# Reading Holocaust Poetry: Genre, Authority and Identification

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## Authority in Holocaust Writing: from Testimony to Fiction

Elie Wiesel famously wrote that his generation 'invented a new literature, that of testimony', and, irrespective of when or by whom this 'new literature' was really first written, there *is* something distinct about the way that we read testimony, and Holocaust testimony in particular - about the way we find ourselves asking not simply *what* we think but what *should* we think, or even, more strongly, what are we *required* to think.[1] Above all, our postmodern sense of reading being an ungoverned and essentially pleasurable activity is completely transformed by the knowledge that these narratives are records of, and part of ongoing responses to, traumatic events that continue to dominate the authors' own lives. This shapes a sense of the human struggle that lies behind the writing: something that testimony rarely allows us to lose sight of. The author and the process of authoring are often foregrounded, as in Primo Levi's present tense interjection in *If This is a Man* (1958), 'Today, at this very moment as I sit writing at a table, I myself am not convinced that these things really happened', or Charlotte Delbo's epigraph to *None of Us Will Return* (1965), which expresses an almost identical sentiment: 'Today, I am not sure that what I wrote is true. I am certain it is truthful.'[2] In making such statements, survivor-writers question their own hold on the past and even the legitimacy of the methods they use to represent it; but rather than freeing readers to interpret their texts in whatever way they choose, these statements emphasise our *double distance* from events that we have

never experienced personally, and which the survivors themselves have been unable to grasp or articulate fully.

Because of this double distance, Wiesel has claimed that 'any survivor has more to say than all the historians combined about what happened'.[3] Here Wiesel perhaps risks overstatement; but it is interesting to note that Levi opens *If This is a Man* with a poem - variously titled 'Shemà' or 'If This is a Man' - which considers the demands the ensuing prose account will make on its readers, and which draws into relief the distance separating victims and non-victims (in terms of their understanding of events) with equal starkness. The poem's imagined readers, addressed directly in the opening stanza, are those who 'live secure' in their 'warm houses'.[4] These readers are first instructed, following the poem's title, to consider 'if this is a man'; but after describing the dehumanisation of male and female victims in the *Lager*, the poem asks us more straightforwardly to 'consider that this has been' and to 'engrave' these words on our hearts, promising catastrophic consequences for our houses, our health and our children if we fail. A clear differentiation is made between an author who must record and come to terms with traumatic experiences and readers who the author seems to view as a bit of a liability, and who must only bear secondary witness to the actual act of witnessing: and in this differentiation lies the unique authority of the survivor-writer.

Poems, epigraphs and authorial intrusions ensure that our reading of testimony is bound by certain rules and governing codes, with authorial 'authority' here being understood both in terms of epistemology - as a kind of bedrock for interpretation that determines *how* meaning is produced - and also in the legalistic or authoritarian sense of defining *what* meanings are produced: Mosaic law is an important point of reference in a work such as 'Shemà', for example. It might seem injudicious to talk

about the authoritarianism of the victims; but to borrow Gillian Rose's phrase (if not her exact sense of it), the *representation of fascism* also entails an encounter with the *fascism of representation* and specifically, in testimony, an encounter with a form of representation which understandably tends towards singularity and the eschewal of counter-narratives.[5]

This compelling claim to the authority of personal experience in testimony has increasingly come to extend to all kinds of Holocaust writing. As Sue Vice notes, even in works that are self-evidently fictional, '"Authority" appears to be conferred on a writer if they can be shown to have a connection with the events they are describing'.[6] By this logic, authority has commonly been *withheld* from those writers who have no direct biographical connection to events. Sylvia Plath, for example, was repeatedly taken to task during the 1960s and 70s not so much for what she wrote, but for what she lacked by way of the necessary experiential credentials. George Steiner embodied this viewpoint when he asked, 'does any writer, does any human being other than an actual survivor have the right to put on this death-rig?'[7]

Steiner's reference to a 'death-rig' conjures up images of poetry as an occult practice and typifies the way that responses to Holocaust verse written by non-victims often also call into question received understandings of the role of the poet. In *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), J. M. Coetzee's protagonist gives a fictional lecture on Paul West's real novel *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg* (1980), reflecting on its graphic account of the execution of the plotters who attempted to kill Hitler in July 1944. The lecture begins by covering what Costello terms the 'familiar ground' of 'authorship and authority', and in particular the

