos or on trains—not to mention "realistic" dramatizations of the holocaust, from the television mini-series "Holocaust" to Schindler's List—may be useful to an extent; but they are still representations of a social reality that stand in the way of a more authentic subjectivity in the face of the catastrophe. In the stones of Treblinka, in the traveling shot of Chelmno that takes you—by van—from Church to forest, in the walking shots of Auschwitz that measure the time from the ramp to the crematoria, not for a minute has Lanzmann forgotten that he is filming from the distance of four decades. This distance is felt, through these subjective shots, but the sense of decentered-ness is not new. Even then, there was the abyss between words and actuality, between symbol and real. In the oft-cited scene between Abraham Bomba and Lanzmann in the barber shop Lanzmann had rented for the shooting, this is clear:

Most of them had long hair—some had short hair. What we had to do was chop off the hair; like I mentioned, the Germans needed the hair for their purposes.

But I asked you and you didn't answer: What was your impression the first time you saw these naked women arriving with children? What did you feel?

I tell you something. To have a feeling about that... it was very hard to feel anything, because working there day and night between dead
people, between bodies, your feeling disappeared, you were dead. You had no feeling at all. As a matter of fact, I want to tell you something that happened. At the gas chamber, when I was chosen to work there as a barber, some of the women that came in on a transport from my town of Czestochowa, I knew a lot of them. I knew them; I lived with them in my town. I lived with them in my street, and some of them were my close friends. And when they saw me, they started asking me, Abe this and Abe that-- "What's going to happen to us?" What could you tell them? What could you tell? (116)

Lanzmann's question is a ruse; it is, we might say, the lure of actual reality, as if Bomba might solidify his narration of his experiences through recourse to the emotions and to emotional discharge. And yet Bomba is already outside all human community--your feeling disappeared, he says, you were dead--and all the attempts to bring him inside, all the "Abe thises and Abe thats," all entreaties to rejoin the network of symbolic exchange, will fail to do so.12 Most of Lanzmann's "little questions" function as similar ruses. To Abraham Bomba: "How did it look, the gas chamber?" "Did you shave them?" "There were no mirrors?" To Franz Schalling: "Was the road between the village of Chelmno and the woods where the pits were located asphalted as it is now?" "How

12Bomba's life after the war shatters redemptive notions wherein survivors regain subjective autonomy and agency. In New York City, after the war, he cut hair in a city subway stop--an exercise, for him, of repeated self-disjunction. Asked how he felt, he says he couldn't get used to cutting the hair of people who had their clothes on.
many feet were the pits from the road?" "Were there many of
these drivers?" "Did the driver sit in the cab of the van?"
"Did he race the motor?" "Could you hear the sound of the
motor?" "Was it a loud noise?" "What were the vans like?"
"What color?" What else but the little questions exist in
the face of the unsayable?

V.

One does not have to get very far into Schindler's List
before realizing that these "subjective" questions are not
Spielberg's. Formally, Spielberg's film is almost entirely
without a "subjective" shot from the perspective of one of
its characters. (The view from Amon Goeth's balcony down the
barrel of his gun is perhaps a notable exception, an
"unconscious" slip which indicates the ideological position,
on the level of form, that the film shares with the
Commandant.) We see this noticeably in the first two scenes
involving Schindler himself. In the shot tracking his
entrance into the German officer's club and in the shot
tracking his walk past the lines of Jews waiting outside the
Judenrat office in Cracow: in both, a part of Schindler's
body enters the field of the camera's vision; we are not
seeing only what he sees. Moreover, when we are given a
subjective shot--usually as part of a discussion between two
characters--it is not without its closing "suture": the
"objective" shot which reassures us that an impartial eye has
been watching all along. The paradigmatic instance of this
occurs in the final shot of the scene wherein Schindler and
Stern perform a sort of "toast" after discussing Jewish
evacuation. This impartial eye is indicative precisely of the transcendental position Spielberg's camera occupies: it is the equivalent of a camera that might have seen what happened at Chelmno from the sky, its position is that of the Master. Herein lies the thorough Kantianism of Schindler's List: the "resolution" it finds in its reliance on the disinterested, objective eye; its belief that the apprehension of objective, universal truth depends on the achievement of such vision. If Oskar Schindler's list is, as Itzhak Stern says at one point in the film, "Absolute Good," then in true Kantian fashion, an objective eye must be achieved to render it. (It is precisely the non-existence of this objective position that has us dissatisfied with Schindler's statement about motive.)

Good, of course, requires a purity of vision. Or as Kant put it in The Critique of Pure Judgement, "a pure judgement of taste has for its determining ground neither charm nor emotion--in a word, no sensation as the material of aesthetic judgement" (62). For Kant, the purity of one's metaphysics requires precisely the "scrupulous cleansing of everything empirical" (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals 56). If Kant has identified the traumatic dimension of the empirical, of "pathological interest," he has identified it only for its excision. The same identification marks the progression of Schindler's List--the banishing of particular, empirical obstacles in order to reach certain ahistorical universals: the list as Absolute Good, the list as Life, Life as Absolute Good. What such a progression
illuminates is the link between pure reason and terror or torture. This fact is illustrated perfectly in the final image of Spielberg's film, an image which effectively collapses the pure judgement that has preceded it: a distant, beautiful, "enigmatic" shot of a darkly dressed Liam Neeson. The shot functions perfectly to preserve Schindler's Nazism, his blemish, for Neeson, like Ralph Fiennes and the others who play Nazis in the film of course, is one actor who cannot, as other actors can, be joined in the real with the actual historical person he plays. Schindler's List, in spite of itself, calls into question the Absolute Good its aesthetic is supposed to have captured.

I say in spite of itself because the narrative of the film derives its energy from identification and excision of certain particulars. Perhaps the ultimate scene wherein the content of the film gets caught speaking to the content of the form, and where the form's approach to historical reality is revealed to be anything but traumatic, takes place in the cellar of Amon Goeth's villa built above Plaszow. Shot entirely from an objective perspective, Helen Hirsch--Goeth's maid--recounts for Schindler the story of her first beating at the hand of the commandant (she had thrown out some chicken bones that Goeth wanted for his dog). "I know your

13For the link between reason and torture--"the architectonic structure of the Kantian system, like the gymnastic pyramids of Sade's orgies [. . .] reveals a organization of life as a whole which is deprived of any substantial goal" (88)-- see Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, pp. 81-119. And also Jacques Lacan, "Kant Avec Sade," pp. 55-75. Lacan, too, sees the form of Kant's law as its only substance. Kant, he says, must be "tortured with Sade" in order to confess his imposing of a union that creates the ethical subject out of the "raw subject of pleasure ('pathological' subject)" (63).
sufferings, Helen," Schindler tells her, leaning over to kiss her forehead. The maid flinches, and Schindler says, "it's not that kind of kiss." What resonates in this scene is its unintentional gesture toward the manner in which Spielberg's film wants to "know" the sufferings of the annihilated: in the form of the blessed kiss. Schindler's kiss is the kiss of the knowing angel for whom trauma is not something which in the last instance cannot be worked-through or resolved. As movie, Schindler's List places the same kiss on the forehead of the victims; their suffering is never permitted to shatter the conceptual framework, or the medium, used to know. Its one instance of hallucination notwithstanding, Spielberg's framework is one that is committed a priori not only to the ability of art to capture reality, but to its disinterested rendering of history's redemptive quality. Though he certainly doesn't know it, Spielberg is caught in the contradiction that was Kant's: how to do one's formal duties when one's contents are intractable. Kant's (and Romanticism's) resolution, of course, was to aestheticize the empirical, to fantasize the "natural" existence of an Identity between ideal and actual over and against material--and, in some cases, theological--claims to the contrary.

Spielberg has worked a similar resolution in the hyperrealism of Schindler's List, and in the body of discourse--created initially by those making the film and, in typical fashion, reproduced by the machine of critics who first received it--that anticipates and cuts off any attempt to note the discontinuity between the movies and reality. So
saturated has this discourse been with talk about the need for and the triumph of the film's strict realism, the undiscussed assumptions behind such claims have been difficult to unearth. This discourse has in fact grasped the crux of the film, but from the wrong end. The hyper-realism of Schindler's List is a symptom of the Hollywood movie form's unwillingness to live with contradiction, attempting to emplot and to work upon the empirical realities of history in such a way that one's formal duties can still be met.14 Consider, for instance, these two passages from the production information released by Universal Studios:

What Schindler's List does, believes Ben Kingsley, 'is isolate all those traumatized and distressed faces that we have seen from that period of history and draw a magic circle around each face and pull it out of the crowd.' Steven Spielberg explains further, 'You get to know the Pfefferbergs, Dresners, Rosners, and Helen Hirsch as frightened faces but strong people who were selected by God, destiny, and Oskar Schindler to survive.' (2)

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14 It's not a stretch to say that Spielberg is conscious of the duties to which he's obligated. During the shooting of Schindler's List, Spielberg's previous film Jurassic Park was in post-production and in need of editing. After twelve-hour days of shooting in Krakow, Spielberg faced the incongruous task of working with dinosaurs: "I was not in a mind-set to be involved with 'Jurassic Park' but I had a duty to myself and to the special effects" (Ansen 114). In its Kantian role, duty provides the way out of this impasse: it conceals Spielberg's clear interest in finishing Jurassic Park.
Schindler's List faithfully recounts episodes from the lives of its characters--real life stories that would seem unbelievable if they were part of a work of fiction. (2)

The obvious point to be made here is that the "faithful" recounting, when it is at the behest of art's duty to produce the "magic circle," isn't all that faithful. The magic circle is precisely that which--like the advocate of pure reason--seeks to trap the particulars of history in order to sacrifice them. But as Spielberg sees it, this circle is unimpeachable: "Every time we go to a movie, it's magic, no matter what the movie's about. Whether you watch eight hours of Shoah or whether it's Ghostbusters, when the lights go down in the theatre and the movie fades in, it's magic" (Richardson 93). Form, for Spielberg, becomes the thing that must deliver this feeling of magic, even though such a view couples Shoah and Ghostbusters in a pluralism that cannot distinguish the difference between actual ghosts and bogus ones. This sort of pure, Disney formalism exposes any claim of fidelity to the real life of characters as "symptom," as the way in which Hollywood "solves" the breach between its forms and the real that escapes them. Schindler's List's "faithful recounting" is symptom for the simple reason that it either excludes the possibility of the traumatic encounter between art and reality, between one's form and the un-representable dimension of the Holocaust that forms cannot reach, or it stages the traumatic encounter in order to work-
through or transcend it. Both moves are evident in the film. On the one hand, Spielberg admits the breach and his evasion of it. In the liquidation of Krakow, for example, the SS threw live babies out of windows and shot them like skeet, but says Spielberg, "I wouldn’t show that in the movie. Not even with dolls" (Richardson 92). The realism of Schindler’s List, then—because it is a realism that knows it has fudged historical reality—gives a cynical twist to Herbert Marcuse’s well-known critique of empiricism. This is true not just of Spielberg’s treatment of the babies, but with the routine hangings in Plaszow that are left out of the film, with Oscar Schindler’s dealings with the Jewish Underground also left out (a move that minimizes his connection with other—perhaps Jewish—resistance and rescue movements already organized), and with the consolidation of several different figures into the character of the accountant, Stern. (This was the result of a key rewrite that pushed the work more in the direction of a "buddy" film.)

Spielberg’s participation in the larger ideological project, however, is glimpsed not just in these fudgings. A move to the empirical becomes ideology not just when it acts selectively upon its own research, but when it refuses to recognize that it can never be empirical enough. The failure of Spielberg’s film, in the last instance, is that it

15 If Marcuse once bemoaned the strict control from above of the empirical in the production of "one-dimensional" individuals—"'abstract' individuals who experience (and express) only that which is given to them" (182)—it is, in the case of Spielberg, not limited knowledge that is preventing a fuller disclosure. Spielberg exemplifies the cynic for this reason: he knows, but acts in such a way as if he didn’t.
embodies just this refusal. Its attempt to be faithful has been circumscribed from above by a priori beliefs in film and in God, its realism placed in the service of advertising both. Those who made the film continually expose this deep-seated sentiment: "We built Plaszow to be as realistic as possible," production designer Allan Starski says. "The location is fully built so Spielberg could shoot from any angle, any corner" ("Production Information" 6). The framing of the scenes depicting the Krakow ghetto liquidation communicates, unintentionally no doubt, just this point. Again, the content of the content speaks to the content of the form. Out for a ride on their horses, we see Schindler and mistress travel toward a point overlooking the city of Krakow; at the same time, the trucks and troops of Amon Goeth enter the ghetto and prepare for its liquidation. After a second shot of Schindler, the camera takes us down into the ghetto itself and its horror: a family eats its jewels in little balls of bread, a hospital staff poisons its patients, men are summarily executed, a boy who tries to run away is shot, families are separated by sex, corpses and suitcases litter the street, etc. Hand-held camera shots capture the speed of fear. After twenty or so minutes of harrowing images, we are returned to the couple on horses and their looks of anguish. This marks the most authentic moment of the liquidation sequence: a sequence of subjective shots depicting both the hallucinated "real"--the little girl in red who moves through the ghetto, at times invisible to the Nazis around her--and the look of horror on the face of those
doing the hallucinating. (In the exhuming of the bodies Spielberg’s camera does hallucinate the reality of this child again, but that is the last formal move of this kind, and clearly not the direction in which the film moves.) The sequence ends with the girl’s hiding under a bunk and Schindler’s simultaneous riding away. Crucially, however, Spielberg returns to this vantage-point at the close of the entire liquidation sequence. After the Nazis, with flashlights and stethoscopes, root out those who are hiding; after the corpses are looted; after a disheveled Goeth says, “I wish this fucking night were over,” Spielberg returns to Schindler’s position in a move that can only signal the camera’s reconquering of the position that got away from it. It is not Schindler but an all-seeing eye (of God? of the camera?) whose view is consistent and unwavering.

This re-assertion of the transcendental vision is part of that register of knowing suffering which again has not internalized the anguishing discontinuity of such knowing. Interestingly enough, Spielberg felt a sense of this discontinuity, that something new in terms of form was required: “... I didn’t want a style that was similar to anything I had done before. First of all, I threw half my toolbox away. I canceled the crane. I tore out the dolly

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16The response to the film in Germany has already provided evidence of this. On the cultural page of one of Germany’s most important conservative newspapers, Gertrude Koch writes, Schindler’s List was praised for showing how “all this bullshit the intellectuals tell about aesthetics after the Holocaust is just not true, because one can narrate it. What Spielberg has shown the world is there is nothing that can’t be narrated. And, therefore, it tells us that aesthetics in general has to come back to these kinds of conventional forms” ("Myth, Movie, and Memory" 29-30).
track. I didn't really plan a style. I didn't say I'm going to use a lot of handheld camera. I simply tried to pull the events closer to the audience by reducing the artifice" (Ansen 114). Spielberg's words, here, beget obvious questions: which audience is he trying to pull closer, and why? To show them the workings of God? To conceal "selection" in the very act of selection? When Spielberg says that he "tried to be as close to a journalist in recording this re-creation, more than being a filmmaker trying to heighten the suspense or action of the pathos" ("Production Information" 8-9), he merely testifies to the competing tasks a subject like the Holocaust forces artists to choose between. And yet from the comic relief/kitsch accompanying last minute rescues (and the interviewing of secretaries) to the beauty of its black and white, from the breakthrough design of skull caps that allowed Spielberg to simulate the situation of women in a gas chamber to the momentum of affirmation that leads to a denouement that has superimposed itself upon the material reality itself, the conventions of form triumph in the film.  

The a priori intertwining of these two strands running throughout Schindler's List--the capturing or representing of the historical actuality on the one hand, and the duty to provide evidence of history's redemptive progress on the other--have in fact formed the crux of Lanzmann's critique of

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77 In "Close Encounters of the Nazi Kind," Leon Wieseltier writes: "The darkness of this film about darkness, in sum, is gorgeous. And its gorgeousness gives it away. For it is a sign that Spielberg has not grasped his material, that the old relation between skill and understanding still obtains" (42).
the film. Writing in *Le Monde*, Lanzmann points to Spielberg's rendering of the exhuming of the bodies of the thousands killed in the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto:

it is a fleeting scene, skillful enough in order to go quickly--the people working in the common graves in order to burn the bodies piled up since the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto. At the start of *Shoah*, there are two survivors of the Vilna ghetto and the famous Ponary forest who tell how they had been forced, in 1944, to open the mass graves and to work with their bare hands on the corpses that were more and more like flat dishes. The deeper they dug in to the grave, the duller the bodies, and the Germans prohibited them from saying the word 'dead' or the word 'victim.' It was necessary to call the ones in the graves 'figuren,' that is to say, dolls, marionnettes. This is in *Shoah* an overwhelming scene: two men who speak in a forest, a forest in Israel, and suddenly I realize that all that I did not show in *Shoah*, Spielberg has shown ("Holocauste, la representation impossible" 7; my translation)

And it is more than just that Spielberg has made, in Lanzmann's words, "a *Shoah* illustrated," it is that such "illustrations" are inseparable from a progressive view of history that moves past the traumatic encounter, reconstructing the past instead of returning in the present. (Spielberg moves to a present at the end of the film, but
this occurs far from the scene of the crime, and serves to complete the "frame" of the story that began in the opening scene: the shot of a Friday evening Sabbath table, and a man making the blessing over the wine.) About the affirmative momentum of the close of Schindler's List, Lanzmann writes, "Never would I have dared to give such 'hammer blows'. . . . With this grand reconciliation, the grave of Schindler in Israel, with its cross and its little Jewish stones, and with the color which has now arrived in order to suggest the hypothesis of a happy ending . . . No, Israel is not the redemption of the Holocaust. These six million did not die in order for Israel to exist. The last image of Shoah is not that. It is instead a train that rolls, interminably: in order to say that the Holocaust has no end" (7).

It is not the final scene of Schindler's List that kills certain possibilities; it is rather the film's refusal, from the beginning, to seriously risk its occupation of a transcendental position. Particular decisions have been referred, or returned, to the higher tribunal: the "magical" reconciliatory power of movies. These decisions are not decisions against themselves and for that reason, the core of the film does not come back. This is evident in the momentum of the film's final ten or so scenes, which exploit all the conventional opportunities for affirmation and the reconstitution of symbolic identity--marriage, religion, non-production, leadership, friendship--so that the arc of the film can be realized. Schindler returns to church--in Cracow, it was only a place to arrange black market
purchases--this time to reconcile with his wife, to give her the promise that before he could not make: "No doorman--or maitre de--will ever mistake you again." Schindler tells Stern he wants the shells his factory is now producing to be defective (the war-profiteer has now turned pacifist, uninterested in production). And Schindler restores lived Time and its rituals to the Jews in his employ: the same man who "survived" the scene with Goeth and the defective gun and who, probably not coincidentally, Spielberg has made a Rabbi, is interrupted at his post and told by Schindler that it’s Friday afternoon and that he should be preparing for the Sabbath (Schindler has a bottle of wine for him, and in the next scene, we see a service). He even restores to the Germans a sense of honor and manhood (though they still need the orator to tell them what to do).

Moving chronologically in fictional time where quickly accumulated scenes can build to the redemptive moment Spielberg’s film is building toward, Schindler’s List does not break with such time even when the film enters what it imagines to be "real" time. This entrance occurs, of course, at the end of the film as part of a return that is antithetical to the returns which Shoah dramatizes (it cannot be the kind of return Lanzmann talks about because, on the level of form, Spielberg has never left). "You have been liberated by the Russian army," a man on horseback tells a crowd of Jews sitting on the ground in Brinnlitz.18 "Where shall we go," he is asked. "I wouldn’t go East," the officer

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18The line is an ideological joke of sorts: how can the Russian army--the military arm of Stalin--liberate anyone?
replies. "They hate you there. I wouldn't go West either."
"We could use some food," one of the Jews says. After the
Russian officer, pointing to his left, says, "Isn't that a
town--over there?" the camera transports us immediately to
present Israel and to a chain of Schindlerjuden walking
toward us in a line. In the move from the huddled Jews
sitting on the ground, to the human chain up and walking
together, the connection is clear: for Spielberg, this food
is as much spiritual as actual. This chronological closure
is buttressed not only by its implicit link to the Judaism
practiced in the opening scene, but by the closing subtitles
also. A tree planted in Schindler's name on the Avenue of
Righteous Gentiles outside Yad Vashem, we are told, "grows
there still." In this way, Spielberg's film joins in
elevating Israel's statehood to the status of redemptive
sign. This is especially evident at Israel's Yad Vashem,
where, as James Young writes, the contemplation of
remembrance is carried out "within an ever-vigilant context:
exile, memory, and redemption." "The 'end of the Holocaust'
comes only with the survivors' return to and redemption in
Eretz Israel" (Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust 187). In
the burst of the film into color, Spielberg announces and
endorses this return, giving history back to a people and a
nation who have constructed a narrative of self-possession.19

19For an investigation of the nationalist/Zionist connection to this
positive emphasis--"after being twinned with heroism for so many years,
the Shoah itself no longer signifies defeat in many of the young
soldier's eyes, but actually emerges as an era of heroism, of triumph
over past passivity" (275)--see James Young, The Texture of Memory,
Chapter 4.
VI.

The spectre of just this resolution implicates the film in an aesthetic that reproduces the logic of Nazism. And it is again Lanzmann and Shoah to which we must turn for their critique, avant la lettre, of the decisions that underwrite Spielberg's formal historicism. In the former, the link between decision and murder is seen to manifest an obvious parallel with the history of anti-semitism and its material culmination: the racist ideology of Nazism and the extermination of millions. As Raul Hilberg tells Lanzmann in the film, this history is marked by nothing other than a series of increasingly cruel "decisions": what transpired when the 'final solution' was adopted--or, to be more precise, bureaucracy moved into it--was a turning point in history. Even here I would suggest a logical progression, one that came to fruition in what might be called closure, because from the earliest days, from the fourth century, the sixth century, the missionaries of Christianity had said in effect to the Jews: 'You may not live among us as Jews.' The secular rulers who followed them from the late Middle Ages then decided: 'You may not live among us,' and the Nazis finally decreed: 'You may not live.' (71-72)

These decrees, or decisions, are the engines of history that the perpetrators would rather not have us encounter, and for Lanzmann, the concealment of the killing they carry out is
essentially an aesthetic move. "At bottom," Nietzsche says in *Will to Power*, "it has been an aesthetic taste that has hindered mankind most" (262). The crucial parallel here involves the work of art's relation to decision, and the murderers' relation to decision, and is revealed in the words of the three Nazis who figure most prominently in *Shoah*. Each of these three figures attempts to seek refuge from history in the decision-less operations of the aesthetic that enable one to move forward, to blur the fictionality of real time. In Lanzmann's encounters with them, however, *Shoah* is able to illustrate how such operations are not a thing apart from the workings of amnesia and the denial of responsibility, and of actual killing. Lanzmann reveals how their "knowing" depends on the decision that has been concealed, and his reason for doing so is such that the work of art does not conceal its own. "You didn't know?" Lanzmann asks Franz Suchomel, SS Unterscharfuhrer at Treblinka:

No!

*Incredible!*

But true. I didn't want to go. That was proved at my trial. I was told: 'Mr. Suchomel, there are big workshops there for tailors and shoemakers, and you'll be guarding them.'

*But you knew it was a camp?*

Yes. We were told: 'The fuhrer ordered a resettlement program. It's an order from the
Fuhrer." Understand?

Resettlement program.

Resettlement program. No one ever spoke of killing. (53-54)

The order from the Fuhrer, we are supposed to understand, is an order from Nature, thus Suchomel's "Understand?" That Suchomel refers to the tribunal only reinforces the exoneration such tribunals exist for. "I didn't want to go, but I didn't know anyway" ("I don't know now, if I ever knew"--Grassler). The same words come later out of the mouth of Walter Stier, former head of the Reich Railways Department 33 of the Nazi Party who gives away far too much about the line between knowing and needing to keep quiet. Stier insists on his ignorance while at the same time admitting that certain things were not to be mentioned. Instead, certain "expressions" were to be employed because "you couldn't talk about that. Unless you were tired of life, it was best not to mention that." "When exactly did you find out," Lanzmann asks him:

Well, when the word got around, when it was whispered. It was never said outright. Good God, no! They'd have hauled you off at once! We heard things. (my italics)

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

You had no idea.

Not the slightest. Like that camp--what was its name? It was in the Oppeln district . . . I've got
it: Auschwitz!

Yes. Auschwitz was in the Oppeln district.
Right. Auschwitz wasn't far from Krakow.
That's true.
We never heard a thing about that. (137)

Though of course he would never say as much, Stier—and Suchomel before him—is something of a Platonist: he works from the assumption that there is an inviolable link between knowledge and good. The sympathy or exoneration he and Suchomel hope to garner is rooted in the Platonic notion that no individual knowingly commits a moral wrong. This view is, as Berel Lang has shown, one which unwittingly turns Platonism into an apology for Nazism: it exculpates such Nazis from the intent to commit genocide.20

Perhaps the ultimate attempt to seek refuge in this sort of exculpation comes with Lanzmann's interview with Franz Grassier near the end of Shoah. Insisting that in the Ghetto "Jewish self-management worked well, I can tell you," Grassier clings to a decision-less (or intention-less) view of history that can arrive at the notion of paradox only in order to explain the contradiction between the stated "mission" of the ghetto ("Our mission wasn't to annihilate the ghetto, but to keep it alive, to maintain it") and the bodies lying everywhere in the streets ("That was the paradox. You see it as a paradox? I'm sure of it"). Lanzmann challenges Grassier on this score:

20See Berel Lang, Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide, pp. 30-61.
That wasn't 'maintaining'! Jews were being exterminated daily in the ghetto. Czerniakow wrote...

To maintain it properly we'd have needed more substantial rations and less crowding.

Why weren't the rations more humane? Why weren't they? That was a German decision, wasn't it?

