

Survivors Fictionalizing the Child:  
A Canon Within the Canon of Holocaust Literature

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Submitted to the University of London

for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

October 2014

Department of English

Royal Holloway, University of London

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Lia Molly Deromedi, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date:

## Abstract

This thesis argues that there is a subgenre within Holocaust literature of survivors writing from the child's perspective. Both the survivor's novel and children occupy multiple spaces, which provides a unique vantage point from which to represent the Holocaust. There are three key attributes of the primary texts within my subgenre: they are all considered novels, their authors are classified as Holocaust survivors, and they have child protagonists. I have identified unifying themes across the texts that show how the child's viewpoint offers a distinct perspective on the historical event, depicts an underrepresented experience, and provides the potential for new understandings on the Holocaust.

Each chapter focuses on one theme, examining how each author uses the child's perspective across disparate genders, ages, geographical locations, and traumatic experiences, which implies that this subgenre is making critical assertions about the Holocaust and the Jewish child's experience. Chapter One focuses on the dichotomy between children and adults, examining the interactions between and actions of their child protagonists with adult characters. In this way, authors underscore the end of childhood in extremity, a loss for both children prematurely killed or who must prematurely develop, as well as the loss of traditional functions of adults by inverting concepts of dependents and guardians. The second chapter briefly explores the way the novels use child's play to highlight the aforementioned changed nature of childhood. Despite often assuming adult responsibilities and attitudes as described in the first chapter, traditional childhood activities can serve to contrast the brutality and hardship with their inherent innocence. Chapter Three explores the novel's representations of a three-fold identity, which signifies how the protagonists' sense of themselves during the experience is shaped by their positions as an outsider, Jewishness, and gender. The fourth chapter examines how these narratives reconstruct the concept of place, give it meaning, and represent it by creating a Holocaust 'child-space' for its youngest experiencers. The child-space is represented by several qualities, including: liminal and paradoxical spaces such as rural and urban settings; specific sites of meaning and concepts of home; belonging to nation states and cities; and the narrative spaces that the authors create.

Analyzing these novels through the patterns that develop between different characters and narratives may impact debates about the portrayal of the childhood self in all writing, as well as contribute to discussions of the Holocaust beyond the child's experience. The fictional child's viewpoint could address some of the questions that are raised by the ethical concerns about imaginative Holocaust representation and the limits of language, suggesting that it is a form to be considered for thinking about the endurance of Holocaust narratives.

## Acknowledgments

It would not have been possible to write this doctoral thesis without the help and support of the family, friends, colleagues, and mentors around me, only some of whom it is possible to mention here.

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Robert Eaglestone. I would like to thank him for encouraging my ideas, for his patience answering my every niggling question, pushing me to do my best, and for helping me to grow as a researcher and person. His advice and support on my research as well as my future career have been invaluable. Special appreciation also goes to my adviser, Professor Betty Jay, for offering valuable feedback throughout.

I would like to thank the English Department and Royal Holloway, University of London for the financial, academic, and technical support of my research and career goals. In particular, thank you for the Crosslands Research Scholarship and the London University Research Grant to undertake research at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

I would like to give a special thanks to my family. Words cannot adequately acknowledge my parents, Dennis and Eddi, and my brother, Adam, for supporting me in my academic and life endeavors and encouraging me throughout this experience. But, all the same, thank you.

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## Introduction

Fiction cannot recite the numbing numbers, but it can be that witness, that memory. A storyteller can attempt to tell the human tale, can make a galaxy out of the chaos, can point to the fact that some people survived even as most people died. And can remind us that the swallows still sing around the smokestacks.

JANE YOLEN<sup>1</sup>

The wanton and savage extermination of children, and the bottomless ferocity with which children were treated prior to their extermination, is unmatched in the total history of humanity.

ISRAEL KNOX<sup>2</sup>

Aharon Appelfeld, both a survivor and a writer, claimed that in the search for a way to communicate the incommunicable, a “new form,” if one may call it that, was discovered by the children.<sup>3</sup> Following Appelfeld, in this thesis I make a case for a new subgenre within the canon of Holocaust literature: survivor-written fiction from the child’s perspective. There are three key components of the primary texts within this subgenre: they all have child protagonists, they are all considered novels, and their authors are defined as Jewish Holocaust survivors. I argue that this subgenre offers a unique perspective on the historical event and represents many lesser-known Holocaust experiences. It also gives expression to the muted voice of the child. Moreover, interpretations of the child’s viewpoint in novels written by survivors can offer special insight into some of the questions raised by the concerns about imaginative Holocaust representation. In order to define this subgenre, I identify unifying themes in ten works; some of these have only been published in English in recent years, others are well established among the Holocaust literature canon. My thesis advances the discussions

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Yolen, *The Devil’s Arithmetic* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1997), p. 170

<sup>2</sup> Israel Knox, ‘Introduction’ in *Anthology of Holocaust Literature* ed. by Jacob Glatstein, Israel Knox, and Samuel Margoshes (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), pp. xiii-xxiii (p. xiv), p. xv (emphasis the author’s)

<sup>3</sup> Aharon Appelfeld, ‘After the Holocaust’ in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. by Berel Lang (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1988), pp. 83-92 (p. 89)

begun by literary scholars like Sue Vice, Naomi Sokoloff, and Andrea Reiter.<sup>4</sup> I begin by introducing the three key components of this subgenre.

### **The distinctive child viewpoint**

Survivor-writer Imre Kertész claims that his use of language and perspective of young Gyuri in *Fatelessness* ‘had the effect of estranging me from the narrative a bit, the perspective became one of observation [...] [that] threw a kind of existential glance on the events’.<sup>5</sup> I argue that this ‘existential glance’ is best understood as a form of Otherness, unique to the child’s perspective. This Otherness has a number of effects. First, if it is true that ‘[aesthetically], the literary representation of horror has an inherent falsity, in that it requires the writer to impose a coherent pattern or form where in reality there was only chaos’,<sup>6</sup> the child viewpoint can bring some of this chaos to the forefront through the fragmented representation of the child’s experiences. Second, the child’s perspective has the ability to depict the complex and little understood interrelations of childhood and the Holocaust: relationships with adults and peers, school, religion, and developmental stages, as well as reactions to trauma. Third, the child’s viewpoint encourages readers to reflect on the Holocaust in different ways, offering a fresh contrast to the early iconic images of concentration camps and narratives about adults.

Henry James recognized the value of the child’s viewpoint for adult literature. In the preface to *What Maisie Knew* he argues, ‘Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them; their vision is at any moment much richer, their apprehension even constantly stronger, than their prompt, their at all producible

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<sup>4</sup> Sue Vice, *Children Writing the Holocaust* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); Naomi Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child in Modern Jewish Fiction*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Andrea Reiter, ‘The Holocaust as Seen through the Eyes of Children’ in *The Holocaust and the Text: Speaking the Unspeakable*, ed. by Andrew Leak and George Paizis (London: MacMillan Press Ltd 2000), pp. 83-96

<sup>5</sup> Imre Kertész, *The Holocaust as Culture*, trans. by Thomas Cooper (Calcutta, India: Seagull Books, 2011), p. 30

<sup>6</sup> Benn E. Williams, ‘Epilogue: “Simply and Complexly Something Else”’, in *Re-examining the Holocaust through Literature*, ed. by Aukje Kluge and Benn E. Williams (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 231-234 (233), p. 3

vocabulary.<sup>7</sup> Survivor-writers have been faced with the failure of language to represent their inexpressibly traumatic memories; the limited communication skills but heightened senses of the child give fictional children the means to express these inner, seemingly inaccessible feelings. One of the techniques devised for this form is to present the child's keen observations and perceptions in an adult's tone with an adult's vocabulary, which offers a more comprehensive interpretation. Thus the child viewpoint not only enables the survivor-writer to narrate the child-specific Holocaust, it also allows the reader more universal insight because of the narrative strategies used. In this way, the image of the child victim as the fictional character can offer the author, reader, critic, or historian some insight into the child witness.

Survivor-writers utilize the child consciousness in several ways in order to subvert character roles and reader expectations. The unreliability and deliberate vagueness of a child's memory acts as a vehicle to pose difficult questions, juxtaposing Holocaust childhoods with normal ones to highlight the changes in extremity, and using tropes to express the marginalized voice. For example, an adult narrator might admit that the child character has a flawed memory that can only grasp everything around him or her with partial clarity because of lapses in temporal continuity.<sup>8</sup> But through this inconsistent memory, the survivor-writer can claim fiction's justification of limited accountability to strict historical accuracy.<sup>9</sup> The survivor-writer maximizes the potential of the child perspective by contrasting representations of a Holocaust childhood with a traditional one; before the protagonist is compelled out into the chaos, the narratives often include a view of him or her as situated in a unified world. This stark juxtaposition of images of idyllic pre-war youth throws into sharp relief the Holocaust life of horror and suffering.

The authors also accentuate the child's unique Holocaust position through its marginalized voice, even within its own story when the child alone cannot always speak

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<sup>7</sup> Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (New York: Penguin, 1985), p. 7

<sup>8</sup> Langer, *Using and Abusing*, p. 57

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



for itself. The child's viewpoint may imagine the youthful mind and experience and be attached to symbols that childhood represents such as possibility and change; however, as Naomi Sokoloff notes, 'it is also a highly, inescapably mediated one, never detached from the adult author who constructs it, nor even entirely separate from the adult characters whose words it absorbs, appropriates, or rejects.'<sup>10</sup> As such, the child-centered novel is an experiment with multiple perspectives on the Holocaust. The narratives are generally not directly written in a child's voice nor are they written in language meant for child readers; '[instead], they consist of a mingled utterance, partly the child's and partly the adult narrator's'.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the authors create a polyphony of voices, which give voice to the previously suppressed central child's viewpoint, in addition to the adult version of the child, other adult experiencers, and occasionally a third-person narrator that may be interpreted as the survivor-writer. One technique the authors use is depicting the child characters transcribing the voices of adults around them rather than giving opinions and speech that would be un-childlike, which also gives expression to other voices. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of polyphony implies the capacity of, in this case, the child's viewpoint to embody the utterances of the others around the child, thus creating a dialogic relationship between all the voices of the text while also maintaining the autonomy of the child's viewpoint: '*a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event.*'<sup>12</sup>

### **Categorization and novelization**

Elie Wiesel, despite writing several novels, declares in the preface to *Day* that 'a novel about Auschwitz is not a novel—or else it is not about Auschwitz,' essentially suggesting that the specificity of Auschwitz is something that cannot be fictionalized.<sup>13</sup>

Kertész also echoed the sentiment, claiming that '[he] would never call *Fatelessness* a

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<sup>10</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 180

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1984), p. 6 (emphasis the author's)

<sup>13</sup> Elie Wiesel, *The Night Trilogy: Night, Dawn, Day* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), p. 230

Holocaust novel because the Holocaust, or what people mean when they use that word, can't be put in a novel'; he separates fictionalizing the camp with the broader concept of the Holocaust.<sup>14</sup> However, an important quality of my identified subgenre is their classification as novels, which invites the questions of truth and authenticity so many find suspicious. The survivor's novel challenges the idea that there are distinct unsurpassable borders separating history from artistic representation, and '[where] these boundaries blur, they imply that one can think better or at least differently about the events of history'.<sup>15</sup> Criticism often calls attention to this idea of boundaries between the two parts of the term, historical and fiction, all of which the Holocaust novel seems to obscure or transgress in some way, revealing that the line between complete invention and genre-distortion has already been crossed by these texts.<sup>16</sup>

Although novels have long addressed historical subjects, including those of war, violence, social oppression, death, and suffering, the Holocaust narrative conflicts with conventional literature because it cannot underscore a kind of heroism that had ceased to exist, seeking instead 'a heroism commensurate with the sweep of ruin in our time'.<sup>17</sup> In particular, the child hero is represented as 'shedding innocence and discarding naïve notions of what counts as heroism or legitimate authority'.<sup>18</sup> To address this issue of boundaries, Holocaust literature scholars have created various terms of their own reserved specifically for the Holocaust novel, particularly when the author is also a survivor. Terms include 'semi-autobiographical fiction' or the 'historical novel', James E. Young's 'docu-novel',<sup>19</sup> and Berel Lang's 'non-fictional fiction'.<sup>20</sup> As historical novels, they may

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<sup>14</sup> Kertész, *Holocaust as Culture*, p. 27

<sup>15</sup> Sara R. Horowitz, *Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 7

<sup>16</sup> Williams, 'Epilogue', p. 233

<sup>17</sup> Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 6

<sup>18</sup> Mitzi Myers, 'Storying War: An Overview' in *Under Fire: Childhood in the Shadow of War*, ed. by Elizabeth Goodenough and Andrea Immel, pp. 9-28 (p. 24)

<sup>19</sup> James E. Young, 'Holocaust Documentary Fiction: Novelist as Eyewitness' in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. by Harold Bloom, pp. 75-90

<sup>20</sup> Berel Lang, 'Holocaust Genres and the Turn to History' in *The Holocaust and the Text: Speaking the Unspeakable*, ed. by Andrew Leak and George Paizis, pp. 17-31

be no different than other stories which, as Efraim Sicher describes, ‘retell the past in order to help us understand the present, and the cataclysmic event called the Holocaust has done a lot to shake the Western world into rethinking its assumptions and beliefs’.<sup>21</sup>

James E. Young claims that much of the power in novelistic discourse appears to originate from the dual claims it makes on fiction and fact to engage readers.<sup>22</sup> Young draws attention to a key term often associated with Holocaust literature, ambiguity, which is particularly relevant to the presumed autobiographical nature of survivor-writers’ fiction, as well as the ambiguous feelings stimulated by child perspectives in the adult author and reader. The survivor-writer does not endow fictionality on the actual historical event; rather, the narratives that seek to give historical events form actually inevitably fictionalize them.<sup>23</sup> Young describes the blending of fact and fiction as a ‘[struggle] to preserve or reconstruct the eyewitness authority displaced by their narrative, however, the “docu-novelists” and “docu-dramatists” of the Holocaust work as hard at manufacturing their own testimonial authority as part of their fictional discourses’.<sup>24</sup> Anxieties about the Holocaust novel seem to center on the idea that to create a character or a life means to cast doubt on the real experiencers and events when there may not be a clearly marked differentiation between the fact and fiction. According to Young:

For as long as facts are presented to us in fictionalizing media and fiction is presented as fact, the categories themselves remain all too fuzzily defined. If there is a line between fact and fiction, it may by necessity be a winding border that tends to bind these two categories as much as it separates them, allowing each side to dissolve occasionally into the other.<sup>25</sup>

The key point here is that the Holocaust novel does not detract from the subject just because it seeks to make history available in a ‘popular format’ and its intentional

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<sup>21</sup> Sicher, p. xix

<sup>22</sup> Young, ‘Documentary Fiction’, p. 87

<sup>23</sup> Young, ‘Documentary Fiction’, p. 89

<sup>24</sup> Young, ‘Documentary Fiction’, p. 75

<sup>25</sup> Young, ‘Documentary Fiction’, p. 76

blending of genres and crossing of borders does not denigrate the historical subject.<sup>26</sup> In fact, as Terrence des Pres writes in *The Survivor*, fiction can provide some framework to mediate the difference between the chaotic and incomprehensible world of the Holocaust and the one in which the reader now exists.<sup>27</sup>

Cynthia Ozick has pointed out that, as it is, many readers and scholars view the Holocaust novel as ‘—at best—a weaker, softer kind of testimony when compared to the rigors of history, or—at worst—a misleading, dangerous confusion of verisimilitude with reality’.<sup>28</sup> However, the mixture of veracity and creativity is an inevitable part of any narrative. Or, as Louis Begley claimed, ‘[to] separate what is true from what is not would be like trying to unscramble an omelet’.<sup>29</sup> Begley makes an important point with his metaphor that the truth is inexorably bound to the fiction and vice versa, perhaps most significantly for the survivor-writer. The complete title of Begley’s work, *Wartime Lies: A Novel*, points ironically to this confusion of terms in which his narrative is branded: Is what follows to be about the lies necessarily told in wartime or is the narrative itself a lie? Positioning ‘fiction’ as synonymous with ‘lies’ and thus as antithetical to truth ‘reflects negatively on the expressive possibilities of a particular literary form when applied to the world of actual events’.<sup>30</sup> The ‘lies’ involved in fiction do not diminish the ‘truth’ of the important historical subject; indeed, this thesis presumes the genre as a crucial agent for Holocaust reflection. A difference must be highlighted between the kinds of truths that these narratives write: on the one hand the literal truth of the narrative lies in that its subject did happen, while on the other is the imagined truth of characters existing within the historical subject.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Des Pres, p. 6

<sup>28</sup> Horowitz, *Voicing the Void*, p. 1

<sup>29</sup> Esther B. Fein ‘Inventing a Life, Then Living It: At the Office with Louis Begley’, *New York Times* (14 April 1993) <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/14/garden/at-the-office-with-louis-begley-inventing-a-life-then-living-it> [accessed 12 August 2012], para. 10 of 31

<sup>30</sup> Horowitz, *Voicing the Void*, p. 1

Another question of terminology and authenticity arises from the novel's creator, the survivor-writer. Kertész has been emphatic about maintaining a distance between his fiction and survivor testimony. But he does not agree with the label *Fatelessness* is often given of 'autobiographical novel' simply because the young protagonist and author's experiences share some basic contours, stating in his memoir *Dossier K.* that 'no such genre exists. A book is either autobiography or a novel.'<sup>31</sup> He views the autobiographer's duty to be in accuracy of facts about the past where the novelist adds to facts. Yet Kertész concedes that novels can contain elements of the author and that he views his life as the 'raw material' for his fiction, which frees him from inhibitions.<sup>32</sup> Raw material by its nature must be constructed into something else. He writes that '[the] world of fiction is a sovereign world that comes to life in the author's head and follows the rules of art, of literature,' rather than those of history and testimony.<sup>33</sup> Kertész extends the process of invention to his descriptions of historically extant camps in *Fatelessness*, claiming that he had to invent Auschwitz to bring it to life on the page.<sup>34</sup> However, separation of subject and author is not entirely successful, as readers find comfort and value in the perceived contributions that the survivor's life makes to the narrative. It could be argued that authenticity is achieved not, or not only, through knowledge of authorial experience but through the existence of the Holocaust in history. Kertész uses Tolstoy's epic *War and Peace* as an example of how the Holocaust as a subject improves the fiction: Tolstoy's work would still have been a good book had the military campaign never existed, but its reality, and attention to details and historical facts, make the book even better.<sup>35</sup>

### **Who is the survivor-writer?**

From where does the persuasive power come in the survivor's fiction? The survivor's narrative, including the memoir and diary, may measure its value from its

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<sup>31</sup> Imre Kertész, *Dossier K.*, trans. by Tim Wilkinson (Brooklyn, NY: Melvin House, 2013), p. 7

<sup>32</sup> Kertész, *Dossier K.*, p. 10

<sup>33</sup> Kertész, *Dossier K.*, pp. 8-9

<sup>34</sup> Kertész, *Dossier K.*, p. 9

<sup>35</sup> Kertész, *Dossier K.*, p. 18

perceived authenticity.<sup>36</sup> Outlining a clear definition of the survivor is important because ‘[the] problem of terminology is very real, for it determines the status of the writers within the literary discourse on the Holocaust’, which informs the degree of authenticity attributed to the text and affects the readers’ interpretations of it.<sup>37</sup> Holocaust literary theorists have developed their own classifications of who are considered survivors for their examinations. For example, in *A Double Dying*, Alvin Rosenfeld’s categories extend to ‘the victims, the survivors, the survivors-who-become-victims, and the kinds-of survivors, those who were never there but know more than the outlines of the place.’<sup>38</sup> Conversely, James E. Young separates Holocaust writers into only three distinct categories: ‘survivors,’ ‘non-victims,’ and ‘other writers’.<sup>39</sup> What this inconsistency among critics demonstrates is that the struggle to define the survivor persists and varies from scholar to scholar. For the purpose of this study, I define survivor-writers as persecuted Jews who lived through the Holocaust in some way, depicting the range of different ways that children could experience it as opposed to adults and thus shifting away from traditional camp survivor definitions.