> claims made by poets over the ages to speak a higher truth, a truth whose authority lies in revelation, and their further claim, in Romantic times, which happen to have been times of unparalleled geographical exploration, of a right to venture into forbidden or tabooed places.[8]

Assuming what Michael Rothberg terms an 'antirealist' position, real critics such as Steiner and fictional critics such as Costello conceptualise the Holocaust as a unique event that resists normative forms of representation and understanding by those who were not there, placing it at odds with the 'romantic' idea of the poet as a 'hero-explorer'.[9]

This standpoint has formed a distinct paradigm for the reception of Holocaust literature written by later generations, and stems from testimony itself. But while it seems entirely correct to disentangle poetic authority from the nebulous ground of 'revelation', especially in the context of the Holocaust, the subsequent tendency to source authority in a Holocaust writer's biography, regardless of whether they do or do not claim to be writing testimony, has had, as Vice observes, the knock-on effect of turning the relation between author and narrator into 'a central literary category' of all forms of Holocaust writing, including fiction.[10] In the case of a writer such as Plath, the critical over-determination of this relation was for a time exaggerated by the theories of 'extremist poetry' and 'confessionalism' that were linked to her verse when it was first published. However, as Antony Rowland notes, since the beginning of the 1990s critics have become more inclined to see Plath's *Ariel* poems as 'dramatic monologues primarily concerned with the proclivities of different speakers'.[11] Following Peter McDonald, this approach takes her poetry (rather than her biography) seriously as an authority.[12] But does sourcing authority in poetic form

– and in doing so opening up the possibility of valid works of Holocaust fiction - challenge the idea that the only authoritative responses to the Holocaust are those which involve direct confrontations with personal experience?

Taking poetry seriously as an authority clearly involves detaching imaginative forms of Holocaust writing, such as poetry by non-victims, from those factual forms, such as testimony, of which, as Vice points out, 'one might more reasonably demand an authentic connection between the author-narrator and the events described'.[13] Testimony's authority derives from its specific *genre*; it is only by way of this genre that the writer's biography is made manifest, with genre here being understood not simply as a pigeon-hole for texts, but as a way, in Robert Eaglestone's terms, of 'connecting texts with contexts, ideas, expectations, rules of argument' and thereby 'a way of describing how reading actually takes place'.[14] And it is this sense of authority being something that pertains to the laws of *genre* – not experience *per se* - that needs to be extended to Holocaust verse written by non-victims. And this latter genre is wholly distinct from testimony; for as fiction the life of the person who produced the work is an irrelevance, and as poetry it demands that we ask specific questions of its mode of representation, its uses of documentary texts, and, above all, its form, which is, in McDonald's resonant phrase, 'the serious heart of a poem' where 'such "authority" as poetry bears must reside'.[15]

As a genre, poetry is inherently connected to memory: an art of recall, it has its origins in mnemonics. As Don Paterson observes, rhythm and rhyme mean that, unlike other artworks, a poem 'can be carried in your head in its original state, intact and perfect […] Our memory of the poem is the poem'.[16] A focus on contemporary Holocaust poetry as a distinct genre in its own right also reveals a concerted negotiation by a generation of writers *with* memory, specifically through the genre

with which it is often confused: testimony. In that negotiation, contemporary poets make a sustained attempt to respond to the legacy of an event which neither simply demands nor totally resists imaginative appropriation by those who were not there, asking how we identify with those whose lives shaped, and those whose lives were destroyed by, the Holocaust. To commit one such poem to memory, is thus, in a way, to remember *how* to remember - or, more obliquely, to remember how to remember 'what one never knew', as Susan Gubar puts it.[17]

Before postmodernism and the rise of self-reflexive narration, poetry after Auschwitz had also, in the work of writers such as Plath and Geoffrey Hill, addressed the need for writing to become meta-fictional, as though talking about the Holocaust – or, to put it bluntly, *using* the Holocaust (as subject matter, as imagery, as literary inspiration) - necessarily meant that poetry also had to talk about itself. This was not a way of avoiding thinking about the Holocaust; neither was it a testament to the self-absorbed sensibilities of these poets. Rather, it was a symptom of poetry's double vision: its way of looking outwards onto history through the internality of genre, which is to say its own specific mode of writing and reading, even of thinking.