There was no real decision to starve the ghetto. (184)

This last line of Grassier's is part of the fantasy that wants to believe that decisions always occur before the act they determine, that the self is in complete control of its behavior. What this fantasy elides is, as Lang argues, the fact that an "intention 'occurs' as an aspect of the act itself, not as independent and prior to it" (24). "In this sense," Lang writes,

the fact that no documentary evidence has been located of an order issued by Hitler which set in motion the process of the Nazi genocide is not, as certain commentators have concluded, a problematic feature in identifying the genocide as intentional--let alone one that would exculpate Hitler as ignorant of the policy or imply that the process of genocide did not occur by design. (25)

In other words, there may have been no "real," independent decision, in Grassler's sense of the term, but the decision--
the forced enclosure of over four-hundred thousand, each having to subsist on a diet of twelve hundred calories a day—is evident in the actual living conditions. What Lanzmann knows is that the intent to kill, whether formally articulated or not, lies in the very actions that underwrite the organization of the ghetto: it is in the Act that the decision is most evident. A notion like this one would meet the first objection formulated by admirers of Schindler’s List: that Spielberg has certainly not intended to participate in a logic affiliated with fascism! The point instead would seem to be that there are "decisions" pertaining to Spielberg’s art that must be disclosed—decisions it "knows" it has made but not as some conscious, prior intention.21 The case for a traumatic aesthetic rests, at bottom, on just this: on a willingness to have one’s decisions disclosed.

21 One sign that it "knows" is the response by Hollywood studios to the Real Estate Ad for an 8 million dollar home that carried the headline "Schindler’s Listing" (see Figure 1). The Ad merely carries out the logic of assimilating certain contents into the usual forms. It is, we might say, a product of the same mindset that made Schindler’s List. Objections to the ad seem to suggest that in being confronted by it, Hollywood is confronted by its "uncanny" double, that Hollywood can recognize only in other forms the extent to which the empirical is a lie—and never in its own forms. Not surprisingly, the defense offered by the Real Estate company relied on the literal truth of the ad. Let me cite just this passage from the Los Angeles Times article about the uproar: "Stephen Shapiro, whose real estate company has the listing along with Fred Sands Estates, said what many callers failed to realize was that a man named Schindler—European publisher Peter Schindler, to be exact—is the actual seller and, 'When you take a listing on a house, it's called a listing'" (Robert Weklos, "Gee, It Sounded Like a Good Idea," Los Angeles Times 12 March 1994: F1).
SCHINDLER'S LISTING

12 NOMINATIONS

- Best House in Los Angeles
- Best Original Architecture
- Best Interior Design
- Best Mountain, City & Ocean Views
- Best Quality of Construction
- Best Use of Space
- Best Home Galleria Space
- Best Use of Glass
- Best Media Room
- Best Guest House
- Best Pool Design
- Best Security

“This urban fortress provides the best in luxury, privacy, security and comfort.”

Stephen Shapiro
Stan Herman, Stephen Shapiro & Associates, Inc.

“The Los Angeles market has never seen a house like this before . . .
You have to see it to believe it.”

Linda May
Fred Sands Estates

2260 SUNSET PLAZA
$7,900,000

Linda May
(310) 278-4100
Fred Sands Estates

Figure 1
89
CHAPTER 3

THE SURVIVOR AS VISIONARY?:
THE WHITE HOTEL, THE HYSTERIC, AND THE IDEA OF DEATH

Sigmund Freud's literal absence, at the Babi Yar of D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*, is not enough to exempt him--and his thought--from the fate of those murdered there. Though Thomas, in the prefatory note to the novel, distinguishes between the "myth" and the "scientific validity" of psychoanalysis--it is not his intention, he says, to put the latter into question--it is difficult not to see Babi Yar being revisited by *The White Hotel* in order to add one more (symbolic) body to its infamous ravine. If Thomas's novel is the only novel about the Holocaust to phantasmatically identify Freud with a site of mass murder, this is the case because, for Thomas, it seems that Freud in some way *belongs* in Babi Yar--not so much because he, too, was a Jew, because he belongs among the persecuted (there is, in fact, the suggestion that more than one of his sisters died in the Babi Yar massacre), but because he is aligned with the other side. "The Sleeping Carriage" section of Thomas's novel, indeed, is a scene which forcefully gives back to Freud and Freudian psychoanalysis that which both refused to privilege: the real and not the remembered, the social and not the sexual, the particular and not the
universal, peasants and not petit bourgeoisie. Babi Yar, in the words of one of the novel’s narrators, is an “afternoon that was no conceivable part of time” (289), and the “conceivable part of time” is precisely the net Freud is seen to throw at and around the neurotic symptoms that he encounters.

For Freud, the human order of time is at the heart of the very meaning or intelligibility of such symptoms: they are, quite literally, inconceivable outside of time. This is in fact one of Freud’s best insights: the symptom often bears witness to the psychical struggle to exist within time, to maintain an intelligible identity. As Freud puts it, "in general symptoms are only formed to escape an otherwise unavoidable generating of anxiety" (Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis 502). The source of this latter anxiety is precisely the prospect of libidinal unemployment, that is to say, the inactivity that would accompany libido’s complete and total satisfaction, the acquisition of its ultimate object—what Lacan later called jouissance, the end of time, existence itself. This final drive is libido’s last, because the satisfied libido has no more need for objects. "We are so made," Freud says, "that we can derive intense enjoyment only from a contrast and very little from a state of things" (Civilization and Its Discontents 25). The subject who desires, in other words, depends fundamentally upon a contrast, a tension wherein appetite for satisfaction always exceeds the meeting of core demands or needs. It is the pleasure principle itself, insofar as it is the initial
direction taken in the life of desire, that depends on this tension, which is one reason why the fundamental goal of the pleasure principle is to regulate its own dissatisfaction. Satisfaction, because it presents the prospect of libido's unemployment, here entails a loss of the world in its entirety. It is a state, Freud says, "before which the efforts of the pleasure principle break down, a 'traumatic moment' [. . .] which cannot be dealt with by the normal rules of the pleasure principle" (New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis 117). This is why Freud insists on the need for libido to experience some frustration, why he insists, in other words, on the "normalcy" or "necessity" of some form of neurosis. As the Freud of The White Hotel tells Lisa Erdman, the gain of psychoanalysis lies "in turning your hysterical misery into common unhappiness" (149).

For D. M. Thomas, however, the method which discovers the source or cause of the symptom always and only in the "conceivable part of time" blinds itself to the premonitory function believed to inhere in some symptoms--i.e., their pointing to some inconceivable part of time: the future, purgatory, Eden before the Fall, etc. (All of these dimensions crop up in The White Hotel.) As several readers of the novel have noted, Thomas would here follow Jung, who insisted on the need for "not only a present-day, personal consciousness, but also a suprapersonal consciousness which is open to the sense of historical continuity" (Modern Man in Search of a Soul 67). This "suprapersonal consciousness" is of the order of religious belief: it is, quite simply, a
consciousness that knows or is believed to know that which is prior, and also superior, to existence within time. It is this consciousness--this "vast outer realm" in Jung's words--that Freud is said to have sacrificed in giving primacy to the inner, or sexual, realm. As Jung puts it, "The strange thing is that man will not learn that God is his father." That is what Freud would never learn, and what all those who share his outlook forbid themselves to learn" (Modern Man in Search of a Soul 122). What Jung understands here, to his credit, is that the eye of the subject is not all-seeing--i.e., he acknowledges the limited access by which the individual subject or psyche, bound by temporality, is constrained in its access to the whole of the cosmos. In the limited nature of this access is the barrier between self and object, self and history, self and other. Freud accounted for this barrier--observed with his own eyes on the world stage and in the trauma wards of Vienna's hospitals--by positing a "beyond" to the pleasure principle, by noting the persistence of the pleasure principle's failures. If the pleasure principle was once, as Freud puts it in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, that which "we have hitherto ascribed dominance over the course of the processes of excitation in mental life" (25), it is now seen to be opposed by something

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'The first World War and its traumatized veterans were examples, for Freud, of this "failure." Thus, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, his well-known call "to abandon the belief that there is an instinct towards perfection [i.e., pleasure] at work in human beings, which has brought them to their present high level of intellectual achievement and ethical sublimation and which may be expected to watch over their development into supermen. I have no faith, however, in the existence of any such internal instinct and I cannot see how this benevolent illusion is to be preserved" (50).
equally dominating: a compulsion to repeatedly experience unpleasure which points to the existence of a deeper, "death" instinct. Jung (and D. M. Thomas), however, does not remain at this impasse. Instead, he entertains a solution to it: the limited eye of the subject can turn around and confront the larger eye that is behind it, the eye capable of comprehending the whole of the temporal order itself, the eye of the divinity so to speak. And more than just confronting this larger eye, some subjects can even occupy its position: they can, as it were, become Cassandras, effectively effacing the difference between the human order of time (which they inhabit) and the order of time that belongs to the Gods. They can, in other words, begin to see themselves from the place outside the temporal order from which they are seen. This is how, in The White Hotel, the symptom is given the power of almost literal premonition.

The possibility of stitching up the divide between the limited vision of the personal and the full vision of the suprapersonal--given the "sense of historical continuity" thereby produced--is significant for two reasons. First, it maintains an inviolable framework capable of assimilating, after the fact, any merely temporal experience. Secondly, it holds out the possibility of a literal ability to see the (again merely temporal) future. It is on this second score that Freud, in Thomas's novel, is especially indicted, for the key to dissolving symptoms like those of Lisa Erdman's--symptoms whose dissolution might have literally saved her from perishing at Babi Yar--requires precisely a transcending
of the temporal, a mythic sensibility that Freud's Enlightenment rationalism is seen to depreciate. As Thomas, in his memoir Memories and Hallucinations, puts it, "Mythologically, hysteria was associated with powers of premonition—the Delphic oracle and Cassandra. Might not some of the hysterias treated by Freud have been caused by apprehensions of the future rather than suppressions of the past?" (40). Freud's insistence on phenomenological time here involves him in suppressions that are for Thomas evidence of a rationalist bias, seducing and seductive:

Gradually two aspects of the case histories impressed themselves on me. First, they followed the classical structure of Greek drama: ignorance suddenly and painfully banished by a blinding flash of light. I wondered if the discoverer of the Oedipus complex hadn't sometimes imposed his own aesthetically pleasing resolution. Secondly, these studies were Viennese seduction stories. A troubled young woman came in and lay down on a couch; Freud, his cigar flaring, got to work on her, striving to strip her naked. Day after day the struggle went on, behind locked doors. Her powerful resistance made it all the more exciting. At long last, and quite unexpectedly, he broke through, drawing blood from the hymen. (Memories and Hallucinations 46)

The violence in these two aspects are not unrelated: the kind of formal closure that Freud's case histories enact is intricately linked with patriarchal power and sexual
violence. And the overarching link that Thomas draws is with Babi Yar and the Holocaust, for as the novel's epigraph from Yeats suggests—"We had fed the heart on fantasies,/ The heart's grown brutal from the fare"—such instances of mass murder are not just events which bring psychoanalysis into contact with persons and events that exceed its ways of knowing; on the contrary, Freud's "science" of mental life—i.e., its ways of knowing, its feeding of fantasies—is itself complicit in the events themselves.

This notion, of course, is part of Jung's sustained critique of Freud, the markings of which are evident in the "great midsummer mist" that Sandor Ferenczi mentions in the letter that opens the novel: in that mist, Jung senses the existence of some "prehistoric monster" while Freud can only tease him "for being a Christian and therefore mystical" (4). (Ferenczi reports that mysticism is a plight Freud sees the Jews as having avoided.) Already in Ferenczi's letter we see what is apparently the link between a repudiation of the mystical and indifference to future eventualities: Freud doesn't care an iota about the prehistoric, mummified "peat-bog corpses" that Jung says have been found buried in northern Germany, and he reproaches Jung for talking obsessively about them. A Freudian rejoinder to "the Jungian critique" here would center on precisely this obsession, specifically, the desire to "fill out" symbolically, or iconographically, some suprahistorical space. This particular focus is clarified only by a consideration of the religious traditions of Freud and Jung respectively: the
Jewish ban on pre- or post-historical iconography; the Christian abundance of, or obsession with, it. The case against Jung here requires complicating Freud’s own disavowal of mysticism, for Freud’s disavowal is not of the mystical experience per se, but of that experience when it is made to give stability and certainty to identity, when it is made to solve the dissatisfaction at the heart of the human condition. This latter experience is the one that is reproduced in the abundance of positive images that "fill out" the entirety of the mystical realm. Instead of gesturing toward that realm--in a way that maintains its thoroughly enigmatic status--these images have the effect of eliminating our uncertainty a propos the beyond. It is precisely this uncertainty that another conception of mysticism--and another set of "mystics"--preserves. The Jew might be the first of this set, for he knows that God is his Father, but this only acquaints him with a place that is beyond the pale of icons: the place of God’s desire, the effects of which we are clearly subject to, but whose design remains inscrutable. What the mystic, in this sense, preserves is the unknowability of this beyond: that the mystic is subjected to its whims does nothing to secure its identity. Lacan made this plain in his reference to Saint Theresa, "[. . .] as for Saint Theresa--you only have to go and look at Bernini’s statue in Rome to understand immediately that she’s coming, there is no doubt about it. And what is her jouissance, her coming from? It is clear
that the essential testimony of the mystics is that they are experiencing it but know nothing about it" ("God and the Jouissance of The Woman" 147).

The mysticism of the Jews and of Freud (and of Lacan) here is clearly not Jung’s. Moreover, in their refusal to elevate the mystical to a position greater in stature (and equal in positivity) to the temporal--there is of course a question as to whether or not this is "elevation" at all; if it isn’t Jews who are the true mystics--both of their worldviews are seen to practice violence against the larger fields of which they are only a part. The Jewish people’s rejection of the miracle of Christ--his virgin birth, his resurrection--and Freud’s rejection of a concrete extra-temporal realm are in this light homologous. It was Jung who saw in the refusal of these particulars the seeds of anti-individual, totalitarianism. As Rowland Wymer, citing Jung, points out, "in one sense at least, Freud’s 'scientific' investigation of his patients can be paralleled to the Nazi terror, which in so many ways is its complete antithesis: 'Over-valued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperised'" (67). According to Wymer, this view is, if tentative, Thomas’s, and the dominion Jung mentions is that which the novel attempts to break apart. The novel wants, in other words, to de-pauperize the individual. This "dominion" gets its fullest expression in the form of the first half of the novel, culminating in the "Frau Anna G." section that for
Thomas no doubt marks the triumph of the seduction--i.e., Freud's writing up of Lisa's case history, his perforce articulation of the etiological link between hysteria and sexuality, his drawing of blood from the hymen. For this reason, it must be drastically undercut. Freud and his method must be shown in their inadequacy, for this method is but the "little eye," and it must turn back toward, in order to occupy, the place of the big eye whose eyesight is all-encompassing. Someone else, it appears, will have to take up the matter of Lisa's hysterical symptoms and the realm to which they pertain: a different, less pauperizing, form is required.

At least initially, we can see The White Hotel as participating in the larger attempt to re-theorize (i.e., de-sexualize) hysteria. Thus its seeming affinity with a certain feminist project. The aim of this project has been, of course, not only to de-pathologize the figure of woman who is seen as "naturally" hysterical, but to cast a critical light on the visual basis upon which hysteria itself is grounded. These displacements are on two counts analogous, on the level of form, to ones performed by Freud: first, his initial transfer of hysteria to women from the group wherein the Viennese medical establishment had seen and located it, Jews; and second, his rejection of the nineteenth-century belief in the ontological representation of disease. These two displacements are not unrelated. As Sander Gilman has said, Freud's "rejection of Charcot's mode of 'seeing' the hysterical [was] also a rejection of the special relationship
which the Jew has with the disease" (77). "The face of the Jew [had become] the face of the hysteric" (63).\footnote{For these displacements, see Sander L. Gilman, "The Jewish Psyche: Freud, Dora, and the Idea of the Hysteric," The Jew's Body (New York: Routledge, 1991): 60-103.} What Freud attempted to counter, even has he remained embedded in it, Gilman says, was that "diagnostic system rooted in belief of external appearance as the source of knowledge about the pathological. For the 'seeing' of the Jew as different was a topos of the world in which Freud lived" (77). In Thomas's novel, these displacements are mobilized against Freud himself. Herein, for some readers of the novel, lies The White Hotel's radical insight. Laura Tanner, for instance, writes, "Clearly, Freud's psychoanalytic perspective precludes his recognition of the very categories of experience on which Lisa's situation is based; Freud's limited forms of understanding lead him to read Lisa's suffering as a symbolic manifestation (rather than a literal demarcation) of a past event (rather than a future occurrence)" (134). David Cowart argues that the "ultimate level of [Lisa's] truth concerns not her body or her mind but her soul, her spiritual reality. This level, inaccessible to her doctors, yields up its secrets only to an artist: the creator of The White Hotel" (221). For Cowart, Thomas's achievement lies in the novel's suggestion of that "larger, external, divine order" which Freud rejected. And Mary Robertson sees Thomas as showing "that Freud's larger failure to put himself in dialogue with real history is symptomatic
of the failure of prominent analytical languages to make the
world better by understanding what happens in history" (462-
63).

In the novel’s move, first from the "analytic hour" and
its pseudonymity to the actual history of Lisa Erdman ("The
Health Resort" chapter), and from there to a principle scene
of the Holocaust ("The Sleeping Carriage"), Thomas is said to
perform the formal act that these critics indict Freud for
having failed to make:

Most of the dead were poor and illiterate. But
every single one of them had dreamed dreams, seen
visions and had had amazing experiences, even the
babes in arms (perhaps especially the babes in
arms). Though most of them had never lived outside
the Podol slum, their lives and histories were as
rich and complex as Lisa Erdman-Berenstein’s. If a
Sigmund Freud had been listening and taking notes
from the time of Adam, he would still not fully
have explored even a single group, even a single
person. (294-95)

This gloss on the victims of Babi Yar is, in the words of
Wymer, a sign of Thomas’s understanding that "every one of
the nameless names who died at Babi Yar was a uniquely
precious individual, possessing an inner life rich and
complex enough to defy rational interpretation" (67).
Implicit in this claim is the notion that Thomas respects, in
a way Freud does not, the non-rational experiences of the
human subject. And yet how does he do this? By taking up the
absolute finitude of our rational experiences, thereby fully exposing the subject of those experiences to the non-rational? Or by assimilating the non-rational to the rational, thereby postponing our full exposure to the truly non-rational? Thomas opts for the latter, and it is for this reason that he appears to be guilty of doing the very thing of which he accuses Freud. Has *The White Hotel* permitted the lives and fates of the victims at Babi Yar to exist outside of rational interpretation? How can the nameless actually be given a name, that which confers upon them their individuality? Has Thomas in fact rescued the individual from the formal monolith--i.e., symbolization--that tyrannizes her/him?

This last question is crucial given the formal shift that marks the novel's final, "purgatory" section. The documentary realism of Babi Yar, we are told, has "nothing to do with the guest, the soul, the lovesick bride, the daughter of Jerusalem" (298). What follows is the Jungian solution to the trauma of limited eyesight, the trauma of human time: the symbolizing of a pre-Oedipal or Imaginary realm, a sort of weigh station of the afterlife where mothers and daughters offer up to one another their breasts, and the Holocaust dead keep pouring in. On one level, this section of the novel is manifestly consistent with Thomas's "postmodern" delegitimization of the formal monolith mentioned above--i.e., with his refusal to grant authority to one form of writing or knowing history. We should, however, be wary of

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hailing these manifestations of the (post-structuralist') dimension of Thomas's narrative structure: its decentering of narrative authority, its commitment to multiple viewpoints, its intertextuality, its contesting of the coherent "humanistic" subject, its "stereoscopic rather than monocular" vision of the psyche and of history, its dramatization of "how we produce meaning in fiction and in history." The point to be made concerning these formal shifts is not that Thomas "put[s] himself in dialogue with real history" by including perspectives heretofore absented from it; it is not that history and the psyche are to be seen "from all sides." On the contrary, the formal logic of The White Hotel is more properly described by the dynamic Thomas himself locates in Freud: "the classical structure of Greek drama: ignorance suddenly and painfully banished by a blinding flash of light. I wondered if the discoverer of the Oedipus complex hadn't sometimes imposed his own aesthetically pleasing resolution." The point here is simply that, in terms of the function certain forms are being asked to carry out, there is in fact only one truly formal shift--not several--and it occurs in the break from Freudian analysis after the "Frau Anna G." section. This is why the

3 Indeed, we appear here to be in the presence of post-structuralism's underside: more attention to narrative/authorial situatedness--more seeming giving up of control--works in fact to solidify the position and control, if covert, of the author.

difference between the "realistic" section at Babi Yar and the "fantasy" section of purgatory cannot be adduced as further evidence of the novel's multiplicity. On the level of form, they are homologous: both are part of an attempt to secure, or symbolize, that in-conceivable referent occluded by Freudian rationalism. What appears to be narrative multiplicity is in fact a function of this central logic, whose project is to heal the split between what is in time and what is not.

The point then is not that Thomas's novel refuses to privilege fantasy or reality, and is thus able to destabilize any achievement of fictive closure. (It is true that Freud reappears in purgatory, but as a beaten man with a heavily bandaged jaw and a cancered "mouth that was no more than a tiny hole" [304]: this image hardly provides a basis for arguing for the provisional or interdeterminate nature of the novel's interpretation of him.5) There is in fact another axis which guarantees the consistency of Thomas's narrative, and it is the preservation of this axis--the extra-temporal--which has attracted Thomas to the Holocaust. Those who experienced it, or "survived" it, are Thomas's hysterical patients: they are the objects of his seduction. What Thomas has in mind, of course, is a reversal of Freud's mistake. In listening to the survivors, he (Thomas) will listen for the future. They are his Cassandras, and what

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they testify to is not the desperate demand, as the bearers of unspeakable horror, to remain in and for language, but rather the speakers of a representable extra-temporal truth. But it is just here that Thomas has missed the real import of Babi Yar: for the thirty-thousand killed there, Babi Yar was not the place of the extra-temporal, but rather Time itself. It was the place where the ultimate object--existence itself--was grasped. But only the dead grasped this; surviving requires the frantic attempt not to catch hold of this object. This is the site of Thomas's mis-step. From the sense that an event like Babi Yar took place outside of time, Thomas has invented the existence of an actual, symbolizable referent that is extra-temporal. This referent is, of course, the autonomous Jungian psyche, "the living force whose sphere of action lies beyond our world of every day" (Modern Man in Search of a Soul 163). Thomas's belief in it is evidence of the fundamental Kantianism of The White Hotel: the "absent God" (or psyche) may be absent phenomenally but is not so noumenally. This psyche is for Thomas fundamentally a "guest" in the phenomenal world; it is a consistent entity with consistent properties, and its direct presentation is not only possible, it does not even occasion terror.  

6The contrast here is to modernism and post-modernism more properly. All three movements can be traced in their relation to the extra-temporal object: romantic insistence on a noumenal God, modernist response to an absent or impotent God, postmodernist depictions of a God that is too close, thus terrifying. The White Hotel is in this sense a romantic novel. For this tracing, see Slavoj Zizek, "The Obscene Object of Postmodernity," Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture, pp. 141-153.
the Holocaust are hereby linked because both have as their object this "guest." In The White Hotel, Freud misses the real import of Lisa's symptoms, and Nazis and Ukranians murder Jews, because neither can account for or accept the collective psyche as a substantial entity. Both enact, it would appear, the failure to heed what Jung called "participation mystique"—a higher level of experience and of community. This is why Thomas can say that his novel is not about the Holocaust but about the soul: the soul and its harmonious, pre-Oedipal environs are prior to the Holocaust and the object of extermination in it. The purgatory section is for this reason a trap: the reader who would deny it would replicate Freudian/Nazi violence. Deny the inconceivability of one dimension, the soul in its afterlife ("her mother had not died, she had emigrated" [313]), and you end up denying the inconceivability of the other: "The world was a world of little children being hurled over a wall like sacks of grain being thrown onto a wagon" (288).

Thomas's endorsement of a substantial, extra-temporal psyche upon which real community is based, however, betrays a misunderstanding of Nazi ideology. The community preached by that ideology was precisely of the Jungian order; it sought to heal the split between individual and divine vision by believing itself privy to the perspective of the divine; its picture of community was based on the positive realization of something extra-temporal: the "one-thousand year Reich," the pre-historic man whose race and features history has

7 "My novel wasn't about the holocaust, but about the journey of the soul, which I believe is endless" (Memories and Hallucinations 49).
polluted. (Jung's obsession with the "peat-bog corpses" does not, in this light, appear all that benign.) Hitler is to be taken literally when he speaks, in Mein Kampf, of "the racial question" as "giving the key not only to world history but to all human culture" (339): world time and human time—the abyss between us and them—were precisely the secrets Nazi racism sought to unlock. The goal proffered by fascism was in fact the achievement of the autonomous psyche or soul—now believed to be absent only because of external or "parasitical" forces. What Thomas misunderstands is the source of the violence that is made to link the office of the analyst with Babi Yar: the refusal or failure to heed the communal binds of some phylogenetic collective unconscious. Babi Yar was, on the contrary, an attempt to realize such binds, to realize the fantasy of an organic society rid of the agents believed to be engineering its imbalance. But it is Freud, far from sharing an affinity with the Nazi gesture, who repudiates this attempt. It is Freud, in other words, who insists that the exclusion of the inconceivable does not occasion murder; what does is the possibility—and even desirability—of achieving a state of total exclusion. It is Freud who, in repudiating full human possession of the mystical, respects the necessity of exclusion. For Freud, there is an Other greater than us, but what it sees cannot be known, and its position cannot be occupied. This is the necessary differentiation—the necessary dissatisfaction—that Lacan summed up with the phrase: "You never look at me from the place from which I see you... Conversely, what I
look at is never what I wish to see" (Four Fundamental Concepts 103). These are necessities fascism of all kinds cannot abide, and it is why Freud’s thought is anti-fascist.