However, being a survivor does not necessarily imbue the author with absolute authority. Primo Levi provocatively claimed that he, the one who had survived, is not the real witness to bear testimony on the Holocaust because the real witnesses are dead.<sup>40</sup> Levi’s statement suggests that the survivor’s testimony must always be lacking because they were not successfully murdered; if this is the case, then even those more authentic documents than the novel are still and always imperfect. In *The Differend*, Jean-François Lyotard similarly questions the victim or survivor’s narrative and the possibility of accurately testifying to the situation. Lyotard asks:

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<sup>36</sup> Sem Dresden, *Persecution, Extermination, Literature*, trans. by Henry G. Schogt (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1995), p. 31

<sup>37</sup> Robert Cohen, ‘The Political Aesthetics of Holocaust Literature: Peter Weiss’s *The Investigation and Its Critics*’, *History and Memory* 10.2 (Fall 1998), pp. 43-67 (p. 55)

<sup>38</sup> Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 19

<sup>39</sup> James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988)

<sup>40</sup> Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. by Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage, 1989), p.

How can you know that the situation itself existed? That it is not the fruit of your informant's imagination? Either the situation did not exist as such. Or else it did exist, in which case your informant's testimony is false, either because he or she should have disappeared, or else because he or she can bear witness only to the particular experience he had, it remaining to be established whether this experience was a component of the situation in question.<sup>41</sup>

Fiction exceeds this notion that the survivor can bear witness to only his or her particular experience. All of these concerns about survivor definitions inspire questions about the individuals writing and those on whom the narratives are based: Who should speak for the victims or perpetrators, or even bystanders, who defines the victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, and which narratives appropriately represent the Holocaust?<sup>42</sup>

As Lawrence Langer argues in *Versions of Survival*, all Holocaust narratives possess this clashing encounter between fact and memory, persuasive horror and the will to believe, none more so than the survivor's fiction, which deliberately forces this encounter.<sup>43</sup> In order to accommodate these complex narratives, our organizational modes for categorizing writing must be reconsidered and adapted to disparate experiences, memories, and expressions. Survivors construct or reconstruct their traumatic memories as they seek to communicate memories that in their nature resist representation. In his criticism of Holocaust representation in television, Jean Baudrillard recognizes the importance of maintaining remembrance, only through the proper medium. He writes, 'Forgetting extermination is part of extermination, because it is also the extermination of memory, of history, of the social, etc.'<sup>44</sup> Although everyone should endeavor to remember atrocities, for the Jew, not forgetting begins with the ethical and historical commandment of continual and constant remembrance in the chief Torah verse, the

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<sup>41</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. by Georges Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 1

<sup>42</sup> Cohen, p. 44

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence L. Langer, *Versions of Survival* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 4

<sup>44</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Flaser, (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 2006), p. 49

*Shema*. The verse reads, ‘And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up’.<sup>45</sup> The Jewish concept of witnessing originating in the *Shema* ‘centres on the imperative to remember the past in order to maintain an enduring spiritual connection with it, an idea deeply rooted in the Hebrew Bible’.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, the Jewish survivor-writer is participating in the commandment to remember, regardless of form.

Moreover, when the survivor is also the author, the text is considered to be a part of a literature of testimony or one form of bearing witness, which must include ‘not only autobiography but fictional autobiography and imaginative literature, as well as poetry’.<sup>47</sup> In his work *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, Jacques Derrida addresses the question of aesthetics and testimony. Fiction does not make the same claims of absolute truth telling as autobiography or history. By writing imaginatively, the survivor-writer may be bearing witness to the subject (the large historical event that is the Holocaust) but has removed the sense of responsibility, not to the truth, but to the singular experience. Derrida emphasizes that ‘bearing witness is not proving’;<sup>48</sup> none of these novels by survivors are actually intending to prove anything, whether or not they are bearing witness. Derrida claims:

Whoever bears witness does not provide proof; he is someone whose experience, in principle singular and irreplaceable (even if it can cross-checked with others in order to become proof, in order to become probative in a verification process) attests, precisely, that some “thing” has been present to him.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Deuteronomy 6. 7

<sup>46</sup> Margaret Taft, *From Victim to Survivor: The Emergence and Development of the Holocaust Witness 1941-1949* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2013), p. 5

<sup>47</sup> Horowitz, p. 8

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. by Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 75 (emphasis the author’s)

<sup>49</sup> Derrida, *Sovereignties*, p. 77



While survivors and critics have all touted the Holocaust experience as incommunicable even in testimony, it is paradoxical that many have spoken about the unspeakable, frequently, and not only imaginatively.<sup>50</sup> Sara R. Horowitz asserts that through the reduction of historical authority in their fiction, survivors are freed ‘from adhering to a certain kind of exactitude or fidelity, in order to attain a different kind of exactitude’.<sup>51</sup> In agreement with Horowitz, Begley writes in the afterword to *Wartime Lies* that the characteristics of the novel ‘give the freedom to invent, consistent with the profound moral and psychological truth of the story being told’.<sup>52</sup>

These obstacles confronting the survivor-writer and literature as a genre have inspired Holocaust literary critics to call for ‘a new literary form to meet the challenge and, most specifically, to cope artistically with the paradoxical impossibility of adequate representation of the Holocaust’.<sup>53</sup> By adopting the new form, the survivor-writer more easily combines their personal experiences with broader knowledge and individual imagination to persuasively represent different perspectives on the event. It is important to note that imagination does not by its own nature invalidate authenticity because fiction and history are not mutually exclusive and are both, in fact, narrative construction.<sup>54</sup> Therefore survivor-writers variously create their own ways of writing to counter the limits of representation of atrocity.<sup>55</sup> One of these new forms, I argue, is the child-centered novel, which confronts many of the issues raised for the survivor-writer in their efforts to represent the Holocaust.

### **Introduction to primary texts**

In order to avoid repetition in later chapters, I will introduce the primary texts here. The textual examples in this study represent a range of possibility of experiences for

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<sup>50</sup> Dresden, p. 57

<sup>51</sup> Horowitz, *Voicing the Void*, p. 2

<sup>52</sup> Louis Begley, *Wartime Lies* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 201. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>53</sup> Sicher, p. x

<sup>54</sup> Sicher, p. xiii

<sup>55</sup> Sicher, p. xi

Jewish children. Several narratives are set inside ghettos or camps, which perhaps most clearly represent the character roles and relationships, expanding the possibilities for narrating and understanding the Holocaust. The survivor-writers narrate these settings from a unique position on the subject: they are inside the historically worst space, imprisoned behind walls and fences; generically, as novels written by survivors, they are necessarily products of both imagination and experience; and they also reflect the minds and experiences of their child protagonists. However, in order to represent the breadth and depth of the child's Holocaust, the texts I have chosen also depict the most common form of child survival, hiding, as well as less conventional experiences. All of the novels narrate historically similar experiences of marginality and occupying multiple spaces. For example, children are a part of and separate from the adult world, just as European Jews were both incorporated in and isolated from their respective national communities. If the challenge of the literary imagination in representing the Holocaust is to make the fundamental truth of the event accessible on an intellectual and emotional level,<sup>56</sup> I argue that this may be accomplished through an examination of such survivor-written child-centered fiction as the following examples.

Bogdan Wojdowski's *Bread for the Departed* is essentially a profile of the Warsaw Ghetto from its foundation to its liquidation through the observations of the young ghetto inhabitant, David. Through David, the reader witnesses the degeneration of values, traditions, and roles of society, and the inexorable physical and moral degradation of the Jewish community, family, and individual. The history of the novel's publication corresponds to the history of Poland in which Wojdowski's narrative differed from the national narrative of post-war Poland. Wojdowski was writing in one of the primary sites of Jewish destruction as well as one 'that came under Soviet domination after the war'.<sup>57</sup> In general, in Communist Poland the Jewish losses were viewed 'as a result of passivity

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<sup>56</sup> Langer, *Literary Imagination*, p. xii

<sup>57</sup> Randolph L. Braham, *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in post-Communist Eastern Europe* (New York: The City University of New York, 1994), pp. 144-145

in the face of fascism' which contrasted with 'redeeming acts of resistance'<sup>58</sup> like Soviet partisanship or armed uprisings. In this way, Wojdowski's narrative about Jewish civilians struggling to live in the ghetto did not fulfill the Party requirements. Although in the early sixties an excerpt was published, its success was hindered by 'anti-Semitic pressures of the mid-sixties, followed by an open anti-Jewish campaign of the late sixties, [which] interrupted any decent publications on the Jewish theme and probably also caused the delay in printing of Wojdowski's book, which appeared only in 1971.'<sup>59</sup> *Bread for the Departed* remained relatively unknown outside Poland until 1995 with English translation into the copy used here.<sup>60</sup>

*Moni: A Novel of Auschwitz* is Ka-tzetnik 135633's account of a ten-year-old Piepel, the personal servant and sex slave to a Block Chief in Auschwitz. Ka-tzetnik constructs his narrative around the established hierarchy within the camp, wherein Moni struggles between the rungs on that twisted ladder. The novel was first published in Hebrew and then shortly thereafter in English; writing in Hebrew, the language of the new Jewish state, was the author's celebration of the endurance of the Jewish people.<sup>61</sup> However, Ka-tzetnik was harshly received in Israel because of his controversial representations of Jews in morally compromised positions. *Moni* is the author's imagining of his younger brother's experience and one of six novels 'that compose what he defined as "a chronicle of a Jewish family in the twentieth century"'.<sup>62</sup> Unique among the survivor-writers in this study is the author's use of a pseudonym under which to publish his fiction. His particularly meaningful pseudonym 'derives from the German

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<sup>58</sup> Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 70-71

<sup>59</sup> Henryk Grynberg, 'The Holocaust in Polish Literature', *Notre Dame English Journal* 11.2 Judaic Literature: Critical Perspectives (1979), pp. 115-139 (p. 115)

<sup>60</sup> Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, 'A New Generation of Voices in Polish Literature', *Prooftexts* 9.3 (1989), pp. 273-287 (p. 281)

<sup>61</sup> Efraim Sicher, *The Holocaust Novel* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), p. 16

<sup>62</sup> Iris Milner, 'The "Gray Zone" Revisited: The Concentrationary Universe in Ka-tzetnik's Literary Testimony', *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 14.2 (2008), pp. 113-155 (p. 114)

acronym for a concentration camp and his prison camp number [representing] the non-identity of the victims reduced to a collective anonymity and inhumanity'.<sup>63</sup>

Imre Kertész's *Fatelessness* follows an assimilated Hungarian boy's persecution and the moral awakening that results from his survival of concentration camps. Kertész's narrator is doggedly ironic, detailing Gyuri's journey as a fumbling sort of learning process. Kertész's first novel succeeded in finding publication in Communist Hungary, 'despite its criticism of all totalitarian regimes and its insistence on anti-Semitism instead of the expected platitudes about anti-fascism in its description of the usual "fate" of the Hungarian Jews in 1944.'<sup>64</sup> And although *Fatelessness* may have found its way onto Hungarian shelves in 1975, '[it] was received in almost complete silence.'<sup>65</sup> The novel was translated into English in 1992 and became well known only after Kertész won the Nobel Prize in Literature ten years later. Though he had the opportunity to leave Hungary during the two months of the 1956 revolution, Kertész decided that the time for emigration had passed. One primary, and literary, reason for this decision was that he wrote in Hungarian and he considered it impractical to switch languages. Kertész cites an old Hungarian joke, that 'instead of going abroad, I decided to do something more adventurous: I stayed at home.'<sup>66</sup> This joke accurately describes the problematic situation in Communist Hungary, particularly for Jewish authors, where the country, although not as notoriously violent as post-war Poland, was still unreceptive.

There is a tendency to dismiss the hiding experience as somehow less-than the concentration camp or ghetto; however, it is not a question of degree of trauma, but rather of kind. Hiding was a trauma in itself and shared many sufferings of imprisonment. These include: deprivation of basic needs like food, shelter, and hygiene; isolation and separation from support network; identity crises; and the overarching fear and constant

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<sup>63</sup> Sicher, p. 16

<sup>64</sup> Sicher, p. 47

<sup>65</sup> Julian Evans, 'A Man Apart,' *The Guardian* (April 22, 2006) <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/apr/22/featuresreviews.guardianreview7> [Accessed 12 November 2013], para. 8 or 20

<sup>66</sup> John Nadler, '10 Questions for Imre Kertész', *TIME* (09 January 2007) <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1575306,00.html> [accessed 24 April 2014], para. 8 of 11

threat of death compounded with the fear of discovery. The two primary means of hiding for children during the Holocaust can be differentiated based on Langer's use of the terms 'external' and 'internal', where the former applies to those hiding in plain sight, on Aryan papers, in convents, or in gentile homes, and the latter to those physically hidden away, in dugouts, barns, backrooms, and wardrobes. Though both forms comprised some universal attributes, children hiding externally faced different crises than children hiding internally.<sup>67</sup> The Otherness already attached to Jewish children by anti-Semitism was intensified for hidden children, whose estrangement took on new and more literal manifestations with concealment. Because, as Langer argues, there was no 'archetypal hidden child',<sup>68</sup> survivor-writers are granted a certain amount of leniency for their fictional characters. However, some features of life were common among all hidden children, irrespective of individual circumstances, and these common threads can be traced in the novels. Principal among these was an extreme lack of understanding about the events ensuing around and against them, coinciding with an unrelenting anxiety and fear.<sup>69</sup> The acts of hiding may signify the overall incomprehension of Holocaust children who were particularly lacking in information and proficiencies to cope with its hardships.

*Wartime Lies* by Louis Begley is a story of hiding in Poland primarily on false papers. Begley left Poland for the United States in the few post-war years when emigration was still possible. After graduating from Harvard College, he served in the Army and had a career and family. Later in life, '[Begley] decided to begin a book about his late father, a physician. Instead he found himself writing about the boyhood of a man roughly his own age. But [he] knew the work had to be fiction.'<sup>70</sup> Despite bringing his retrospective knowledge and American perspective to *Wartime Lies*, his descriptions of non-Jewish Poles are particularly representative of survivors who stayed in Poland. He

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<sup>67</sup> Langer, *Using and Abusing*, p. 65

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Debórah Dwork, *Children with a Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 69

<sup>70</sup> Laurel Graeber, 'War and Memories', *The New York Times* (May 5 1991) <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/12/06/specials/begley-lies.html> [accessed 3 February 2014], para. 12 of 15

acknowledges that there were some Poles who ‘showed extraordinary decency and courage in their dealings with Polish Jews, risking death and torture,’<sup>71</sup> (p. 208), but he did not personally experience that compassion. He writes:

During those years of catastrophe and horror, the conduct that hurt and humiliated me most was that of my fellow Poles: their hatred of Jews, their utter callousness in the face of the unspeakable suffering and extinction of their former friends and neighbors, their contemptible duplicity. [...] The ultimate betrayal was, of course, the virulence of Polish anti-Semitism in evidence immediately after the [war].<sup>72</sup>

This anti-Semitism precipitated his family’s immigration to the United States, but the remembered betrayal would stain the pages of Begley’s novel written years later from the safety of America.