**Consuming the Holocaust: Sylvia Plath's 'Lady Lazarus'**

Contemporary Holocaust poetry thus defines itself by its attempts to come to terms with other forms of writing, responding either overtly or implicitly to historical studies which document events through eyewitness accounts and analysis of surviving evidence, and to texts written by those who *were* there (poetry, essays, memoirs, diaries). This process, which began in earnest during the 1960s, allowed writers to address the 'secondary' questions which followed once the factual revelations (the

when and where and how and by whom) started to seep into public consciousness. Questions such as: What do we *do* with such knowledge?

It is hard to say with any certainty precisely which firsthand accounts of the Holocaust Sylvia Plath read, but Eugen Kogon's *The Theory and Practice of Hell* (1950) and poetic works by writers including Nelly Sachs and Paul Celan seem to have influenced her. For example, here is the final stanza of the provocative Holocaust monologue 'Lady Lazarus':

> Out of the ash
> I rise with my red hair
> And I eat men like air.[18]

This seems to allude at once to Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' ('Beware! Beware!/ His flashing eyes, his floating hair!') and to Celan's 'Todesfuge', with its imagery of smoke 'rising into air' and men digging 'a grave in the air', and in which the 'golden hair' of Margarete (namesake of Goethe's apotheosised representative of the 'eternal feminine' in *Faust*) contrasts with the 'ashen hair' of Shulamith (who is named after the princess in 'The Song of Songs', who traditionally symbolises the tribe of Israel).[19] Another Holocaust poem written by a survivor, Sachs's 'O the Chimneys', also seems to underlie Plath's final stanza. Sachs's poem considers the impact of the death camps on traditional forms of religious belief, and concludes with the tercet:

> O you chimneys,
> O you fingers
> And Israel's body as smoke through the air![20]

Taken together, the references to Sachs and Celan add a Holocaust-specific dimension to Christina Britzolakis's perception that 'Lady Lazarus is an allegorical figure, constructed from past and present images of femininity […] She is a pastiche of the numerous deathly or demonic women of poetic tradition'.[21]

The striptease performed by a narrator who is constructed from the remains of the dead (both literally and textually) transforms the historically 'real' into a lurid spectacle. Celan famously wrote that 'No one/ witnesses for the/ witness'; but Lady Lazarus's hubris is precisely that she leaves the 'grave cave' once a decade to transplant the witnesses, graphically displaying what is left of the victims – 'a Nazi lampshade', a 'Jew linen' - on her own body.[22] Plath's hubris, on the other hand, is not that she *is* Lady Lazarus, but that she places 'sacred' survivor texts in the mouth of such a flawed speaker. The poem's broad aesthetic of shock and sensationalism - with its lampshades, gold fillings and bars of soap - has led some critics to question the extent to which the poem is able to repudiate the representative practices of its narrator. Drawing on Saul Friedlander's *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (1993), which warns of a disturbing 'new discourse' about Nazism dominated by sensationalist images and an obsession with death, Rowland argues that Plath deploys an iconography that she cannot transcend. What he terms her 'camp poetics', which reproduce the 'exaggeration', 'artifice', and 'extremity' of the Camp movement, 'highlight and reflect the post-Holocaust writer's reception of "spectacular" history, rather than rigorously challenging it'.[23]

Yet one could argue that the monologue's transformation of horror into kitsch and the subversive allusions to canonical Holocaust and Romantic texts only service the ends of a poem whose guiding impulse is overwhelmingly satiric. As a biting