The purported feminism of Thomas’s novel has to do principally with the status and the gender of this eye/Other greater than us, this suprapersonal consciousness. The White Hotel’s desire to include this consciousness has for its object the embodiment of it: woman. Given Jung’s and Thomas’s valorization of the feminine,¹ it surely is no accident that Thomas has chosen the body of a woman to mediate the trauma of the Holocaust. It is this body that not only sees the Holocaust in advance, but also survives the literal destruction in order to provide nourishment and images of unity to guide the post-war human world. In gendering this consciousness, Thomas has apparently landed on a positive property which pertains to the sexed body prior to signification: he has materialized some extra-temporal substance which exists in (and prior to) the female body.

The "inconceivable part of time," it turns out, is gendered, which is why the gender of the novel’s central character is so significant. As Mary Robertson argues, "[Lisa’s] femaleness is thus indispensable to the theme of the book; this novel could not have had a male hero. Thomas suggests that woman has a kind of knowledge the world could use" (465). This knowledge is linked, obviously, with the somatic

¹ Thomas’s claim, in his memoir, that the "poet writes from his feminine unconscious" is a clear echo of Jung, who says that "the creative process has a feminine quality, and the creative work arises from unconscious depths--we might say, from the realm of the mothers" (Modern Man In Search of a Soul 170).
symptoms of Lisa's that Freud mis-interprets. These telepathic capacities are for Robertson or Thomas "feminine" and so unable to get a fair hearing. Simone de Beauvoir, indeed, noted the predominance of somatic symptoms in women---she, too, might have said the novel could only have had a female hero---but if for her these symptoms are primarily a socio-historical production (the product of woman's "total situation"), for Thomas they are something else. They suggest an ahistorical, prophetic insight.

In this installation of woman in the position of the suprapersonal---their hysterical symptoms understood as prophetic---*The White Hotel* appears to be another intervention in the debate concerning female sexuality and the source of sexual difference, and specifically, the centrality of the castration complex in Freud's account of sexual division. In the case study Thomas writes for him, Freud interprets Lisa's symptoms as signs of a repressed homosexuality (her wish for her mother's death clearly relies on the Oedipus complex as the determiner of desire), and the fact that this case study gets radically undercut can only signify Thomas's opposition to the Freudian account. In a later letter to Freud, Lisa seems to speak for Thomas when she says to her former analyst: "Frankly, I didn't always want to talk about the past; I was more interested in what was happening to me then, and what might happen in the future. In a way, you made me become fascinated by my mother's sin [. . . .] But I don't

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9"The feminine body is peculiarly psychosomatic; that is, there is often close connection between the mental and the organic" (*The Second Sex* 391).
believe for one moment that had anything to do with my being crippled with pain" (226). Lisa's letter here, in its contesting of Freud's account, seems to place at loggerheads the castration complex (the source of sexual difference for Freud) and the properties that describe that difference (masculine focus on the past; feminine insight into the future). In siding with the latter, Thomas joins an opposition to Freud that, according to Juliet Mitchell, "saw the concept of the castration complex as derogatory to women. In repudiating its terms they hoped both to elevate women and to explain what women consisted of [. . . .] Women, so to speak, had to have something of their own. The issue subtly shifts from what distinguishes the sexes to what has each sex got of value that belongs to it alone" (Feminine Sexuality 20). This view is clearly not fascist, but in its production and proliferation of signs and qualities that are unique to each sex, it moves in the opposite direction from that unsymbolizable, traumatic, real kernel which determines sexual difference in the first place. The necessity of encountering this kernel lies at the heart of a radical feminist practice—centered not on the articulation of "what each sex has of value that belongs to it alone," but on a recognition of sexual difference as the point where signification breaks down: a recognition of the stupidity of sexual difference itself, the way sex is simply the means one has for existing at one remove from nothingness itself.10

It is in this light that the final section of Thomas's novel takes on its real import, for what it signifies—in its valorization of the Imaginary and orality and mother-child identification—is, quite simply, existence not marked by the castration complex or law of the Father. This is the explicit thesis of Frances Bartkowski and Catherine Stearns, for whom The White Hotel maps through the "itinerary of Lisa Erdman an entry into the symbolic via the name of the mother" (283). For Bartkowski and Stearns, Thomas elucidates "specifically female desires" (284), and for them, "The Camp" section depicts a pre-oedipal stage in which "mother and daughter are able to merge and separate, listen and speak" (292); it depicts a "culturally repressed image [...] mutual recognition between women" (285), a "way of knowing" predicated on the rediscovery of the mother's body (i.e., the white hotel). This is, however, precisely the schema that gives to women (and even, presumably, boys) an intersubjective relation marked by the meeting of two complementary beings, a meeting not marred by sexual difference or its foundation: mutual powerlessness in the face of the beyond. There is, in this schema, no object that lies beyond this intersubjective relation which the child desires (and around which revolves the child's relation to his or her desire), no lack within subject itself. In Lacan's discussions of the castration complex, however, it is the object that is "beyond" the mother, a "beyond" fundamentally outside our control, that is utterly necessary for mother and daughter and son to separate and speak. It is
this same "beyond" that initiates the impasse of sexual difference, that gives to anatomical difference a significance that cannot be transcended. The White Hotel however, like the Ukrainian soldiers who violate the almost-dead, seems to aim at just the transcendence of this difference. Freud says of the orality and the return to the mother’s body, everywhere depicted in Lisa’s "Don Giovanni" poem, that "in the 'white hotel' there is no division between Anna and the world outside; everything is swallowed whole" (135).

One immediate consequence of "residence" at the white hotel here becomes clear: Lisa’s exercise of control. As in the game of fort-da played by the child,11 at the White Hotel, the thing that threatens one’s fantasy of omnipotence—the object that exists out of reach, the object that, in instituting division, creates desire—is brought within one’s control. We have here a sidestepping of the castration complex, because, as Jacqueline Rose writes, “Castration means first of all this—that the child’s desire for the mother does not refer to her but beyond her, to an object” (Feminine Sexuality 38). This involves, then, a necessary breaking of the mother-child dyad, the dyad to which Thomas, after the Holocaust, wants to return. And it involves a symbolic object that is necessarily always out of

11 "The reference is to the second chapter of Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle, where the child’s game makes up for the absence of the mother and the loss of instinctual satisfaction by seeming to engineer those absences: "He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach" (14)."
reach, always "beyond." Lisa's altruism in giving her body to more than one man—and the mutuality of the white hotel more generally—is, in this light, really the opposite of altruism. The fantasies of "Don Giovanni" and "The Gastein Journal" illustrate ways of getting, not giving up, control: with her eyes closed and her face buried in the pillow, she could not tell which of them was making love to her, it was all equally rare, tender and full of good juice. She felt happy that part of her body was occupied by someone else. The spirit of the white hotel was against selfishness. (99)

This deep happiness reveals the real underside of the White Hotel's unselfishness. One's own status as object is mitigated by making the encounter that most foregrounds that status a self-willed one. That part of herself that Lisa is not the subject of—that hollow place within herself—is, in the White Hotel, filled out by the body of mother of lover, and Lisa is able to imagine herself the agent in the experience: "I didn't mind which one of them was in,/ the steaks he cooked were rare and beautiful,/ the juice was natural, and it was good/ to feel a part of me was someone else,/ no one was selfish in the white hotel" (29). That these experiences in which Lisa cannot coincide with herself become instances of unselfishness is crucial, for they point to a dynamic which is the mark not only of Lisa's hysteria

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12 Altruism is far from posing a challenge to the subject's fantasy of omnipotence. As Lacan, in The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, puts it: "My egoism is quite content with a certain altruism, altruism of the kind that is situated on the level of the useful" (187).
but of Thomas's novel as a whole: the event that shatters the subject's, or the work's, ostensible autonomy is transformed in such a way that the shattering is seen to come from the agency of the subject or work itself—thus sneaking autonomy back in through a side door. This is clear in Lisa's consistent eroticization, to be discussed momentarily, of the events which remind her of her utter powerlessness, and in Thomas's decision to write a novel about the Holocaust in which the central character telepathically sees it coming: what is outside comprehension will at least have been prefigured, and an analyst in Vienna, a Jew no less, should have seen it coming.

It must be said that this "beyond" before which we are powerless, this "beyond" that is outside comprehension, is fundamentally the site of non-meaning, of death: to deny it is to deny death itself. This denial, Juliet Mitchell says, lies at the center of hysteria: the hysteric is one who cannot effect the transition between "death as an ever-present emotional 'happening'" and death as an "idea." The "excitation" that the hysteric discharges somatically, rather than deal with psychically, is precisely this "idea." For the hysteric, "Death is only another thing to be opposed and conquered. The point about death is, of course, that it cannot be conquered; it does have dominion" ("Psychoanalysis and Hysteria" 2). One obvious link to the purgatory section of Thomas's novel becomes apparent, for what is "The Camp" if not evidence of an artistic consciousness that can accept the bodily occurrence of death--it is certainly not the case that
Thomas is one of those "deniers" who doesn't even believe the bodily death occurred--but not the idea of death and the ceasing of thought that accompanies it? On this level, The White Hotel reveals its own hysteria in the face of history. The genesis of this hysteria may in fact be located not only in the horror of the end, but in the horror of the beginning as well. Mitchell, for one, traces hysteria back to the child's exclusion from the primal scene of his/her very creation, and notes how the denial of death is strictly equivalent to the denial of this earlier realm of non-meaning: "Death or its equivalent is the ultimate non-existence of pre-conception" (14). The hysteria of Thomas's own work of art, in some sense, is also the product of its exclusion from its "primal scene," from the historical event it is fundamentally dependent on, but which, in rendering it helpless, triggers its desire for control. We can see something like this dynamic describing Thomas's relation to Babi Yar itself. The eye-witness account of its only survivor (Dina Pronicheva) that he reads in Anatoli Kuznetsov's Babi Yar overwhelms him. Its impact on him artistically, however, is indiscernible: he continues his research for a thesis on the problems of translating Pushkin. When Babi Yar returns to him, it returns to him in a way that makes him already the anticipator of it. It links up to a poem about a woman that Thomas had already written (it is this poem that became the "Don Giovanni" section of the novel):

one afternoon, as I was sitting doing nothing in my
cell, Babi Yar came back to me, and linked up with the wild monologue The Woman to Sigmund Freud, rotting in a drawer at home. There were extraordinary connections [. . . .] I couldn't escape the conviction that the woman of my poem was Dina Pronicheva—or someone very like her. (Memories and Hallucinations 39-40)

This is one way Thomas would appear to maintain a fantasy of ominipotence after the traumatic irruption of the story of Dina Pronicheva—the lone survivor and subject of Kuznetsov's narrative—into his artistic identity as poet and translator: he, himself, had already written the first part of Dina Pronicheva's story.

This way of remaining in control in and after the encounter with death is modeled in an exemplary way in the gesture that introduces the "The Camp" section. Thomas takes a condition of helplessness and transforms it into exactly its opposite. Death can be opposed and conquered because it has "nothing to do with the guest, the soul, the lovesick bride, the daughter of Jerusalem." Zion is here the mother from whom we are exiled, but to whom we shall return. The purgatory section, in this sense, takes an Orthodox Zionist view one step further: it concretizes the mythic stature of Israel, and the reality of God's pact with his "children": their return to the land they were promised. In this depiction, there is no finality to loss—not of Israel, not of the mother, not of the promise of return. What Thomas's novel refuses to accept is just this notion of finality: the
idea of the mother's death, the constitutive helplessness that, Mitchell says, must be recognized: "Accepting one's dependence on someone who is not within one's control, who can go on missing and thus be 'dead,' is to overcome one's hysteria" ("Psychoanalysis and Hysteria" 17). We have here landed on an articulation of what it means to engage the Holocaust: the dead must be allowed to "go on missing and thus be 'dead.'" The idea of their death must be internalized, with all of the implications such an internalization would have on our desire to remain in control, to be the subject of our experience. That thousands of "immigrants" arrive in purgatory--they arrive in the same box cars that removed them from temporal history--is clearly an avoidance of the idea of their death. One of Thomas's justifications for this section--that it does not depict a painless, tranquil state of things--misses the critical point: people may still be suffering, but they are still living and speaking.13

This moment of, and subsequent flight from, the idea of death is dramatized in the case of Lisa herself. The case study Thomas imagines Freud writing, in fact, reveals Lisa's approach of this critical point--the point at which hysteria is either instituted or overcome. This is clear in Freud's summary of the "Frau Anna G." section where he reports how after Lisa's wish for her mother's death is granted, leaving

13 Thomas: "I tried to mix realistic, down-to-earth images, of sand and dust and refugee huts, with lyrical passages: I am the rose of Sharon . . . Above all I tried to convey that it was a place where people still suffered" (Memories and Hallucinations 49).
the little girl free "to do what every little girl wants, bear a child to her father," happiness does not ensue:

Instead of bringing her happiness, her mother’s death brought misery. She learned that death meant being in the cold earth forever, not just staying away for a few more days. Nor was her matricide rewarded with her father’s love. (162)

In this case, Father is more and more remote because he, too, is an hysteric: in light of his wife’s infidelity, he doesn’t know if he was present at the point of Lisa’s conception. It is here that a wholly contingent act arrives on the scene to give Lisa a way out of these relations that have her confronting the realm of death: her sexual violation at the hands of anti-Semitic Russian sailors:

They spat on me, threatened to burn my breasts with their cigarettes, used vile language I’d never heard. They forced me to commit acts of oral sex with them, saying all I was good for, as a dirty Jewess was to--But you’ll guess the expression they used. (221)

This episode should be but the third in a series which destroys Lisa’s capacity to believe herself in control of her life. Instead, it initiates her first hysterical symptom (breathlessness), a sign of her bringing all three episodes into the reach of her control. Not only is Lisa, in the experience involving the mob of sailors, given explanations that put her in control of the relation to her two absent parents--she learns "that perhaps her mother had deserved to
die, for being a bad woman" (162), and also blames her father
"for being Jewish" (221)--she also takes up an attitude in
the scene of violation itself that stands her in good stead
in every subsequent encounter with that which lies outside
her control. "Looking back at those fearful events," Lisa
recalls in her letter to Freud, "I found them arousing"
(222). What we have here, it appears, is the eroticization
of violence in the service of the hysteric's denial of
helplessness, the conversion of impotence to omnipotence.
This eroticization of violence makes Lisa the subject, not
the object, of the experience of violence, and it explains
Lisa's obsession with sex, and the constant commingling of
sex and disaster, in the first two parts of the novel that
she authors. "If I'm not thinking about sex," she says in
her "Gastein Journal," "I'm thinking about death [. . .]
Sometimes both at the same time" (96).

The erotic is, for Lisa, the way of bridging the abyss
between something and nothing, between meaning and non-
meaning, between herself and death. It is a way of remaining
in control and in language in the same way the "Postcards
from the White Hotel" reveal ways the guests at the White
Hotel have of keeping the disaster at one remove. "The dead
shall be raised," a Pastor writes in his "postcard," "I have
no fear of that." A Baker's wife reports that her mother had
died in the fire, "But she was an old lady, so we mustn't
grieve over it too much." And a salesman's mistress writes,
"Luckily it was a wing away from where we are, so our things
are all right." What is clear here is the extent to which
Thomas has exceeded the Jungian framework he embraces: the position of the hysteric evokes a truer form of engagement with death than do these postcards. Hysteria, if only initially, signifies the subject's refusal to comply with reality and the identity he/she is being asked to play in it; in other words, that the hysteric "converts" the unspeakable into a sign by way of the symptom indicates his/her resistance to that reality. In this way, Lisa's hysteria stands implicitly as a critique of the dominant mode of dealing with disaster evinced by the other guests at the hotel: they have all acceded to the "reality principle" of disaster. And yet if more authentic than these patently superficial reactions, Lisa's reliance on the erotic is nonetheless analogous to them, and all of them flee the unexplainable. The postcards of these guests reveal a set of people who refuse outright to engage the horror that might be disturbing to them; Lisa engages that horror only in the eroticization of it. The poem written by the Japanese maid killed in the cable car accident--"The plum who marries/ an ox can anticipate/ great sorrow, great joy"--is for Lisa no consolation and for this reason sexualized: "She did not think it amusing, as her friend did; she found it disturbing, moving, even erotic" (94-95). And in order to bring that which is outside into an even more intimate realm, Lisa fantasizes masochistic sexual encounters. Like her "arousal"

"For this notion-- "hysteria is the subject's way of resisting the prevailing, historically specified form of interpellation or symbolic identification. Hysteria means failed interpellation"--see Slavoj Zizek, For they know not what they do (New York: Verso, 1991): 99-103, 142-146.
at the hands of the Russian soldiers, this has the effect of transforming every act of the other into an autoerotic one:\footnote{Freud says, a propos the link between the hysterical symptom and auto-erotism, that "the hysterical attack is a substitute for an auto-erotic gratification previously practiced and given up" ("General Remarks on Hysterical Attacks" 122)}: "one of his fingers was in her anus, hurting her, but she wanted to be hurt more" (48). In these hysterical fantasies that Thomas has given to his hero, the erotic always has this role: it is the realm in which Lisa is able to preserve her status as agent in her encounter with the (dying) other. In this move, the dying other becomes the other whose death Lisa imagines herself responsible for. If the death of the other threatens to collapse the barrier between herself and the real—if, in other words, it threatens psychic breakdown—it must for this reason be transformed. When Lisa finds herself thrown into the cruel, miserable world from which she is unable to maintain a necessary distance, survival depends on this gesture: imagining herself responsible for the breaking of the barrier.

Rather than having these encounters with death and the dominion of the real teach Lisa, and all of us, something about the necessary loss of agency—it is the reparation of this loss, not the loss itself, that lies at the heart of so much human cruelty—\textit{The White Hotel} refuses Lisa this recognition. We see this clearly in Thomas’s introduction of the mass murderer Peter Kurten, and in the hysterical effect that his arrest and execution have on Lisa and others: "An event from a long way away, which had nothing to do with her
personally, tormented her worse than grief" (207). Lisa thinks of Kurten, and Kurten’s wife, and Kurten’s victims, and is haunted by the arbitrary forces that determine our situations. Her head spins

with the thought that it was only God’s grace, or mere chance, that she was Elisabeth Erdman of Vienna and not Maria Hahn of Dusseldorf! Waking up one morning, full of sweet life, with small bright plans to buy some new make-up or go to a dance... falling in with a pleasant, charming man, and strolling with him in the woods; and then... Nothing. But even more more unimaginably horrible, if she had been born as Peter Kurten... To have to spend every moment of your life, the only life you were given, as Kurten... But then again, the very thought that someone had had to be Maria Hahn and Peter Kurten made it impossible to feel any happiness in being Lisa Erdman... (209)

It is this jarring realization—analogous to the realization that the death of her mother meant more than that she would be away for a few days—that shakes Lisa’s fantasy of omnipotence at its foundations. That the world is the result of a "cause" that is unknown, a "cause" that results in some people being the victims of murder and others just readers of stories in the newspaper about it: this is fundamentally the knot of non-meaning that Lisa cannot accept. The threat posed by the idea of this knot explains her great trepidation about getting pregnant and having a child—pregnancy,
childbirth, and parenthood being three conditions that concretize the power of the other—and it also explains why Kurten’s execution does not restore to Lisa a sense of equilibrium. On the contrary, Lisa’s somatic pain is not unlike the love letters written by hundreds of women to Kurten while the latter is on death row (they are "aroused" for the same reasons Lisa was at the hands of the mob of Russian sailors). Both are reactions to, or flights from, the fact that, as Lisa puts it later to Freud, "somewhere--at that very moment--someone was inflicting the worst possible horror on another human being" (210).

It is this truth about the world that the hysterical symptom denies in its very bodily "expression" of it. Lisa clearly engages the sufferings of others, but she engages them only on the level of emotional happenings, not on the level of ideas. Engaged exclusively on the former level, they can be "discharged" on that same level. Affect here becomes a principle form of defense against the power of the image. What this suggests is that it is the idea of death that is required for our encounter with the images of death—and Lisa does encounter these images—to be something more than the occasion for somatic discharge. That someone "had had to be" Maria Hahn or Peter Kurten, that mother and uncle died together in a hotel fire, that soldiers in World War I have been buried in trenches—these are the meaningless facts that are brought into the fold via the hysterical symptom. They are phenomena the hysteric struggles to signify. That thirty-thousand people died in a ravine outside Kiev is The
White Hotel's meaningless fact but as Thomas confesses, "I began strongly to feel it couldn't end there, with thirty thousand corpses in a ravine" (Memories and Hallucinations 49). Thomas's narrator says that each death, similar in technique, was nonetheless individual: "it had happened thirty-thousand times; always in the same way and always differently. Nor can the living ever speak for the dead" (295). Thomas's solution to this impasse is for the dead to speak: no one must not be able to signify. Between the living and the dead, between the will of a nation and the will of God, between mother and child, there is no separation. This in a novel touching the event that, in the name of an era that promised not to be marred by this separation, separated mother and child without remorse: separated them irrevocably, forever and for all time.
Zeitblom's introduction of the crematoria in Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus comes in a paradigmatic way: to further the analogy between the subject of his biography, Adrian Leverkuhn, and the country that did the cremating, Germany. It is April 25, 1945, and "a transatlantic general," Zeitblom reports, has forced the population of Weimar to march past the ovens at Buchenwald. For Zeitblom, the day—or better, "these very times in which I write"—is linked irrevocably with the period that his biography has now reached: Adrian's final composition, The Lamentation of Dr. Faustus. "Those years," he says, "were part and parcel of the mounting and spreading harms which then overwhelmed the country and now are being blotted out in blood and flames" (482). "For Adrian Leverkuhn," he continues, "they were years of immense and highly stimulated, one is tempted to say monstrous creative activity, which made even the sympathetic onlooker giddy" (483). The suggestion of fascism in this parallel is not difficult to detect: the "monstrous creative activity" of the composer Adrian Leverkuhn dizzies a "sympathetic" onlooker such as Zeitblom in the same way the "monstrous creative activity" of National Socialism dizzied,
say, the population of Weimar. Zeitblom's analogy—and this is not the only instance of it—directs our reading of the novel in two critical ways: it fundamentally implicates Leverkuhn's art in German fascism and it turns Mann's novel into an inquiry into the relation, a propos of the criminal, between guilt and grace. Leverkuhn's art, in other words, as "part and parcel" of the domination and extermination, is such that its creator—like the population of Weimar—has reached the point where he must take up the Faustian predicament: eternal damnation or mercy.

There is, for Zeitblom of course, a great deal at stake in having Adrian take up this question, for it is in fact the one he is concerned to take up a propos of Germany. Now that the torture-chambers have been broken open and foreign commissions inspect the incredible photographs, is Germany, like Adrian Leverkuhn, eternally damned?:

'Is it mere hypochondria to say to oneself that everything German, even the German mind and spirit, German thought, the German Word, is involved in this scandalous exposure and made subject to the same distrust? Is this sense of guilt quite morbid which makes one ask oneself the question of how Germany, whatever her future manifestations, can ever presume to open her mouth in human affairs? [. . . ] all that is German now stands forth as an abomination and a warning.' (481)

Of crucial importance in this response is the way it typifies a certain engagement with history. Zeitblom, it would
appear, is less concerned with the pictured victims of Nazism, than he is with the question, or possibility, of German redemption or damnation. This is by no means an innocent facet of his personality, and it explains the underlying motivation for the correspondence he sets up between the career of Adrian and that of Germany. That correspondence enables Zeitblom to displace the actual source of his conflict—Germany’s embrace of fascism and its execution of genocide—to a realm once removed from it, to the biography of a "bedevilled" artist. Adrian’s final works and the Holocaust itself here occupy identical positions: those who committed them must pray for their souls, once pure, now defiled. This is the paradigmatic Zeitblomian response to the events which appear to defile. They do not suggest a defilement we have always been subject to; rather, they become occasions for the romantic re-affirmation of a soul which exists free from any pact with the devil. (Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.) For Zeitblom, the events that defile must be referred to the Faustian situation—i.e. must be made the subject of a drama about guilt and grace. For the narrator of Doctor Faustus, history becomes this drama, and those who lie utterly outside of it—the murdered Jews, for instance—are the casualty of a crucial elision.

Zeitblom’s move from the death camps to the theological problem of Faust is for this reason troubling, and yet the proper response to it cannot be to relegate the victims as well to the drama of Faust. Egon Schwartz, for instance, is
correct to note the problem in Zeitblom commending Leverkuhn and his worshippers to divine mercy while glossing over Jewish victims, and yet his critique, too, transfers the question raised by the places of extermination to the terrain of a positivist religious problematic. "Are the Jewish outsiders," Schwartz asks, "included in the plea for mercy or must they stay outside once more? That is the question" (138). Schwartz suggests here that Zeitblom's "exclusion" is the anti-Semitic act par excellence; in true German fashion, according to this reasoning, Mann's novel "once more" relegates Jews to the status of outsiders. Schwartz's critique, however, rests on a key misunderstanding of anti-Semitism as that which designates and maintains the Jew as outsider. At the most obvious level of anti-Semitic ideology--the level of its slogans--this is clearly the case: the Jew is the "tuberculosis of nations," the "parasite" attached to an otherwise pure and sound social organism. On a deeper level, however, these slogans serve precisely an opposite function which is in fact the deeper ground of anti-Semitism: the Jew is made the outsider so that the place outside the social order can be known and given a body, so that the "real" outside not be encountered as the place of a void. If this second level is in fact the level of the real anti-Semitic act, then to include Jewish victims in a larger petition for grace would be to perform a gesture analogous to it, because both have their source in the need to mitigate the encounter with the place of that which is utterly outside the symbolic order and the body that happens to occupy it:
the emaciated and inscrutable Jewish corpse, for instance. To return to Zeitblom's failure to memorialize the Holocaust, the point is not that his plea for mercy is not comprehensive enough. It is instead that the very discussion of mercy—or damnation, for that matter—in the context of the Holocaust represents an attempt to save an ordering system in the face of the catastrophe that shatters it, to bring inside that which is outside. At stake for Zeitblom is precisely this system, the very category of grace—and the Being who might bestow it—and one way of preserving it, is to keep it alive in the form of a problem. Herein perhaps lies the enduring appeal of the Faust legend, or of the very attempt to allegorize German history along Faustian lines: regardless of its variations with respect to outcome, in raising the question of grace (divine or otherwise), it tacitly maintains the existence of a force which deals in damnation and mercy, and which, in so dealing, links us all. Mann himself experienced this appeal—he responded sharply to those who did not see the novel's "Christian character"—and that experience points to the deep formal need the Faustian drama meets. This same need drives Zeitblom to turn "The Life of

1The primary historical line on German soil runs from Johann Spies's chapbook Historia Von D. Johan Fausten (1587)—in which Faust is denied redemption—to Goethe's Faust II (1832)—in which Faust achieves grace and redemption. For an overview, see Klaus L. Berghahn, "Georg Johann Heinrich Faust: The Myth and Its History" in Our Faust?: Roots and Ramifications of a Modern German Myth, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987).