Henry Grynberg’s *The Jewish War and the Victory* follows one young Jewish boy and his mother hiding in Poland and their difficult years following the war’s end. Such a narrative could not have been written as it stands in English translation because corresponding to Communist ideology, Holocaust narratives had to fit into a specific mold; thus, though they could be written, the severe restriction to content was an act of silencing. First published under the name *Child of the Shadows* in 1969 two years after defection to the United States, the reissued edition from the United States more accurately depicts Jewish, non-Jewish, and Communist roles as he and his family had known them.<sup>73</sup> Grynberg defected from Poland for many reasons, one of which was to write this unrestricted story as he observes in his ‘Author’s Note’:

*The Jewish War*, my first full-size prose, written and published in Warsaw in 1965, became a subject of controversy because it differed from official

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<sup>71</sup> Begley, p. 208

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Sicher, p. 40

prescriptions of depicting the Nazi Occupation and the fate of the Jews. All reviews were held up by the censorship.<sup>74</sup>

According to this censorship, Holocaust narratives should highlight the class struggle of non-Jewish and Jewish Poles alike, regardless of the author's actual class and perspective. Though initial reports often proved the opposite to be true, authors should create the impression that it was the Polish poor classes who helped the Jews, seeking no compensation, while the middle class made denunciations.<sup>75</sup> Jewish authors could not even represent themselves authentically because Jews must reflect the character dictated by Soviet ideology: Jewish proletarians were brave and sacrificing and particularly leftist-oriented, whereas wealthy Jews were selfish and cowardly.<sup>76</sup> And naturally, Communist aid and Soviet victories in any Holocaust narrative needed to be heroically represented, when those participating in these acts were in fact often notorious anti-Semites.<sup>77</sup>

*Tzili: the story of a life* is the coming-of-age story of an unlikely female protagonist. Like much of Aharon Appelfeld's work, it is based 'on his own experiences fleeing the massacre of his family and wandering in the forest among peasants.'<sup>78</sup> Appelfeld had a secular upbringing in Bukovina, but his writing demonstrates an interest in the Eastern European Jewish traditions that he learned later in life.<sup>79</sup> Unlike many of the authors writing in the countries about which Appelfeld writes, Appelfeld has been widely read and translated from the Hebrew. According to Efraim Sicher, 'Appelfeld's subsequent career as Israel's foremost Holocaust novelist was largely boosted by his growing fame in English.'<sup>80</sup> *Tzili* is an example of a trend in many of Appelfeld's novels of choosing perspectives such as children from which to explore the Holocaust or

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<sup>74</sup> Henryk Grynberg, *The Jewish War and The Victory*, trans. by Richard Lourie and Celina Wieniewska (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. vii. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>75</sup> Grynberg, 'Polish Literature', p. 127

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Grynberg, 'Polish Literature', p. 128

<sup>78</sup> Sicher, p. 19

<sup>79</sup> Sicher, p. 18

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

survivors. The child's viewpoint is endowed with special meaning for Appelfeld because of his opinion that children perceived the Holocaust differently from adults, where Tzili's narrative perspective '[combines] especially sensitive perceptions or powers of observation with naiveté'.<sup>81</sup>

*Shadows of a Childhood: A Novel of Friendship* details the life in hiding and in the wake of the Holocaust of a young French Jewish girl, Léa Levy. Elisabeth Gille née Epstein is the daughter of Irène Némirovsky, most known as the author of *Suite Française*, who died in Auschwitz in 1943. Sharing similar characteristics, the protagonist of Gille's novel has Russian-born parents who were deported and presumed dead. Gille incorporates and reimagines some of her own experiences in *Un paysage de cendres*, which was published the same month as her death to cancer in 1996; the French title literally translates to 'a landscape of ashes', which clearly indicates the crematoria at Gille's parents' destination.<sup>82</sup> The English translation used in this study was published under the title *Shadows of a Childhood*, which remarks upon the memory and trauma of the experience. Gille's novel is also a commentary on France's attitudes and activities, '[including] excellent analysis of the complicated motives, combining basic human charity and ambivalence toward Jews, that doubtless dictated the actions of many rescuers of Jewish children in France and elsewhere.'<sup>83</sup>

The above two types of narratives, incarceration and hiding, represent the more commonly understood and represented experiences of Jewish children during the Holocaust. However, this study provides evidence of literature depicting an underrepresented type, terming them non-traditional narratives, among which are protagonists and stories that do not correspond to the established character of the Holocaust's youngest victim. They exist more isolated from the center of the historical

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<sup>81</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 130

<sup>82</sup> Alan Astro, 'Elisabeth Gille', *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia* (1 March 2009) <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/gille-elisabeth> [accessed 28 May 2014], para. 7 of 12

<sup>83</sup> Astro, para. 7



event as the indirectly persecuted half-Jew, the exile escaping on the *Kindertransport*, and the camp survivor in the post-war period. Each character represents a category of people – half-Jew, refugee, survivor – who confront the Holocaust in different ways than in incarceration or hiding narratives, which could be viewed as within the event. These texts represent a marginalized group within an already marginalized viewpoint, emphasizing the extent of the young individual's experience and its effect on, for example, the child's identity and development.

Ilse Aichinger's *Herod's Children* is an exploration of the effects of Nazi racial classifications on a child who is largely without adult supervision. Although Aichinger was already a young woman at the time of the *Anschluss* in her native Austria, like her protagonist she was classified as a *Mischling*, a Jew of mixed race. Aichinger was born to a Jewish mother, whom she was able to save, and non-Jewish father; the remainder of her maternal family was murdered.<sup>84</sup> Aichinger's mother was unable to protect her daughter but the daughter's status managed to safeguard the mother's life; this role reversal translates to Ellen's abandonment by her own mother when she saves herself through immigration to America. The exploration of identity for Ellen as a *Mischling* underscores the author's own feelings about the irrationality of Nazi racial decrees. Published in 1949 as *Die größere Hoffnung* (The greatest hope),<sup>85</sup> Aichinger's was one of the first fictional accounts of Nazi persecution and the Final Solution to reach a German-speaking readership.<sup>86</sup> Patricia Haas Stanley remarks, 'One feels that Aichinger obviously suffered episodes similar to Ellen's and can only retell them from the safe vantage of omniscient narrator.'<sup>87</sup> Ellen is also representative of Aichinger's notable interest in children in her

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<sup>84</sup> Michaela Grobbel, 'The "Mischling" as a Trope for a New German-Jewish Identity?: The Figure of the Girl in Ilse Aichinger's *Die Größere Hoffnung* and Margarethe von Trotta's *Rosenstrasse*', *Pacific Coast Philology* 44.1 (2009), pp. 72-99 (p. 73)

<sup>85</sup> Further references to this work will use the 1963 English publication and will be referred to as *Herod's Children*.

<sup>86</sup> Patrick Greaney, 'Estranging Memory in Ilse Aichinger', *The German Quarterly* 80.1 (2007), pp. 42-58 (p. 42)

<sup>87</sup> Patricia Haas Stanley, 'Ilse Aichinger's Absurd "I"', *German Studies Review* 2.3 (1979), pp. 331-350 (p. 340)

writing, frequently serving as protagonist or otherwise having a strong presence in the text.<sup>88</sup>

Lore Segal's *Other People's Houses* takes place between 1937 and 1951, spanning the protagonist's life in Vienna immediately prior to and after the *Anschluss*, her *Kindertransport* flight to England and subsequent life as a refugee there, and ending with her settlement in New York. The time period and events lend themselves to an examination of the European Jewish refugee and Jewish identity during and after the Holocaust.<sup>89</sup> The work is often called a memoir despite the fictional devices such as invented places because the protagonist's story arc mirrors the author's biography. However, it is through her fiction that Segal is able to explore the irony and humor in what was a deeply painful experience, as well as examine larger issues beyond the scope of the child's perspective such as the plight of the refugee.

*Dita Saxova* is one example of Arnošt Lustig's works that depart from the male-centered established narrative by focusing on children and women. Like Dita, Lustig's adolescence was spent in Nazi captivity, including Theresienstadt and Auschwitz,<sup>90</sup> and his work *Darkness Casts No Shadow* describes his escape from a transport train to Dachau. Lustig lived in Prague after the war, publishing in Czech and English translation, but after the Soviet invasion of 1968, 'he was banned along with other Holocaust novelists who did not toe the Party line and who insisted on the Jewish identity of the victims.'<sup>91</sup> While many narratives include scenes after the war ends to provide the reader a sample of the child experiencer as survivor, the narrative present of *Dita Saxova* is exclusively post-war. The work begins in the spring of 1947 with its title character turning eighteen and, although Dita was aged ten through sixteen during the years 1939-1945, her Holocaust childhood is only represented through flashbacks in conversations

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<sup>88</sup> Stanley, p. 348

<sup>89</sup> Claire M. Tylee, 'Lore Segal', in *Holocaust Literature: An Encyclopedia of Writers and Their Work* ed. by S. Lillian Kremer (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1135-1137 (p. 1135)

<sup>90</sup> Robert Trucks and Arnošt Lustig, 'A Conversation with Arnošt Lustig', *New England Review* 20.4 (1999), pp. 68-76 (p. 68)

<sup>91</sup> Sicher, p. 43

and memories. In this way, the novel acts as an examination of the child survivor; instead of presenting events contemporaneously, Lustig explores what happens to the Jewish child who grew up during the war, survived, and became a young adult in the post-war period. Byron Sherwin writes in the Afterword that ‘only a writer of Arnošt Lustig’s life’s experience, uncanny insight, and narrative elegance could so delicately tell the tale of Dita Saxova’.<sup>92</sup>

### **Themes and thesis organization**

In Chapter One I identify the importance placed on the relationships between child and adult characters, and inversions of traits, roles, and language. In this way, the survivor-writers underscore the end of childhood in extremity, a loss for both children killed and the living child who must prematurely become ‘adult-like’.<sup>93</sup> Conversely, some narratives emphasize a dependence on adults that seems to inhibit their normal maturity, fixing the child in a state of immaturity even after the war. The second chapter explores how the novels use child’s play, school, and engagement with peers to highlight the aforementioned changed nature of childhood. Play has the ability to re-establish the protagonist’s youth while spotlighting their particular tragedies through imitation. Chapter Three is an exploration of what I identify as a three-fold identity: the protagonists are shaped by their positions as an outsider because of their particular experience, their Jewishness, and their genders. Identity formation is a recurrent theme in Holocaust and Jewish literature, as is the development of selfhood in children. Examining how the Holocaust was responsible for character development is especially important because, as Berel Lang writes, ‘Jewish identity is engendered primarily by conflict, by the antagonism of anti-Semitism, by the imposed awareness of the contingency of Jewish

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<sup>92</sup> Byron L. Sherwin, ‘Afterword’, in *Dita Saxova* by Arnošt Lustig, (London: Quartet Books Limited, 1994), pp. 353-358 (pp. 355-356)

<sup>93</sup> Milena Šubrtová, ‘When Children Die In War: Death in War Literature for Children and Youth’, *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* 47.4 (October 2009), pp. 1-8 (p. 5)

existence—in short, by holocaust.’<sup>94</sup> The fourth and final chapter examines how these narratives reconstruct the concept of Holocaust place, give it meaning, and represent it by creating a new child-space for its youngest experiencers. The Holocaust child-space is represented by several aspects of spatial concern: the liminal and paradoxical spaces of the texts’ setting, particularly those of the rural and urban and in between; specific sites of meaning and the concept of home; belonging to nation states and cities; and the narrative spaces that the authors create. Just as these ten textual examples do not comprise the entirety of the subgenre, these four themes are neither the only common threads nor are they exclusive to the subgenre, as they may also be applicable to the Holocaust literature canon as a whole. However, they speak to some of the most important issues in Holocaust literature and literature about children.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis argues that the form and perspective of the child-centered novel makes it possible for survivor-writers to more effectively narrate the child’s Holocaust experience and the Holocaust more generally. Both the survivor’s novel and children occupy multiple spaces, which provides a unique vantage point from which to represent the event. This study is not intended to join the on-going debate about the degree to which the Holocaust is unique from or worse than other atrocities. Whereas the child-centered Holocaust narrative is important and can offer new insights into the subject, ‘quantitative terms like *greater*, *more*, *additional* are irrelevant here; the hostility toward the Jews was different in kind and not in degree’.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, even without the graphic details of specific horrors expected of Holocaust representation, the survivor-writer’s choice of the child protagonist underscores the horror of the event through the combination of naïveté and cleverness. This thesis suggests that the survivor’s child-centered novel focuses on

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<sup>94</sup> Berel Lang, ‘Writing-the-Holocaust: Jabès and the Measure of History’ in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. by Berel Lang, pp. 245-260 (p. 250)

<sup>95</sup> Knox, p. xiv (emphasis the author’s)

the ways in which childhood and children were changed by the experience in order to represent the distorted world of the Holocaust.

## Chapter I: The Child-Adult Dichotomy – Interactions and Actions

I have the impression that they send us here the mere leavings of children.

JANUS KORCZAK<sup>96</sup>

A young Jewish boy discovered the kingdom of night. I remember his bewilderment, I remember his anguish. It all happened so fast. The ghetto. The deportation. The sealed cattle car. The fiery altar upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind were meant to be sacrificed.

ELIE WIESEL<sup>97</sup>

### The child-adult dichotomy and child point of view

In this chapter, I argue that the survivor-writers underscore the heightened powerlessness and vulnerability of the Jews by emphasizing the dichotomy between child and adult characters in extremity. In these novels, the focus is often on the role reversals and relationships between the two age groups; for example, children are often represented exhibiting character traits associated with adults and, conversely, adults those of children. Merging child and adult voices, the child's viewpoint is delivered in adult language, highlighting elements of the child's importance such as their keen observations that develop from naiveté and their position as representative of hope for the future. The suffering child who is marked for death reinforces the perspective's unique force while undermining it with the Jews' powerlessness. Similarly, depictions of the attempts at life made by adult characters are feeble not for lack of effort, but in the futility of that exertion against the Nazi machine, the texts' universal antagonist. This machine seeks the deliberate separation and destruction of the nuclear family, which is the most 'basic organizational unit of society',<sup>98</sup> in order to further cripple the potential for survival. Oftentimes the destruction of these ties may precipitate children into meeting new challenges with surprising strength and ingenuity, despite the traumatic loss of their

<sup>96</sup> Janus Korczak, *Ghetto Diary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 74-75

<sup>97</sup> Elie Wiesel, 'Acceptance Speech', Nobelprize.org (1986) [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-acceptance\\_en.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-acceptance_en.html) [accessed 24 August 2013], para. 4 of 14

<sup>98</sup> George Eisen, *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games among the Shadows* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 19

families. The interactions between the characters can represent the relationships among children and adults as well as the ways traditional bonds are tested and refashioned in times of atrocity.

The disparities that necessarily exist between the child character and the adult narrator provide an opportunity to contrast and expand perspectives. For example, the contrast of brutality with a child's innocence can elicit an amplified consciousness of the devastation and cruelty.<sup>99</sup> The child's cavalier comments and unevaluated descriptions of violent episodes replace potential sentimentalism without impeding the novel's impact. The character situates violence always within the context of his personal experience, consistent with the behavior of children. The narratives use the child's 'unknowing stance' in language accessible to the reader by way of the adult narrator, working with and against a reader's knowledge of history, thus underscoring the incomprehensible nature of the Holocaust itself.<sup>100</sup> The different ways in which the authors navigate the language of their child protagonists, in particular the dialogue, establish a framework for the child's relationships with others and their own development.

By the time of the events of the Holocaust, traditional family cultures and configurations had given the child a significant role so that the child's presence, existence, and future are of concern.<sup>101</sup> Previously, for the most part and with rare exceptions, the literary child was either not present or only mentioned in passing, and at most only a minor component of the adult's world.<sup>102</sup> By the time post-Holocaust generations are writing, in accordance with changes of social thought about the child and childhood, children were '[emerging] from comparative unimportance to become the focus of an unprecedented literary interest, and, in time, the central figure of an

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<sup>99</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 16

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Aries, pp. 33-49

<sup>102</sup> Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: the Individual and Society* (New York and London: Penguin, 1967), p. 29

increasingly significant proportion of our literature.<sup>103</sup> As such, the child-centered Holocaust novel is part of a wider social and cultural change that can serve to provide a new perspective on historical events. Because events obstructed both physical growth and social growth into an adult member of Jewish society, the process of childhood as stages toward maturation abruptly ends or is disordered. This chaotic growth emulates the chaos of the world in which they are developing, dramatizing these representations of childhood by the abruptness of their premature changes and endings.<sup>104</sup>

In this capacity, the young protagonists are not intended to be real children, but rather a version of the child that may be representative of others. It could be argued that the child and childhood are ‘cultural myths replicated and reinvented through representational practices of history, science, literature, material culture, woven in, and by, discourses, or discursive traditions, which inevitably embody priorities, beliefs, the feelings of people, of time and of place’.<sup>105</sup> As a result of their cultural construction, these literary children are further connected to the adult ideologies that create them, the adult authors that give them form, the adult characters with whom they interact, and the adult readers that react to their representation. The way that the authors represent their child protagonists and Holocaust childhoods open readers to the possibility of access to another world. Walter Benjamin asserts that ‘every childhood action and gesture becomes a signal. Not so much a signal of the unconscious, of latent processes, repressions, or censorship, [...] but a signal from another world, in which the child lives and commands’.<sup>106</sup> Through their figure of the child, the survivor-writers may recreate the signal of the ‘real’ Holocaust child. For Benjamin, a few remarkably perceptive authors in

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Sungolowsky, ‘Holocaust and Autobiography: Wiesel Friedländer, Pizar’ in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), p. 98

<sup>105</sup> Margarida Morgado, ‘The Season of Play: Constructions of the Child in the English Novel’ in *Children in Culture: Approaches to Childhood*, ed. by Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (Houndsmills: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1998), pp. 204-230 (p. 204)

<sup>106</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘Program for a Proletarian Children’s Theater’ in *Selected Writings Vol. 2 1927-1934* trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), pp. 201-206, (pp. 203-204)



their representations may only glimpse access to this world.<sup>107</sup> Jacqueline Rose comparably claims that the child as literary conduit acts as restoration to a ‘primitive or lost state to which the child has special access’.<sup>108</sup> Both theorists are positing that the child’s viewpoint can provide access to a different version of or perspective on the same truth. Meanwhile, Lawrence Langer separates adult and child worlds, asserting that while history and representation attempt to understand how the Holocaust could have been happened, the imprisonment and extermination of children stands as an atrocity apart because the suffering of children is more emotionally, intellectually, and imaginatively offensive. Langer writes:

If man’s fate in war is to die, and women’s to mourn, a child’s fate—as always—is to live and rejoice in youth and innocence while they last; and the mind has special difficulty adjusting to any situation that reverses this “normal” trend.<sup>109</sup>

While Langer is deliberately oversimplifying the societal roles of each, he emphasizes the altered realities of the Holocaust child. The children within these narratives must abandon innocence in favor of prolonged life, contradicting the reader’s expectations of children and charging the narrative with special potency.