parody of the crass sensationalism of the Holocaust industry, and of the way that poetry after Auschwitz feeds off the remnants of the victims, the poem 'Lady Lazarus' *is* able to question the iconography and allusions that its speaker brazenly exploits. For example, the objects left in the ashes prior to Lady Lazarus's final 'rebirth' – 'A wedding ring,/ A gold filling' – suggest that she is some sort of jackdaw of history, attracted to bright, shiny objects, rather than a Benjaminian angel, possessing genuine historical insight. Indeed, these evocative objects are associated with some of the most violent Nazi larcenies. In addition, Plath actively undermines Lady Lazarus's rhetoric through the *double entendre* of the last line. As Gubar points out, to 'eat men like air' is an ambiguous simile which could mean both that Lady Lazarus eats these adversaries (perhaps the German Herren, or 'masters from Germany', as Celan ironically names them, who ordered the deaths of women such as Shulamith) as easily as if they were air, or that she eats men who are themselves already like air: the murdered men who, in 'Todesfuge', dug their 'graves in the air', and whose deaths Sachs laments when describing 'Israel's body as smoke through the air'.[24] Here wordplay and allusion help to unmask the speaker as the victimiser, not the victimised: as the prostitute-performer rises from the ashes in the guise of what Judith Kroll calls a 'triumphant resurrecting goddess', we are actually left with a pretty unpalatable taste of what her opportunistic imagination really feeds off.[25] Through the suggestion that Lady Lazarus's tawdry suicide show involves acts of historical theft, even cannibalism, both at the level of its performance and its language, Plath offers a critique of her speaker that recalls Jean Baudrillard's claim (made with reference to the American TV mini-series *Holocaust* (1978)) that turning the Holocaust into a spectacle produces a forgetting that 'is part of the extermination'.[26]

**Poetry and Identification: Geoffrey Hill's 'September Song'**

In ‘Lady Lazarus’ poetic technique is used to generate a kind of internal commentary on the moral pitfalls of Holocaust representation - one which sits side by side with the total moral ambivalence of the poem’s speaker. Combining narrative with visual and sonic forms of making and breaking meaning (the rhymes and short lines of the final stanza, for example, create a breezy feel entirely at odds with the gravitas one might expect from a performance artist whose subject is genocide), a poem which is commonly thought to abuse the Holocaust offers a critique of the forms of identification and appropriation that its narrator indulges in, starkly highlighting her distance - temporal, geographical, imaginative - from the true horrors of the death camps.

This focus on the eloquence of poetic form - separating out the parts of a poem from the personality of its creator - occasionally runs the risk of divesting artworks of their human content; of losing sight of the way that poetry offers distinct ways of thinking about, and remembering, human lives. So while taking poetry seriously as an authority means doing away with the idea, popularised by proponents of ‘confessionalism’, that the speakers of poems by authors including Plath, Hill, John Berryman and W. D. Snodgrass (who both devoted years to writing ambitious poetic cycles centred on the Holocaust and Nazism) are transparent embodiments of their authors, it is equally important not to lose sight of the ‘existential’ edge that early critics rightly noted in their work. In their preoccupation with issues of memory, identity, and the extremities of experience, these writers find in the Holocaust a *demand* for self-examination. In Eaglestone’s terms, their poems ask questions about

'"who we are" and "how the world is for us" and how the event of the Holocaust has utterly changed this'.[27]

In *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (2004), Eaglestone highlights how the process of 'identification' forms 'a central and major - but not always necessary - part of our experience of reading'.[28] Survivor accounts, however, open a problem:

> We who come after the Holocaust and know about it only through representations are frequently and with authority told that it is incomprehensible. However, the representations seem to demand us to do exactly that, to comprehend it, to grasp the experiences, to imagine the suffering, through identifying with those who suffered.[29]

Drawing on Wiesel's claim that the Holocaust 'invented a new literature', Eaglestone argues that testimony offers a distinct 'horizon of understanding where interpretation, text, and readership come together': one which legislates against the 'sort of reading as identification, as comprehension' which consumes, and thus normalises, the experience of the other.[30] The failure of identification does not mean, however, that the experience of victimhood, or otherness, is totally lost to us. If nothing else, it persists in a negative fashion, in the form of that very authority which tells us that the event 'is incomprehensible'.