2Mann: "It is true and self-evident: how could such a radical book not extend into the religious sphere. And yet it has been called 'godless.' That shows you the caliber of those who professionally write on 'belles lettres'" (qtd. in Bergsten, Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus 213).
the German Composer Adrian Leverkuhn" into an examination of a soul "sold to the devil." In this turn, Zeitblom is able tacitly to maintain the existence of an angelic soul (Adrian's/Germany's) prior to its corruption, and to incorporate more easily into his (and Mann's) symbolic universe, then, the unspeakable dimensions that constitute that corruption--i.e. one can, if only for a moment, feel connected to Adrian Leverkuhn; one can, at least, "pray" for his soul.

To incorporate the victims of the Holocaust in the Faustian drama--to speak of including them, too, in a plea for mercy--would be to grant ourselves as well the comforts of such prayer. For Zeitblom, these fruits are not insignificant. As the novel's ultimate line of prayer makes clear--"God be merciful to thy poor soul, my friend, my Fatherland!" (510)--the petition for grace enables Zeitblom to salvage a felt connection to his country as much as to Adrian. This feeling is one of the pay-offs of the Faustian application, and even the Holocaust is caught up in it, enfolded within a rationalism that must maintain, it would appear, a "we" at all costs: if "we" were once the land of poets and thinkers, now "we" are the penitent who must pray. Zeitblom's predicament is the one Mann felt in exile--how to retain a kind of humanistic feeling in the face of the terrifying German atrocity?--and what becomes clear in it is the way a humanism charged with delivering this feeling slips into a form of nationalism. In this feeling of community lies the shared basis of Zeitblom's humanism and German
nationalism. Zeitblom must incorporate the two singlemost threats to this feeling--Adrian Leverkuhn and the murdered Jews--into the decidedly German drama of Faust because his feeling of connection can survive only within this more nationalistic focus. Zeitblom here persists in what Etienne Balibar calls "the nationalization of society," the production of "peoplehood" that enables the nation form to survive/contain those historical conjunctures which threaten national vitality. The notion of an International vitality was in currency at the time of Mann's writing, and for Balibar at least, such a vitality is one of the threats which the production of "peoplehood" attempts to surmount. That is to say, the national state intervenes, and continues to intervene, at the level of the social when faced with "at least a risk of class conflicts drifting beyond the limits within which they had been more or less easily confined by the 'consensus' of the national state" (92). It is precisely the national consensus qua "natural" entity that is at stake in the Faustian application, the (concealed) production and re-production of a certain social formation.

That social formation yields a feeling of belonging that is its raison d'etre. The guarantor of this feeling is of course the imagined auditor of Zeitblom's prayers, the Big

1That these conflicts would drift beyond the limits of the "national" was clearly a source of anxiety to Mann. Late in 1943, for instance, Mann had to refuse the London Evening Standard's request for an article addressing the question "What to Do with Germany?": "My inner monologue ran. . . . What revolutionized, proletarianized, naked and stripped, shattered masses believing in nothing we shall have to deal with after this war. Proclamation of a national Bolshevism and a going over to Russia not out of the question. This country is lost for a decent liberal-democratic republic" (The Story of a Novel 66).
Other which grants consistency to his life, his teaching, and his understanding of history. Zeitblom here reveals in an exemplary way the hidden underside of prayer, namely that we never pray for those we say we are praying for. We pray, instead, for the Third Party without whom we cannot imagine our lives, and without whom consistent identities like "teacher," "German," "scholar," or "father" are impossible. Zeitblom's prayer for friend and Fatherland is precisely for this Third Party, and it fulfills two critical functions. It brings the deeds of both Leverkuhn and the Nazis into a framework that maintains positive notions of a transcendent essence, and more importantly, it maintains Zeitblom's fidelity to the injunction inherent in that essence: obey. In this light, the entire project of Doctor Faustus might be seen as Zeitblom's steadfast attempt to remain loyal to the dictates of this essence, to reap the enjoyment, the consistency of identity, of "doing one's duty." The self-doubt he evinces with respect to competency, the fear and dread and horror he invokes to explain his "'faulty' technique of narration" (286), is nothing but Zeitblom's feeling that he may not be able to write Leverkuhn's biography and be obedient at the same time. The conflict between the "daemonic," which Zeitblom says he has "at all times found utterly foreign to [his] nature" (4), and Zeitblom's core disposition ("wholly moderate," "of a temper healthy and humane," "addressed to reason and harmony," etc.) is in fact the conflict between duty and desire. To the end, Zeitblom refuses the risk entailed in the latter.
Despite his public act of disobedience then—Zeitblom has resigned his post in a German university—despite the destruction of his country and the destruction of European Jewry, Mann's narrator still carries on his life for the cosmic force that he imagines links us all. Throughout *Doctor Faustus*, dutifulness delivers what it always does: a way to sustain the real existence of some unifying principle before whom we experience essential solidarity. Although his humanism may not entail traditional belief in God per se, the unifying principle to which Zeitblom clings serves the same (God/Father) function; were it not there, there would be no one to obey. This is precisely why obedience must be made universal: no one should see that it is not there, that this transcendent, unifying principle does not exist. And more importantly, God himself shouldn't see it. One critical way of maintaining the illusion lies in guilt itself. Simply put, guilt unifies, and in so doing, preserves the essential identity of a unifying principle. The feeling of guilt is, to use one of Zeitblom's phrases, "religiously productive"; it provides a core consistency upon which community depends. All the more reason, then, to emplot Leverkuhn and Nazi Germany within a long narrative of "original" German sin. As Balibar points out, in the historical production of the people, or of national individuality, the constitution of a new unity depends upon a model of unity that must be seen to "anticipate" that constitution—the Faustian personality for instance in which "we" Germans have always been "at home" (94). This is the source which, Zeitblom would have us
believe, supposedly illuminates the link between Leverkühnian and Nazi catastrophe: both are derived from some Faustian urge, some originary guilt for having made a pact with the devil. Zeitblom reflects upon just this source when he says that one would be hard-pressed to see the "blood state" of the Nazis as something forced, or "foreign to our national character":

For was this government, in word and deed, anything but the distorted, vulgarized, besmirched symbol of a state of mind, a notion of world affairs which we must recognize as both genuine and characteristic? Indeed, must not the Christian and humane man shrink as he sees it stamped upon the features of our greatest, the mightiest embodiments of our essential Germanness? (482)

The notion of a kind of "national" original sin which establishes essential guilt here carries out a clandestine mission. Far from destroying the notion of a Big Other who has "chosen" Germany for some solidifying task, the Faustian urge as "essential" (or "original") German sin keeps it alive. It is one way of refusing to permit history to put one at risk. The connection not to be missed here pertains to "original sin" more generally, and the way it serves to mask the Big Other's nonexistence. As Slavoj Zizek, in Enjoy Your Symptom!, writes, "the sense of man's 'original sin' is precisely to spare Him [God] the existence of his 'inexistence' (inconsistency, impotence) by assuming guilt.
The logic of 'original sin' is therefore again: better for me to be throughout guilty than for Him to learn about His death" (41).

Several questions here follow. Is not this the "logic" that describes Zeitblom's response to Nazi barbarism? Are not all of Zeitblom's explanations concerning his "nature"—his open embrace of what he calls "the high-minded realms of the humaniora" where one is "safe from impish phenomena" (20)—are not these explanations the explanations of a man who quite simply wants to spare this unifying force, this Big Other, the news of its nonexistence? Is it not here that his engagement with the Holocaust is most suspect? If at first glance Zeitblom's humanism—his belief in the legitimacy of man's self-reverence—seems to waver in his indictment of Germany for its fascist crimes, it does not do so in another more critical sense. Zeitblom may indeed feel guilt and shame hearing news of the atrocities—he ratifies Eisenhower's declaration that the people of Weimar were as "guilty" for Buchenwald as those who actually administered the camp— but it is still guilt and shame of a dutiful nature. It is guilt and shame for the Big Other still capable of conferring a patriotic feeling, however perverse. It is, we might say, guilt and shame for Eisenhower (and for the Allies), thus Zeitblom's esteem for the latter and for the "community" the latter unwittingly creates in which
Zeitblom is able to participate⁴: "Was that unjust? Let them look, I look with them. In spirit I let myself be shouldered in their dazed or shuddering ranks" (481). His humanism, in other words, has become the inverse of itself: only the content of his conception of obedience has changed; formally, it remains the same. If before, the Big Other was one before whom we revered ourselves, it is now one before whom we feel disgraced and dishonored.⁵

It is precisely here in the context of this inversion that a connection emerges which crystallizes Doctor Faustus’s incisive insight into fascism and into a way of orienting ourselves toward the Holocaust and toward history. I am speaking here about the crucial feature which Zeitblom and National Socialism have in common: the need to continue to act obediently for the Big Other, and the need to organize and/or eliminate those in their midst who suggest an ontological void in the very place of that Other. The odd

⁴This is not an argument against Eisenhower’s act--related by Zeitblom in the novel--of forcing the citizens of Weimer to walk through Buchenwald after the Allies had liberated the camp. (Eisenhower wanted those who had lived in proximity to the camp to see with their own eyes the crematoria that had been operating in their midst.) It is to note instead the way that act can so quickly become another exercise of a mode of conduct that necessitated it in the first place.

⁵Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity--"the courage of a Christian, of a believer in God in general, can never be a courage without witnesses--this fact alone degrades it" (Will to Power 443)--is perhaps the clearest expression of the manner in which belonging to a community is not the fruit of particular decisions, but rather their underlying cause. Is this not the consistent feature of Zeitblom’s personality--the need to be among a community necessarily selected by History? The "pleasure" experienced here in the "shuddering ranks" of Weimar’s citizens appears to be analogous to the pleasure he experienced in fighting in World War I for what "fate" (he says) had willed: "... it is a great pleasure to the superior individual, just once--and where should one find this once, if not here and how?--to lose himself altogether in the general" (301).
man out in this equation of course is the artist who suggests--and moves toward--such a void: Adrian Leverkühn. It is Adrian who understands the silliness--recall here his laughter at would-be meaningful orders--of believing in a Big Other who possesses the truth of our desire, and for this reason, he must be seen not of the fascist's party, but of that party's victims. By orienting himself toward, and then finally occupying the position of the murdered Jews, Adrian is the one who most truly understands the causes and consequences of the genocide, the difficulty and exigency of being-toward-the-void. Despite the "obvious" import of his statement of intent, what Mann has given us, then--unwittingly or otherwise--is a character who, prior to the Holocaust, was already its victim--i.e. Leverkühn qua artist already occupies the position of the murdered Jews. He already knows what their murder should not have had to teach us: that we live in the world at the mercy of a kind of senseless chaos, and that any attempt to order our relation to that chaos which does not acknowledge its "idiocy" or "stupidity," involves itself in murder.

This recognition of Adrian as "Jew" reverses radically the critical doxa on the mythical composer. That doxa, following Mann's own statements and Zeitblom's analogizing, almost religiously links Leverkühn's career with fascist

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Mann--intentionally or otherwise--is ambiguous in *The Story of a Novel* when he recalls the task he set for himself in *Doctor Faustus* as "to write nothing less than the novel of my era, disguised as the story of an artist's life, a terribly imperiled and sinful artist" (38). In Zeitblom's attempt to know the desire of the Other (i.e., Adrian)--his consistent efforts to invest the latter and his art with a sensible meaning and purpose--Mann has indeed written the novel of his era.
Germany in order to establish the artist's guilt. Patrick Carnegy sees Adrian, for instance, as "errant Germany" (29). Gunilla Bergston says that "Germany becomes Adrian Leverkuhn" (128). Erich Heller argues that Leverkuhn is Mann's way of showing how artistic freedom "so easily deteriorates into [ . . . ] an alliance with the very powers of evil" (24). And Herbert Lehnert, more recently, in claiming that Leverkuhn's "anti-conventional pride translates into removal of his art from human concerns" (13) contends that Adrian's "imposition of artistic order is represented as an analogy to totalitarian power" (8). 7 (For Lehnert, Zeitblom is not in the novel to be distrusted; he is there to balance a "radical cultural pessimism.") The mistake in these "obvious" readings of Mann's novel lies in their inability to note Adrian's fundamental recognition of what both Zeitblom and Nazism never recognize: the arbitrary and utterly senseless nature of our ways of experiencing and ordering our existence in the world, the nonexistence of the Big Other which leaves us frail and constitutionally incapable of completion. The point to be made a propos of Adrian's "imposition of artistic order"--Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone system of composition to be discussed shortly--concerns precisely this: the impossibility of completion, and consequently, the

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7These views are representative. Virtually every essay in a recent collection (Thomas Mann's 'Doctor Faustus' [Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1991]) argues, or tacitly assumes, Adrian as the figure of evil in the novel. Even those who see Mann intending a kind of ambiguity and unequivocality a propos our judgement of Adrian still implicitly assume Adrian's "damnation." The ambiguity, in this view, pertains solely to the fate of Adrian's music a propos a future German cultural tradition. (See, e.g. Judith Ryan, The Uncompleted Past [Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1983].)
"stupidity" or "silliness" of those forms which promise or perform the deliverance. By exaggerating the very act of ordering, Adrian's art demonstrates itself to be utterly antithetical to the workings of totalitarianism. His response to the horror of the human situation--i.e. we live at the mercy of an "imbecilic" order or else we do not live at all--could not be more different than that of the fascists. He furthers the imbecility of order, and laughs; they posit a pure, natural (Aryan) order, and exterminate. The recognition of order's "stupidity" signifies not a removal from human concerns, but an approach of them at their deepest level. Far from animating a project of extermination, this recognition confronts Adrian with a kind of constitutional impotence that no activity, artistic or otherwise, can cure. This is an impotence which the genuine artist embraces; as the devil says to Adrian, "we, thou and I, lever prefer the decent impotence of those who scorn to cloak the general sickness under colour of a dignified mummery" (238). Adrian's compositional activity for this reason escapes the obsessional economy that so often guides the work of technical invention: he does not act in order to maintain the meaning and the sense of the Big Other. The stupidity of his compositions is a sign of his art having internalized the "general sickness," the trauma of its impotence. The "works" which Adrian sees as frauds--the self-sufficient forms of traditional art playing what Adrian calls their "little game"--are those of an obsessional economy: they are the result of so many little acts which
hold out the possibility of an essential meaning for its constructions, sacrificing themselves to the project of concealing an abyss. This sacrifice is part and parcel of Zeitblom's ethic of obedience; and it is this ethic—in refusing to permit the place of the void to interrupt, or render senseless, our experience of harmony in the world—and not Adrian's, which is the more representative German. Leverkuhn himself, it would appear, must be invoked to save himself from his interpreters.

In refusing this sacrifice, Leverkuhn's art points beneath itself to the abyss for which it stands. It is of course Adrian's art which again and again exposes the "stupidity" of those systems which attempt to fill out the void that marks our relation to nature and to history and to ourselves. The very progression of the forms he develops and employs is determined by the desire to expose, at the level of technique, the arbitrariness of one's choice of technique. This dynamic, of course, is what gives the lie to the self-sufficient work of art, and to the entirety of the symbolic universe, which is why the artist who would expose it is akin—as the devil puts it—to the criminal and the madman. "Do you ween," the devil asks Adrian, "that any important work was ever wrought except its maker learned to understand

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*On the refusal of this sacrifice, see Kretschmar's lecture on Beethoven's final piano sonata (Op. 111). There, what Kretschmar calls Beethoven's "excess of introspection and speculation"—a sign of his degeneracy in the eyes of critics and friends—is precisely the genuine artist's exposing of the abyss that the sonata form, for example, stands in for. In the "hundred vicissitudes" that mark the encounter with this abyss—in the long second movement—are the kind of explorations after which there can be no return. Thus, no third movement."
the way of the criminal and madman?" (236). "Every composer of the better sort carries within himself a canon of the forbidden" (239). Before taking up directly the formal shifts that mark the telos of Adrian's musical compositions, we can see this "criminality" or "madness" in an exemplary way in Adrian's astronomical and oceanographical investigations, and in the reaction they elicit from Zeitblom. Adrian has been reading the work of a certain Professor Ackercocke, and Zeitblom sees nothing in the ocean deeps or in the perpetual explosion of our galaxy capable of stirring one to the feeling of God or moral elevation. "'Admit,' said I to him, 'that the horrendous physical creation is in no way religiously productive. What reverence and what civilizing process born of reverence can come from the picture of a vast impropriety like this of the exploding universe?'" (273). Horrendous for Zeitblom are those statistics--e.g. "light-year" as equivalent of six trillion miles--which defy human understanding, statistics before which we stand utterly alienated, statistics that speak the terrifying otherness of the object world. Adrian's trespasses in this extra-human realm, in the brute facts of the universe's vastness, threaten Zeitblom's pleasure in the face of the ungraspable. For this reason, such trespasses are "improper." The real source of the pleasure Zeitblom gets from doing his duty here becomes unmistakable; it lies not just in performing some sort of tribute to an actually existing God, but in the possibility--if everyone does his/her duty, too--of experiencing the pleasure of belonging
in a meaningful way to the "family" of living species:

Piety, reverence, intellectual decency, religious feeling, are only possible about men and through men, and by limitation to the earthly and human. Their fruit should, can, and will be a religiously tinged humanism, conditioned by feeling for the transcendental mystery of man, by the proud consciousness that he is no mere biological being, but with a decisive part of him belongs to an intellectual and spiritual world, that to him the Absolute is given, the ideas of truth, of freedom, of justice; that upon him the duty is laid to approach the consummate. In this pathos, this obligation, this reverence of man for himself, is God. (273)

It is only under the aegis of this higher principle, this "Father"--in Zeitblom-ese "the transcendental mystery of man"--that Zeitblom can achieve the impossible: that Wordsworthian bliss of a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, that feeling of connection to every other thing in the universe, that reverence of man for himself. The belief in this "ideal signifier," and more specifically its incarnation in the nation, is evident in Zeitblom's final appeal with its invocation--still!--of a Fatherland.

Herein lies Zeitblom's real objection to Adrian's scientific inquiries. It is not just that Adrian's "sublime objects" do not, as Kant said they should, increase our estimation of both ourselves and our minds in our relations
with Nature.' It is not just that Adrian's examinations do not work to inspire romantic-humanistic feelings of reverence (for his own "enthusiasm for size," Zeitblom is here the exemplar of Kantian "judgment," mentioning three other more traditional sites of encounters with the immense: the Pyramids, Mont Blanc, and the dome inside St. Peter's); it is instead that they expose the formal principle which organizes that experience in all of its stupid, arbitrary, non-sensical-ness:

Adrian did fling himself into the immense, which astro-physical science seeks to measure, only to arrive at measures, figures, orders of greatness with which the human spirit has no longer any relation, and which lose themselves in the theoretic and abstract, in the entirely non-sensory, not to say non-sensical. (266)

This is, though not for Zeitblom, in fact Adrian's achievement: he makes the descent to that deep place where we most experience the utter non-sensory, non-sensical nature of the nothingness at whose whim we live. It is Adrian who unmasks every single conceptual framework which wants to pass itself off as something other than a fraud, every single

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For Kant, the mathematical sublime of nature--i.e. the stuff of Adrian's investigations--resides not so much in a large numerical concept (a content), but rather in its offering of a "unit" for the measure of the imagination (a form)--i.e. a way of approaching these phenomena at all: "The sublime in the aesthetical judging of an immeasurable whole like this lies, not so much in the greatness of the number [of units], as in the fact that in our progress we ever arrive at greater units. To this the systematic division of the universe contributes" (Critique of Judgment 95). This is clearly a "progress" Adrian is out to throw into question.
conceptual framework which believes it actually possesses the goods to fill out the terrifying abyss and lack of connection that marks our relation to the universe. Zeitblom refers to this as his friend's "itch": "Adrian spoke of the itch one felt to expose the unexposed, to look at the unlooked-at, the not-to-be and not-expecting-to-be looked at" (268). What Adrian discovers in looking at the thing not-expecting-to-be-looked-at is that the thing is actually the place of a void, an emptiness that one attempts to "fill out" with artificial notions of the transcendental mystery of man and of duty.

Adrian's "journey" with Akercocke thirty-six hundred feet beneath the sea in a two-ton hollow ball makes this plain. It is essentially a trip into the void which, far from penetrating that void, merely exposes the idiocy of all our ordering systems that attempt to comprehend it:

long before the hand of the indicator stood at seven hundred and fifty to seven hundred and sixty-five metres, came solid blackness all around, the blackness of interstellar space whither for eternities no weakest sun-ray had penetrated, the eternally still and virgin night, which now had to put up with a powerful artificial light from the upper world, not of cosmic origin, in order to be looked at and looked through. (268)

For Zeitblom, there is a feeling of "indiscretion" bound up with such investigations. What strikes him about Adrian is the sense that the latter has "derived his knowledge not simply through reading, but rather by personal transmission,
instruction, demonstration, experience" (272). This is in fact the case in a way Zeitblom cannot imagine, because Adrian is one whose actual experiences--his reading, his visit to the brothel, his meeting with the devil--only make explicit what has been experienced implicitly all along: one's being at the mercy of the nothingness just named. His experiences, in other words, do not have him trying to maintain the existence of some different, discrete identity or value prior to the experience. On the contrary, they have him understanding all the ways that very "prior" identity was always, all along, marked by the experience now being encountered directly. This is why the devil tells Adrian not to pretend that he has not been expecting him, and it is also why it makes little sense to locate the precise point of Adrian's perdition. Such an effort appears always to be a nostalgic one, hearkening back to an imagined/imaginary time not marked by lack or loss--i.e. by damnation. Marguerite De Huszar Allen is right to note that Adrian "is damned long before he officially encounters the Devil," but this insight becomes merely the occasion to propose an earlier encounter as the actual point of damnation. "Adrian's true pact," Allen writes, "occurs in the form of an amorous union with a diseased whore called Esmeralda" (97). This reading, however, merely participates in the long misogynist narrative of the Judeo-Christian world--the proud spokesperson of which is Zeitblom himself--in its positing of Adrian's "health"
against the backdrop of Esmeralda's disease.\[^{10}\] Zeitblom's report, in typical fashion, lays the castration/contamination at the doorstep of Woman: "His [Adrian's] intellectual pride," he writes, "had suffered the trauma of contact with soulless instinct"; disturbed, Zeitblom can only wonder if his readers can "feel with me the indescribably profaning, the mockingly debasing and dangerous nature of this contact" (148). Hearing Adrian speak of Esmeralda, Zeitblom says, is like hearing an angel holding forth on sin (146).

Such lines make plain Zeitblom's investment in Adrian: Adrian has a substantial phallus (just as Germany "had" it), but then, in some daemonic pact, is stripped of it. The traumatic truth this investment elides, of course, is that the phallus is not a substance: when one has it, one has nothing. This realization, were Zeitblom capable of it, would collapse his entire investment in the Faustian drama. If the phallus is not a substance, then there can be no actual moment of castration--no actual point of perdition, no "true pact," no classical Faustian situation: only moments that indicate to Adrian that he never had the phallus he, or Zeitblom, might have thought he had. That is to say, he has been without a substantial phallus from the beginning, and his life is but a series of events which make this fact unmistakable. Each "true pact," then, only makes explicit a truth that Adrian has felt implicitly all along--the ontological experience of his own loss or damnation.

\[^{10}\]Zeitblom would appear to be retelling yet another the story of "paradise lost": Adrian's (Adam's) downfall is traced in the manner of Milton to Esmeralda (Eve).
Damnation, in other words, does not come afterward, because as Hegel once argued, the Mind capable of conceptualizing damnation is staked on the very division damnation expresses. "We must," Hegel says in the lesser Logic, "give up the setting of incident which represents original sin as consequent upon an accidental act of the first man. For the very notion of spirit is enough to show that man is evil by nature, and it is an error to imagine that he could ever be otherwise" (44). The state of health that Zeitblom would have us believe Adrian lives in prior to the contaminating contact with "soulless instinct" is thus entirely Zeitblom's fantasy. For Zeitblom, there must be a castrator, else there is no substantial phallus. For us, however, Esmeralda cannot be seen as an initiator: she is not the source of the disease, she is not the cause of the transformation. Adrian's meeting with her, instead, is the completely accidental and arbitrary moment which provides Adrian the opportunity to become what he already was, to understand what it is to be ecce homo. This notion is best expressed in the devil's advice that he and Adrian "make nought new—that is other people's matter. We only release, only set free" (236). Adrian's "freedom" consists in the attitude he takes toward this accidental encounter: his pursuit of Esmeralda and his union with her. This signifies his pursuit of symbolic death, his recognition of the ethical position that bears the characteristics of the death-drive. We have here perhaps an initial delineation of the act that would engage history by trying to remember events like the Holocaust "in the real":

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Adrian would be one who does not "identify" with the victims, but rather tries to "become" one of them, with all the risks that the pursuit of symbolic death entails. The risk, as Adrian reveals, is precisely that you might in fact succeed, putting in jeopardy your subject position within language.