One of the primary ways these texts highlight the end of childhood is by the young experiencers adopting adult behaviors and mentalities while conversely imbuing adults with child-like attributes. An example of this is representations of adults forced to rely on children to provide food for entire families, which emphasizes the attributes necessary for the adult to step back from and the child to step forward into the caretaking role. The historical inability of parents to protect and provide for their children is translated into and sometimes exaggerated by this literary role reversal. Placing the narratives inside the real-life destruction of traditional family structures, the narratives

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<sup>107</sup> Benjamin, ‘Children’s Theatre’, p. 204

<sup>108</sup> Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 9

<sup>109</sup> Langer, *Literary Imagination*, p. 124

break down the barriers between adult caretakers and child dependents. The striking inversion of adult-child roles, in conjunction with the destruction of the family, sets the tone for the world-destroying Holocaust. The child protagonists make for reliable viewpoints because of their premature thrust into the adult world, 'which gives it existence, supports, sustains, controls and sometimes even emotionally and psychologically destroys it'.<sup>110</sup> This integration and transition demands they develop survival tactics that even the adult characters seem unable to cultivate. The choice to narrate from the perspective of the most vulnerable members of society serves to convey 'an authentic impression of the texture of life under Nazi occupation'.<sup>111</sup> The juxtaposition of the child's physical vulnerability and innocence with the weakened aptitude of adults may produce this texture.

Another key component is the language used to explore the child-adult dichotomy. As these children are imagined by adult authors, Sokoloff contends that they are 'by definition Others whose words must be translated into a world of mature discourse they do not yet inhabit'.<sup>112</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogic imagination provides one theoretical approach for examining the child-centered narrative when the young viewpoint or voice is thus transformed in and appropriated by this other more mature discourse.<sup>113</sup> The narratives often utilize free indirect speech more than traditional direct dialogue, merging the child's consciousness and adult narration. Although some novels use more direct speech, each child has a tendency to repeat the conversations and opinions of others without differentiating his or her own opinion, which emphasizes that children are prone to naively absorbing what both adults and peers say. According to Bakhtin:

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<sup>110</sup> John Hodgson, *The Search for the Self: Childhood in Autobiography and Fiction since 1940* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 28

<sup>111</sup> Leon I. Yudkin, *Literature in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Saint-Denis, France: Les Editions Suger/Suger Press, 2003), p. 166

<sup>112</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 3

<sup>113</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 24

The ability to distinguish between one's own and another's discourse, between one's own and another's thought, is activated rather late in development. [...]

One's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible.<sup>114</sup>

The child characters' unquestioning adoption of beliefs held by the adults around them often precipitates their internalization of anti-Semitic or defeatist attitudes expressed by the older characters. In this way, the child character may act as a vehicle for critiquing Jewish self-criticism by combining this analysis with 'a more sympathetic acknowledgement that events will turn out disastrously, beyond anything the grown-ups could have imagined'.<sup>115</sup>

While the child perspective can offer new insights to the adult reader and author, there are always risks involved in choosing this mode of narration. There is a danger of caricature when an adult attempts to recreate the child or the possible presentation of unreal situations. Moreover, the marginalized and muted voice of the child is limited even in its fictionalization. Naomi Sokoloff remarks,

Unlike suppressed voices in any given canon that may eventually gain autonomy (women, for instance, in traditions of writing dominated by men), use of the child's voice and perspective in adult fiction must necessarily remain a ventriloquism and a peculiarly literary phenomena.<sup>116</sup>

The literary and child-centered factors that enhance the narrative can also limit the novel's ability 'to explore the psychological realities of personality development and the interaction between social forces and the growth of consciousness'.<sup>117</sup> The authors seek to counteract the potential restrictions of the child's experience, observations, and analyses

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<sup>114</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 345

<sup>115</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 18

<sup>116</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 4

<sup>117</sup> Hodgson, p. 26

through adult language, dialogue, and occasional shifts in point of view, thereby recognizing and addressing the problems inherent in the child-centered novel. Thus, although there are conceivably many obstacles that Holocaust texts utilizing the child viewpoint must surmount, the successful navigation of these boundaries can ultimately provide insights that other narratives may not.

### **Interactions: Roles and relationships**

In the survivor-writers' endeavors to describe settings and characters that reflect the reality of life during the Holocaust, the characters are representations of members of a collective community or family. However, traditional relationships were one of the first aspects of ordinary life to be dramatically altered when normative societal structures collapsed, particularly those between parents and their children. As such, the child characters often turn toward new relationships when their parents have their primary functions as caregivers taken away. And often only when separation is forced upon them do the characters realize how much they need and want their families. As survivor P.H. reflects in a collection of testimonies, 'I didn't value as a young child what it means to have a family with a father and mother. I only really appreciate it now that it's too late...'<sup>118</sup>

### Children surpassing parental shortcomings

A text that clearly highlights the mixture of child and adult qualities in characters of all ages is Bogdan Wojdowski's *Bread for the Departed* in which David's rapid maturation is documented through the passage of time behind the ghetto walls. Each chapter depicts a different aspect of ghetto life and David's function in it. As his parents are gradually unable to provide for him, David no longer spends his time at home, instead going out in search of food and other necessities with his friends. The figure of David's

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<sup>118</sup> Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), p. 326

mother best comments on the psychological and physical deterioration of a parent, which makes the adult dependent on her child, ‘and the child’s survival was frequently linked to his or her ability to gain authority for independent actions.’<sup>119</sup> Although David’s mother still prepares their daily meals, David is the one responsible for bringing her the supplies, first from the chaotic food distribution stations and later through smuggling from outside the wall. She also physically takes care of him in her own small ways such as picking the lice from him every evening, but she is emotionally distant and spends most of her presence complaining, nagging, or mourning. The narrator concedes retrospectively that her lack of maternal demonstrations is not from lack of love: ‘Only later would it turn out that his mother’s apathy had been a secret way of conserving the remains of her energy’.<sup>120</sup> Like a young child, she requires constant consolation and reassurance, and David’s father in turn speaks to her like one. She frequently wails that she will not survive their internment (p. 45). Unlike the conventional parental desire to protect her child, she also does not make an effort to shield David from her worst fears. For example, when the liquidation begins she repeatedly refers to it as ‘doomsday’ and emulates a child’s reaction to fear: ‘Mother flung herself onto the bed, covered her face, and pressed her hands against her ears’ (p. 324). Like his mother, the most desperate characters are often compared to children with their crying, pleading, and overall helplessness. Those described as consistently behaving this way are religious, as Wojdowski writes, ‘The three holy men began wailing in unison, like children’ (p. 125), contributing to Wojdowski’s running commentary on the failure of prayer.

Ka-tzetnik 135633’s *Moni* utilizes similar juxtapositions of children and adults in the concentration camp, in particular comparing the adult prisoners to children after they have been reduced to ‘camping’, or Mussulman, status. The physical degradation from a healthy adult to a camping reflects the physical weakness and vulnerability of the child.

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<sup>119</sup> Eisen, p. 23

<sup>120</sup> Bogdan Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, trans. by Madeline G. Levine (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), p. 45. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

Though Ka-tzetnik has a plethora of similes available, he deliberately chooses comparisons to children in order to emphasize the essential fragility of the prisoners' positions and lives as well as Moni's unique position as a child in the camp. One example is a scene with the sadistic Polish dwarf, Piotr, who is also referred to by the ironic nickname Holy Dad; the dwarf is physically smaller than the other adult prisoners and the comparative size of a child. In a rare show of almost-tenderness, 'not saying a word, [Piotr] offered the full-grown campling his hand the way a child offers his hand to adult to be led'.<sup>121</sup> But rather than fulfilling the role of a dependent child, Piotr is in fact leading the prisoner to his death. His ironic nickname is further emphasized here because if he were a father figure to the prisoners, his children, he would take care of them instead of sadistically killing them.

In another scene of handholding, the secondary protagonist, Hayim-Idl, leads the former cantor to a potentially life-saving position, if only for one more Auschwitz day:

To an observer, it might have seemed that Bergson was leading a little boy by the hand. Actually, Hayim-Idl was holding on to Bergson the way one holds a little child to keep it from going astray in a crowd. (p. 152)

Ka-tzetnik's language plays with the character roles, questioning who are the adult and child in the relationship, who is holding onto whom. In another scene, a laborer carries his wooden plank 'like a frightened child carrying a heavy load which might save his mother's life' (p. 178). Ka-tzetnik does not describe the plank as the laborer's life raft; instead, he uses the simile of a mother-child relationship with the converse of traditional functions. Importantly, mothers have no physical presence in this part of the camp and Moni's mother exists only in his memories and imagined conversations. Several times the campings who cling to the Rabbi of Shilev are compared to children who view him as a father figure, standing in for their lost roles of fathers and sons and for their dead parents

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<sup>121</sup> Ka-tzetnik 135633, *Moni: A Novel of Auschwitz* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1963), p. 35. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

and children. Initially Hayim-Idl cuddles the rabbi, 'like a happy child' (p. 162), but the roles reverse when the Rabbi of Shilev becomes a campling, too physically weak to offer spiritual support or hope to other prisoners. The Rabbi of Shilev is described as '[so] naked, so puny, like a little boy' (p. 255) because any physical weakness elicits comparisons to children.

The crucial feature of Ka-tzetnik's Auschwitz is the loss of human connections such as basic trust, bonding, and solidarity. According to Iris Milner, the camp's efforts 'culminated in the collapse of fundamental ties within the nucleus of human relations: family ties in general, and the parent-child unit in particular. Human societies universally fetishize the family and sanctify familial relations'.<sup>122</sup> Recently separated from his parents before the narrative begins, a conflict arises between Moni's position as a sex slave and his representation as a child because Moni's child-like qualities are also accentuated repeatedly throughout the text. Perhaps Ka-tzetnik reinforces Moni's youthfulness to contrast it with the brutality of life in Auschwitz and his *Funktion*, which is more shocking because of the sexual component. This consistent reminder of his youth throws into sharp relief the horrors of his role as a sex slave and then, almost paradoxically, his efforts to regain his Piepel status when *Funktion*-less. One of the ways that Ka-tzetnik highlights Moni's age is the recurrent internal dialogues he conducts with his father, whom he understands to be dead, and his mother, whom he hopes still lives. These exchanges are consistent with the large part of the novel's action that occurs inside Moni's mind.<sup>123</sup> The example below of one of these conversations reinforces both Moni's disinclination to believe the truth and his desire to have the security of his family again.

Ka-tzetnik writes:

'Won't you, Pa? Won't you pick me up in your arms again?' 'But you saw them throw me into the lorry.' 'But then I saw you standing in B Camp.' 'That wasn't I.

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<sup>122</sup> Milner, pp. 138-139

<sup>123</sup> Yudkin, p. 56

Maybe it was Harrik.’ ‘But Harrik is in Palestine!’ ‘So why do you ask such childish questions? You know that in B Camp all the heads look alike.’ (p. 250)

This internal dialogue with his dead father surfaces Moni’s fears that no one he loves has survived and emphasizes the prisoners’ loss of individuality, but he also uses these conversations as motivation to live.

Gyuri in *Fatelessness* perhaps best embodies the adolescent’s feelings about family and parents, in or out of extremity, as earlier expressed by survivor P.H. and his attitude toward others is inverted by his development in the camps. Prior to deportation, Kertész’s protagonist demonstrates deep discomfort with showing affection toward his family, having difficulty reaching any depth of emotion about being separated from his parents—first, from his father when he is conscripted to a labor camp and, second, from both mother and stepmother when Gyuri is transported to Poland. Any demonstrations of emotion stem more from a sense of obligation than from any recognition that he actually cares about them. Consistent with this lack of serious introspection and expression of deep emotions, much of the writing in the narrative possesses the unconcerned charm and naiveté of a boy at summer camp rather than a concentration camp.<sup>124</sup> Gary Adelman describes Gyuri as a ‘foolish marionette’ because he so quickly acquiesces to the will of the adults around him and what he does not understand, and he congratulates himself for making the choice to volunteer for the train to Auschwitz.<sup>125</sup> With this decision, Gyuri is now complicit in his fate, something he will come to recognize and unsuccessfully try to articulate to nonexperiencers upon his post-war return to Budapest.<sup>126</sup> Adelman’s analysis of Gyuri is that while his intellect and consciousness is inquisitive, ‘his emotional life remains benumbed, dimmed, as if he had been traumatized in anticipation of the trauma

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<sup>124</sup> Gary Adelman, ‘Getting Started with Imre Kertész’, *New England Review* 25 1/2: Translation Double Issue (2004), p. 264

<sup>125</sup> Adelman, p. 265

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.



of the concentration camp'.<sup>127</sup> Gyuri lies about his age to volunteer for a labor camp for reasons that are completely logical in his fourteen-year-old mind; but his innocent attitude horrifies the reader who has knowledge of what awaits him. As one of Gyuri's more shocking statements, the passage below demonstrates how his childlike naiveté contributes to his fate. Gyuri remarks cheerfully:

What I could look forward to from working, though, was above all orderliness, employment, new impressions, and a bit of fun—all in all, a more sensible lifestyle than the one here in Hungary, just as was being promised and as we boys, quite naturally, pictured it when we talked among ourselves, though alongside that it crossed my mind that this might also be a way of getting to see a bit of the world. (p. 64)

Although a boy could envision making the best of his impromptu situation in such a way, his youthful logic and naiveté is shocking to the reader who brings knowledge of what awaits him. Gyuri's prevailing instinct to accept as natural what is horrific to the reader could serve to distance the child from the experience and have a desensitizing effect on the reader. However, in these instances when the true horrors are distant from Gyuri's account, the value of Kertész's approach 'is that by setting things at a distance it permits us a tougher, more active response'.<sup>128</sup>

Upon arrival in Auschwitz, the prisoners helping them down from the cattle car are agitated at the sight of the boys, which will be a common response from adult prisoners about Gyuri's age. When the unloading prisoners ask in Yiddish if he wants to work, Gyuri understands the question only because of its similarity to the German he learned in school. He replies that naturally he wants to work because that was why he came, after all, invoking his belief that his journey to this point had been a choice. The agitated prisoners instruct the boys to tell the Germans they are all sixteen, a lie that

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Terrence Des Pres, 'Holocaust *Laughter?*' in *Writing and the Holocaust* ed. by Berel Lang, pp. 216-233 (p. 232)

Gyuri is comfortable accommodating: ‘all right, I’ll be sixteen then’ (p. 79). Because he has no solid sense of his own identity at this point and the lie fulfills his desire to work, Gyuri finds it easy to transform himself into a boy two years older and qualified for adult tasks. When Gyuri arrives in the Buchenwald hospital, he recognizes that the adult patients view him with pity because of his youth, something he does not altogether welcome as he has been striving to seem more mature and capable of adult labor. He observes, ‘In the end, I found that people on all sides were looking at me, heads shaking, and with a most singular emotion on their faces, which was a little embarrassing because, as best I could tell, they were feeling sorry for me’ (p. 213).

#### The hidden voice and dependency for survival

While narratives about children in hiding describe adults and children in many similar ways to those set in ghettos and camps, a particular emphasis is placed on interactions and relationships as they highlight development. Each of the child character’s relationships with others is defined by and representative of their particular hiding experience. First, there is the crucial relationship with the adults on whom they most often depend for survival. In *Wartime Lies* and *The Jewish War and the Victory*, the boys hide with mother figures; for Maciek this is his aunt Tania who has helped raise him since his mother’s death in childbirth, and for Henryk this is his young mother. Both the boys’ fathers are peripheral in the narratives after they are early on separated from their families. Abandoned by her parents and siblings, the title character in *Tzili* is closest to the escaped camp inmate Mark, the aging prostitute Katarina, and later fellow refugee Linda, all of whom contribute to her development, maturation, and awareness of herself while also providing versions of caretaking. Léa’s primary adult relationship in *Shadows of a Childhood* is with Sister Saint-Gabriel, the nun in charge of the convent, and she never becomes close with Bénédicte’s parents who are her guardians after the war. Because the young character is only beginning to know him or herself, this presents a

constantly changing novelty of vision as hiding challenges the child's limits of redefining 'self' and 'other' in relation to adults.<sup>129</sup>

The interplay between the main characters and minor non-Jewish characters also represents how the people among whom the hidden Jews live as neighbors or on whom they depend to hide them may also be the most serious threats. Societal customs necessitate a degree of belonging to and involvement in communities in order to avoid suspicion or ostracizing. Naturally accentuated in wartime, this includes gossiping and other types of invasive interest in one another's activities.<sup>130</sup> Slip-ups might be more readily detected, as noted in *Wartime Lies* when they 'had to spend more time in their company than Tania considered prudent' (p. 105). Revealed through the author's interpretations of the children, these characters experience a pressure to please and adapt under constant observation, which often overshadows any display and development of individuality because '[the] assertion of their own likes, dislikes, desires, former habits, and customs was out of the question'.<sup>131</sup> Tzili, for example, accepts beatings from and allows herself to be overworked by the peasants who shelter her in winter simply because she has no alternative.<sup>132</sup> Henryk perceives the increased danger of constant human engagement when their hiding place changes to a small community of rural Poles, because 'it was no longer a question of walking in the street with head high or smiling at Germans in a tram' (p. 44); Henryk has to learn new tactics of deception to assimilate.

The character voice of each text helps to restrict the perspective to the child protagonist, whereby linguistic features are interpreted as indicators of a child's speech. Therefore, even if what is offered as the child's perspective clearly does not agree with a child's genuine speech, or when they could or should be attributed to other characters'

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<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff, 'Introduction' in *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1994), pp. 1-15 (p. 4)

<sup>130</sup> Dwork, p. 85

<sup>131</sup> Dwork, p. 96

<sup>132</sup> Aharon Appelfeld, *Tzili: The Story of a Life* (New York: Grove Press, 1996), p. 52. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

speech, these passages are still perceived as childlike because they are expected to be childlike.<sup>133</sup> *Wartime Lies* and *The Jewish War* are both written in the retrospective first-person voice. Presumably, the narrators are the adult versions of Maciek and Henryk whose childhoods are being recounted, and as such the division between the adult narrator and child viewpoint ‘may be hard to detect because of the apparently identical and continuous self-reference’.<sup>134</sup> The bulk of the narratives limit themselves almost entirely to the boys’ viewpoints and the knowledge available to him in the story’s present.<sup>135</sup> Use of free indirect discourse fortifies the child viewpoint with immediacy and uncertainty.<sup>136</sup>

This method is particularly profound when the child protagonists echo the anti-Jewish views of the Polish Catholics among whom they are hiding. For example, Maciek’s contact with non-Jewish Poles and their opinions of Jews are particularly resonant as he parrots their speech and presents an ironized version of the non-Jewish Pole’s outlook.<sup>137</sup> He repeats one landlady’s attitudes about the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto: ‘Jews had actually attacked Germans, even forcing the SS unit that was sent to restore order to retreat. Some said that many of the SS had been killed. But now Germans were teaching the Jews a final lesson’ (p. 102). The free indirect speech does not differentiate between the landlady’s feelings and Maciek’s own, perhaps suggesting his non-Jewish lies have been internalized. Appelfeld and Gille write only in the third-person subjective voice while also incorporating infrequent direct speech and limiting the perspective to the main characters. And despite the potential openness of the omniscient point of view, the authors restrict panoramic or retrospective information, choosing instead to remain within the children’s present with rare insights into other characters.