So, while all reading is grounded in the 'day-to-day process of identification', for Eaglestone the 'new genre' of testimony contains individuating traits which mean that its texts 'eschew easy identification and so comprehension by readers'.[31] Testimony is therefore unique, in as much as it disrupts the normative ways in which we consume literature; it does this through its imagery and style, and (as noted in the

introduction to this essay) through devices such as interruptions and narrative frames, ensuring that incomprehensible events do not appear to be too readily comprehensible. Eaglestone quotes Levi's account of an incident when a schoolboy presented him with an adventure-fuelled plan of how he should have escaped from Auschwitz. This causes Levi to reflect on the general tendency for non-victims to normalise the Holocaust, illustrating the 'gap that exists and grows wider every year between things as they were down there and things as they are represented by the current imagination fed by books, films and myths'. Levi, concerned about this slide 'towards simplification and stereotype', states that in his own writing he hoped 'to erect a dyke against this trend'.[32]

Through his analysis of the way that readers of testimony are drawn into a dynamic of thwarted identification, Eaglestone offers a whole new vocabulary and interpretative framework with which to approach imaginative works about the Holocaust which consider our relation to history's victims. The work of poets such as Geoffrey Hill, and even, I would argue, Plath, can be understood as profoundly respectful negotiations with the 'dykes' that emerge in testimonial texts, and the sense of distance and non-identity that they purposefully produce (Plath's 'Lady Lazarus' and 'Daddy' are in essence instructive dramas of Holocaust *mis*identification). The concept of identification also circumvents the dry objectivity that would be implied if we were to see these texts simply as works of historical analysis, while at the same time qualifying the discourse about memory which is often attached to any contemporary work - be it critical or imaginative - which takes an event such as the Holocaust as its subject. This particular discourse is potentially misleading when applied to authors who have no personal recollection of events, as Eva Hoffman warns: 'It has become routine to speak of the "memory" of the Holocaust, and to

adduce to this faculty a moral, even a spiritual value. But it is important to be precise: We who come after do not have memories of the Holocaust.'[33] While critics such as Gubar couch their critiques of non-victim memory in deliberately paradoxical terms, one can't actually *remember* what one never knew; but one might try to respond to it in other ways.[34]

Hill's 'September Song', like 'Lady Lazarus' and 'Daddy', approaches historical victimhood by way of its speaker's gestures of identification - though not in terms of wildly inappropriate acts of historical identification, or 'empathetic identification', but through more oblique exclusions, through pointed *failures* of the straining imagination.[35] To empathise is to find common ground, and thus to comprehend; a poet such as Hill, however, is more attuned to the uncommon ground that separates the living from the dead:

*born 19.6.32 — deported 24.9.42*

Undesirable you may have been, untouchable
You were not. Not forgotten
or passed over at the proper time.

As estimated, you died. Things marched,
sufficient, to that end.
Just so much Zyklon and leather, patented
terror, so many routine cries.

(I have made

an elegy for myself it

is true)

September fattens on vines. Roses

flake from the wall. The smoke

of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

This is plenty. This is more than enough.[36]

The poem begins by memorialising the death of a ten-year-old child murdered by the Nazis, taking the form of a tombstone - though the flagrant pun in the epigraph-epitaph, where the Christian language of loss ('departed') morphs into Nazi euphemism ('deported'), already exposes something of the poem's lyric impropriety. More than simply remembering the dead child, 'September Song' wants to make contact with them: the first stanza is all about touching children. But another series of puns relating to paedophilia ('undesirable') and social caste ('untouchable') implies that the poem's elegiac endeavour constitutes a grave taboo violation, while 'not forgetting' is figured as a Nazi trait.[37]

The poem's queasy addressivity is rendered by an adult 'I' calling upon an infant 'you'; at every stage, however, attempts at communication are blocked, with metaphor, in particular, proving unable to connect the two worlds of 'here' and 'there', 'inside history' and 'outside history'. In as much as the poem has a narrator (the second stanza uses an even more overtly Nazified language, but the tone softens in the third), he or she seems to possess the kind of 'mind engraved with the Holocaust' described by Norma Rosen, for which 'gas is always that gas. Shower

means their shower. Ovens are those ovens.'[38] In the penultimate stanza, the line 'Roses/ flake from the wall' can be read, as Rowland observes, as 'a terrible metaphor for the flaking skin of burnt victims; even such a seemingly innocent signifier as "wall" is infected by the history of Nazi incidents in which "dissidents" were lined up and shot'.[39] Similarly, the negative adjective used to describe the 'smoke/ of harmless fires' only very thinly conceals its opposite: the harm*ful* fires lit at the sites of mass murder. As the narrator undertakes some unidentified but clearly prosaic activity, his or her memory is activated metaphorically, dredging up the past through a process of association which brings to mind the scene in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) where fires burning in a forest in present-day Israel form a suggestive backdrop for a discussion of the murder of the Vilna Jews in a forest in Lithuania. Here 'smoke' provides the twentieth-century equivalent of Proust's madeleine; but the next step, the mind being flooded by things past, is missing.