The original five-tone series Adrian employs--"B, E, A, E, E-flat," spelling (in German) the code name for Esmeralda--must be seen in the light of this pursuit: as the attempt, on the level of technique, to embrace the "stupid" force accidentally encountered. For Adrian, this ideal signifier is contingent--or "stupid"--in a way Zeitblom's "Fatherland" is not. If for Zeitblom, the organizing principle signifies a destined community, for Adrian, the five-tone series is derived from the accidental consequence of a prank. His embrace of it suggests a taking up of the death-drive, the pursuit of symbolic death, for the purposes of achieving separation from, and not alienation in, the effects of symbolization. We should, therefore, not be tempted to see any actual, positive meaning in the series: it is but the clasp of arbitrariness. Adrian's understanding of the necessity of this embrace is apparent in his letter to Kretschmar detailing his decision to become composer. Adrian's disgust--he declaims the "robust naivete" he sees everywhere in the artist--is precisely for those works which testify to the adequacy of their own artistic mediation: "the beautiful," the "surging feeling, the Ah-h-effect" which the order of a musical composition "naturally" arrives at. The stuff of art, for Adrian, lies beneath what these
compositions so decorously sing of. Its domain—and this is why Adrian refers to it as his own "fear and concern"—"passeth [he says to Kretschmar] far beyond the pattern, the canon, the tradition, beyond what one learns from others, the trick, the technique. Yet it is undeniable that there is a lot of all that in it" (132).

What Adrian here understands is the utter necessity of a pattern—he says later that "organization is everything. Without it there is nothing, least of all art" (190)—and yet what he despairs of is the insipidity with which the pattern produces works marked by beautiful, unequivocal, harmonic triumphs. These triumphs, Adrian says, attempt to "make one believe that [they] are not made but born, like Pallas Athene in full fig and embossed armour from Jupiter's head" (180). And given "the complete insecurity, problematic conditions, and lack of harmony of our social situation," these works, for Adrian, have no legitimate relation to the world: they are, he says, a lie. The despair which follows from this gets its first expression in Ocean Lights, which Zeitblom sees correctly as the work of an artist giving his best to the conventions in which he no longer believes. The methods and conventions of art, Adrian has in fact said, "are good for parody only"; he can only laugh at examples of their use:

Can a man employ the traditional or sanctify the trick with greater genius? Can one with a shrewder sense achieve the beautiful? And I, abandoned wretch, I have to laugh [ . . . ] I may have tears in my eyes at the same time, but the desire to laugh
is irresistible--I have always had to laugh, most
damnably, at the most mysterious and impressive
phenomena. (133-34)

Ocean Lights is but the demonstration of conventions for the
purposes of parodying them. Carrying with it what Zeitblom
calls traits of the "intellectual mockery of art," it
signifies the initial point of the Leverkuhn trajectory: an
understanding of the ironic.

Adrian's genius, however, lies in his next step--in his
recognition of the formal implications of this understanding:
the need to eschew ironic distance. The beautiful, self-
sufficient work may be a fraud, but it is not enough that one
merely content oneself with the task of ironizing it. That
is to say, one cannot remain within the ironic mode; the
genuine artist must achieve it, and then get beyond it. The
reason for this is clarified by Zeitblom himself, for whom
the ironic becomes a way to maintain allegiance to the Big
Other." One need only consider his response to another of
Adrian's ironic works--the thirteen Bretano songs. What
Zeitblom experiences on one hand as a "mockery and a
glorification of the fundamental, a painfully ironic
treatment of tonality, of the tempered system, of traditional
music itself" becomes on the other an appreciation of the
"music of the words themselves"--an appreciation of pure
form. This is the "out" Adrian will soon make increasingly
difficult to draw upon. He will not merely continue to "fill
up" forms in which he no longer believes. He will expose,

"On ironic distance as a form of ideology, see Slavoj Zizek, The
Sublime Object of Ideology, Chap. 1.
instead, in the form of the work itself, the non-sensical
meaninglessness of the imposition of form at all.12 We have
now arrived at the twelve-tone method of composing whose
origins are to be detected in the subject of one of
Kretschmar’s lectures: Johann Conrad Beissel. Responding to
the artificiality of the chorals coming over from Europe,
Beissel does something novel: he develops a theory of
composition that is even more artificial: "An ingenious and
practical theory of melody was swiftly and boldly resolved
on. He decreed that there should be 'masters' and 'servants'
in every scale" (65). The result of this arbitrary system
is, surprisingly, the democratization of musical composition.
(With chord-tables for all the possible keys, anybody could
"write out his tunes comfortably enough, in four or five
parts; and thus he caused a perfect rage for composition in
the community" [65].) What Beissel’s theory foregrounds is
the very arbitrariness of musical form. This is why,
Kretschmar says, it sunk into oblivion when the sect of
German Seventh-Day Baptists ceased to flourish (it was "too
unusual, too amazing and arbitrary, to be taken over by the
world outside" [66]), and it is also why at this point
Zeitblom’s and Adrian’s respective "aesthetics" part ways.

12We might here mention Lukacs’ paradigmatic misreading of Doctor
Faustus. Leverkuhn’s realization of the "stupidity" or "silliness" of
the social order is for Lukacs evidence of a consciousness in need of
"maturing." What Lukacs would have Adrian and Mann see (he says, in
fact, that they do eventually see it) is that there exists another, more
"intelligent" order out there—the order of the socialist revolution.
Adrian’s "bedevilled path," for Lukacs, points to Marx. Unable to see
order in its very constitution as "stupid" or "silly," Lukacs here
appears in the company of Zeitblom (see "The Tragedy of Modern Art" in
1964]).
Zeitblom cannot defend "such a ridiculous and dogmatic arrangement," whereas Adrian insists that he can "do with him [Beissel]. At least he had a sense of order, and even a silly order is better than none at all" (68). Adrian's syntax here evokes Hegel's line in *The Phenomenology* about Spirit: "even reveries are better than its own emptiness" (89). No line, however, has been more invoked to prove Adrian's proto-fascism and the proto-fascism of his absolute form—the twelve-tone method of composing.\(^{13}\) Mann's novel has in fact been read as uncovering the close connection between the twelve-tone method and Nazi suppression of irrationality. According to Fred Chappel, Zeitblom is correct to note the way Adrian's maniacal rationality threatens to transform that rationality into its opposite. Like the Nazis, this thorough-going rationalism has its source and origin in the most irrational of impulses. Chappel writes: "Mann is careful to show over and over again in his novel that Leverkühn's coldly rational and highly mathematical means of expression has been constructed upon a basis thoroughly romantic and primitive" (12). Brigitte Prutti, too, sees Adrian's turn to the twelve-tone system as part of an "'archaic' regression [. . .] into an order of his own making over which he has total control" (104). And Manfred Dierks goes as far as to see in this "regression" the narcissist's

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\(^{13}\)Even Arnold Schoenberg might have made this equation. His objection to Mann's use of his "intellectual property" (the twelve-tone method of musical composition) appears to stem principally from the fact that his invention seemed to be "involved with a sick-minded fictional character or even with German National Socialism" (Michael Mann, "The Musical Symbolism in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*.) Schoenberg sees Adrian "from beginning to end, as a lunatic."
fantasy of omnipotence. Adrian's principle of composition is for Dierks the "constant defense of a self threatened by fragmentation": "Leverkühn's continuous creations of ever new and ultimately 'rigid' formations can be understood to follow the pattern of identification with mirror images, which produce the imaginary ego" (53).

I would like here to insist on the error of these readings. Adrian's recourse to the primitive is not for the purpose of achieving a self healed of fragmentation, a self in total control. It is one motivated instead by a desire to take up the self absolutely in order to encounter the "real" source of the subject's fragmentation--i.e., the real that is outside all symbolization. Adrian acts on the Hegelian insight developed in Chapter One that everything thought is already universal, and that only in the gesture of unapologetic universalizing is thought itself opened up to what it is not possible to think. By taking thought itself to its extreme, Adrian thereby sets the stage for the ultimate opposition of something and nothing. Youth, Adrian says at one point, enjoys not an intimate relation with nature, but an estranged one. His return to the primitive, then, must be seen as a return to this estrangement--where the failure of omnipotence is perhaps most marked. His use

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"This forms the basis, as Walter Davis has observed, of Mann's insight into the nature of dialectical thought, his recognition, if you will, of Absolute Knowledge as the recognition of what Davis calls "'the true or ultimate dichotomy': that single comprehensive opposition which generates and sustains the progressively more inclusive oppositions which make up the dialectical process" (Inwardness and Existence 330). Adrian's twelve-tone method of composition would seem to dramatize this "single comprehensive opposition" in its most developed form.
of the absolute is for the purpose of exposing its defects, a purpose which cannot be confused with Hitlerism, as if the promise of fascism consisted of a return to some constitutive estrangement. Contra fascism, the primitive is for Adrian not the realization of Imaginary relations, of harmony and balance and perfect unions. Whereas the Nazis posit such relations as a desired goal—even as they invent obstacles to it (i.e. the more the Jews disappeared, the more potency they are imagined to have)—Adrian is nothing but honest about just how horrible its achievement would actually be. How else is one to explain, at the onset of his "madness," Adrian’s suicide attempt after hearing of his mother’s imminent arrival? How else to explain the "isolated occurrence" Zeitblom mentions after Adrian’s breakdown, the "outburst of rage against his mother, an unexpected seizure" on the train ride north into central Germany? What is this if not the expression of a certain horror at being trapped within the Imaginary, a certain horror at suffering the loss of the ability to speak and desire? The true horror lies not

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15 The stupidity of attempting to "solve" this estrangement is made unequivocal by none other than Adrian. In the Christian Society Winifried gathering, Adrian’s responds to the notion that "Youth" is some positive German metaphysical endowment with a short laugh and with this line: "And his [the German’s] revolutions […] are the puppet-shows of world history" (118).
in the Symbolic Law to which we are subject, but in life without this law at all--i.e. life without the ability to speak at all.16

And yet its achievement is precisely what the artist must risk in order to communicate our fundamental estrangement. In a certain sense, the radicalness of Mann’s artist lies in his taking at its word--his overidentification with--fascism’s desired goal of a society not beset by unsymbolizable forces. He risks what they never would: its actual realization. This risk, admittedly, entails an asocial act, but this is far from a sign of that risk’s barbarity. Far from being an example of the totalitarian impulse, Adrian’s "rigid" or "strict" creations expose the fundamental antagonism which discussions of personal or national unity would conceal, the un-symbolizable dimension that we live--utterly estranged--in relation to. Promises of a messianic Reich are part of a different sort of strictness. Herein lies the unsurpassable accomplishment of the dododecaphonic principle that Adorno, in Philosophy of Modern Music, notices: "the correctness of twelve-tone cannot be 'heard' and this is the simplest name for that moment of meaninglessness in it" (118). This "correctness," for

16This is also why we must be clear about the diction that Mann has given to Adrian’s discussion with the devil. The point is not that Mann has given to Adrian a "corrupt diction" in order to bear witness to a corruption of language, to the abuse of rhetorical techniques, and to a "wit" that leads to nihilism (H.F. Fullenwider, "Adrian Leverkuhn’s Corrupt Diction in Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus"). Adrian’s archaisms, instead, indicate that there is no non-corrupt speech, and that the "virtuosity of technique in language in the service of the preservation of the humanist tradition," the supposed healthiness of a rhetoric which evokes "a Classical humanitas characterized by urbanity and lenity" is itself nihilistic.
Adorno, was part of a necessary change in the function of musical expression. The communication of a "heteronomy of scars," the blotches which challenge music's facade of self-sufficiency, was not a matter of content but of form:

Structure as such is to be correct rather than meaningful. The question which twelve-tone music asks of the composer is not how musical meaning is to be organized, but rather, how organization is to become meaningful. (67)

Adorno would here follow Beissel: the problem of organization is to be addressed by even more organization, so much so that subjective expression itself is resisted. In this denied expression, however, something is, if only on the level of form, after all expressed: "Horror has cast its spell upon the subject and it is no longer able to say anything which might be worth saying" (112).

What is "heard" instead is precisely a nothingness, the sound that cannot be made to mean, the note that cannot be played. The artist who would memorialize the dead can do so only on the level of technique, and only in such a manner that technique itself dramatizes the impossibility of transmitting the hell of their suffering, the "real" time of their death. The devil says to Adrian that art must make its recipients "listen" to precisely this impossibility: "only the non-fictional is still permissible, the unplayed, the undisguised and untransfigured expression of suffering in its actual moment" (240; my italics). It is the (non-) communication of this moment, this terrible suffering of the
negative, that marks Adrian's two expressionistic masterpieces: the *Apocalypse cum figuris* and *The Lamentation of Dr. Faustus*.

In both works, form itself is organized so as to point beneath itself to a harrowing absence. The first, a "resume of the whole literature" on the apocalyptic (Zeitblom's words), is the working out of "vastly complex problems, technical and intellectual, subjecting themselves to the strictest law" (358). More significantly, Adrian himself, qua artist, subjects himself, in his very being, to this strictest of laws, risking in the process his very contact with reality and the consistency of symbolic identity. Zeitblom can only shudder at these literal risks, at "the legitimacy of [Adrian's] activity, his claim in time to the sphere into which he had plunged" (373). The *Apocalypse* intimidates Zeitblom not just for the terrifying juxtapositions of its parodies, the horror of its loud-speaker effects, the pandemonic laughter of the Pit which sweeps through fifty bars, it intimidates for what it suggests about the actual state toward which his friend leans in order to produce artistic truth. A clear parallel exists between Adrian's conception of the oratorio's end and his emotional well-being:

he did suffer a relapse. It was shortly before he got to the end, that frightful finis, which demanded all his courage and which, so far from being a romantic music of redemption, relentlessly confirms the theologically negative and pitiless
character of the whole. It was, I say, just before he made port with those roaring brass passages, heavily scored and widely spaced out, which make one think of an open abyss wherein one must hopelessly sink. The relapse lasted for three weeks with pain and nausea, a condition in which, in his own words, he lost the memory of what it meant to compose, or even how it was done. (360)

This is here the condition of the artist that is to be unequivocally articulated in the context of the Lamentation: the artist who risks his own annihilation, his own symbolic identity as composer, in the act of creation, in the act of testifying to the Hell of memory. The genius of the Apocalypse lies in just this risk, and in the way it "remembers" what hadn't even occurred yet: the hellish laugh that in Zeitblom's description slips indistinguishably into, and then back out of, the sounds of human slaughter. This laughter--analogous to, and soon to be superceded by, the screams of the Nazis' victims--is then perfectly juxtaposed with the sounds of children singing: there is a "rigid correspondence," we are told, and "rigid" is here no perjorative word. For its "musical essence," Zeitblom is able to praise: "Everywhere is Adrian Leverkuhn great in making the unlike the like" (378). And yet he does not want to go further than this, though he does say that in the chorus of children is "the devil's laughter all over again":

The passages of horror just before heard are given, indeed, to an indescribable children's chorus at
quite a different pitch, and in changed orchestration and rhythms; but in the searing, susurrant tones of spheres and angels there is not one note which does not occur, with rigid correspondence, in the hellish laughter. (379)

This formal correspondence is, Zeitblom says, Adrian's Leverkuhn's "profound significance," though his gloss is a paradigmatic mystification: "calculation raised to mystery" (379).

This is characteristic Zeitblomian misreading. It is not Adrian's "calculation" that is mysterious as much as das Ding which all calculation seeks to flee, and which finally might take from one the ability to "calculate" at all. This is the effect that Adrian's final composition, the symphonic cantata The Lamentation of Dr. Faustus, has on its creator--it should be the effect on us as well--and with it, Mann's novel reaches its culminating insight: artistic creation testifies to the hell of history only in its own drive toward symbolic death, in its utter renunciation of its very symbolic function, in the senselessness of its form. In his overidentification with the arbitrariness of life and death--Adrian sees his life continuing at the expense of little Nepomuk's--Adrian culminates the "symbolic suicide" first manifested in the encounter with Esmeralda: a "taking back" of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. We are here directly back into the domain of the Holocaust, for what Adrian risks, in his "revocation," is precisely his place in the symbolic circuit of meaning. The radicalness of this act lies in the
way he *risks* a fate soon to be violently thrust upon the Jews and gypsies of Eastern Europe. Before the fact, he is already the one most committed to their memory, to the place outside the symbolic circuit of meaning in which they exist. Only those of Zeitblom's camp would speak here of Adrian as having, in retrospect, "gone too far." The radicalness of his risk resides precisely in his rejection of a future vantage point from which he might gauge his present undertaking. What is rejected is in fact the very guarantee of symbolization, because symbolization oversees all the ways we have of dealing with the trauma of the Holocaust and our historical situatedness.

It is for this reason that the most authentic work of art that would have the Holocaust as its subject be one which refuses the inherent affirmation of symbolization. And more radically, it is for this reason that the most authentic act of bearing witness to the Holocaust be one which places in question the very ability to symbolize. Adrian's *Lamentation* lands authentically on both of these scores. Technique has here become even stricter; there is, Zeitblom reports, "no longer any free note" (486). Submitting every note to the most arbitrary of laws, Adrian has perfectly revealed the fugitive disposition of all symbolization. Thus, the identity between the angelic choir and the hellish laughter encountered already in the *Apocalypse cum figuris* is carried to its furthest extreme: that identity, Zeitblom tells us, has now become "all-embracing" (487). In this way he achieves freedom: "by virtue of the absoluteness of the form
the music is freed" (488). At its end, the chorus of lament passes into a movement purely orchestral: "it is, as it were, the reverse of the 'Ode to Joy,' the negative, equally a work of genius, of that transition of the symphony into vocal jubilation" (489-90). The horror to which Adrian must testify is that which cannot be spoken. For this Faust (Adrian), the thought of being saved has become the bait held out by the Tempter. This is crucial, of course, because it turns Zeitblom—and more generally, Thomas Mann—into the figure of the Tempter. At least this was the implicit judgement of Adorno, for whom any hint of consolation or redemption or regeneration smacked of a wished-for affirmation that art could not, in good conscience, deliver.17

The "high G of a cello" given as the "last word" of Adrian’s Lamentation must be seen in the light of this context—not, as Zeitblom would have it, as a sign of Adrian’s "conversion," and not, as Hans Rudolf Vaget would have it, as "Leverkuhn’s most desperate plea" (184). It must be seen, instead, as Mann’s own last-minute flight from Adorno’s insistence on unequivocal negativity: the echo of the high G, for Zeitblom, "abides as a light in the night" (491).

What Mann apparently could not give up was precisely this

17When Adorno read Mann’s rendering of the Lamentation, he could not abide the redemptive quality the latter had given it. "He had no objections to make on musical matters, but took issue with the end, the last forty lines, in which, after all the darkness, a ray of hope, the possibility of grace, appears. Those lines did not then stand as they stand now; they had gone wrong. I had been too optomistic, too kindly, too pat, had kindled too much light, had been too lavish with the consolation" (The Story of a Novel 222-23). Adorno’s critique, one suspects, survived—given the "high G" given to Adrian’s last work—Mann’s modifications.
symbolic, light-giving function of art. Against it, we must set Adrian himself who despises the tradition that might "save" him, and who insists on exposing the consolation that symbolic identities and symbolization itself affords. (Consider, here, Zeitblom's pleasure at Adrian's seeming assumption of symbolic identities--e.g. "suitor" of Marie Godeau, "father" to Nepomuk Schneidenwein, composer, etc.)

The experience Adrian wants us to have is the experience of being outside symbolization, even though the risk is that--like Adrian--we might remain there.

What we must undergo is our own disappearance, the risk of losing everything, for it is only then that the act of memory is allowed truly to change us. We have perhaps now reached the point where we can understand the novel's epigraph from Dante: "O Memory who wrote down what I did see/Here thy nobility will be made plain." For Adrian, memory lies somewhere beyond the human world; its nobility lies in the lesson it teaches us about time. There is not a time for us--in the world of our relations with others--in which we are not damned.
CHAPTER 5

History as/and Paranoia: David Grossman’s See Under: Love

The unresolved antagonisms of reality recur in works
of art as the immanent problems of their form.

—Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory

The arrival of Anshel Wasserman on the first page of
David Grossman’s See Under: Love—"It was like this, a few
months after Grandma Henny was buried in her grave, Momik got
a new grandfather" (3)—signals the arrival of an immanent
problem of the novel’s form. The story that Wasserman tells
is a story that Grossman’s novel cannot. It is the story of
Treblinka, and of watching one’s wife and daughter disappear
in a line filing toward the gas chamber, and of watching new
arrivals do the same, and it cannot be re-told. "Between our
memory and its reflection," Elie Wiesel once said, "there
stands a wall that cannot be pierced [. . . .] We speak in
code, we survivors, and this code cannot be broken, cannot be
deciphered [. . . .] no matter how much you try" (7). Wiesel’s
words here point to the antagonism between symbolic and real
knowledge that has figured in each of the previous chapters,
the epistemological limit that haunts our attempt to know the
atrocities of history within the order of representation.
Wiesel rendered the futility of this attempt perfectly when
he offered this warning to those who would forget such a limit: "A novel about Treblinka is either not a novel or not about Treblinka" (7).

The problem, however, is not strictly epistemological. In Grossman's novel, Momik Neuman's inability to write his grandfather's story makes this clear: the un-crackability of the code, the epistemological limit, is experienced as an ontological problem. For as long as the code--i.e., the real of the Holocaust--eludes him, Momik is faced quite simply with the feeling of not knowing, with certainty, who he is. One of the achievements of See Under: Love lies in its recognition of this situation and its characteristic feeling of self-division--the feeling, as the adult Momik puts it, of "being unable to understand my life until I learn about my unlived life Over There" (109). Even as a boy, Momik suffers the manner in which historicity makes wholeness impossible. This is why, when he washes his face in the bathroom of his house, Grossman has him "[holding] his head exactly where the long crack runs down the middle of the mirror" (47).

Grossman's novel, however, does more than just recognize this experience. Indeed, each of Momik's attempts to learn about his "unlived life Over There"--by way of a mythical Beast in part one, of the murdered artist Bruno Schulz in part two, and of the story told by grandfather Anshel to a Nazi in part three--are in fact Momik's attempts to symbolize what actually exists Over There, in the place of the real. In this way, See Under: Love dramatizes the prevailing form for coping with the inability of identity to come full circle,
the psychological operation whereby a problem of being is turned back into a problem of knowledge—i.e., the paranoid construction. Paranoia is the "solution" to the fact that all identity is symbolic, that the real is that which lies outside all symbolization, that the order of language is an order marred by a lack of intelligence. If for us this lack is something fortunate, enabling the symbolic order to constitute itself, the case is otherwise for the paranoiac. In his view, what the symbolic order is too stupid to see is precisely what is threatening the very fabric of our families and our society, and something—the paranoiac usually says with urgency—must be done about it. The paranoiac is thus self-evidently a creature of superior intelligence: he is able to detect the "real" reason behind what only appear to be inexplicable, contingent phenomena.

The paranoiac, then, correctly registers the fact of our deception—he rightly has the sense that we are lacking a certain autonomy—and works for its reversal: the missing "cause" for the symbolic order's inability to get a hold of itself must not go on missing. On the contrary, the existence of some One or some Thing is posited that, if recovered and eliminated, might make it all clearer. How does one cope with the subjective experience of irretrievable loss and instability, of the feeling that a critical part of the world has vanished? Grossman displays with striking clarity, in the "Momik" section of the novel, the paranoid response: one tests the old frameworks that might have once managed to deliver a satisfactory explanation, and when that
fails, one copes by declaring war on the imagined thief—i.e. the Nazi Beast. Momik's war in this sense is, on the level of form, not unlike that of the Nazis: the Beast/Other/Jew is responsible, the Beast/Other/Jew must really in fact exist, the Beast/Other/Jew must be eliminated. This sort of war meets a crucial need for the subject who declares it, taking that which is contingent or without a sensible cause—Momik's inheritance of a particular cultural and familial history, his birth as the son of Gisella and Tuvia Neuman, as grand-nephew of Anshel Wasserman, etc.—and gives it the ground of necessity. The "curse" of the Nazi Beast becomes the force that unites a multiplicity of disparate miseries and inscrutable signs, and it gives Momik's existence a singular purpose:

the really big prophecies are for Momik alone, there's no one he can tell them to, like spying on his parents, and all the spy work to put together the vanished land of Over There like a jigsaw puzzle, there's still a lot of work left on this, and he's the only one in the whole wide world who can do it, because who else can save Mama and Papa from their fears and silences and krechtzes, and the curse, which was even worse after Grandfather Anshel turned up. (18)

The Beast, we might say in light of the discussion of the anti-semitic construction of the Jew in Chapter One, is
Momik's point de capiton: it is his way of "adding a name" to a number of unsymbolizable, heterogeneous elements for the purpose of consolidating them.¹

In this way, the paranoiac gets around Lacan's insight that the very organization of a symbolic universe depends on an arbitrary, contingent Law, that the point de capiton—or Master-Signifier—is literally, and traumatically, without sense. This is why for Lacan, the end of analysis can never be self-transparency or self-understanding,² and why what is required instead is an act of interpretation whose goal is to "isolate in the subject a kernel... of non-sense":

What is there is rich and complex, when it is a question of the unconscious of the subject, and intended to bring out irreducible, non-sensical—composed of non-meanings—signifying elements... What is essential is that [the subject] should see... to what signifier—to what irreducible, traumatic, non-meaning—he is, as a subject, subjected. (The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis 250-51)

The incarnation of history in the form of the Beast, for Momik, would seem to be underwritten by an opposite

¹For this connection, see pp. 23-29 in Chapter One above. The application of a quilting point does seem to define Momik's dealings with the Holocaust. History has no immanent meaning for Momik until it is "given a name." His literal adoption of Bella's "accidental" mention of a Nazi Beast is what cements the "hidden meaning" of what are wholly contingent and chaotic experiences.