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<sup>133</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 32

<sup>134</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 66

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 68

<sup>137</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 78

Thus, what is revealed of the child's relationships to others is often delivered from this restricted child-like stance.

*Wartime Lies* is unique among the hidden child texts because Begley uses three different voices by also periodically interrupting the first-person narrative with an italicized third-person voice. This combination of narrative voices perhaps best contributes to a deeper understanding of the protagonist by counteracting the limitations of a child's viewpoint. The italicized voice frames his story on 'myth and literary paradigm in understanding the Holocaust,'<sup>138</sup> primarily through Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*, '[calling] to his aid the greatest connoisseur of evil in Western literature, one who was equipped with a remarkable grid of values through which to assess it' (p. 209). The myth's ability to evaluate problematic subjects assists Begley's analyses of the Holocaust. Begley explains that this purposeful break in the narrative also serves as a necessary respite from the difficult task faced by the survivor-writer even in writing fiction. The separation of the primary protagonist Maciek from his presumably adult self is underscored by the italicization, a visible demarcation of the boy from the man. Begley views the italicized sections as a way to give rise to another voice beyond that of the young Maciek's, even if ultimately the author intends for the reader to be responsible for the 'search for further links between these disclosures and Maciek's story' (p. 208). The italicized voice can express opinions outside of Maciek's more limited child scope without breaking from the young consciousness. For example, he can remark upon the morality of the adult characters' choices and suffering where the child character would not have: '*The grandfather's and Tania's bravery and occasional defiance were admirable, but then the punishment the Germans piled on them in the hell of Poland was undeserved*' (p. 121). This narrator also may confront post-Holocaust opinions of the perceived passivity and inactivity of Jews in the face of extermination, asking:

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<sup>138</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 67

*Why does a Jew, hunted by the Gestapo, captured, and on his way to the gas chamber, have to be disdainful or defiant to awaken sympathy, avoid disdain? [...] Why do we find it difficult to admire those who are tormented and make no defiant gesture? Suppose they are neither meek nor proud, only frightened. (p. 122)*

The final chapter similarly comes from the perspective of an ironic omniscient third-person narrator. Like the italicized voice, Begley explains this change in point of view as that a child could not communicate what he needed to say; he was overwhelmed when attempting to describe the post-war humiliation in Maciek's words 'and to show through him the depth of his disillusionment and despair. It occurred to me that this was a job for a grownup' (p. 208).

In the first-person narrated sections, Maciek's relationships are complicated by his conscientiousness of trying to be the best non-Jew; as such, his behavior with adults is sycophantic where, most of all, he wants to please them and be liked. One way that he shows this is by smiling in response to anything adults say, even when he is lying, does not understand, or a smile is not the proper reaction. For example, while being tutored by a fellow lodger in Warsaw, he cheats on the assignment he is given and the tutor is obligated to inform Maciek's 'mother'. Although Maciek knows Tania will be disappointed in his actions, he also cannot view his behavior as immoral because he cannot tell the difference anymore between when it is or is not permissible to tell lies. Another fellow boarder, Pan Władek, confronts Maciek about his 'habit of smiling when there was nothing to smile about; it couldn't be because I was stupid, it had to be because I was a little hypocrite' (p. 111). Tania defends Maciek, saying that he does it only to be polite. But Pan Władek insists that 'our Janek is a hypocrite' (ibid.). Because Maciek is not actually Janek, the accusation is ironically imbued with truth. Pan Władek later apologizes for his own conduct, explaining that 'watching my mother and me struggle so hard became unbearable; he wanted me to be, if only for a moment, like other boys.

Anyway, we were doing too much. Nobody needed to be so perfect' (p. 112). The use of free indirect speech here may suggest that Maciek agrees with Pan Władek, perhaps even unconsciously. This interaction highlights how important and precarious their involvements with the non-Jewish Poles are; in effect, it is their efforts to assimilate that reveal their deception.

In *The Jewish War and the Victory*, Henryk's parents are only ever referred to in relation to Henryk, as possessions of his and not by their individual names: 'Mother', 'Father', 'his mother', and 'his father'. The first section of *The Jewish War* is titled 'Father' and ends with his separation from Henryk and his mother. The retrospective first-person narrator envisions the last days of his father's life. He imagines that 'he must have looked awful' (p. 27) and speculates on the motivation for and events surrounding his father's death. The narrator supplies the cause of death, which would be unknown to his wife and son for many months, as axed in the back by an unknown thief who wants to steal his rumored Jewish wealth. His father's meaningless murder resulting from outdated stereotypes underscores the parochial nature of Polish peasantry that Appelfeld and Begley also highlight. The father essentially ceases to exist in the second section titled 'Mother', replaced by the image of a man more suitable to their cover story and supported by forged letters, a stolen photograph, and fictional stories. Henryk still identifies this fabrication as his father, stating that every month his mother 'wrote my father, an officer of the cavalry, in my mother's own round handwriting. We also had his photograph: a fair-haired, smoothly combed man in uniform' (p. 43). The language does not distinguish between this invented father and the one killed on the roadside. As his original Jewish self, the father is but late night whispers of conjectures and hopes that he may yet live, though the reader knows otherwise.

The 'Mother' section ends Henryk's internal hiding and substitutes the importance of his father in their survival for external hiding and his mother's extraordinary actions. The portrayal of the creativity and courage required of Henryk's mother is consistent with

the difficulties and complexities that survivors have testified to about hiding externally, which was nearly impossible for a resourceful adult and amplified by the child's presence. Like Maciek's high opinion of his aunt Tania, Henryk depicts his mother's endless strength and ingenuity as derivative of her role as his mother. Henryk believes she manages to keep them both alive and take care of him *because* she is a mother: what propels her forward is her belief that everything she did and does is 'something of the utmost importance, something that has to be done, and nothing can force her then to give in even if the entire world with its savage threat of annihilation turn against her' (p. 33). She is also Henryk's sole real relationship because they are alone in their hiding; in this way, the mother must fulfill the position of adult caretaker as well as friend.

*Tzili* is narrated with a childlike straightforwardness, reflecting the views Appelfeld has expressed that children best understand 'the immediacy but not the importance of the events they observe.'<sup>139</sup> To a certain extent, both in the narrative style and in *Tzili* as a character, this strategy creates an artful imitation of the ways children reduce important events to their bare essentials.<sup>140</sup> The appearance of Mark escaped from a concentration camp confirms the destruction of the Jews, as Appelfeld writes, 'She did not understand much, but one thing she understood: in all the countryside around them there were no Jews left' (p. 63). These frequent references to things that *Tzili* does not fully know and yet can intuit 'emphasize the discrepancy between a young narrator's innocence and the incomprehensible undoing of [her] world'.<sup>141</sup> Within this framework, the novel is about solitude as much as it is about *Tzili*'s interactions with others.

Before going into hiding, *Tzili*'s primary relationships with adults are her parents and grown siblings, and peripherally the old man who gives her religious instruction. The youngest child of a large family, she is generally ignored and they abandon her when the war breaks out (p. 7). Though her family's deaths are never confirmed in the narrative,

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<sup>139</sup> Daniel R. Schwarz, *Imagining the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave, 1999), p. 250

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Schwarz, p. 263



from this point forward Tzili is separated from them. This orphanhood mirrors the treatment she received for being a Jew. As a female coming-of-age story, *Tzili* also depicts a neglected and orphaned girl receiving unwanted and confusing attention from men as '[her] femininity blossomed within her, blind and sweet' (p. 96). She is attacked by a blind man, almost sold for sex to a peasant by Katerina, and groped by an employer. Only after she meets Mark does her fear of men gradually become dependence and affection, and yet he too will abuse her trust and abandon her. When Tzili joins the group of adult refugees who have survived concentration camps, this makeshift community further emphasizes her homelessness and solitude because she neither belongs in the same survivor category nor has a family to which she can return.

Several pages during Tzili's wandering with the refugees are devoted to her observations of and interactions with one refugee, Zigi Baum. Zigi represents the manifestation of their collective survivor's guilt, which culminates in his abrupt suicide. In the essay titled 'Shame' in *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi discusses the prevalence of suicides among Holocaust victims, more so after surviving the camp than while imprisoned in it. He writes that in 'the majority of cases, suicide is born from a feeling of guilt that no punishment has attenuated'.<sup>142</sup> Levi also explains that, 'coming out of the darkness, one suffered because of the reacquired consciousness of having been diminished'.<sup>143</sup> Echoing Mark, Zigi confronts the refugees, "'A man abandons his wife and children, his father and his mother. What is he if not a murderer?'" (p. 151). Not only did Zigi not believe he would survive, but it is incredible that he could do so alone. Zigi's final words are "'Strange. [...] The war is over. I never imagined it would end like this'" (p. 153), and with that parting reflection, he dives into the river. His suicide haunts the group as a constant reminder of their own fragility (p. 155). Zigi was the first of the survivors to surrender to their despair, with one woman shortly thereafter throwing

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<sup>142</sup> Levi, p. 76

<sup>143</sup> Levi, p. 75

herself into a lake and another swallowing poison (p. 160). One refugee surmises that they will always be followed by death and never find peace (ibid.). The survivor cannot find peace nor is she easily fit back into the matrix of society; she is disturbed and, as Terrence Des Pres writes, ‘is a disturber of the peace’.<sup>144</sup>

Many of the characters that Tzili encounters provoke negative experiences, such as the blind man who assaults her or the old woman who beats her; these characters go unnamed. The more significant relationships are given names and are more developed, such as Katerina, Mark, fellow refugee Linda, and even Zigi Baum. Linda speaks of herself in the third person, dances for the refugees with her thighs exposed as she had danced for the inmates in the camp, and, among all the emaciated survivors, she is fat. Linda unapologetically tells Tzili that before she was in the camp she survived by taking German lovers. Unlike the other adults who use and neglect Tzili, when she falls ill and lags behind the refugees, Linda remembers her; in a way, Linda fulfills the role Tzili’s mother failed at by neglecting and abandoning her. Linda forces the other survivors to remember their own compassion and retrieve Tzili, which in turn forces them to recall how they had lost their humanity in the camps. Appelfeld writes that ‘they had learned to run and to stop for no one. The fat woman made them stop. “Man is not an insect. This time no one will shirk his duty.” A sudden shame covered their faces’ (p. 165). Linda also ensures that Tzili receives the medical attention needed to save her life. Linda is the only survivor with whom Tzili connects, feeling ‘a warm intimacy’ (p. 182) with her, bonding over shared loss, womanhood, Otherness, and, perhaps most significantly, loneliness. Linda explains, “I too have nobody left in the world. At first I didn’t understand, now I understand. There’s the world, and there’s Linda. And Linda had nobody in the whole wide world” (p. 181). Understanding the importance of this relationship, rather than ending *Tzili* with the title character, Appelfeld ends with Linda telling the story of her own wartime survival and singing Hungarian lullabies as they head to British Mandated

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<sup>144</sup> Des Pres, p. 42

Palestine. In this way, Appelfeld suggests that Tzili's Holocaust childhood has ended as she is freed from both her past and the narrative simultaneously.

In Gille's work, Léa's interactions with adults are fraught with tension both during and after the war. The conflict between Léa and the adults who seek to care for her indicates her discomfort with dependency on strangers after her perceived desertion by her parents. Upon her arrival at the convent she is afraid of the nuns, inverting their roles as potential guardians by describing them from her view as 'attackers'.<sup>145</sup> After the initial shock of separation from her parents and insertion into unfamiliar surroundings, Léa refuses to show the nuns the respect or fondness their position as her elders, teachers, and caretakers would ordinarily elicit. She is defiant of authority and thwarts all attempts to correct the flaws in her character caused by her spoiled early years and compounded by the trauma of her abandonment. However, Léa's reserve toward adults and fellow students, and her constant storytelling of extravagant details about her former life, is actually the result of the fading image of her parents. Gille explains that this behavior results from 'her growing amnesia: the more memories she lost, the more she invented. She would never have admitted it, not even to Bénédicte, but her parents' faces were fading, no longer appearing to her except in snatches' (p. 39).

This struggle with the memory of her parents emphasizes that 'Léa must deal with the paradoxical fact that her parents are present mainly through their absence'.<sup>146</sup> Léa overcompensates for her faulty memory by demonstrating deep distrust and disrespect, '[clinging] to her rage and fear, contending that she hates her parents because they abandoned her.'<sup>147</sup> She is only able to form a close connection with Bénédicte. The friendship develops for Léa because the older girl's kindness is the first time she feels safe in her new surroundings and the bond is strengthened over their parents' mysterious

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<sup>145</sup> Elisabeth Gille, *Shadows of a Childhood: A Novel of War and Friendship*, trans. by Linda Coverdale (New York: New Press, 2008), p. 3. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>146</sup> Alan L. Berger, 'Hidden Children: The Literature of Hiding' in *Jewish American and Holocaust Literature: Representation in the Postmodern World*, ed. by Alan L. Berger and Gloria L. Cronin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 13-30 (p. 24)

<sup>147</sup> Berger, 'Hidden Children', p. 25

absences. Although close in age, Bénédicte become both friend and caretaker, allowing the Jewish child's growth and maturity to remain underdeveloped because of the early loss of her parents.

#### Where adult weakness facilitates child strength

Ellen's voice in *Herod's Children* is perhaps the most strikingly child-like of all the texts, both contributing to and developing out of the surreal quality of a narrative in which reality and fantasy are merged.<sup>148</sup> The first chapter, which depicts her contact with a government official, underscores Ellen's lack of understanding of adult procedures and her dependence. Clearly Ellen has absorbed much of what she has overhead, including the seriousness of the situation that has caused her mother to flee. However, she misinterprets some information, believing that obtaining a visa is as simple as finding the proper adult, whom she understands to be the consul. Ellen begs:

‘Please, would you write me a visa? My grandmother says it’s all up to you. All you have to do is sign. My grandmother knows a lot of things! She really does. [...] I can’t let my mother go alone, Mister Consul. And my mother was given a visa’”<sup>149</sup>

Rather than stating that she needs the visa because she is a child who wants to be with her mother, Ellen claims that her mother is the one who should not go alone, inverting the guardian roles. Through Ellen's frantic attempt to obtain a visa, the first chapter reveals that Ellen's Jewish mother has fled to America and left Ellen with her maternal grandmother under the assumption that Ellen's *Mischling* status will protect her from anti-Jewish persecution, while also underscoring her unquestioning trust in adults.

*Herod's Children*, although focusing more on Ellen's relationship with her peers, also concentrates on the ineptitude of the adults in Ellen's life and their failure in their

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<sup>148</sup> Stanley, p. 348

<sup>149</sup> Ilse Aichinger, *Herod's Children* (New York: Atheneum Books, 1963), pp. 8-9. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

responsibilities to her as a young girl. Ellen's grandmother appears to lack both strength and courage, leaving Ellen to take care of her instead. Ellen's grandmother grows hysterical over the increasing anti-Jewish laws and hides in her home in an effort to prevent deportation, while Ellen wanders the city alone until she meets the other Jewish children. Because Ellen does not understand the dangers of being defined as Jewish, she considers her grandmother's despair to be weakness. Ultimately, the grandmother chooses to commit suicide rather than face deportation, without demonstrating concern about abandoning her grandchild because, like her daughter, she believes Ellen's half-Aryan side will save her. Ellen is desperate for her grandmother to live because she does not want to be alone and she believes she needs an adult to take care of her. But when she admits the fight to save the older woman is futile, Ellen takes on the role of caregiver in her grandmother's last moments. As Aichinger writes, 'She fed her grandmother the poison as a sparrow feeds its young' (p. 160). Like Tzili, Ellen's abandonment by the adults meant to look after her facilitates her premature development; only when her dependence on them is cruelly severed can she act as agent for her own fate.

Ellen's father deliberately refuses to fulfill the role of a parent and care for his daughter. In an early scene, after she first meets the other Jewish children, she encounters the Aryan soldier who fathered her but disowned her because of her Jewish mother. She acknowledges him, forgetting that she is no longer allowed to. 'This was the man who had asked Ellen to forget him. But can the word forget the lips that have spoken it?' (p. 41), Aichinger writes. Rather than expressing concern over her welfare, he worries about how meeting with a half-Jewish girl will be perceived by his fellow soldiers and may potentially harm his reputation or career. He decides that he will 'explain the whole thing to his superiors as a child's fevered hallucination' (p. 43), effectively dismissing their father-daughter relationship; their connection is as invalid as the Jewish children without proper identification cards. His lack of compassion for the well being of his daughter highlights the cruelty of the racial definitions that would make an Aryan father forsake

his half-Jewish child, as well as the overall failure of parents in this period to protect their children. 'Sensing the deep-seated insecurity of her Nazi father, Ellen even goes so far as to pity the Nazi who, she feels, act out of fear.'<sup>150</sup> Although Ellen chooses to shed the half-Aryan assurances gained through her father, she is not relegated to victimhood; rather, she 'uses her inner strength to resist Nazi ideology by designing a counter-language all her own'.<sup>151</sup> In this way, Ellen challenges the proscribed role of the historically persecuted powerless Jew, supporting the heroic narrative of resistance rather than passive victimhood. This narrative, generally relegated to adults capable of physical fighting, often ignores the moral or spiritual resistance also necessary to survive, which Ellen embodies.