Rosen has suggested that as 'an analogy making species', 'what we connect and how we connect it are vital keys to our understanding and can be discussed and at times corrected. That we connect is a given.'[40] Even when one's own suffering cannot approximate to that of another, 'the law of human communication is unchanged. We must still work from what we know and try to connect it to what we do not.'[41] In other words, we must somehow force ourselves to identify with the experience of victimhood. This structure or 'law' survives in 'September Song' (the speaker *wants* to connect), but in a damaged form, as the unfamiliar reality of the Holocaust, and thus the child's ultimate fate, lie on the far side of language, inhabiting a world that words and objects can intimate, but not recreate. As Jahan Ramazani points out, 'Hill tweaks himself with constant verbal reminders of the child's inaccessibility'.[42] Even the date of birth given in the poem's epigraph is one day before Hill's own, offering 'a

sickening reminder of their dissimilarity' and suggesting that while the child's reality existed alongside the writer's world of comparative normality, it is now unreachable, separated by language, geography and a small but critical lag in time.[43] Importantly, as Gubar observes, this epigraph also shows that the narrator 'knows the date of deportation' but 'nothing about the death or death date of the nameless child'.[44]

The speaker who sets out to describe the life and death of a Holocaust victim concedes: '(I have made/ an elegy for myself it/ is true)'. The parentheses exaggerate the imaginative failure, and the sense that this poem remains somehow beside the point. For the speaker, the 'smoke/ of harmless fires' is 'plenty', implying that the indirect contact of metaphor - not the thing itself, the historical reality - is all he or she can take. Ironically, this also suggests that a connection with the Holocaust yields a certain profit (perhaps for poetry: as Ramazani points out, 'every elegy is an elegy for elegy', and, as such, the genre becomes increasingly replete with losses); but this is only the case when the poem's language descends from its initial point of high suggestibility into cliché and banality.[45] Through this one short poem, Hill traces the verbal degeneration later noted in *The Triumph of Love* (1999): 'Nor is language, now, what it once was/ even in - wait a tick - nineteen hundred and forty - / five of the common era'.[46]

'September Song' is a poem which endeavours to provide a kind of portal into the past, but which only opens onto absence, suggesting that the deaths of the victims of Nazism cannot be reached through traditional gestures of elegiac commemoration. The urge to connect imaginatively with their experiences persists, but the line (both the metaphorical phone line and, at least by the final stanza, the real poetic line) is dead. Through this self-scrutinising style of writing, Hill pursues the kind of aporia that emerges from the reading of testimony, as noted by Eaglestone and summarised

by Maurice Blanchot: 'We read books on Auschwitz. The wish of all in the camps, the last wish: know what has happened, do not forget, and at the same time never will you know.'[47]

The *pursuit* of the aporia is the thing though: a contradictory logic can be followed, worked *at* if not worked *through*. Unable to accept that we will simply never know, poets such as Hill and Plath create speakers who are consumed by a desire for understanding: a desire which often manifests itself in attempts to identify with the victims, and which is at the same time continuously thwarted by the 'dykes' which cut off survivors' accounts of the Holocaust - and, by association, their experiences - from the full comprehension of those who come after. Writing in this way, poets such as Plath and Hill refuse to sanction the collapse of the two logically opposed commands identified by Blanchot. They do not resolve the apparent contradiction between knowing and not-knowing in the way that Rosen does, for example, when she argues that after Auschwitz identification is still possible - 'the law of human communication is unchanged' - and in the way which also occurs when we view the Holocaust as an event that we should not even *try* to imagine or comprehend (the gravamen of 'antirealist' approaches to the Holocaust). These poets suggest that testimony is misunderstood if *either* injunction is forgotten.

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**Notes**

[1] Elie Wiesel. 1997. 'The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration', in *Dimensions of the Holocaust*, ed. Elliot Lefkovitz, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 9.