²In the first Seminar, Lacan says that understanding is one of the things psychoanalysis has most to guard against: "I would go as far as to say that it is on the basis of a kind of refusal of understanding that we push open the door to analytic understanding" (73).
requirement: to bestow an essential integrity on the non-sensical signifier—e.g., Holocaust, Jew, etc.—that he is, as subject, subjected. The pay-off here is a way of making sense of things, a consistent identity. To achieve it would mean finally not just to write the story of the Holocaust without feeling that one hasn’t really written it, but to write the story of one’s self without feeling that you’re not really the writer of it.

The stories Momik invents, his earliest efforts to make history exist by fitting it into forms that might make sense of it, are attempts to rid himself of this feeling. They are also at this point the first stage of Momik’s paranoid solution to the problem of identity’s incompletion. About his father’s nightmares, for example, Momik explains:

The screaming is certainly weird, but what do we have logic and brains and Bella for? When we examine the screaming in the light of day, it turns out to be quite simple. It was like this, there was a war in that kingdom, and Papa was the Emperor and also the chief warrior, a commando fighter. One of his friends (his lieutenant?) was called Sondar.

(28)

In the grim humor of Momik’s attempt to mythologize the sonderkommando, what is clear is that the heroic forms of popular adventure stories so abundantly at the boy’s disposal—forms that tell of kings and armies and magical escapes, spies and detectives and secret signals, time travel and Snow Queens and "submarines like in Jules Verne" (47)—
these forms cannot comprehend the events of Over There. The defining feature of paranoia, however, is its refusal to be discouraged by particular failures at comprehension. Indeed, the phenomena these forms cannot accommodate, far from destroying Momik's entire conceptual approach, actually invigorate it. In true paranoid fashion, Momik merely attributes consecutive failures to "external" causes--i.e., to the mysterious power already believed to inhere in the object of his paranoia--and resolves on more extreme measures. Thus, Momik's inability to feel content with the versions of history in which everything acquires a benign simplicity--"So much was missing. The main thing was missing, he felt sometimes" (29)--reveals the impossibility of Momik's project even as it performs its function as that project's driving force. Momik's other efforts, culminating in the attempt to "raise" the Nazi Beast in his cellar, perform a similar function, and in the process exemplify the way the Holocaust itself can be made to deliver a solution to the very anxiety that occasioned it. His "commando invasions" into the heart of Grandfather Anshel's story (among other things, he reads aloud various combinations of the numbers tattooed on his grandfather's arm), his acting out of the ritual from the Sholem Aleichem tale, his systematic means for naming and comprehending infamous phrases of history ("I killed your Jew": two fists, four fingers; "like sheep to the slaughter": five fists, no fingers)--all are part of an effort to achieve, within the symbolic, formal relations with that which is radically Other. For Momik, this Other is
rightly felt to be responsible for so much: it has taken from him a brother, and has given him a hundred names;" it makes his father scream in his sleep, and forces him to write everything down in his spy notebooks. Momik's mistake, however, is to think that this Other can be embodied, to think, in other words, that this Other is a Beast who eats and not an absence that fasts.

The fact of this hunger strike plagues every one of Momik's attempts to have his narratives of the Holocaust correspond to its real, and to have his narratives of himself correspond to the real of his identity. His father as Emperor-in-exile, Grandfather Anshel as the only fighter who wouldn't surrender, himself as spy/detective/Theodor Herzl-like savior—all are part both of the objectifying mind's obsession to make something heroic, or sentimental, or sublime, of the nothingness of history and of self, and of another inadequate fictional paradigm. Nothingness is precisely what the romantic imagination of the nine-year-old boy sets out to transform; this is its gift:

Momik has this gift, a gift for all kinds of languages no one understands, he can even

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3"They'd have liked to give him a hundred names. Grandma Henny did it all the time. She would call him Mordecai Leiblah, and Shepselah and Mendel and Anshel and Shulam and Chumak, and Shlomo Haim, and that's how Momik got to know who they all were. Mendel who ran off to Russia to be a Communist nebuch, and disappeared, and Shulam the Yiddishist who sailed for America and the ship sank, and Isser who played the violin and died with the Nazis, may-their-name-be-blowt- out..." (26-27). Momik bears responsibility for the lost names in a second way as well: he has, from the time he learned how to read, been charged with the task of listening for the names of "a lot of lost Neumans" (37) on the lunchtime radio-show, "Greetings from New Immigrants and Locating Lost Relations."
understand the silent people who say maybe three words in their whole life talk, like Ginzburg who says, Who am I who am I, and Momik understands that he’s lost his memory and that now he’s looking for who he is everywhere even in the garbage cans [. . .] oh yes, Momik can translate just about anything. He is the translator of the royal realm. He can even translate nothing into something. Okay, that’s because he knows there’s no such thing as nothing, there must be something, nu. (35)

It is not surprising that Ginzburg is here invoked to demonstrate Momik’s feats of translation, for Ginzburg’s question is really the one driving Momik’s whole enterprise: who am I for this history? for the lost Neumans whose names I listen for on the radio? for my trapped parents and my trapped grandfather and my trapped friends on the park bench? Who am I, in other words, for those who experienced the Holocaust? Momik’s predicament underlines the insufficiency of all attempts to bear witness within symbolization: the dead are unable to speak, unable to tell us that our efforts to remember satisfy their desire, unable to tell Momik what it is that they want from him. The relation between victim and would-be witness is marked for this reason by a gulf:
those who perished in the Holocaust represent a group before whom we experience an abyssal uncertainty, the dead whose desire we cannot fathom.\footnote{The everyday platitude concerning memorials of all types--i.e., "it's what they would have wanted"--suggests the way in which symbolic forms of memory often seek to colonize the desire of those being remembered. Walter Benjamin's claim, in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," that the dead remain in danger might be considered in this light: the dead are endangered when the void that is their desire is "filled in," when works of culture "imagine" or stand in for a knowledge of their incommunicable desire.}

The critical consequence of this is that if the real of their desire cannot be known, the real of our own, as a result, cannot either. This is why the fundamental project of Momik's romantic imagination is to symbolize the desire of the other, why there can be "no such thing as nothing, there must be something, nu." Even nothingness must be coerced into confessing its story, its "confession" serving to legitimize, if only temporarily, the meaning of its auditor's identity as poet-visionary-translator. If the repetition of such confessions does indicate, on the level of form, that any final legitimization is not to be had, that the sublimity of nature's objects is ultimately a product of duress, nonetheless, in specific instances, as Momik's case makes clear, rarely is this conclusion reached. Indeed, in his particular encounters with the place of the real, the explanations Momik finds there are not understood as his own desperate concoctions or translations but rather as actually there in the object. According to Slavoj Zizek, in the motive that underwrites this explanation lies "the fundamental lesson of Lacan: while it is true that any object can occupy
the empty place of the Thing, it can do so only by means of the illusion that it was always already there, i.e. that it was not placed there by us but found there as an 'answer of the real'" (Looking Awry 33).\(^5\) Momik's "gift" depends on precisely this illusion, for it implies that he has only "found" the language in which the real answers, and not created this "answer of the real" in the first place. The very reference to his activity as translation implies the actual pre-existence of the original. As poet-visionary-translator, he believes himself to have discovered in the royal realm of the object a meaning and an order--i.e. a sensible something--that has only the appearance of nothingness, a something that has either duped those around him, or sworn them to secrecy (if they know the languages Momik does, they certainly aren't letting on; he thinks they have perhaps taken some sort of oath).

It is because these stories fail, because the "answer of the real" does not stick, that Bella's accidental mention of the Nazi Beast captivates Momik in the way that it does. The existence of an actual Beast is for Momik "the biggest clue of all" (30), because it gives him a way holding out the possibility of incarnating the force he imagines as the possessor of history. To establish a "real" relation with this force would be, as it was in his attempts at

\(^5\)The repeated performance of "Romantic" anxiety seems to pertain fundamentally to the real and its reticence, and whether or not its objects are placed there by consciousness or already exist there as "answers of the real." The paradigmatic case is, of course, Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," where first "nature and the language of the sense" and then Woman (i.e. Dorothy) are "found" to occupy the place of the Thing.
storytelling, to establish a "real" relation with the real of his own Jewish identity. (This identity is clearly linked to the feeling that what is "real" in Judaism belonged to the European Jews, and was destroyed in the Holocaust. It is thus not insignificant that the cellar of the Neuman household where the Beast will be "raised" is referred to by Momik as a shtetl.) As Grossman demonstrates again and again, these projects are inseparable for the subject engaged in them; what the boy, in his struggle, wants from history is something more than history can give him: an identity unsullied by inconsistency and lack. Momik's desire is to know the real of history and of his own desire—that unsymbolizable surplus which, once and for all, would make Momik a Jew, and not a boy plagued by the feeling that he's merely been acting the part. Were the Beast actually to appear in the cellar as a creature of consciousness, Momik would not just be able to authenticate the "curse" that has frozen everyone he knows from "Over There" into the equivalent of tiny glass animals (his analogy), it would also authenticate for him a part of his identity that remains alien to him, that is, his status as "Jude grandson" and as storyteller. Only before the look of the actual Beast would he in fact be certain that Momik Neuman is who Momik Neuman thinks he is.

It should thus not surprise that after Momik's failed attempts at befriending the Beast—"to tame it and make it good, and persuade it to change its ways and stop torturing people" (30)—the "raising" of it depends more and more on
the ability to "raise" the "real" Jew in the process. If the Nazi Beast, as the nine-year-old boy believes, is an essence, so too is the "real" Jew he believes is required to draw it out. Momik's attempt to produce a Jew "real" enough in order to get the Beast to show its face is part and parcel of the paranoid solution to an ontological difficulty: the desire to reproduce the Nazi Beast is not merely the desire to gain full knowledge, it is the desire for that ultimate object supposed to confer upon him full being. It is this that explains Momik's determined research--"Momik worked like a combination scientist and detective" (68)--into various traits believed to inhere in the "real" Jew. Copying pictures from library books and making notes from his own encounters with Jews, Momik hopes to detect the substantial meaning behind what only appear to be contingent features--e.g., "how a Jew looks at a soldier, how a Jew looks when he's frightened, how he looks in a convoy, [...] how a Jew krechtzes, how he screams out in his sleep, and how he chews on a drumstick, etc." (68). When the taking on of these traits fails, when his repeated paradings in front of the Beast fail to elicit a response from it, Momik does not recognize the error of his project's fundamental assumption--that failure is not empirical but ontological--and believes instead in the existence of a Genuine Jew qua set of positive, substantial features. It is not, in other words, the notion of a "real" Jew itself that is seen as the problem, but rather merely the inadequacy of Momik's attempts at impersonation. The Beast, so Momik thinks, in another
perfect instance of his paranoia, "could probably tell the
difference between a real Jew and Momik suddenly trying to
act like a Jew" (74). Thus, Grandfather Anshel is enlisted
for a trip to the cellar:

Wave your hands too! And Grandfather waved his
hands the way he does, and Momik watched him
closely to make sure he was really trying hard and
doing what he was supposed to do, and he glanced at
the cages and the suitcases and the torn mattresses
and silently cried, Jude! Jude! Here, I brought you
the kind you like, a real Jude that looks like a
Jude and talks like a Jude, and smells like a Jude,
a Jude grandfather with a Jude grandson, so come on
out... (80)

Momik's goal here is to salvage a Jewish essence—even if it
takes the most murderous of Beasts to certify it. He
believes that there exists a "real" kernel of identity (i.e.,
"Jewishness") whose loss can be reversed, regardless of the
sacrifice such a reversal is seen to entail.

Grandfather's Anshel's failure to elicit the Beast only
intensifies Momik's sacrifice in the service of his war.
Momik sings songs in Hebrew and Yiddish, he recites prayers
from his father's High-Holiday prayer book, he even takes to

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6The point here shares only a seeming similarity to the objection
which comes from a more traditional quarter of Judaism—i.e., that too
many get their Jewish identity from the Holocaust only (thus the term
"Holocaust Jew"). Behind this lament, of course, is the sense that there
is another place to which one might go to become more of a "real" Jew.
Momik's progression in See Under: Love lies exactly in the opposite
direction: in becoming a "Jew without a substantial signifier—i.e.,
Father or Big Other or Holocaust—as the consolidator capable of
guaranteeing the "real" nature of that identity.

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covering the far wall of the cellar with pages torn from his copy of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. When the Beast still refuses to come out, Momik brings down all of the "partisans" from Over There and commands them to "be so Jewish it won't know what to do with itself" (83). In this instant, Momik is brought face to face with precisely the point of the collapse of his paranoia. All of the "sacrifices" of Momik's war, his heroic mission, are herein revealed as attempts to forestall recognition of the more traumatic requirement: the "sacrifice" itself must be sacrificed, because the real site of the Other is not external but within.

The miracle--the essence--promised by his interpretive model isn't going to come: "he raised his arms and begged, Enough, stop it now, he raised his arms as if to surrender, like a boy he saw in a picture once, but a terrible scream escaped him, the cry of a Beast" (84). This point of recognition is a potential point of reversal, where the paranoid construction might be either reduplicated or overcome, the point where, in the absence of the Beast, one is either angry at oneself for not being precise and scientific enough, or one recognizes that it is nothing that you're actually sacrificing yourself to. At this stage of the novel, Momik opts for the former. If the scream signifies initially Momik's recognition of the void at the core of the object of his pursuit--the Nazi Beast--his reaction following this recognition, however, misses the truth of the scream in a fundamental way: disgust for the survivors and their stories, and the almost maniacal
redoubling of one's war efforts with the idea that it (the war) might still be won, that justice, whatever that term would mean after the enormity of the Holocaust, might be done.' The achievement of this denouement lies in the fact that in it, Grossman does not permit his child-character to overcome the paranoid construction structuring his relations with history. We see what the nine-year-old boy cannot: that there is a void at the core of all of the objects of our pursuit, and that one cannot make this the reason for his/her

The link between justice and paranoia might be made clearer in the context of the creation of the state of Israel. In The Differend, Jean-Francois Lyotard articulates just this point: that it was precisely in all of the protocols whereby the Jews were granted a State that the world—including the citizens of Israel itself—continued to substitute a symbolic war for a real one which could not be symbolized. For Lyotard, a notion of justice antithetical to paranoia involves a recognition of the differend: the point of impossible litigation wherein a wrong is felt but cannot be put into words. Litigation "smothers" differends and the feelings of alarm sounded by them. We must, he says, "bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them" (13). In this conception, the paranoiac is precisely the one who believes that the wrong can be put into words, that the damage can be litigated. The differend attached to proper names or the names of states, Lyotard argues, cannot adjudicate history's crimes, because that is to betray the kernel of non-sense that inheres in such names:

The differend attached to Nazi names, to Hitler, to Auschwitz, to Eichmann, could not be transformed into a litigation and regulated by a verdict. The shades of those to whom had been refused not only life but also the expression of the wrong done to them by the Final Solution continue to wander in their indeterminacy. By forming the State of Israel, the survivors transformed the wrong into damages and the differend into a litigation. By beginning to speak in the common idiom of public international law and of authorized politics, they put an end to the silence to which they had been condemned. But the reality of the wrong suffered at Auschwitz before the foundation of this state remained and remains to be established, and it cannot be established because it is in the nature of a wrong not to be established by consensus. (56)

This should be considered not an argument against the existence of a Jewish state, but rather, against the ideological purposes toward which the state's existence is put.

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rejection. To do so is usually to replace—in paranoid fashion—that object with another one believed to be unmarked by a similar void. Thus, the successive objects of Momik’s paranoia: the Nazi Beast, Bruno Schulz’s lost manuscript *The Messiah*, and Grandfather Anshel’s last “Childern of the Heart” installment as told to a Nazi. As long as Momik conceives of his relations with the Beast, with Bruno Schulz, and with Anshel Wasserman as relations that might deliver full knowledge and self-possession, he is simply, and by no means innocently, misunderstanding the nature of the combat. His desire is still for an Other who would guarantee the meaning of his identity. The very quest for the Nazi Beast, for Schulz’s lost manuscript, and for Wasserman’s final story holds out implicitly an end to the impasse: that history can be contained within the order of the symbolic; that there is an Other/Form that “possesses” history, that knows it absolutely. That there is, in short, a writer who is really a Writer, a subject who is really a Subject, a jew who is really a Jew, etc. These recoveries would seal once and for all the crack in the mirror in Momik’s bathroom, the mirror that cracks in the instant language is created, the instant in which one recognizes the nothingness in one’s being without narrating or translating or mythologizing that recognition.

The truth that Momik has yet to learn, however—and this is precisely the truth Grossman articulates—is that any attempt to be the identity we play always makes us impostors. Grossman here reverses the more romantic appearance/essence
dichotomy: the fake is not the one who betrays some inner depth (in Rilkean terms, the letter inside oneself), but the one who actually grasps that depth, who believes that a "reality" exists behind all appearances, and that such a reality can be accessed within language. Full identity is a fraud for the reasons articulated in Chapter One: it entails at the same time the very dissolution of one’s identity. The point here is the one made by Lacan and others, and that has recurred in each of the arguments above: the social dimension of our identity depends on that identity’s lack of self-possession, on that real kernel that is "in you more than you" and that is integrated only at the cost of the social order itself. Within the social order, then, who we are must always be disturbed by a place we cannot access. Momik’s attention to physio- and characterological detail--e.g., the waving of hands, the fast talking, the sharp, old smell--can only be regarded as a nine-year-old boy’s flight from this recognition: as an attempt, in order to consolidate identity, to access this place which in fact sunders all identity, to give body to a void. As I have remarked more than once in the preceding pages, this kind of attempt shares in the anti-semitic, paranoid construction of the Jew, the result of a similar need to give body to that "excess" which kept disturbing a German national identity, to grasp a depth that illuminates a vision and a necessary destiny. In Momik’s quest for a similar essence, See Under: Love opens up the two levels on which the Holocaust exists for us: as itself the result of the utter failure to live an
anxious relation to this real surplus and, now, as the site of that real excess, the potential object of another violent incorporation.

II.

In See Under: Love, Momik's place in the paranoid network--and Grossman's larger point--that history survives in the duplication and re-duplication of that network--are sealed when one compares his encounter with the Beast with the encounter homologous to it: the encounter between Ginzburg and the SS interrogator Fritz Orf. The "aesthetic pleasure" Orf gets from using his tools of torture is tied directly to the objective certainty he thinks he is getting from the screams of his victims. Orf views his work as Art because it has all the properties of Aristotelian theatre (e.g. "fixed rules of interrogation," "predictable stages and moments of tension and climax," catharsis). Strictly speaking, the enjoyment he gets from his work lies not in the actual suffering of his subjects (he himself says as much), but from the formal enjoyment of his trade, its ability to eliminate difference. His affinity for electrodes attached to the sex organ and nipples of his prisoners suggests as much: "torture made everyone alike in the end" (319). What Orf imagines he has gained access to is the enigmatic kernel of the Other--"the truth about the people behind the posters," the "real" Jew. The Jew, for Orf and for the Nazis in general, was the body which materialized otherness of the Other. When Ginzburg answers Orf's first question, "Who are
you?" with the question, "Who am I?," Orf can barely contain his pleasure now that someone else, too, is interested in finally "knowing" who the Jew is. That the extermination of the Jews only intensified for the Nazis the un-knowable quality of the Jew--hadn't they been "told" again and again who the Jew was?--uncovers the extent to which even murder isn't enough to eliminate the feeling of instability which drives one to murder. Even in victory, the Nazi would search for the "last Jew" after his/her death.8 As Ginzburg's question survives the worst imaginable torture, the split between German and Jew (and the split within Orf himself) is revealed as indissolvable. Here, the real reasons underlying Orf's behavior are exposed. The paranoid construction rather than Sartrean nausea: "He [Orf] lifted Ginzburg up and supported him till he could stand on his feet. This took quite a while, and the touch of the Jew was almost unbearable" (322). What is unbearable is the fact that no answer to the question is forthcoming. Ginzburg's answer is in fact the answer, insofar as its idiotic repetition keeps the question a question. The only answer to the question "Who am I?" is the one which forever postpones a definitive response, the one which cannot produce the Other who would say: You are. . . .

The link between Momik and Orf is not un-intentional.

8It is thus the case that even after the last Jew's death, the German Nazi would still experience the "loss of the real." More Jews would have to be invented in order to locate the enjoyment the German Nazi still experiences as lacking, the enjoyment "stolen" from him. This is why the surest way to undo the anti-semitic construction of the Jew is to insist that the Jew, too, has no real relation to his/her enjoyment--i.e., the Real Jew does not exist.
But there is a middle term: Momik's parents. Their silence (i.e. their trying-so-hard-not-to-talk-about-it) is not just the result of fear and horror in the face of a particular experience of the Holocaust--the loss of a son, for example--but with the fear and horror that they no more "possess" history than the hedgehogs and ravens and cats and suitcases their son has been collecting in their cellar. One way they have of owning history lies in their obsession with the catastrophic. This is clear not just in the Mother's response to Anshel's arrival ("Mama said... what happened? and the fat driver smiled a big fat smile and said, Nothing happened, why are always people expecting something happened" [5]), but in their suspicion of Momik's potential playmate (Alex Tochner), and in their furtive scouring of the house when they fear Momik has contracted polio. Related to this obsession is the silence they maintain about their past, about, in Momik's mother's words, "things that are no more and shouldn't be mentioned" (8). Only by keeping their history under lock and key are they sure that it is there. Their enjoyment lies in fortress building and in fortress maintenance--i.e. the guarded life. What becomes clear is that it is not so much the Holocaust that they are guarding, but rather their very status as guardians. When Momik actually enacts one of his father's childhood memories of the shtetl--lighting his way home with a radish and a candlestick--his father reacts by swatting the candle to the ground and saying, "Enough of this nonsense" (63); here, he doesn't know the truth of what he utters: violence is always
directed at the non-sensical, at that which exposes essential experience not as something real but as something performed. By refusing to engage the trauma of their past, however, they replicate the paranoia responsible for that trauma in the first place. This is, for Grossman, how the Holocaust continues, how history is transmitted. For Momik's parents, the Nazis are the otherness of the Other, which is exactly what they communicate to their son instead of something about the nature of love.

To his own son, Momik, it appears, communicates something similar. His relations with Yariv are the exact inverse of his parents' relations with him in terms of the particular historical contents he transmits. On the level of form, however, they are identical. If for Momik's parents, Fate was something vague and terrible and not to be mentioned, for Momik, there is no limit to its actual manifestations, no scene irrelevant to the preparation for its arrival. Foregrounding the violence and cruelty of the world, Momik trains his son for war in order to certify that there is a method to history's madness. The traumatization of his son on the playground is but part of a fantasy of wholeness in which every eventuality might be accounted for. (With his son wailing at the top of the slide, Momik wonders how, if they were caught in a bunker with soldiers looking for them, he would have to shut him up.) If Yariv is to know anything, Momik imagines, he is to know the Law of history—a substantial Law that protects one from ever having to experience the problem of love's contingency and finitude.
If violence is, indeed, the way of the world, then violence need be the only thing that structures Momik's relations with his son.\(^9\) The embrace of this substantial Law performs a sense-giving function for a number of nonsensical factors. For one thing, it retroactively underwrites a way of coping with the "obedient" march of the victims to their death--i.e., in Momik's view, the so-called "sheep led to slaughter" were simply ignorant of the Law, and for Momik, this isn't a mistake that's going to be made twice.\(^10\) For another thing, it guarantees that which is impossible to guarantee: Momik's "protection" of his son, the complete elimination of fear in the core of Yariv's being (which is really a projection of Momik's own fear), as if the effects of an eruption of the

\(^9\)In one of Momik's conversations with Ruth, this motive becomes clear: "you have to train him for war. I told her this once, before he was born, if I ever had a child, the first thing I would do in the morning would be to slap his face. Just like that. So he'll know there's no justice in this world, only strife [. . . .] Ruth said, Someday he'll slap you back, how will you feel then? And I said, I'll feel great. I'll know I've prepared my son for life. And she said, But he may not love you for it much. Love, I sneered maliciously, I prefer a living son to a loving son" (148).

\(^10\)In this context, Terence Des Pres' important book, The Survivor, might, in the last instance, be symptomatic of a similar retroactive coping gesture. If Momik's way of dealing is to identify implicitly a fundamental ignorance, a fundamental passivity, in the victims, Des Pres tries to "save" the survivors (and some who died) by making survival itself an active process. (This rescue is in response to the ill-informed critiques of Bruno Bettelheim in The Informed Heart and elsewhere.) It is surely not the case that acts of resistance/surviving should go unrecorded; only that the danger of deploying the category of the survivor lies in it becoming a way of retroactively ordering what was for the victims the most contingent and "un-real" of experiences (e.g. the transport and arrival, hunger, thirst, commands in a foreign language). The point is that the experience of the victims only retroactively appears as either passive ("sheep-like") or active ("surviving"). Our trauma lies in recognizing the unsymbolizable real that the victims experienced, for which these conceptions attempt to stand.
traumatic real were really only a matter of preparation. Momik is constantly "getting ready," so that when (he says) the convoys come again, "unlike the rest of you, I will not be shocked or humiliated. And I won't suffer the pains of separation" (151). This is, of course, a goal never reached—or reached only at the cost of all attachment. Only the individual who attaches himself to no one elides the possibility of this pain. The Law thus becomes a way of avoiding the contingency of attachment, the feeling he gets, for instance, at the sight of his son sleeping peacefully:

Evening. Yariv is asleep already and I go in to look at him. He's lying on his back. I feel shivers up my spine. 'You feel it, too?' asks Ruth quietly, and her face fills the room with pleasure. I want to say something nice to her, to make her happy, to show her that I really do care for him, but my throat contracts. 'It's a good thing he can sleep through all the noise,' I say finally. 'He may have to sleep with tanks passing in the streets someday. Or on his feet, trudging through the snow. Or in a crowded cell block maybe, with ten more like him to a bunk. Or on a--' 'Stop it,' says Ruth, and leaves the room. (149)

If Momik's feeling of tenderness places him on shaky ground, he must for this reason refer this feeling to what is certain: a conception of human history and existence as but an endless cycle of violence and killing, in Momik's words, "a death machine" (151). But this scene, in fact, testifies

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to the truth of Ruth's diagnosis: "it isn't places you fear, it's people" (150). And what he fears about them is what he cannot know: what they want from him, their desire. Throughout the novel, this question dominates Momik's actions: what does the Beast want of me? What do my parents want from me? what does Schulz/the Sea want of me? what does Wasserman want of me? And all of his attempts to answer this question are attempts to discover a consistency, a self-identity, to his desire. If it is the case that Momik takes on fascist characteristics, it should be plain that this involves more than pure "identification with the aggressor." Grossman indicates, on the contrary, that the real point of "identification with the aggressor" lies beyond the aggressor: it is an identification with the unmediated relation the aggressor is believed to have a propos his desire.