*Other People's Houses* describes one girl's *Kindertransport* escape and subsequent experience as a refugee in England. Lore has key adult relationships throughout the text with her father, mother, uncle Paul, and the people who foster her. From the beginning of the narrative, Lore likes her father least of the adults in her life. At the outset of the anti-Jewish actions in Austria, Lore loses respect for him, viewing his denial as naive and his inactivity as frustrating. Retrospectively, Lore appears more aware of the Jews' ominous future when her rights in school are gradually stripped, their fine apartment is appropriated, and her parents lose their jobs. The novel inverts their roles through levels of awareness, internal strength, and physical ability. Perhaps more importantly for a child, Lore also views her father's presence as the end of her fun whenever he joins them at the grandparents' house in the country. This is carried over into Britain when she perceives his company as an impediment to her happiness.<sup>152</sup> Her father's poor health is also a symbol of his weakness and a source of shame to his daughter. In England, he faces repeated setbacks that deteriorate his health and image to

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<sup>150</sup> Dagmar C. Lorenz, 'Ilse Aichinger' in *Holocaust Literature: An Encyclopedia of Writers and Their Work*, ed. by S. Lillian Kremer (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 5-9 (p. 6)

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Lore Segal, *Other People's Houses: A Novel* (New York: The New Press, 2004), p. 121. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

his daughter. She often describes her father crying in contrast to her own stoicism, which emphasizes his physical and psychological failings. For example not only does he cry, but he does so with ‘a tiny whimpering sound’ (p. 95); such descriptors represent him as a puny, helpless being similar to a child. In these scenes, ‘Segal beautifully renders that sense in the young that the parents fail, fall ill, suffer *in order to* impede the development of the child.’<sup>153</sup>

Conversely, Lore dotes on her mother, although she struggles with respecting her as she cares for her husband at the expense of health and happiness. Not wanting to contribute to her mother’s anxiety, Lore constantly reassures her of her own happiness and independence (p. 108). Lore’s desire to protect her mother inverts traditional roles, while also highlighting her loneliness. As her father’s health deteriorates, her mother promises that if he dies she will not continue to be unhappy and Lore will not have to worry about her anymore. But Lore is not pacified by this declaration; rather, she ‘considered the probability of my father’s dying, with terror, because I might have no tears for him and the emptiness of my unnatural heart would be exposed to my mother and proved to myself’ (p. 140). Lore’s fear, though self-centered in tone, highlights the emotional development issues generated by the child’s refugee status and her strained relationship with her parents. Also, paradoxically, her tears do not negatively affect Lore’s opinion of her mother as they do her father’s, perhaps commenting on the young girl’s desire for her father to be a strong masculine figure. Moreover, as symbolized by her inability to live with them in wartime England, Lore’s relationship with her parents is one of both presence and absence.

Unlike her father, Lore idolizes her young uncle Paul, calling him ‘the hero of my childhood’ (p. 6). She recognizes that Paul is her male role model, to whom she gives her love and respect, commenting, ‘It was Paul, not my father, who had been the man in my

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<sup>153</sup> Philip G. Cavanaugh, ‘The Present Is a Foreign Country: Lore Segal’s Fiction’, *Contemporary Literature* 34.3 Special Issue: Contemporary American Jewish Literature (1993), pp. 475-511 (p. 485)

life: our affair, dating from my birth and based on a mutual enthusiasm' (ibid.). This characterization of their relationship carries similar undertones to Maciek's passion for his aunt—childish admiration described in mature language verging on the romantic. Paul's youth makes him a fun companion in games and she is flattered that he treats her as an equal. Distinct from her father's passive speech, Paul espouses anger and warnings about the worsening anti-Jewish actions in Austria and sarcastically comments on the typical European Jew's disbelief that there was any real danger (p. 3). Paul is highly educated and would have been a doctor had he not been expelled from medical school for being Jewish; his education is the impetus for Lore's own academic dreams. Attending university represents the best of her uncle and Oxford represents the best of England and the fulfillment of her desire to no longer be the Jewish refugee girl. Segal writes, 'Oxford seemed everything that I was not: at ease with itself, at one with its own past—upper class, English' (p. 167). That Lore does not succeed in attending Oxford despite her acceptance represents her failure to meet the expectations she set for herself based on her veneration of her uncle, exaggerated in their separation. Likewise, upon their post-war reunion in the Dominican Republic, Paul has been disheartened by his experiences and fails to match her lofty childish vision.

Lore also has various relationships with those in whose homes she lives throughout the war. Her first placement is with an older, wealthy, Orthodox Jewish couple in Liverpool whose children are grown. Lore is disappointed with the Levines because she 'had imagined that the family who would choose me would be very special, very beautiful people' (p. 49), and they are not. Although she is eager to charm and please, Lore is unfamiliar with the Orthodox customs and her behavior lacks the charisma she believes she possesses. The failure to fulfill each other's expectations suggests that Lore has been unsuccessful at her efforts to be the image of the refugee girl she similarly attempted for the newspapermen upon arrival. Lore is then placed with the Hoopers, a working class family in Mellbridge. In contrast to her sickly father, Mr. Hooper's strong



vitality inclines Lore to consider him a real ‘man’ (p. 94). She becomes closest with one of the daughters, Gwenda, and Mr. Hooper, in part because she feels she can identify with them with their ‘brown eyes, not alien, chilly, Christian eyes like Albert. [...] To all intents, Mr. Hooper and Gwenda were Jewish; I adopted them’ (p. 103). The language of this passage inverts the roles of foster family and refugee charge, where Lore chooses them to be a part of her ‘family’ of Jews. When Lore must leave to avoid discomfort with their antagonistic adopted son, Mrs. Hooper is overcome with emotion. Lore reassures her, “‘You don’t have to worry,” I said. “I can find somewhere to live,” and I rocked Mrs. Hooper to my chest’ (p. 111). Mrs. Hooper’s ineffectuality at being an adequate foster parent by failing to curb Alfred’s animosity toward Lore is accentuated by her inability to comfort Lore in the moment of her rejection. Lore’s final caretakers are a woman who works at the charity for refugees, Miss Douglas, and her widowed sister, Mrs. Dillon. Lore describes this home as idyllic and beautiful in the classic English country style. Mrs. Dillon’s motives are not as altruistic as her sister’s, intending to convert the Jewish refugee to Christianity. While living with the sisters, Lore experiences the end of the war, her father’s death, and acceptance to Oxford. Ultimately, Lore’s time spent in Allchester with the sisters changes her, though perhaps not for the better; she leaves them a ‘temporary snob and an Anglophile forever’ (p. 168). Although Lore appreciates the aid and devotion of her caretakers, she maintains a distance from them in order to preserve something of herself that was lost in being a refugee.

In Lustig’s novel, Dita lives in a Jewish home for girls where as wards of the state, the home’s residents are encouraged in education, employment, and recreation, most often through the auspices of Jewish organizations, restricting her contact to those in similar situations. The adults in Dita’s life are primarily men who are uncertain of how to interpret or interact with the girl. As a character, Dita is developed as much by other characters as from her own concept of herself. Mr. Goldblat, the house caretaker, is the first man whose opinion of Dita is recounted as he reflects on her eccentric behavior. He

gives an example of Dita disappearing for three days to visit Theresienstadt, bringing back a pair of cardboard shoes as a souvenir that she then wore to a party. Lustig uses the caretaker as a vehicle to contemplate how the Holocaust childhood is reflected in the survivor's post-war life and personality. Mr. Goldblat offers the first of many observations that are almost universally true for the young survivors:

For girls like Dita Saxova, the world, as their now-dead parents knew it, ended in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka or in some other camp. And the new world with its redemptions came too slowly. The original trust between them and the world was gone, and the new one was budding like a fragile flower.<sup>154</sup>

Lustig's language reverses the characters and their places by not describing the survivors as vulnerable, but rather the post-war world in which they live. Mr. Goldblat also provides a physical description of Dita as one of his prettiest charges—tall, blond, and with beautiful blue eyes (p. 4). He questions the confidence she exudes because of her beauty, whether it is from the strength of survival, vulnerability, innocence, or vanity. While Lustig had earlier described the young survivors as unsure of their new world, Mr. Goldblat's struggle highlights the discomfort of that world with the young survivors.

Munk is a member of the Jewish community who gives Dita books to read because he sees the potential in her bright mind. However, Dita sells these books to purchase frivolous items, which undermines Munk's view of her maturity. Mr. Gotlob, a former soldier, is a man twice her age engaged to another of the house's residents, Liza Wagner. Mr. Gotlob is sexually attracted to Dita but also confused by her, calling her 'child' while simultaneously commenting on her beauty, womanly figure, and mature mind. The doctor who routinely examines the girls encourages Dita to act like the woman she physically is without taking into account her mental immaturity. These men

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<sup>154</sup> Arnošt Lustig, *Dita Saxova* (London: Quartet Books, 1994), p. 4. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

demonstrate the same conflict that Dita is feeling about herself: on the one hand, she desires to dress and act like a woman, while on the other, her virginity and the premature loss of her childhood seem to consign her to the role of a child among her peers. The later loss of her virginity, feelings of love she attaches to another young survivor, and adult quality of their brief relationship all seem to propel Dita forever out of the realm of childhood. However, the absence of a 'real' childhood other than a Holocaust one also shadows her more adult activities.

### **Actions: Premature maturity**

In addition to the boundaries between children and adults, the characters often develop within the narrative prematurely. In his testimony at the Eichmann trial about life in the Kovno ghetto, Dr. Aharon Peretz commented, 'The Jewish child matured before his time. We always wondered how children at the age of three or four understood the whole tragic nature of the situation. [...] We always marvelled at this maturity of the children.'<sup>155</sup> In *Bread for the Departed*, as David ages inside the ghetto, his thoughts become more adult-like. Unlike traditional childhoods in which children are encouraged to dream about a bright future, '[David sees] a barren, empty future ahead of him, long days filled with equally gray boredom. His fate lay concealed in terrifying images' (p. 206). Child and adult characters all demonstrate levels of awareness that tomorrow is neither a guarantee nor even particularly inviting. In fact, there is often an absence of a future at all as the young die suddenly and with great frequency. Mirroring his mother's despair, David does not expect to grow old and the narrative obliges by ending with his deportation from the ghetto to the extermination camp. Other child characters are also represented as straddling the line of maturity and humanity in their conduct, most of them younger and more physically fragile. However, some die before they can physically

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<sup>155</sup> Aharon Peretz, 'May 4, 1961, Session 28', in *The Trial of Adolf Eichmann: Record of Proceedings in the District Court of Jerusalem* Vol. I, Trust for the Publication of the Proceedings of the Eichmann Trial in cooperation with the Israel State Archives and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority (Jerusalem: Keter Enterprises, 1992), p. 479

mature or fully exhibit adult characteristics, such as David's neighbor, Leibus. Leibus is barely five when his mother dies and, on the verge of death himself from the same illness, he begs to go with his mother's corpse. But the corpse bearer cannot oblige until Leibus is completely dead. They argue: "Don't be in such a hurry. Where are you rushing to, my little angel?" "Take me away from here. Me, too..." (p. 159). Through this exchange, death is identified with escape from starvation and illness and from the ghetto itself.

Similarly, when David's time to be separated from his own mother comes, he wants to go with her to what the reader and David both assume is her death. In a show of great strength that is perhaps the strength she has been saving from the beginning, his mother does not allow the 'dogcatchers' to drag her to the waiting truck, instead walking alone with as much pride as the situation allows. It is possible that this performance distracts them from her son because '[her] captors followed her but no one laid a hand on David' (p. 342). As he is forced to watch helplessly while she is taken away, David is struck by the knowledge that he may never see his mother again and that '[every] look may be the last' (ibid.). In an almost cinematic scene, David chases after the truck as all of his lack of sentiment toward his mother dissolves; he yields his annoyance at her apathetic behavior, his restlessness as she picked lice from him, and his constant desire to disobey her wishes. As the truck disappears around a corner and he gives up the fruitless chase, David is engulfed in a confused mixture of emotions that accurately fit the experience: 'pained amazement, sorrow, and shame that he hadn't even the strength to weep at this sight' (p. 343). David's standard had been to separate himself from pre-ghetto childhood and dependence on his parents and in the moment he loses his mother he regresses to the traditional need of a child for its mother. David is orphaned shortly thereafter when his father, in an insanity induced by a surprising show of grief and love, voluntarily follows his wife even 'to Treblinka itself' (p. 371) so that she will not die alone. Inverting expectations that the remaining parent will take responsibility for their

child, David's father knowingly abandons him (*ibid.*). When the child is presumably no longer dependent on the parent, the parent may feel released of the obligation to care.

In *Moni*, Piepels are the only children who are described living beyond selection; in Ka-tzetnik's Auschwitz, adults of all ages are grouped together indiscriminately. In addition to the frequent general comparisons of the adult prisoners to children, Piepels are prematurely adult-like because of their *Funktion*. For example, Piepels in Auschwitz are associated with wives in the outside world: 'One could sense the hand of a former Piepel, the way a second wife, coming into her husband's home, could feel the hand of her predecessor' (p. 17). Later, Moni's status as 'old campbird' because he has survived longer than others inside Auschwitz inspires the secondary protagonist Hayim-Idl to look to the boy for advice and comfort. While a *Funktion*-less Moni shines boots for a Piepel in the hopes of scraps, 'Hayim-Idl walked over and sat down in the sand like a child come to watch an adult at work, and silently observed Moni's movements' (p. 199). Their inverse interaction is further underscored when Hayim-Idl asks Moni if he thinks Hayim-Idl stands a chance at living. Meaningfully, neither character comments on whether or not Moni will live. "'Do you think I'll make it?'" Hayim-Idl feverishly waited for the child's affirmative reply' (p. 215). Ka-tzetnik tellingly refers to Moni as 'the child' here, emphasizing the reversal of their positions with the strangeness of an adult coming to the child for answers or hope.

Part of the force of *Fatelessness* comes from the changes Gyuri exhibits as he moves from casually presenting his life circumstances to an understanding of them.<sup>156</sup> Though he displays childlike qualities throughout, Gyuri wants to be viewed as an adult from the moment he volunteers for labor. When Gyuri's train arrives at Auschwitz, the rumor circulates that the Germans are looking for children who can expect school and special treatment. Gyuri and the boys from the factory are encouraged to take advantage:

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<sup>156</sup> Susan Derwin, *Rage is the Subtext: Readings in Holocaust Literature* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), p. 33

Several adults even urged us to line up, not to pass up the opportunity, but I was still mindful of the warning that had been given by the prisoners on the train, and anyway, I was more inclined to work, naturally, rather than lead a child's life. (p. 84)

This scene stresses that Gyuri and the boys are still considered children to others; Gyuri chooses not to lead a child's life or be perceived as a child by lying about his age. Though his Buchenwald mentor, Bandi Citrom, remarks that Gyuri's ignorance is the result of him having been "tied to Mummy's apron strings up till now" (p. 134), Gyuri's deportation marks his physical separation from dependence on his parents. The revelations of the camp further distance him from his childish self, even if his natural naiveté is exaggerated through his language and easy acquiescence. For example, he observes, 'I would never have believed it, yet it is a positive fact that nowhere is a certain discipline, a certain exemplariness, I might even say virtue, in one's conduct of life as obviously important as it is in captivity' (p. 137). By outlining the positive qualities necessary for the concentration camp inmate to be a model prisoner, Gyuri characteristically overturns the expected response to imprisonment.

Gyuri's rapid physical deterioration from deprivation and exertion surprises him, as he comments, 'I would never have believed, for instance, that I could become a decrepit old man so quickly' (p. 165). Kertész's phrasing is unique here because unlike other texts, Gyuri is not compared to an old man through simile or metaphor, but rather he transforms into one. His corporeal weakness is a source of particular shame and irritation because despite intention and effort, Gyuri's body betrays him by no longer being healthy and youthful. To be helpless against wasting away, above all else, is the most painful and disheartening change with which he must contend (*ibid.*). Gyuri's powerlessness represents the Jews' overall powerlessness and the physical impossibility of resisting decline and death. In one scene Gyuri is told to carry a bag that weighs twenty or thirty pounds, 'child's play compared with back home, one could even safely play ball

with it, I reckon; but here I was, stumbling and dropping it' (p. 169). Calling the labor 'child's play' inverts the expectations of adult labor and, because the prisoners have been physically weakened, they cannot live up to adult or pre-camp expectations.

After his liberation, Gyuri's altered perceptions of fate and life cause defensive reactions in Jewish neighbors who have managed to escape imprisonment. The older men talk about the war and Nazi persecution in a phrase that Gyuri struggles with, 'came about' (p. 255), as if the event happened to or around them, whereas Gyuri now perceives that many interactive events led up to the Jews' deportations. Gyuri claims, without accusation, that everyone knew what was in store for him at the factory, all those roads ended at Auschwitz, and everyone takes steps in his life. As they struggle to understand his meaning, Gyuri calls them 'the two old boys' (p. 257), highlighting in this exchange that Gyuri is the mature adult and they are the stubborn children following the outdated beliefs Gyuri had shared prior to the camps. One neighbor tires of Gyuri's attitude, erupting in a childlike tantrum: "'What!'" he bawled, his face red as a beetroot and beating his chest with his fist: "So it's us who're the guilty ones, is it? Us, the victims!" (p. 260). But Gyuri only wants them to comprehend his new understanding that every individual bears some responsibility for what happens to him and the Germans cannot be the only ones to blame. When considering the roles of the Hungarian police and gendarmes and Gyuri's volunteering for the first train, responsibility takes on new meaning for the reader. This particular view would garner considerable criticism, such as the perception of *Fatelessness* as 'a cynical provocation, a book about the Holocaust that refused to wear the accepted robe of victimhood; it declared everyone, perpetrators and victims, had taken their own steps towards their future'.<sup>157</sup> By accepting responsibility for what he perceives as his part in his deportation and imprisonment, Gyuri declines to satisfy the accepted version of the child and Jew as passive victim.