[2] Primo Levi. 1996. *If This is a Man and the Truce*, trans. Stuart Woolf, London: Abacus, 109; Charlotte Delbo. 1995. *Auschwitz and After*, trans. Rosette C. Lamont, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1.

[3] Peter Novick. 1999 *The Holocaust in American Life*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 201.

[4] Primo Levi. 1992. 'Shemà', in *Collected Poems*, trans. Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann, London: Faber and Faber, 9.

[5] Gillian Rose. 1997. *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 50.

[6] Sue Vice. 2000. *Holocaust Fiction*, London: Routledge, 4.

[7] James E. Young. 1990. *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 130.

[8] J. M. Coetzee. 2004. *Elizabeth Costello*, London: Vintage, 172.

[9] Michael Rothberg. 2000. *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 4-5; Coetzee, *Costello*, 172.

[10] Vice, *Holocaust*, 3.

[11] Antony Rowland. 2005. *Holocaust Poetry: Awkward Poetics in the Work of Sylvia Plath, Geoffrey Hill, Tony Harrison and Ted Hughes*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 34.

[12] Peter McDonald. 2002. *Serious Poetry: Form and Authority from Yeats to Hill*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 5.

[13] Vice, *Holocaust*, 4.

[14] Robert Eaglestone. 2004. *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6 and 37.

[15] McDonald, *Serious*, 6.

[16] Don Paterson. 2004. 'Rhyme and reason', in *Guardian*, 6 November.

[17] Susan Gubar. 2003. *Poetry after Auschwitz: Remembering What One Never Knew*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

[18] Sylvia Plath. 1989. 'Lady Lazarus', in *Collected Poems*, London: Faber and Faber, 244-47 (245).

[19] Gubar notes the 'ironic echo' of Coleridge in *Poetry*, 201; Rowland, Brian Murdoch, Janice Markey and Steven Gould Axelrod have all detected allusions to Celan, and especially 'Todesfuge', in Plath's poem (Rowland, *Holocaust*, 47-49); and John Felstiner unpicks Celan's literary and biblical allusions in John Felstiner. 2001. *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 38.

[20] Nelly Sachs. 1971. 'O the Chimneys', in *Abba Kovner and Nelly Sachs: Selected Poems*, trans. Michael Roloff, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 79.

[21] Christina Britzolakis. 1999. *Sylvia Plath and the Theatre of Mourning*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 154.

[22] Celan, 'Aschenglorie' ('Ashglory'), trans. John Felstiner, in Felstiner, *Celan*, 223.

[23] Rowland, *Holocaust*, 31 and 43.

[24] Gubar, *Poetry*, 200.

[25] Judith Kroll. 1976. *Chapters in a Mythology: The Poetry of Sylvia Plath*, New York: Harper and Row, 118.

[26] Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg. 2003. 'General Introduction: Theory and the Holocaust', in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, eds Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 13.

[27] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 2.

[28] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 24.

[29] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 19.

[30] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 15-16, 101 and 37.

[31] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 8.

[32] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 22.

[33] Eva Hoffman. 2004. *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust*, London: Secker and Warburg, 6.

34. Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory', which 'is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection', should retain its very specific application to the lives of the children of Holocaust survivors who 'grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth'. See Marianne Hirsch. 1997. *Family Frames: Photographs, Narrative and Postmemory*, London: Harvard University Press, 22.

[35] Gubar, *Poetry*, 55.

[36] Geoffrey Hill. 1985. 'September Song', in *Collected Poems*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 67.

[37] Neil Roberts. 1999. *Narrative and Voice in Postwar Poetry*, London and New York: Longman, 77; Antony Rowland. 2001. *Tony Harrison and the Holocaust*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 24.

[38] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 34.

[39] Rowland, *Harrison*, 26.

[40] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 33-34.

[41] Eaglestone, *Holocaust*, 34.

[42] Jahan Ramazani. 1994. *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 7.

[43] Ramazani, *Poetry*, 7; Rowland, *Harrison*, 24.

[44] Gubar, *Poetry*, 211.

[45] Ramazani, *Poetry*, 8.

[46] Geoffrey Hill. 1999. *The Triumph of Love*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 28.

[47] Maurice Blanchot. 1995. *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln, USA: University of Nebraska Press, 82.

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