Orf's torture, Momik's parents' silence, Momik's raising of the Nazi Beast, Momik's own parenting--all are part of the duplication and re-duplication of paranoia that Grossman sees as perpetuating the violence of history. The intent of See

"Parental inability to endure this impasse does not go unnoticed by children, but is projected onto them. In this context, we might understand one of the more poignant dimensions to Momik's relations with his parents--his "fake" dreams in front of them: "Sometimes they come into his room at night and stand next to his bed. They just want to take one last look at him before they start with the nightmares. That's when Momik strains every muscle to look as if he's asleep, to look like a healthy, happy boy, just as cheerful as he can, always smiling... and sometimes he has a really Einsteinian idea, like when he pretends to be talking in his sleep and says, Kick it to me, Joe, we're going to win this game, Danny, and things like that to make them happy... all to make them understand that they didn't have to get so upset, they didn't have to waste their fears on him or anything" (51). In pretending normalcy, Momik tries to "fill out" his parents' desire.
Under: Love, of course, is to present these paranoid encounters for the purpose of arresting the cycle which oversees their reproduction: so that the Holocaust does not survive in the form of thinking responsible for it in the first place, so that History does not become the perpetuation of the fascist fantasy, so that one does not begin to think and act as if there really were an essence to the otherness of the other and of oneself. Momik's later realization vis-à-vis the Little Nazi In You (LNIY) makes this clear: the real problem, the disease, lies much deeper. And it may be incurable. and it could be that we are all no more than germs. And when here and there the LNIY is signaled, could it be that this is only a sly and cowardly act of blackmail, the goal of which is to reach a general consensus about the things it is convenient and easy to agree upon? That is, to fight whatever can be fought? (292)
The negating of paranoia would seem to lie in the refusal to agree to fight whatever can be found to fight, the refusal to believe in the substantiality of the object of one's pursuit. This is the lesson of the White Room of See Under: Love where the missing body of history cannot be recovered. Grossman's refusal of objective omniscience--his "postmodern" disavowal of the seamless relation between writer and character--pertains to this body. This refusal is decisive for the novel's radical insight because in the narrative breakdowns that ensue, the fantasmatic quality of this body facilitates a kind of return of the repressed: the
anguishing immediacy of the writing scene itself is exposed as that which artistic Form, and the finished work of art it unveils, attempts too often to solve. Like Lanzmann, Grossman repudiates the point of view of God. But this does not, as in the case of D. M. Thomas, lead to a perspectival multiplicity that will admit the "success" of a paranoid pursuit--the re-acquisition of the lost, ultimate object--as one of a series of possible realities. On the contrary, for Grossman, the reasons for rejecting the point of view of God apply as well to any merely "subjective" perspective. The real is not possible within symbolization, whether or not that symbolization comes within a framework of omniscience or a framework of multiple points of view. This is why even within the multiple stories of Grossman's novel breakdown occurs, why an investment in character and plot is consistently interrupted.

Symbolization is not for Grossman the ultimate province of memory. Indeed, in See Under: Love the White Room is the place where one "remembers in the real"--i.e., where consciousness arrests its flow of thoughts in order to grasp that very flow itself, and where one is confronted by the realization that the task of art can no longer be to unearth the missing bodies of history. Again like Lanzmann, Grossman is less interested in what is true and what is false because such questions presuppose the consistency of the social order in which those objects have meaning. What matters instead is the real. Momik's painful realization vis-a-vis the White Room in the next to last break of the "Wasserman" section
makes this clear:

In the White Room there are efficient ways to investigate such questions: if something is written down on paper, and must be weighed in order to ascertain whether it is true or not, then a certain person is clearly on the wrong track. But if the procedure is such that it is enough for a certain pair of eyes to close in order for consciousness to return and for a clear reflection to appear on the mirror of the inner eye without recourse to rational intervention--herein lies the fulfillment of the capricious, physio-literary demands of the White Room. (287-88)

The White Room denies recourse to rational intervention, for such intervention re-invests art with purely symbolic tasks. Rational intervention carries with it rules of knowledge all its own. But as "home" to that which is radically Other, the White Room contravenes such rules; there, rational consciousness is eclipsed. In the White Room one does not remember the trauma, one repeats it "for real"--which is why one faces such terror in approaching it. The terror lies in the fact that it is not memory (i.e. particular contents) that is feared as much as its sacrifice--i.e., not memory in the symbolic but memory "in the real." "To enter the White Room," Momik says during an announced postponement of the novel, "a certain amount of forgetfulness and sacrifice is required of one. But again and again the mysterious warning voices were heard: Get out of here. The White Room is too
dangerous for you" (278). In the White Room no language is spoken; the word that precedes it is for this reason BEWARE. The White Room is where the Other does not exist: it is the origin of time.

III.

Momik's imaginative recovery of Bruno Schulz attempts to discover the path to precisely this origin. It is an origin, however, where a language might still be spoken. Schulz's writings for this reason form the perfect companion for Grossman's novel: they explore the possibility of grasping the real of time itself as it pertains to the achievement of full identity. Father's "experiments" in Schulz's The Street of Crocodiles and Joseph's paintings in "The Age of Genius" (in Schulz's Sanitorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass) both attempt to solve the breach between the life one imagines and the life one actually lives. The similarity of such figures to Momik are clear: the Father, figured as king who has lost his throne, and Joseph, the artist who "should have been born earlier" are both the dispossessed, locked in the prison-house of human time, divided from an Over There believed to have the power to reverse such dispossession. For having created these characters, Schulz is a potential key to Momik's understanding his "unlived life Over There," because both of Schulz's protagonists attempt to recover lost origins: both attempt a regression back to the point of a primary trauma, or at least one they imagine as primary.

This is the motive driving Father's laboratory work on Uncle
Edward in "The Comet"—the final story of *The Street of Crocodiles* in which the latter is "reduced" to his core in order to escape the happy/unhappy dichotomy; and it underwrites as well Joseph's discovery of "illegal and suspect" branches of time that give us access to "illegal" events.

The suggestion of criminality here is apt because what Schulz seems to be driving at is an artistic act, or an artistic age, that would contravene the everyday sense of time and its control of historical events--driving instead toward the "real" or "messianic" time of those very events. Indeed, Schulz's narrator, in the opening paragraphs of "The Age of Genius," seems to paraphrase Benjamin's "Theses":

> Ordinary facts are arranged within time, strung along its length as on a thread. There they have their antecedents, and their consequences, which crowd tightly together and press hard one upon the other without any pause. This has its importance for any narrative, of which continuity and successiveness are the soul.

Yet what is to be done with events that have no place of their own in time; events that have occurred too late, after the whole of time has been distributed, divided, and allotted; events that have been left in the cold, unregistered, hanging in the air, homeless, and errant?

Could it be that time is too narrow for all events? (14)
It was Benjamin, of course, who said that history's sequence of events could not be charted like the beads of a rosary, that history would have to be "brushed against the grain" in order to create a space for the most significant of historical events. The appeal of this enterprise for Momik should not be difficult to detect. Schulz's recognition that the ordinary arrangement of facts is utterly inadequate in the attempt to know what is real is the same recognition that motivates Momik's acts of recovery in each of the novel's first three sections. Moreover, when this recognition is grasped on the level of artistic form itself, the result is an Encyclopedia—a form that repudiates the narrative "thread" by foregrounding the empty space between entries (a space that is not-time) in order to prevent antecedents and consequences from pressing upon one another without pause.2

Because of these very regressions, however, Bruno is for Momik more than just an "invitation"; he is also a "warning." This is so because Schulz's "Age of Genius," and his lost manuscript The Messiah, do not just promise a world disabused of history, a world in which time might be re-distributed so that artists need not traffic in "illegal branches" of it; they demand that one begin to ask the question of "I" that is separate from any essential collectivity. The "Age of Genius" and The Messiah, in other words, invite Momik to

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2 The obvious analogous project centers around Sergei's "Prometheus" machine—the optical system Aaron Marcus sets up. The goal of the machine, the circular arrangement of mirrors, is to isolate a dimension of non-time. Sergei's goal is to try to eradicate suffering and joy, and to do it, he must change the metaphysical status of human beings—i.e. "turn them into the only living creatures existing in the dimension of space but not time" (407).
imagine his overcoming of historical situatedness by becoming truly individual: but for a man encouraged by his parents never to say "I" too freely, this is also an invitation that frightens.

This two-fold function of Schulz is for Grossman both his value and his limitation. First, Bruno is one who might teach Momik how to constitute himself as subject in a manner different from the paranoid construction of the real Jew that led him to war in the novel's first section. Schulz's own life is evidence of this. As the gifted pupil without friends, the "hypersensitive child, struggling against foes [one] can't begin to imagine" (93), as the inventor of his own language and private mythology (these are just a few of the parallels to Momik's life), Schulz is the artist who in his separation from the socius testifies to a way of thinking and being that makes contact with that dimension of our experience which is intimate with irretrievable, irreversible loss. Schulz's self-understanding explodes any contract between the artist and the socius; he is, as Momik says of Munch, the artist who "turns traitor," the one whose "dangerous passions" must be--like "The Scream" in the art gallery at Danzig--cordoned off with a red sign warning, "DO NOT TOUCH." ("Idiots," Momik says. "They should have protected the public from the painting, not the other way around" [90].) This is, as Momik recognizes, one way the socius has of "cordoning" off the work of art. The work is "cherished": "the scream bursts rudely into your midst [. . .] and they loved Munch all the more!" (92). In this
way, the work of the genuine artist is deprived of its disruptive, "illegal" force: what should sunder community in fact works to consolidate it. In the guise of altruism, the artist is one who is always being "looked after"; from this gaze, Schulz too lies in danger:

Bruno is still running. . . . Look after him, for his sake, and for ours. Don’t let his dangerous passions tempt him to forgo your trusty, threadbare words. Do not allow him to write in body code, to a rhythm unmeasured by clock or metronome. And for heaven’s sake, don’t let him talk to himself in that unintelligible language. . . (92)

In Schulz is the artistic consciousness that refuses the conventional forms of mediating one’s trauma, the jovial clap on the shoulder at a party and the advice to "come out of your isolation and feel 'the pulse of humanity,' the 'sorrows of life,' don't be such a hermit" (138). Schulz was, we learn, the recipient of such counsel, but his manner of mediating trauma was a form that sought not to mitigate it—the development of a rhythm and a parallel time in order to express the trauma of the contingency of our relations with history. The trauma of the real is thus approached by Schulz in a kind of "rhythm," in the creation of an "unreal" time:

Have you ever heard of parallel streams of time within a two-track time? Yes, there are such branches of time, somewhat illegal and suspect, but when, like us, one is burdened with contraband of supernumerary events that cannot be registered, one
cannot be too fussy. Let us try to find at some point of history such a branch line, a blind track onto which to shunt these illegal events ("The Age of Genuis" 14)

For Schulz, Munch's painting is such a branch line; for Momik, it is Munch's painting and Schulz's response to it. In this way, Momik joins the group of "weak links"--those who touch this branch line, and whose sense of loss only grows deeper.

This engagement with the "branch line" is thus a sign of Schulz's refusal to disburden himself of artistic insight and despair. His kiss of Munch's painting for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation equates this insight and despair with breathing itself. Schulz's despair, the Sea tells us, is not the commonplace despair that can be solved by insanity or by fellowship. Bruno does "cheat" and pretend at the latter--at parties and in lectures and letters13--but his despair is much more individual and existential. Bruno's despair stems from the otherness that exists within himself, and that cannot be mastered:

the fear of the abyss between one minute and the next, and of what he would discover on the page after it was touched by his magical magnetic pen, which sucked up the magma of ancient truth, that

13In the words of the Sea, "My Bruno was too honest for the suicide-insanity routine, and he could not dissolve his loneliness in the crowd because he knew the crowd offered no haven from imminent danger. He would have to keep to himself, sit in his chair, abandoning himself to his razor-keen awareness and the two big searchlights--longing and despair--converging in his head, and to bear the mark of Cain on endless wanderings" (138)
rose steadily upward through layers of caution and 
self-defense--and then he would stop and scream in 
fear, because what he had written seemed to come 
from somebody else. (137)

At this stage, the content of Schulz's prose is not enough to 
ensure self-possession because that content is still 
separated from the real that is beyond words. This is why 
Schulz says that his books are merely the scaffolding that 
surrounds a "creature unknown." As artist, Bruno recognizes 
that the life he lives has not really been his: "People 
lived by robbing each other's lives. Before the war, they had 
at least shown some tact, taking care not to inflict more 
pain than necessary, with a sense of humor, in fact, but 
nowadays nobody even made an effort to pretend" (94). That 
this situation has come to constitute normal, everyday life 
is for the artist part of a horrible fathomless boredom that 
the work of art must violently uproot. Those who would 
"cherish thine artist" only serve to perpetuate this boredom, 
and for this reason, community becomes one of the things the 
artist fears most. As Momik says after the imagined scene of 
Bruno kissing Munch's painting, "Bruno fears neither the SS 
nor the Polish police, his latest persecutors. He fears only 
the great searchlights that converge inside and chastise him 
to be-like-everybody-else, to live the grey life he can never 
redeem with a touch of his pen" (90). In his utter 
loneliness, Bruno represents the kind of individual life 
Momik can only imagine vicariously--with a combination of
envy and pride: "Even the dual was too plural for you, and the truly crucial things had to be said in the singular. So you became a salmon" (165).

The real historical murder of Bruno Schulz in the Drohobycz ghetto in 1942 here takes on significance, because the Holocaust threatens to envelope Schulz in the fate he most feared: mass life and mass death. This is one of the dimensions of the Holocaust that has so traumatized Momik in his relation to the Event. How is one to be individual in the face of the phenomenon that robs one of individuality? This question is the one driving Momik's reasons for trying to recover Schulz:

the horrible thing for me about the Holocaust is the way every trace of individuality was obliterated. A person's uniqueness, his thoughts, his past, his characteristics, loves, defects, and secrets--all meant nothing. You were debased to the lowest level of existence. You were nothing but flesh and blood. It drives me mad. That's why I wrote 'Bruno.' (153)

If it was the Holocaust that obliterated every trace of individuality, it is Schulz who sees the process as beginning earlier--antecedent to language itself: "He heard the rumbling long before anyone else heard it [. . . .] He guessed everything before it happened" (167). Schulz has heard of or guessed the murder at the core of our existence as creatures of language, an "originary violence" that

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Derrida calls "the mystical foundation of law." For Derrida, this founding or revolutionary moment of law is an instance of non-law—i.e., it is without sense, it is a purely performative act that does not have to answer to or before anyone. Far from something to bemoan, this originary act founds the whole of our symbolic world: it founds the differential relation upon which language is staked. It is just this founding violence, however, that Schulz wants to do away with. For this reason, Schulz too models the paranoid response to the split between symbolic and real. Schulz, we learn, wanted to murder language when he was the object of its "originary violence," because he sees no difference between this violence and the violence that actually took his life:

even when Bruno was a little boy he understood this, yes, and he longed not merely for a new world but for a totally new language that would enable him to describe it, because even then, long before he came to me, he guessed [. . . .] Bruno, sensitive as he was, had guessed everything years before it actually happened. And for that reason, perhaps, he had begun to write, to train himself in the new language and the new grammar. He understood humanity and knew; he heard the rumbling

"Derrida makes the point that will be developed more fully in the discussion of the "Encyclopedia" section below—i.e., that because the Law is the result of a purely performative, senseless act, its essential integrity is undermined by its very existence. As Derrida puts it, "There is something decayed or rotten in law, which condemns it or ruins it in advance. Law is condemned, ruined, in ruins, ruinous" (39)."
long before anyone else heard it. He had always been the weak link. Yes. He knew that a language that will admit a sentence like 'I killed your Jew... In that case, I will now kill,' etc., a language where such verbal constructs do not turn to poison in the speaker’s mouth— is not the language of life, human and moral, but a language infiltrated many ages past by evil traitors, with one intention—to kill. (168)

Bruno’s mistake lies in seeing the capacity of human speech to admit sentences like "I killed your Jew" as a continuation of the corruption of language rather than as the attempt in fact to eliminate that corruption. In other words, when SS officer Karl Gunther shot Bruno Schulz and then said to the man for whom Schulz worked as a "House Jew," SS officer Felix Landau, "I killed your Jew," he is not merely perpetuating that "originary violence" which separates words from things; on the contrary, he is maintaining the essentiality of the Law currently structuring human relations. Unlike the senslessness of "originary violence"—which by its very senslessness is founding and creative— Gunther's act is retributive and as such conservative: it is violence with a ground.

The lessons here for Momik are many—and risky. To write in body code, and to rhythms unmeasured by clock or metronome, is to begin to engage a place in one’s experience with which there can be no compromise. For Momik, this would mean regressing all the way back to the point of the crucial
affective recognition and repression:

I had been deeply immersed in 'it' almost from the moment I was born, from the moment I began to despair and relate to people as self-understood, when I stopped trying to invent a special language for them, with new names for every object. And from the moment I stopped being able to say 'I' without hearing a tinny echo of 'we.' And I did something to protect myself from the pain of other people, from other people. And I refused to maim myself: to become lidless and see all. (296)

It is from this point on that Momik has lived the guarded life. The "thin-lipped" style of his four books of poetry testify to this fact. And it's also the obstacle to a more authentic relation to the Holocaust: the inability to concretize the individual death in the sea of the millions. Bruno's "escape," in the special sense that Momik gives to that word, is a sign of Momik's movement toward a conceptualization of the individual's relation to the Holocaust.

And yet this "escape" is also Bruno's limitation. The very questions Schulz encourages one to ask are also the questions that might lead one to believe in the substantiality of the parallel time, to over-invest in the lost work: to believe that it actually contains the great secret: "I want the big secret from you and I won't take anything else" (168). Schulz, Momik imagines, has formulated a "final conclusion, the marrow of our existence" (169).
These claims suggest a re-application of the kind of paranoia that marked Momik's youth. If in the first section we saw Momik trying to raise a Monster, we see him here trying to raise a Savior. (It is no accident here that in the "Bruno" section, Schulz and the Sea are indissoluble because both function for Momik as repositories of primeval/primordial forces. Both are imagined to share a pure relation to language and to time.) The apparent allure of Schulz's envisioned Age of Genuis then would lie in the fact that the very possibility of paranoia has no place in it, for all Otherness has therein been eliminated. The Age of Genius would be a world without neurosis because, in it, there is no dissatisfaction. In this vision of the world, no one would need to materialize that "excess" or "surplus" that plagues our relations in the world because there will be no Otherness experienced anxiously. This is clear first in Schulz's story "The Age of Genius," when on a beautiful, Easter-time, spring day, Shloma, just released from a winter in prison for "brawls and follies" (i.e. "wars") finds himself alone with the artist Joseph in Trinity Square. Alone, Joseph imagines the possibility of the Messiah's arrival:

We could have divided it between us and renamed it, so open, unprotected, and unattached was the world. On such a day the Messiah advances to the edge of the horizon and looks down on the earth. And when He sees it, white, silent, surrounded by azure and contemplation, He may lose sight of the boundary of the clouds that arrange themselves into a passage,
and, not knowing what He is doing, He may descend upon earth. And in its reverie the earth won't even notice Him, who has descended onto its roads, and people will wake up from their afternoon nap remembering nothing. The whole event will be rubbed out, and everything will be as it has been for centuries, as it was before history began. (21)

In this vision of Schulz's narrator, there will be no more mass life or mass death, no change, only true individuals without the ability to say words like "murder" because the word is contrary to the most basic precepts of life. Schulz, with his Promethean-like Messiah, here perfectly represents the romantic conception and recovery of language: words return to their roots, to their presupposed Original Sense. There is no division between signifier and signified:

And not only the thought of murder, my Shloma: any thought bearing the bitter traces of decay and putrefaction, destruction and fear. No one will be able to understand such thoughts, just as in the old world you could never really understand a person coming back to life, or the backward flow of time. Because I am speaking to you about a totally different life, about the coming phase of human evolution. (179)

Bruno's words appear here in Momik's re-writing of Schulz's story, and this time Joseph's companion, "Shloma" (i.e., Momik, whose adult name is Shlomo), will not miss the moment of the arrival of the Real Thing. (In Schulz's story in the
Sanitorium collection, Shloma refuses the role of the New Adam, looking away from Joseph's discovery of "The Original", and instead to the patent leather shoe of Adela, the servant girl.) It is precisely this grasping of the Thing that eliminates time, and returns the world to some realizable primordial unity. Individuals become truly individual. Schulz, however, has radically underestimated the cost of this realization, because for the individual to remain in and for language, the moment of the Messiah must be missed. In this recovery, Grossman reveals the Messiah to Momik for what it is: an encounter with the Real carried too far, an encounter that merely recapitulates the paranoia that marks his relations with history. At the end of time and of language, in the return to a pre-historic or pre-verbal existence, Bruno imagines a world returned to art: "We are all artists, Shlomo, only some of us have forgotten that" (180). And those too afraid to become creators, who cannot understand their call, are disintegrated; they are, for Bruno, "second-hand souls"--those who cannot bear the freedom the Messiah delivers, "the chance to live anew" (177), those who must die because they never really were alive.

The problem with all of this is clear, and it is registered in Momik's reaction. This notion of art begins to strike Momik as barbaric.15 The "freedom" imagined in this

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15 It might be important to note the parallel between Bruno's notions of return and Nazi readings of Nietzsche, in particular the Nazis' use of Nietzsche's claim in Will to Power that "The great majority of men have no right to existence, but are a misfortune to higher men" (872). The flaw in Bruno's thinking--and in most conceptions of a Messianic return--is that one can in fact be "really alive," i.e., really in full possession of themselves, etc., during the time of the Messiah.
recovery has an immediate appeal ("otherwise we're statues trapped from birth till death" [177]), but the appeal is inseparable from a kind of terror. The Messiah performs nothing if not the task of the dictator, delivering to them control over the real of their beings: "The fact of their existence had suddenly become a palpable reality to them [. . . .] Life itself was pungent, a provocative pleasure" (178).

In Bruno's imagined conception, "creation in the fullest sense of the term" eliminates history. There is no longing for the past, but there's no remembering of it either ("They're forgetting," Bruno beamed. "They're forgetting!") [172].) Only Momik here understands the implications:

my thoughts turned gloomy. Why, in fact, it had failed already, it had all been a colossal disappointment, and no force in the world could prevent these things from being used for the vilest ends. And I asked myself in a rage, were Roosevelt and Churchill the 'good'? Against evil we pit our tanks and planes and submarines, and we set up a different evil. (179)

The point to be made about the Messiah is that if we are in fact to go beyond good and evil, we will have to go beyond symbolization. Any promise of a harmonious community always involves the sort of violence Joseph's scenario contains. (Communist violence was for this very reason inevitable.)

The encounter with that which would give us full being must be a missed encounter. The "Original" hinted at in Schulz's story cannot be reproduced--not without suggesting that the
paranoiac is in fact correct: that the real can be accessed within language, that the human community might again enjoy a pure relation to objects, an unmediated relation between words and things. In the re-telling, Schulz is not just one who thinks that there’s an other to the Other, he believes he’s actually found it. He believes that a world, a reality, can survive the reversal of the fundamental deception practiced by the symbolic order.

Thus, Bruno as embodiment of the artistic subject—"The power of his ning was good for a shoal of one only" (161-62)—is an embodiment Momik must incorporate and surpass. The options might be as Bruno describes them—the Messiah or prison—but there is more than one way of living in prison, and it is, besides, the only place in which one actually has a social identity. Messianic time is not the time of the object, no more than a nine-year-old boy can raise the Nazi Beast in his cellar. Time, or storytelling, is too narrow for all events, and must—for us to have time or storytelling at all—remain so. This is precisely why Momik cannot apply Bruno to the story of Baby Kazik in the "Wasserman" section: were he to do so, there would be literally no story. The story exists only insofar as there are obstacles that stand in the way of its completion. Momik voices this realization: Bruno doesn’t solve a thing for me in the day-to-day. Bruno is a nice dream. But he’s more than that too. What he revealed to me was very frightening, and I felt a tremendous resistance to it. I can feel it even now, when I get stuck in
the story of Wasserman and the German. I feel I have to defend myself against what Bruno showed me.

(153-54)

The way of Bruno Schulz must ultimately be negated for that way appears most horrifying of all: both story and subject risk a suffocating immersion in the oceanic. In losing that which prevents us from gaining true possession of ourselves—from being truly human and artist—we lose our individuality altogether. How does one, then, tell the story without, literally, losing one’s self? This is the question that interrupts Momik’s attempt to re-tell Grandfather Anshel’s last story.

IV.