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<sup>157</sup> Evans, para. 8

Consequently, who returns to Budapest is not the unthinking child that went into the camp; as a survivor, Gyuri possesses an understanding that exceeds the capabilities of the adults who have not been there. Accordingly, the dichotomy of child and adult characters is depicted primarily in the form of experiencer and nonexperiencer, which is similar to Moni, the old campbird, becoming the adult figure to newer prisoners like Hayim-Idl. Jews such as Gyuri's neighbors who have not been in the camps are depicted as the naive children while Gyuri is the patient adult attempting to explain concepts incomprehensible to them. However, the polyphonic feature in Gyuri's language 'is not only confessional or theoretical, but also ironic towards his own truth as we can read in the so-called "monologue" in the text'.<sup>158</sup> This is represented by Gyuri's constant doublespeak about his own experience, with claims such as 'so perhaps I don't remember it clearly. I am quite sure, though, that he said it' (p. 4);<sup>159</sup> the boy wants to make the reader understand while the narrator undermines the boy's reliability by casting doubt on his memory. However, Gyuri's youthfulness is returned to him in the last paragraph when he accepts that he will return to his mother to live out the life she had planned for him. Thus, though he has inexplicably survived the camps and returned wiser for it, he also returns to be her child, negating his moral awakening and maturity. Gyuri's childlike attitude is a crucial device used to highlight the general Jews' ignorance and lack of preparedness for and belief in the Final Solution. Andrea Reiter notes that, '[in] their unprejudiced and uninformed attitude, children not only notice details which escape the adult but interpret them in a way which makes them seem even more horrific'.<sup>160</sup> The delivery of these interpretations equally shock Gyuri's post-war listeners and Kertész's reader.

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<sup>158</sup> Sára Molnár, 'Nobel in Literature 2002 Imre Kertész's Aesthetics of the Holocaust', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.1 (2003), p. 3

<sup>159</sup> Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness*, trans. by Tim Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), p. 4. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>160</sup> Reiter, p. 85



One of the major questions arising in the narratives about hiding regarding the child's premature development is how the authors address sexual interest and exploration, if at all. More so than in the previous works, including *Moni* whose protagonist is a sex slave, the narratives about hiding seem open to discussions about a child's sexual development and observations of the sexual activities and relationships of adults. Sex in Holocaust literature is predominantly labeled as taboo, with Ka-tzetnik's more famous work, *House of Dolls*, having been accused of being 'Holocaust porn' that turns the traumatic subject into a spectacle.<sup>161</sup> Depictions of sex in Holocaust literature can wear various guises: simply a part of human nature, expressions of brutality, or a trade for prolonged life. How does the child's perception of the intricacies of sexual relationships frame the Holocaust? Each hidden child approaches sex differently in the novel. Maciek's awareness develops out of touching the female adults and children in his life, often because of the physical closeness in hiding places, and the close observation of his aunt. The younger Henryk's cognizance of his mother's sexual activities do not extend beyond the vague recognition of a relationship and providing descriptions whose meanings the reader better comprehends than the observing boy. Tzili's sexual development occurs almost entirely in her two years of hiding: menstruation, sexual intercourse, and pregnancy. As they enter adolescence and Bénédicte begins to date boys, Léa's traumatic past sustains her ambivalence about relationships despite her friend's encouragement. These representations are important because sexual curiosity and exploration is a normal part of a child's development into an adult. In addition to a focus on sexual development, the child's general maturity is often exaggerated because of hiding.

Of all the texts, *Wartime Lies* most frequently and openly discusses sexual awareness and activities, both Maciek's own and those of the adults around him. Maciek's attentiveness to the sexual relationships between adults is manifested by Tania's

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<sup>161</sup> David Mikics, 'Holocaust Pulp Fiction', *Tablet* (April 19 2012) <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/97160/ka-tzetnik> [accessed 25 February 2013], para. 6 of 20

three primary admirers who also represent three distinct classes of characters within the context of the war. Bern is a Jewish family friend serving on T.'s Jewish Committee who helps Tania get essential employment that makes her 'indispensible' (p. 46) to the Germans and saves her family from early deportations. Bern's influence generates Tania's introduction to her second relationship, Bernhard; Tania's act of replacing a Jewish lover for a German suggests the Jew's inability to successfully facilitate survival. Bernhard is a one-armed, non-Party member German official and '[Tania] thought she loved him, probably as much as she had ever loved anybody' (pp. 68-9). Bernhard's benevolence includes smuggling Bern to the partisans, helping Grandfather get to Warsaw on false papers, settling Tania and Maciek in a nice apartment in Lwów that was confiscated from a Jewish family, and hiding and caring for Maciek's ill grandmother in his own apartment. Tania's final admirer, Nowak, the black market vodka salesman, does not succeed in gaining Tania's affections, and the bitterness caused by his failure ultimately threatens their final hiding place. Tania tolerates his boorish intentions because he provides her with work and educated adult company. But when Tania spurns Nowak's more serious advances and insults him in the process, he is determined to turn them in as Jews. Though Maciek's limited understanding of these relationships arises from observations and overheard conversations, they may also contribute to his growing awareness of his own sexuality.

Begley's use of free indirect speech is especially striking when the adult narrator seems to be preserving something particular of the child's memory such as Maciek's expressions of sexuality.<sup>162</sup> In the years before the war, he craves the comforting touch of his eighteen-year-old nanny, Zosia. At night, Zosia would get into Maciek's bed and hold him to soothe his nightmares. Maciek's description of the intimate contact with Zosia's body is far from innocent: 'She would be all warm and wet from sleep, often her nightshirt had worked its way up, and when she pressed me against her I felt her naked

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<sup>162</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 69

legs, her stomach' (p. 26). The same expressions of delight in the female body are used when Maciek later cuddles in bed with their German rescuer's daughter, Erika. Later, he desires his aunt's body, fantasizing about the skin beneath her nightgown that he never sees or touches. His language describes their relationship in ways that suggest their isolation brings them closer to each other: 'a day-and-night partnership of Tania and Maciek *contra mundum*, with the world against us. And I admired and loved my beautiful and brave aunt with increasing passion' (p. 169). Maciek equates the security he feels because of his aunt's capacity to keep them alive with her body, commenting, 'her body could never be close enough to mine; she was the fortress against danger and the well of all comfort' (ibid). Despite the fact that hiding places frequently require close sleeping arrangements, out of a sense of propriety or an attempt to maintain a personal space that hiding often precludes, Tania withholds such intimate contact with her nephew. Perhaps a reflection of the absence of his mother dead in childbirth, in many ways, Maciek's desire for contact with these women's bodies stems from their abilities to protect him.

Moreover, Maciek's responsiveness to the female body extends to children his own age. While initially sequestered with other Jews in his hometown of T., Maciek and his young neighbor, Irena Kramer, re-enact sexually explicit adult books they have stolen from her father's library. This role-play involves the sadistic mixture of pain and pleasure in addition to costuming and playacting. Maciek also joins in with older Jewish boys making crass jokes about sexual intercourse (p. 40), though their understandings of its actual workings are limited at best. If *Wartime Lies* followed the traditional *Bildungsroman* story arc in regards to sexual love, Maciek's love for his aunt Tania and jealousy of her relationships and flirtations 'would have constituted the main part of the narrative. As it is, this sexual narrative occupies the interstices of the overshadowing historical narrative, literally so in the case of Tania's admirers.'<sup>163</sup> On the one hand, the narrative's non-traditional interpretation of the genre could be viewed as the result of

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<sup>163</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 70

demands placed on Maciek by the lies and a surprisingly mature grasp of the deception's necessity. On the other, Maciek's hiddenness also paradoxically infantilizes him when he is forced to be helpless and dependent on his aunt for survival.<sup>164</sup>

In contrast to the older Maciek, Henryk observes his mother's relationship with a Russian soldier, commenting on her reactions to his attentions without demonstrating understanding. He does not recognize the signs of courtship such as blushing and touching that he describes to the reader. Additionally, Henryk alludes to intimate touching with a young neighbor, but framed within the context of discovering his circumcision: 'She was two years younger than I, so when we pulled the blanket over our heads and played immodestly in the dark, I did not have to worry that she would recognize I was a Jew' (p. 48). These few naive instances of potential sexual awareness seem to suggest that Henryk is developing normally despite hiding; however, Henryk's maturity by the end of the novel represents the changes to his childhood. Less focused on his sexual development, Henryk's premature development is particularly acute because his starting age is four. As Grynberg remarks in his Author's Note, *The Victory* attempts to present 'the liberation as not an end but a sequel to their suffering'.<sup>165</sup> Though rarely separated from his mother during their time in hiding, Henryk's near-orphanhood at the end of the narrative emphasizes the loss of his childhood and family as a result of the Holocaust.

The narrator accentuates the differences of Henryk's post-war life as a Jewish child through comparisons to the teachers at the orphanage-sanatorium, inverting their roles as adult teacher and child student through their perceptions of the war. According to the narrator, the children possess greater wisdom on the subject of the war because of their inseparability from the experience. As Aharon Appelfeld has asserted, 'for the

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<sup>164</sup> Naomi Sokoloff, 'Childhood Lost: Children's Voices in Holocaust Literature' in *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff, pp. 259-274 (p. 260)

<sup>165</sup> Grynberg, *The Jewish War*, pp. vii-viii

children the Holocaust was the present, their childhood and youth'.<sup>166</sup> The teachers tell the children that the war is over, but there are different meanings of this phrase for each age group. Henryk comments:

Our teachers were grownups and had lived through the war as grownups. It could not be said that they were deceiving us. At that time they still did not know how slight the difference is between peace and war, war that never really ends but only hides beneath the surface of life and continues its course there. (p. 149)

Grynberg's final line of the novel asks a question that he claims no one had the courage to ask: 'So how did the war end?' (p. 150). The Jewish children in the sanatorium are leading idyllic lives and assured by adult teachers that they have been victorious, remarking that they 'believed in the victory because we were children. We thought that a war like the one we'd lived through happens only once in a lifetime; if you survived, you were completely safe. And we had the war behind us' (pp. 149-150). But Henryk also views his circumstances differently: his step-father is in prison, the result of a set-up by a former Communist friend; his mother is alone on the streets peddling illegal wares and living on false papers; his baby brother was killed early in their hiding; and his father died on the side of a road. The narrator asks if this ending can truly be considered a victory.

*Tzili* is an artful representation of the female child growing up in extremity where she physically develops while mentally fluctuating between immaturity and maturity. Mark is a significant relationship for Tzili because he initiates her into the adult world of sex and its consequences. Though she initially refuses Mark's desperate advances, she eventually surrenders to the safety of human connection, adult protection, and unfamiliar feelings of love. The pregnancy as a secret source of life and hope for the future also gives Tzili the strength to continue after Mark deserts her. Although the idea of motherhood is foreign to her, Tzili draws upon her own neglectful mother for inspiration. There is an isolating distance that separates the child from the mother, 'a wound that cuts

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<sup>166</sup> Appelfeld, 'After the Holocaust', p. 90

through the self.’<sup>167</sup> Despite her youthful ignorance, Tzili vows to be a better mother than hers, and when asked how she will care for the baby, Tzili replies that she will keep it with her all the time (p. 157); Tzili perceives good parenting and love as simply being present. The orphaned child and the mother who has had all her children killed are comparable, as the bond between mother and child has been severed irreparably. The same woman who questions Tzili’s ability to raise a child tells Tzili that her own children are dead while she, their mother, is inexplicably alive. Their interaction is described as an inverse orphanhood. As a mother reflecting on an orphaned pregnant fifteen-year-old girl, ‘the woman now wanted more than anything to help Tzili, but she did not know how’ (p. 158). Her helplessness underscores the woman’s prior inability to save her children. Then, because of her loss, the woman ‘shrank to the size of a child of six’, which brings out a maternal instinct from Tzili who ‘wanted to cover the woman with her tattered coat’ (ibid.). The transference of the mother-child relationship between the woman and Tzili demonstrates the uncanny position in which the survivors find themselves—a mother whose children were murdered and an orphaned child who is pregnant. The loss of Tzili’s baby represents the loss of her connection to the Holocaust and the place of her birth (p. 175), providing the impetus to move forward. As such, the death of her unborn child conceived in hiding is a rebirth for Tzili the child.

The second part of *Shadows of a Childhood* is set after the war as Léa grows up, when all traces of her pre-war self have disappeared along with the hope of her parents’ return. Léa maintains her distance from adults and despite the kindness and efforts of Bénédicte’s parents she does not return their overtures of affection. She forms a false attachment to a prosecutor as a carefully constructed ruse to receive his help with her schoolwork and gain access to the local war crimes trials that feed her single-minded focus on justice against those she holds responsible for her parents’ deaths. As Alan

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<sup>167</sup> David Patterson, *Sun Turned to Darkness: Memory and Recovery in the Holocaust Memoir* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), p. 79

Berger notes, 'Léa's post-Shoah testimony is dominated by feelings of abandonment and by her search for justice. Bénédicte provides her only abiding sense of human connection.'<sup>168</sup> After Bénédicte is reunited with her parents, Léa expresses her profound sense of abandonment and loss: "I have no father or mother," she announced abruptly. "I never had any parents"" (p. 82). Near the end of the narrative, Léa begins to show some respect for and interest in an adult beyond cool politeness, a professor at the university whose passion for his subject enralls her. The way the interest is described at first encourages the reader to expect this relationship to lead to her first romantic affair. However, any fruition is thwarted when Bénédicte dies in an automobile accident, and Léa descends into madness.

In contrast to Gille's portrayal of Léa's imprisonment by her traumatic past, Aichinger's Ellen attempts to surmount the captivity of both identification and trauma. Aichinger's mystical and allegorical writing style heightens the symbolism of Ellen as the universal child and Jew. It could be argued that 'Ellen herself is larger than life, an idealized plausible representation, not a real person.'<sup>169</sup> This representation of Ellen is achieved by Aichinger writing in the omniscient third-person narrative voice, giving us the child but also not-the-child. At times the narrative seems to emulate that of a child's bedtime story, such as the personification of night observing the girl and her grandmother struggle over the cyanide. The writing style emphasizes the confusion, uncertainty, and naiveté of the historical victim, both child and adult Jews. Oftentimes, Ellen's speech spouted is contradictory to her age, representing both her accelerated maturity as well as the imposition of the adult narrator. Aichinger's unique language 'is ironic, magical, and [...] undermines the discourse of power'.<sup>170</sup> Yet these moments are never explicitly explained as narrator intervention; in fact multiple times soldiers or policemen are

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<sup>168</sup> Berger, 'Hidden Children', p. 25

<sup>169</sup> Stanley, p. 340

<sup>170</sup> Bernhard Fetz and Rachel Magsham, 'Representing the Holocaust. On Paul Celan, Ilse Aichinger, Albert Drach and Heimrad Bäcker, with an Appeal for Critical Reflection on the Cultural and Political Field in Which Holocaust Literature is Inscribed', *New German Critique* 93: Austrian Writers Confront the Past (2004), pp. 55-86 (p. 56)

confused by the philosophical viewpoints coming from and through Ellen's child voice. This writing style highlights the dichotomy of the adult and child through the integration of narrative voice and viewpoint.

In *Other People's Houses*, when Lore becomes a refugee in England, she must take on some adult responsibilities and embody the maturity she sought in Austria. Inverting the role of parent caretaker and child dependent, Ellen's status as a resident in England provides her parents with the opportunity to escape Austria. Her easier adaptability to English customs throws into sharp relief her parents' struggle to acclimatize. Lore's father was once a successful businessman and does not possess the household skills required of his work visa. His humiliation is exacerbated by his alien status when he is sent to an internment camp for German-speaking refugees. Lore perceives only her father's weakness without understanding the mental and physical suffering that contribute to his failure to adjust and ultimately lead to his heart attacks. From this viewpoint, Lore's ability to start over in England makes her the stronger of the two, where the child's success, her attempt to teach and help the adults, and frustration over their ignorance underscore the universal struggle of the exiled Jew.

In similar ways to Kertész and Ka-tzetnik, the survivors' wartime positions within the camps in *Dita Saxova* suggest adult responsibilities and traits; not only was Dita able to perform labor in Auschwitz, she also acted as a caretaker to younger inmates in Theresienstadt. This ghetto and camp outside of Prague was distinctive from others in many ways, perhaps chief among them its dealings with its youngest occupants:

‘[Theresienstadt] was the only camp where the care, love, and shelter of children, as temporary as their influences on the final outcome may have been, made any dent in the psychological and physical destruction.’<sup>171</sup> Other characters often comment that before being sent to Auschwitz, Dita looked after children in Theresienstadt. Though Dita's ages at the camps are never provided, in 1945 at the war's end she was sixteen, and it is said

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<sup>171</sup> Eisen, p. 62



that she spent the last two years in Auschwitz, thus making her fourteen at the time of her deportation from Theresienstadt. Dita ceased to be a child, despite her own age, when she took on this role of custodian or mother figure. This position defines Dita's time in the camps for both her and others. She often reflects fondly on the memories, remembering how she 'had put them to bed and told them how the world would be someday' (p. 19) and claiming that taking care of them was '[the] best thing that happened to me during the war' (p. 230). While Dita attempts to downplay her Theresienstadt post, others exaggerate her activities: "Fitzi told Munk that during the war you saved 105 children." "I did look after a few children in Theresienstadt. That's all'" (p. 88). Jealous of the attention Dita gets from boys, one of her housemates belittles her camp experiences:

'Some people really believe that by putting a few kids to bed at night and telling them fairy tales for six weeks they probably saved their lives, or prolonged them,' Linda said. 'There's someone who thinks that just because by some chance she survived Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Belsen, in return she'll be served the world on a plate'. (pp. 179-180)

Strangers in Switzerland have even heard the rumors of her wartime exploits, asking her if she was the one who saved all those children (p. 332). As a minder, the confluence of adult and child, or mother and child, is emphasized. David Patterson notes that in this role Dita is 'preserving what is most precious and most fragile in life, just as the author struggles to preserve what is most dear through his female child'.<sup>172</sup> Dita's adult duty of taking care of children while being a child herself underscores the argument that the Holocaust child grew up prematurely.

To a different degree than the younger protagonists, in Lustig's novel there is an interesting dichotomy between the expectations of Dita's age and her actual maturity. Many do not consider the effect that being a survivor has on her psychological maturity

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<sup>172</sup> David Patterson, *The Shriek of Silence: A Phenomenology of the Holocaust Novel* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1992), p. 81

because she has continued to age and physically develop. Several times it is implied that she is not actually mature despite what certain characteristics or affectations would imply: ‘When Dita laughed, she gave the impression of being mature’ (p. 34) and ‘[Dita’s] spunk might have been mistaken for strength, and her smile for self-possession, or maturity’ (p. 10). She is no longer legally or biologically a child because she turns eighteen in the beginning of the book. However, she experienced the war as a child and lost her childhood to it, and yet she is expected to independently know how to be an adult. She is repeatedly referred to as a child, particularly when she returned to Prague in 1945 along with the other older children who were becoming young adults. Lustig writes, ‘Originally fifteen thousand children had lived there; fewer than a hundred had returned, not one below the age of fifteen. In four years the Germans had succeeded in killing off 1.5 million Jewish children. Dita was one of them’ (p. 61). This final line is ambiguous: Is Dita one of those few to return or is Lustig suggesting that because her childhood was killed off, so was she? There is a frequent interchange of ‘girl’ or ‘child’ with ‘woman’ referring to Dita and her female peers (p. 21). This comingling of terms demonstrates the liminal period of Dita’s age and that being a child is sometimes less and sometimes more than just a number of years.