The new artists (or "partisans") enlisted to help tell Wasserman’s story indicate exactly the extent to which full recovery of The Book, The Original, The Messiah, etc., is part of a paranoid project. Malkiel Zeidman, the biographer, is perhaps the best demonstrator of this, for what Zeidman makes clear is that the "real" link between book and history would produce a book that cannot be read. An obstacle is a strict necessity for there to be a story at all. Overcoming the barriers between people, Zeidman is the site where the impossible occurs: genuine intersubjective relations. Zeidman is in some ways the Book every book desires to be, within himself able to experience the Other’s feeling as the Other feels it:
I at least can wander freely... contain everyone... send a wordless greeting at least... I am a hostel of sorts, the mute translator of numerous strange languages, because they can say the words, for instance 'misery' and 'agony,' 'hope' and 'longing,' ah, but only I know what you mean by them [. . .] only inside me do they acknowledge themselves to each other in all their depth... A dictionary I have become, a person-to-person dictionary, but there is no one to read me, because I myself am not able to read, I am only the pages. (344)

Zeidman's initial articulation of the positive benefits of his ability---"increasing in however small measure the love and compassion that exists between people, because, well, we are all so lonely, locked up in our boxes, deaf and dumb and blind all" (344)---echoes a conception of art, wherein the ability of a writer to know his characters from the inside is presupposed. "We have to know others!" Zeidman says, "From the inside!" (340). For Zeidman, there is no discrepancy between himself and the people his art is able to invade, no uncertainty as to what these people want from him. The crucial exception, however, are the Nazis guarding the Warsaw ghetto; in radical evil, Zeidman encounters a force that cannot be incorporated into his purely literary world, the hard kernel of the real that resists symbolization. This hard kernel does more than just undermine his claim to have achieved intersubjective relations---the foundation of
traditional fiction and its authorial investment in character—it also establishes itself as the thing upon which the readability of a book depends. Zeidman confesses as much when he admits that as a truly intersubjective book, he is just mere pages, with no one to read him. In Zeidman, the representative of a form endowed a priori with the ability to capture the life of Others, Grossman articulates the problem of Momik’s childhood, the problem that drives his appeal to Bruno Schulz, the problem that comes to a climax in the "Wasserman" section: the impossibility of intersubjective relations between character and writer, and character and reader. What Zeidman reveals is that an art staked on the achievement of these relations betrays its own very conditions of possibility. Such an art, strictly speaking, would have no audience. The novel about the Holocaust that actually captured the Holocaust’s Otherness would have no readers to read it.

This explains the struggle for authority between Wasserman and Shlomo in the rendering of Wasserman’s tale told to Neigel. Wasserman’s "Children of the Heart" stories are stories imagined to be fully present to themselves. Wasserman’s empirical research is designed precisely to foster this illusion; the data he collects serves to authenticate the placement of his characters in the various historical situations in which they find themselves. In these moves, however, is Wasserman’s error: the concealing of an a priori assumption of intersubjectivity that underwrites his storytelling. This section of Grossman’s
novel, however, is not just a telling of Wasserman’s story, it is a retelling of it—and this gives Shlomo the space to reflect on the relation between writer and character, and the "beyond" of the character that is often the writer’s real source of identification and fascination. This fact is evident in Shlomo’s musing on the world of his own character: Anshel Wasserman lives totally in a world of words, which means, I imagine, that every word he utters or hears has for him a sensual quality which I cannot perceive. Is it possible, then, that the word 'supper' is enough to satisfy his hunger? That the word 'sore' cuts his flesh? That the word 'living' enlivens him? These thoughts, I admit, are a bit over my head. (283)

As a pure subject, Wasserman would enjoy a relation to language without rift. And yet the pure subject is one—by this time of the novel, after what Joseph has shown him in the "Bruno" section—Shlomo can only contemplate from a distance: it is not for-him. Between Wasserman and Shlomo there can be no intersubjective relation. For Grossman, the characters one creates are no different from the dead one cannot ever completely memorialize, or the baby son you bring in to the world. They are, in other words, another Other before whom Momik faces the question of all questions: what do you want from me? This question is so unsettling because it designates once again our crisis: when we cannot know their desire, we cannot know our own. This is nowhere more clear than in Shlomo’s sense that Wasserman has "tricked" him
by bringing baby Kazik into the story. The source of the novelist's anguish is crystallized in Shlomo's response to the trick: "I don't understand what the baby wants from me. It's hard enough with my first baby" (154). Narrative authority, for Grossman, is not that which permits the artist to steal with impunity across the frontiers of his characters. For the genuine artist, characters arise from the netherworld of the imagination carrying an inscrutable--and for that reason threatening--claim. Narrative authority cannot "read" this claim. Such authority only indentures the artist and the work of art within the symbolic, forestalling any contact with the inaccessible real.

To give the novel to Wasserman is to give oneself over to the illusion of intersubjectivity, and to the project at the core of this illusion: to infect oneself and one's audience, through the telling of a story, with humanity. This is Wasserman's project vis-à-vis Neigel, and it depends fundamentally on the illusion of a story capable of capturing the Otherness of history. Neigel's love of the simple story, and Wasserman's desire to "infect Neigel with humanity" are both part of a conception of art that seeks and carries out the integration of Otherness. This explains the fantastic popularity of Anshel Wasserman's children's stories. The intersubjective relation between writer and character caters precisely to a way of reading which wants to "identify" with the characters who carry out the greatest good in history. Unity of time and place and action fosters this identification, which is why such readers object to
violations thereof. (Neigel distinguishes himself as just this reader in his remark that "modern" writers are misanthropes, who have "ruined" Art.) In the intersubjective relation, no one cannot be known from the inside. In this aspect, the link between liberal humanism and fascism is once again illuminated: both desire the impossible community--i.e. the community in which consensus can be reached. To put this in other terms, we might say that both desire a central role in novels. That is to say, they want to be available to the full representational abilities of artists in order to represent themselves to themselves. This perhaps explains Neigel's--and then after Neigel's suicide, his assistant Staukeh's--desire to retain the storyteller as House Jew. In some sense, this desire to retain the Jew is analagous to gassing him. At stake is a representation of oneself that would confirm that you are who you think you are. The nightly story or the nightly transports can function as just this representation. The point is that even the murderers want to be presented fully--that's why they've murdered in the first place: their act of murder is an act which gives body to the other in themselves by externalizing, concentrating, and then exterminating that other. This explains Neigel's rebuke of Shlomo for having yet to take pains to present Neigel more fully in the story Shlomo is writing: "Isn't it true," Niegel asks his creator, Shlomo, at one point, "that writers are supposed to enter all the way into their characters?" (280).
Neigel's question here joins his conception of art with Wasserman's. Their differences notwithstanding—Neigel prefers a simple, entertaining story; Wasserman says there are no simple stories anymore—both share a formal belief in the ability of the story to survive, in the pure passion of telling and listening. In their desire for recognition and reputation, both indicate, as well, how impure such passions really are. Both believe in the learning that takes place when one "gets outside oneself"; this is precisely where Neigel wants to be in his tenure as camp commandant, and it is precisely where Wasserman leads him. The characters of Wasserman's story have aged, but their narrative, their "universal theme"—the triumph of good over evil—remains essentially the same. In the words of the serial's hero, Otto Brig, this is "the only war there is." For Wasserman, no discrepancy exists between the form of the Children of the Heart tales and the actual events of history. Armenians before their genocide, African-Americans during slavery, Navaho poverty, England's poor in the time of Robin Hood, even Beethoven—all are amenable to the serialized saga detailing the battle against "disaster, disease, and deformity, injustice, ignorance, and blight" (195-96). For Wasserman, "every meeting between two people is a wonder and a mystery" (199). The standard deconstructionist point bears repeating here for the truth is that Wasserman's "Children of the Heart" tales are as self-referential as the novel in which they have been placed. They are, quite simply, about the ability of the story to be adequate to, and to triumph
over, the realities of history. On the level of form, they answer the slogan repeated before each mission: Is the heart willing? The heart is willing. Come what may? Come what may.

These slogans only conceal, however, that what is to come has been decided a priori. It is this a priori that permits Wasserman to stage the defeat of evil in the world, but it also involves Wasserman in perpetuating that evil. Humanity is not a substance capable of being injected: it is that relation to lack which causes us to desire the injection in the first place. The humanist inventor of fairy-tales is here linked directly with the Nazi; both have "missions" to redeem the world that depend on the recovery of certain substances and the elimination of others. Liberal democratic programs aim at a substance crystallized around universal human rights. And the metaphors of Nazi ideology almost universally communicate the notion of Jew as substance--recall here Hitler's idea of the Jew as the tuberculosis of nations, and Goebbels likening of the task of the Third Reich to surgery. Both visions might be part of the same constellation containing Wasserman's storytelling purposes.

Consider this exchange between Wasserman and Neigel:

'Are certain passages--I mean--do you think any passages of the, um, soul might be reversible?'

'You can easily get rid of grief, of compassion, Herr Neigel, and the love of mankind, the wonderful capacity of fools to believe in mankind, in spite of everything. And the operation will be almost painless.' 'But can you bring them back again?'
asks Neigel, his eyes fixed on Wasserman. 'I hope so,' Wasserman replies, and to himself, or to me, he says these unintelligible words: 'After all, this is my mission, Shleimeleh, for this I am staging my comedy here.' (239)

Wasserman's transporting of the Children of the Heart to the Warsaw Ghetto is part of this positive "mission." The triumphant narrative of this story's form, for Wasserman, might still prevail. This is one of the reasons Shlomo must eventually declare war on his own character and the baby that character has introduced.

But it's not the only reason. This becomes clear when the liberal humanist and fascist part ways over the fate of the baby. Kazik's birth with Werner's syndrome (rapid aging) clashes with Neigel's commitment to an art that entertains and educates, but this is not enough to placate Shlomo. Wasserman's advice--write about the baby--provokes an outburst from Shlomo because the critical dimension of the novel transcends the particular fate of baby Kazik:

Write about the baby, Shleimeleh
No!!!
I screamed and threw off the soft, warm hand where the story streamed in torrents. I flung myself against the smooth white walls, across the pages of my notebook, at the mirror, at my soul--there was no way out. Everything was blocked. (297)

The insight Grossman develops in this exchange is this: the artistic attempt to tell the story of the Holocaust is not
primarily a matter of whether one chooses to focus on those who will die or those who will live. The point is not that Wasserman has the guts to "kill" baby Kazik whereas Neigel wants the baby not to be harmed and to be happy. This would make Grossman's writing of the "Wasserman" section the story of the "Children of the Heart" redux. It is instead that even in death, Momik doesn't know what Baby Kazik wants of him. Momik's declaration of war on Wasserman's story comes, with good reason, after Wasserman has already "decided"--through the plot device of rapid aging--that Kazik must be killed. What this indicates is that the nature of the dispute between Momik and Wasserman does not concern the fate of the baby. On the contrary, there is a dispute because for Momik the decision regarding Kazik's fate does nothing to address the fundamental uncertainty he occasions--an uncertainty that is fundamentally formal. The real struggle Grossman is demonstrating never concerned the particular dimension of Kazik's life--his survival or his death--but the approach of that life from the perspective of literary form and the question: What does this baby (alive or dead) want from me?16

The stories written by Anshel Wasserman and read avidly by children like Neigel are precisely those that repress this

16 For Lacan, of course, the formulation of this question is a sign that the subject is becoming true to his/her desire. It is, for Lacan, "the question of the Other which comes back from the place from which he expects an oracular reply" ("Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire" 312). It is at the level of Lacan's Che Vuoi? (i.e., What do you want?) that Grossman demonstrates the real predicament in its properly formal dimension. The disagreement between Wasserman and Neigel about the fate of the baby is a disagreement concerning content only.
question, those that acclimate the child to history as a stabilizing force. They communicate the idea of history as mission (Hitler is to the adult as Otto Brig is to the child: the perfect Father), and not as that which is utterly contingent, and therefore without "mission" (or progressive movement). Even in killing the baby, Wasserman's story is far from innocent, for it produces the unconscious enjoyment of knowing that history has been entrusted to someone. Otto Brig and his band become in this sense proto-Fuhrers. This is what Momik must learn in his recovery of Wasserman's story in order to negate once and for all his paranoid approach of history: he must tell the "end" of the story in a form that destroys this enjoyment. This time the object of Momik's pursuit--i.e., the Story--will not be rejected because it fails to capture the essence of the Other. On the contrary, the story is not rejected in favor of some other form that promises a real within symbolization. The fourth section of Grossman's novel signifies the arrest of this series of rejections. There, Momik does not reject the story of baby Kazik because a non-sensical signifier organizes it; instead, he takes up the non-sensicalness of that signifier and exaggerates it. The most arbitrary or "stupid" of principles--the alphabetization of random words and phrases--will order the telling of the story's events. The declaration of war on the story is, then, not at all like the declaration made against the Beast: it is a declaration of war against the declaration of war against the Beast, and the paranoid construction underwriting the second declaration.
Wasserman's Art attempts to put Neigel in touch with his imagination, in order to create a recognition of some essential human-ness. His diagnosis of Neigel makes this clear:

Your main problem Herr Neigel is that you never leave the confines of your own skin! After all, even the powers of the imagination need gymnastic exercise, else they wither and die, heaven forbid, like atrophied limbs. (232)

This is, however, a fundamental romantic misdiagnosis of Neigel's problem: the truth one arrives at when one "leaves one's own skin" does not have a meaning that is universal and ahistorical. On the contrary, it is linked concretely with the symbolic network of meanings in which such an act is inscribed. Thus, we might say that Neigel has in fact left the confines of his own skin every time he has pulled the trigger or supervised another incoming trainload to the crematoria. Neigel's problem is far from a simple sort of narcissism, or an atrophied imagination. He "leaves his own skin" for the same reason Wasserman encourages him, to identify at the deepest level of his being with a concrete Other—in this case the dictator of Nazi Germany who guarantees the consistency of his identity. A critique of Neigel must focus on the reward for this identification, not on perceived shortcomings of his imagination. The enjoyment Neigel gets is the enjoyment of acting on behalf of the figure who has robbed existence of its contingency: "I live in the new world, the future I was promised by the Fuhrer and
the Reich," Neigel says (237). It is at this level that Grossman directs his final undercutting of the Wassermanian mission--by linking the success of that mission with Niegel's vicious rape of his wife Christina. What Grossman suggests here is that in this rape, Wasserman's story has in fact reached the heart of Niegel--and there exposed and abetted its cruelty. Wasserman has told Neigel to carry the story within him, to make it his own, and Neigel has done just this. Wasserman thought he was imparting a nugget of humanity that would work toward positive ends; the heart is for him evidently incapable of being fundamentally rotten. This is his mistake. His story--and the hearts of its recipients as well--appear always at the mercy of the symbolic structure in which it is told. The point of attack, as the final section makes clear, is thus the symbolic structure itself, and its non-sensical character.

V.

The finite [. . .] has always to be maintained and made into an absolute.

--Hegel

The Encyclopedia form in which Momik elects to tell the story of baby Kazik is itself a way of making plain that the dispute between Momik and Wasserman does not concern the particular fate of the child. The dispute touches instead on the manner in which all narrative potentially partakes of paranoia, and of the possibility of a "real" relation to history within language. In each of the three quests that
that make up Grossman's novel, we have seen Momik's failure to produce and identify with those figures who would seem to contain the real of history. These failures have had the effect of revealing to us the fundamental finitude that dooms his efforts. As long as Momik is trying to symbolize these "real" figures, his project must fail because of this finitude: the real cannot be known within the symbolic, within the finite. A story, then--any story--is thus inseparable from the whole of the finite world (i.e., the symbolic structure) that sustains its meaning. And if Momik wants truly to open himself to the otherness he encounters in the fact of a little boy's death--of an individual victim of the Holocaust--it is at the level of this whole that this little boy's death will have to be faced. The finite is not, as Bruno Schulz might have maintained, what must be eliminated in order to encounter the real, but is rather, as Hegel suggests, to be maintained and made into an absolute. We have returned here to the Hegelian insights discussed at the close of the opening chapter. In opting for a form which overidentifies with its object, Momik would appear to have reached the point of absolute self-knowledge, which is, in the ultimate line of the Phenomenology, far from the experience of self-transparency or self-possession. Hegel writes, instead, that "the self-knowing Spirit knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit: to know one's limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself" (492).

This is, in fact, Momik's recognition and the crowning achievement of his formal decision in the last quarter of
Grossman's novel: his sacrifice is now no longer a process content to take place inside the realm of symbolization and for a nameable, symbolizable force. This sort of sacrifice, Momik has realized, must be given up because it appears always to be a way of conferring a substantial integrity upon the Law or Master which guarantees the consistency of our symbolic identities. If every sacrifice is for a something, then the order of signification—the order of the symbolic—truly is comprehensive. But if one sacrifices oneself for nothing, if that sacrifice cannot be accounted for, cannot be made sense of, then the symbolic is shown to be lacking. Holes in it become visible, and the order of the real emerges. When Hegel says that the self-knowing Spirit has learned "how to sacrifice oneself," he points in just this direction: knowing "how to sacrifice oneself" means sacrificing oneself not for any mere symbolic entity, but for the real itself. Momik's sacrifices, in the various declarations of war that occupy him for much of the novel—against the Beast, against the Sea, against Grandfather Anshel—appear, then, to mistake the "real" import of sacrifice as an ethical gesture. Sacrifice is an ethical position when it is nothing—i.e., death—that one is sacrificing oneself for.

By the end of the novel, Momik appears to have reached this ethical position: he seems to have grasped the manner in which his repeated "wars" have in fact met a decisive covert need. In the "Absolute Knowing" section of The Phenomenology, Hegel exposes this need: self-consciousness
does not wish to know the nothingness of the object, which is in fact knowledge of itself. Hegel calls this the "uncultivated consciousness" of religion, and claims that "not until consciousness has given up hope of overcoming that alienation in an external, i.e. alien, manner does it turn to itself, because the overcoming of that alienation is the return into self-consciousness; not until then does it turn to its own present world and discover it as its property" (488). The function of Momik's "wars," in other words, is to keep consciousness from taking itself as object, and to see that Absolute Knowledge is nothing but the movement—the restless process of the self superceding the self—in which consciousness takes itself as object. This is why the Subject, the "I," is for Hegel not a substance but rather a relation or an identity, which always indicates a lack of wholeness: "The 'I' is not merely the Self, but the identity of the Self with itself" (489; Hegel's emphasis). If Momik has before always named his "enemy," and in so doing kept himself from recognizing that the source of his conflicts lie in the deadlock of his self-alienating, self-identity, he now rightly sees that act, and the sacrificial economy that undergirds it, as a sign of the "little nazi" in every one of us: "the disease at the very root of our nature which we proliferate with every move. The Nazis merely outlined it and gave it a name, an army, workers, temples, and sacrificial victims" (296). For Momik, the Nazis only tapped into an already-extant willingness to participate in such sacrificial economies—economies that solve, for the human subject, the
impasse of absolute knowing, of the prospect of having to sacrifice oneself for nothing. It is, then, this willingness that must be engaged in the project of historical memory, and Momik engages it in a novel way--not by advancing a simple dismissal of sacrifice, but by exaggerating it to such an extent that its entire economy is unmasked and exposed to nothingness itself.

If the Nazi sacrifice may seem itself already sufficiently exaggerated--and did it not, indeed, result in the most horrible of consequences?--it is, for Momik, never more than the slave's sacrifice for the name of the Master. It is not "absolute" (in the Hegelian sense) because it is a sacrifice for something; it freezes the subject at the point where the essentiality of the Master's name is maintained. The Nazi sacrifice, in other words, is one colossal attempt to preserve the illusion that the symbolic is all. All of its activity--its work, its battles, its building of temples, its genocidal acts--points to this end. "The Complete Encyclopedia of Kazik's Life," however, represents a different sort of activity. The real war, Momik realizes, is against nothingness--it is against the experience of the White Room--and the others have been but attempts to occlude this fact. Wasserman's prayer on the final page of the novel, in this context, articulates the larger, formal message of Grossman's novel:

Wasserman raised his eyes to Niegel and said, 'All of us prayed for one thing: that he might end his life knowing nothing of war. Do you understand,
Herr Niegel? We asked for so little: for a man to live in this world from birth to death and know nothing of war." (452)

The war to which Wasserman refers resonates beyond the world war he survived, and to the paranoia that structured it. His prayer, then, appears as a prayer for the sort of artistic form in which he has ultimately landed—a form that has given up its belief in the essence of the alterity of the Other or of that kernel of non-sense to which we are subjected. "The Complete Encyclopedia of Kazik's Life," we might say, as a form that knows nothing of war, is an attempt to arrest the paranoid relations that drove the Holocaust itself, and that are handed down from the survivors to the second and third generations which inherit it: "He was finished in this war. This war was finished in him. There was nobody to fight for. For him it was over. He was dead now. He was ready for life" (297).

How is it that a kind of death readies one for life? This paradox is critical for an understanding of Momik's progression in See Under: Love, and an ethics of memory that seeks to "remember in the real"—i.e., that seeks to make us able to experience our death. What Momik comes to realize is that our very access to language entails a kind of death we cannot seek to escape. The Beast, The Messiah, the "eternal" story of Anshel Wasserman—these form the basis, as I have said, of such an escape, but this is not life, only the paranoid form of coping with it. To be "ready for life" is thus to fully assume the symbolic order's incompletion, and
to take on a project of memory whose object is not symbolizable. One's act of memory, in this context, would thus be a sacrifice for nothing, a sacrifice that would appear to make no sense. Is it not for this reason that the Reader's Preface to the "Encyclopedia" speaks of removing any and all tensions likely to create the "extraneous illusion of a purpose, as it were, at the root of all things, toward which all 'life' is supposed to flow" (304). Does not a similar "purposelessness" pertain to our act of reading an encyclopedia in its entirety—a work that is explicitly not a narrative? Purpose appears to be what the experience of reading an encyclopedically arranged story appears to lack: the very headings have been selected in the most arbitrary of ways, and our "reading on" is robbed of the enjoyment of believing that we are progressing toward some end (e.g., the "Reader's Preface" reports the fact of Kazik's death before we even encounter it in the narrative proper). For the nine-year-old boy, an Encyclopedia promised comprehensive knowledge:

Momik loves to hold the big books in his hands, and it makes him feel good all over to run his fingers down the smooth pages that seem to have a protective covering that keeps your fingers away, so you won't get too close, because who are you, what are you compared to the Encyclopedia, will all the little letters crowded in long, straight columns and mysterious abbreviations like secret signals for a big, strong, silent army boldly
marching out to conquer the world, all-knowing, all-righteous [. . .] he likes to touch the pages and feel deep in his stomach and his heart all the power and the silence, and the seriousness and the scientificness that makes everything so clear and simple. (43-44)

Then, it required shrewd and methodical detection strategies--i.e., purposeful activity. Now, it is that form which, in arbitrarily organizing the imagined life of a victim of the Holocaust, suggests the stupidity of all our ordering efforts, the impossibility of achieving complete relations within language with history or with those we love. The Encyclopedia reveals its order while at the same time revealing the complete contingency of all order.

The activity that results in the "Encyclopedia" is the product of an ethical realization that the acts in which one must engage are the ones which appear to be without purpose. The most radical act of bearing witness is for Grossman the act which makes no sense. Ayala, then, testifies to the truth of Momik's enterprise in her very condemnation of it:

This whole encyclopedia business is utterly worthless. It doesn't explain anything. Look at it: you know what it reminds me of? A mass grave. That's what it reminds me of. A grave with limbs sticking out in every direction. All disjointed. But not only that, Shlomik. It's also a documentation of your crimes against humanity. And now that you've gotten this far, I hope you see
that you've failed, that your whole encyclopedia is not enough to fully encompass a single day or even a single moment of human life. (450)

Momik's crime is the crime of his form—an Encyclopedia that explains nothing. Ayala tells him that she doesn't expect a "happy ending" from him—"I know your limitations," she says—but what she does expect are stories which affirm the symbolic order that sustains their meaning. Momik can thus reverse his disaster and earn her forgiveness if he writes her a "new story. A good story. A beautiful story"—a story "with MERCY [q.v.], with LOVE [q.v.]! Not See under: Love!" (450). In Ayala's view, crimes can be committed in novels, but novels ought not commit crimes. The artist, for her, must write with mercy and love in order to suspend the gap between symbolic and real. On the level of form, at least, art is not to disclose its disability: it is not to take on the shape of a mass grave.

Ayala's analogy is apt, for Grossman seems to have found the only way to treat a "local" facet of the Holocaust without being accused of trying to mitigate its enormity. The attempt to know an individual's life and death under the Nazis absolutely, gives shape to a form which corresponds to that enormity. Taking his positing abilities to their extreme, Grossman's goal is finally to open the subject up to that feeling which is outside all positing. Aaron Marcus is here perhaps our guide, the apothecary who declares "open war on the limitations of human feeling" (441). Wasserman tells us that Marcus "longed to clear a way for himself into
unknown territories, the abracadabra realms we feel inside, which nobody dares to touch" (440). And Marcus is not one who shies away from the most ultimate of sacrifices. To know certain feelings, Marcus often undergoes the very dissolution of his identity. It is not so much Marcus’s desire to develop a new language of feeling--his "Sentimo" is an attempt to give a name to various shades of feelings, because people are trained to feel only what they can name--as much as it is risk that exemplifies the truth of his enterprise. Marcus is one who has "saddened himself to death"--and the important consequence of this effort is not his new language, but his recognition that within language, the most important dimensions of feeling are missing. Perhaps this is why in the very moment of Kazik’s death, everyone--except Marcus--experiences a kind of mystical moment of justice, of divine justice:

Approaching death had roused the same feeling in most of them: it was the right thing. And all of life is a free ticket, but in the end we are returned against our will to the domain of some invisible force, grave and inevitable, which collects its rightful debt, without MERCY [q.v.] or solace. To all of them, suddenly life, their own lives, seemed wrong and dreary and senseless [see under: LIFE, THE MEANING OF], and even those who weren’t religious felt a sudden awe of God, while unfamiliar thoughts of sins committed and punishments deserved ran through their minds. (429)
Only Marcus derives a different lesson from the death of the "old boy" (Kazik)—a lesson for the perpetrators and those who carry on their paranoia: "Only Aaron Marcus thought sadly that perhaps death was as arbitrary and inexplicable as life itself" (429). This is our lesson as well: the trauma of the Holocaust is not confined to it, but pertains to the implicit trauma—the inexplicability of our lives and of our deaths—that it makes explicit in the calculated attempt to eliminate the inexplicability that is perhaps its greatest, and most difficult, legacy.
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