### **How the novel drives the dichotomy**

The novel acts as a reversal of form, preserving in the reader’s adult world that which is impermanent and transitory inside the Holocaust childhood. The form and narrative strategies used, particularly that of adult language to narrate a child’s perspective, invert the construction and meaning of the language used. One of the most striking aspects is the necessary role reversal between children and adults, whereby the combination of adult language with child viewpoint does not seem inappropriate. Some of the survivor-writers’ biographies more or less follow the plot arcs of their narratives; that their personal experiences would be reflected in their fiction is an understandable

outcome of a genre attempting to accommodate the placelessness of Holocaust literature. According to Sue Vice, ‘These are particularly Bahktinian comments, aware that genre recognition, the interaction of discourses, and the context in which a text is produced and read may determine not only what label it is given but, more significantly, why an outcry follows a particular shift in context’.<sup>173</sup>

The survivor-writer also facilitates testimony from within the text by inverting the reader-narrative relationship. These dialogic narratives with child protagonists and adult narration are contradictory in nature.<sup>174</sup> As the child-adult relationships and actions demonstrate, they cannot conform to Western literary traditions, ‘[which] promote a tendency to individualize, heroize, moralize, idealize, and universalize’.<sup>175</sup> By upending the expected narrative the author does not conform to any reductionist Western literary ideals that were inadequate to the realities; rather, it narrates the understanding that the Holocaust is not an event about heroism, a definitive end, or the cleansing of trauma.<sup>176</sup> The survivor-writers do not capitulate to the tendency for the child-centered Holocaust narrative to deliver a weaker version of historical fact because of its physically weak protagonist. Instead, the texts change the ways in which readers approach the settings of the Holocaust childhood through an exploration of the child-adult dichotomy. Ending the narratives with the combination of hope and despair also found in survivor testimony, the redemptive practice of fiction may be tempered and the muted voice of the child heard.

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<sup>173</sup> Sue Vice, *Holocaust Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 80

<sup>174</sup> Michael J. Martin, ‘Experience and Expectations: The Dialogic Narrative of Adolescent Holocaust Literature’, *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 29.4 (2004), pp. 315-328 (p. 317)

<sup>175</sup> Alvin H. Rosenfeld, ‘The Americanization of the Holocaust’, *Thinking about the Holocaust*, Ed. by Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 19-50 (p. 123)

<sup>176</sup> Martin, p. 322

## Chapter II: 'Tomato!' – Play and Fixtures of Childhood

The children are no longer afraid of death. In one courtyard, the children played a game tickling a corpse.

EMMANUEL RINGELBLUM<sup>177</sup>

I think that possibly the greatest tragedy the Jewish People underwent was the tragedy of the children. The children in the ghetto also used to play and laugh, and in their games the tragedy of the Jewish people was reflected.

AHARON PERETZ<sup>178</sup>

Whereas the previous chapter argues that relationships, roles, and behaviors highlight the inverted development of the child characters, this chapter will focus on representations of conventional identifiers of childhood, particularly play, school, and relationships with peers. Interpretations of child characters at play fulfill an important purpose in the Holocaust novel; despite often assuming adult responsibilities and attitudes, traditional childhood activities remind readers that the protagonists and perspectives are young, while the contrast between the brutality and hardship with their inherent innocence underscores the senselessness of the Nazi program. The survivor-writers utilize this juxtaposition to represent the ways in which children adapt to their Holocaust childhoods through play. Although readers will instinctively resist 'the suggestion that mass murder and the games and amusements of youth could exist side by side', the novels represent the fact that the instincts of play in childhood resist even the horrors of the Holocaust.<sup>179</sup> George Eisen identifies three inherent impulses that directly impacted this phenomenon: 'opposition to subjugation, adjustment to adversity, and the urge for survival.'<sup>180</sup> I contend that, in representations of the child's response to life in atrocity, play combines elements of all three impulses. It is important to note that while play is considered an activity within the realm of childhood and imagination, it is also inextricably linked to the adult world and reality. Benjamin describes this connection as follows:

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<sup>177</sup> Emmanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, ed. and trans. by Jacob Sloan (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p. 174

<sup>178</sup> Peretz, pp. 478-479

<sup>179</sup> Patricia Heberer, ed., *Children During the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011)

<sup>180</sup> Eisen, pp. 82-83

It is impossible to construct [the child's play activities] as dwelling in a fantasy realm, a fairy-tale land of pure childhood or pure art. Even where they are not simply imitations of the tools of adults, toys are a site of conflict, less of the child with the adult than of the adult with the child.<sup>181</sup>

How a child plays speaks to how a child is reacting to his or her environment. Thus, representations of children at play underscore the complex relationships between children and adults as well as each other.

Second, the importance of education placed on children in ordinary life settings changed along with their wartime circumstances, reinforcing the image of the specifically Holocaust childhood. Representations of education and play depict two of the primary ways that the Holocaust differed from normal childhood. All of the narratives show children attempting education, usually in secret and at the insistence of adults. The characters process their altered educational conditions distinctively; for example, Gyuri in *Fatelessness* remarks that his pre-Holocaust education was insufficient because it did not teach him about Auschwitz. *Dita Saxova* author Arnošt Lustig remarked in an interview that although his time spent inside ghettos and camps would not allow for any formal education, he was instead educated at what he called a university about humanity.<sup>182</sup> Lustig claimed that if this so-called school of man wasn't so costly, it could actually be considered 'a good school to learn about life because, after all, these camps were life, too [...] [and] created by humans'.<sup>183</sup> Lustig concluded that while formal education was abolished for young Jews during the Holocaust, they were educated in other meaningful ways, a concept reinforced in the textual examples.<sup>184</sup>

Relationships with other children, as well as perhaps more significantly the lack thereof, also emphasize their unique situations. Examples include: David forming a close-

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<sup>181</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Toys and Play' in *Selected Writings Vol. 2 1927-1934*, pp. 117-21 (p. 118)

<sup>182</sup> Trucks and Lustig, p. 68

<sup>183</sup> Trucks and Lustig, p. 69

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

knit group of boys in the ghetto that dwindles with each death; Léa's only friendship is a disturbingly dependent one with Bénédicte; and Dita being surrounded in peers but remaining distant. As the end of the war nears, the characters' lack of a peer network is an important impediment to their natural development. Sociologically, these narratives all explore this crucial stage of a child's development, 'the relative physical independence of children at this age and their developing relationships with other children the same age, their parents and wider family, school teachers and an increasing range of other adults'.<sup>185</sup> As well as relationships with others, this period is also a time of more complex social growth, linguistic development, and emerging powers of abstraction.<sup>186</sup>

Reminders of the protagonists' ages may appear in the form of traditional expectations of childhood such as school, play, and association with friends; however, these norms are reworked as the children adapt to their changed surroundings. In established childhood arcs and child development, children grow and mature over time. Consequently, in narratives set inside the Holocaust where maturity is often accelerated, physical growth stunted, and institutions and relationships destroyed, the lines between childhood and adulthood are blurred. Langer differentiates between the interrupted or abandoned Holocaust childhoods represented in these texts as an opposition to normal childhood, which generally 'proceeds in an uninterrupted rhythm from infancy through youth to the vestibule of maturity'.<sup>187</sup> In extremity the rhythm is disrupted; like the previous chapter's examination of the child's premature development, the characters become increasingly less childlike in actions and thoughts, less uncertain about their new lives, and essentially less playful. The combination of the child's imagination with mimetic behavior of the adult world is a key aspect to how the protagonists attempt to comprehend and find meaning. Benjamin writes that '[the] child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher, but also a windmill and a train. Of what use to him is this

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<sup>185</sup> Hodgson, p. 12

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Langer, *Using and Abusing*, p. 63

schooling of his mimetic faculty?’<sup>188</sup> When the Holocaust is new to all, mimetic codes of understanding and play still exist, but as reflections of atrocity. Descriptions of the young characters at play and frequent passing references to school underscore the importance of their youthful viewpoint for the narrative as well as provide the contrast of extreme circumstances with traditional childhood innocence and ignorance.

#### Imagination and distraction in ghettos and camps

The beginning of Wojdowski's *Bread for the Departed* clearly establishes David as a young boy by juxtaposing the onset of the war in Poland with his schooling. He initially expresses gratitude because the war's commencement eclipses the arrival of a poor report card. He recounts:

Now no one will ever know, because summer vacation began right after that, and at the end of vacation the war broke out and Father was conscripted into the cavalry, and then there was the siege of Warsaw and the airplanes circled above the city, the popular sat in dark cellars, and then Father was taken prisoner, escaped and crossed the Bug River, and by the time he came home everyone had long since forgotten about the report card. He's gotten off easy. (p. 16)

David links the war, his father's involvement in it, and the report card in the way a child understands larger historical events through concurrent important personal events. The last sentence is acutely ironic because the reason for David avoiding parental punishment will cause infinitely greater difficulties. David's offhand remarks about the offensive also reflect a trend among the narratives of how the survivor-writer transmits information about the broader historical picture. Another example of this dissemination is represented by how much of what the child protagonist initially learns about the war comes from overheard conversations between adults. The children are often present and observant, even if they are not observed or included. When the extended family gathers to celebrate

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<sup>188</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'On the mimetic faculty' in *Selected Writings Vol. 2 1927-1934*, pp. 720-722 (p. 720)

Purim, David listens to the adults discuss the implications of the war's sudden loss and occupation by the Germans. David only wants to rattle his Purim noisemaker because the holiday is generally a festive occasion, but his father quickly reprimands him for disrupting the subdued discussion (p. 24). The effects of the war and the Germans' arrival mute the entertaining tradition that the child has come to expect.

This interrupted Jewish holiday marks the first of a series of grimmer holidays to come as David's childhood is transplanted into the Warsaw Ghetto. The first significant change, apart from the physical move, is that David is no longer allowed to attend school. However, his parents attempt to maintain this formative element of childhood by having a family friend who is a former professor tutor David in exchange for a meager bowl of soup. This educational element also emphasizes the powerlessness of adult Jews to retain their lucrative professions and how they must demean themselves in order to eat. According to Debórah Dwork, continuing with education, even in informal settings such as these, 'signified in a very basic and fundamental way that they meant to return to society, that they believed they would resume a normal life'.<sup>189</sup> However, hunger inhibits David's ability to pay attention, as do the restlessness and unruliness he has embraced in the ghetto. Furthermore, because David cannot envision a time when such education might be useful, such as when he might return to school after the war, continued tutoring in subjects that are not relevant to daily ghetto life seems unnecessary.

David's hobby of stamp collecting is another of the ways that his previous life adapts to the ghetto. He continues to collect stamps with most of his new acquisitions coming from his downstairs neighbor who receives sporadic letters from his concerned daughter in Palestine. His stamp collecting speaks to a sarcastic hope for the future: 'He keeps his worthless stamps separately. Who knows; some day they might be a rarity' (p. 81). Although David has expressed doubt in his need for education, this hobby displays subtle signs of belief in a future outside of the ghetto. Eisen claims that 'this hope in the

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<sup>189</sup> Dwork, p. 75



future is perhaps one of the most sustaining sentiments—especially when the present is so dismal'.<sup>190</sup> The continued accumulation sparks a flashback to when David's father took him to purchase his first book and stamps. Rather than idealize his life or relationships before the ghetto, as many adult characters are wont to do, David appreciates them for their dissimilarity to his current circumstances. He reflects, 'There weren't many such days, and he remembered every one of them' (p. 81). While David may place more value on those memories because of his present, consistent with the child's consciousness there is no commentary on the differences in emotions between the positive memory and the absence of such carefreeness in the ghetto.

In the stark contrast between the innocence of play and the brutality of atrocity, children come up with new horrible games and means of entertainment. In the following example, the game David and his friends play is essentially a test as to how long hungry children can last being taunted with the prospect of food. A player will lose if he says anything other than 'tomato' to whatever is asked; the children always lose to the empty promise of bread. The game proceeds as follows:

'Are you hungry?' 'Tomato.' 'How much marmalade do you get on your rations?' 'Tomato.' And then he'll finish the game with a cunning question, 'Will you eat a slice of bread?' 'I'll eat it, I'll eat it.' 'Now you owe me a forfeit!' (p. 103)

This game highlights the importance of play as a means of both separating children from and engaging them in their harsh realities, while also serving useful purposes of entertainment.<sup>191</sup> Within the text, play persists in even the most hostile settings, and as the above example demonstrates, may reflect or be in response to the atrocities.<sup>192</sup>

Other forms of entertainment such as Western films and novels also serve as modes of escapism for David and his friends. Eventually, however, even the Westerns cannot stave off the ghetto's harsh reality or the premature end to childhood. David and

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<sup>190</sup> Eisen, p. 50

<sup>191</sup> Eisen, p. 5

<sup>192</sup> Eisen, p. 7

his friends must 'put down the old, well-worn Western from years ago. Ken Maynard was dying in the ruins of Waliców' (p. 106). David recognizes that his life does not resemble the Westerns because 'only a wild mustang can gallop at full speed across the prairies' (p. 107) and there are no horses left in the Warsaw Ghetto. David also turns to his imagination to escape his oppressive reality. For instance, he daydreams about Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the title character of which was longsuffering but survived to get revenge, perhaps envisioning himself in the Count's role. At the same time, David is irrationally frustrated that no ghetto inhabitants try to change their situation by force, realizing his ideals of resistance and revenge are merely naive fancies:

He felt contempt at those times for the entire world: someone was doing evil deeds, but someone else was acquiescing in that evil. In his childish dreams everything was so simple! If only the Jews would fling themselves against the walls with pickaxes, the Ghetto would cease to exist. (p. 257)

The narrator's dismissal of these as 'childish dreams' effectively denies credibility to criticism of the absence of historical small- or large-scale rebellions in most of the ghettos and camps. Because of his immaturity and desire for actions that could result in his freedom, David cannot see the flaws to his plan.

Unlike Wojdowski's representation of the Warsaw Ghetto where some elements of daily life resemble normality, in Ka-tzetnik's Auschwitz play characteristically has very little place, especially for the Piepel who is the only child present. Accordingly, only one chapter brings playing children into Moni's grim world, beginning with the collective cry 'Children!' announcing the arrival of a transport from Theresienstadt. These children and their caretakers still look like people; they have hair, wear real clothing, and interact playfully. The initial exclamation is followed by, "'Children are playing here!'" mouths breathed ecstatically' (p. 61), expressing the amazement and incongruousness not only of the children's presence, but also of their play. The sight of these youngsters, so like him in age and yet so different in appearance and action, recalls to Moni days when he

behaved similarly: '[*They seem*] just like in Miss Zoshka's kindergarten, Moni's heart quivered' (p. 63). His recollection reminds the reader that Moni should still be playing in the schoolyard. The transport disappears into the gas chamber and crematorium the next day, leaving only their tiny footprints and the echoing silence that follows their laughter. The fleeting presence of children playing in the camp is significant because it brings the outside world very briefly into Moni's Auschwitz. Ka-tzetnik writes, 'Auschwitz was no longer a lost planet spinning away into oblivion. Auschwitz had suddenly landed on earth and become a part of it' (p. 63). After witnessing the Theresienstadt children, Moni views his surroundings from a new perspective; he had become so accustomed to the ageless, faceless inmates that he forgot what people could be like elsewhere, and '[with] a shock the reality of the camp hit him. As though he had just arrived' (p. 65). This glimpse of normal children, and the knowledge that they were murdered, commands awareness of Moni's present reality and make the distance in place and time from outside and before all the more remote. The absence of play in the Piepel's existence and in the camp as a whole highlights the absence of children and foreshadows Moni's death.

Like *Bread for the Departed, Fatelessness* also begins with reference to school, establishing an image of Gyuri's youthful ignorance and innocence that will be in continual conflict with his concentration camp familiarity. The first lines align Gyuri and the war with grammar school as he announces, 'I didn't go to school today' (p. 3). The remark is followed by a contradictory phrase in Gyuri's characteristic doublespeak that will become standard in the text. This language deliberately casts doubt on the narrator's reliability by inverting the meaning of Gyuri's words and suggesting the fallibility of memory. He adds, 'Or rather, I did go, but only to ask my class teacher's permission to take the day off' (ibid.). Ruth Franklin calls this trademark 'ironic pseudoprecision'.<sup>193</sup> Despite the fact that he clearly knows more than his parents tell him, Gyuri doubts his

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<sup>193</sup> Ruth Franklin, *A Thousand Darknenses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 124

own knowledge and opinions, disinclining the reader to trust him. The narrative is infused with this circular self-doubt with clauses such as ‘But then, of course, what do I know about anything’ (p. 34). Nonetheless, Gyuri’s early mention of school situates him as a youth, an important distinction in regards to the new racial policies that will shortly restrict his return to formal education and mandate factory work in its stead. He does not mention regret, or any emotion, about not returning to the classroom, merely offering it as a time marker: ‘Summer is here, but it’s been ages since, back in springtime, the grammar school let us out on holiday, adverting to the war that’s going on’ (p. 27).

Later, Gyuri considers the phrase he often overhears from fellow prisoners, ‘we learn for life, not school’ (p. 113); he is struck by the outside education’s inadequate preparation for this new life inside the concentration camp. The information his parents and others withheld from him because of his age and innocence actually served to undermine his ability to mature for, understand, and adapt to his incarceration. He had been educated for a life that no longer existed. Gyuri argues:

[Really], I ought to have been learning all along exclusively about Auschwitz. Everything would have been explained, openly, honestly, reasonably. The thing was, though, that over the four years of school I had heard not a single word about it. Of course, that would have been embarrassing, I conceded, nor indeed did it belong to education, I realized. The drawback, however, was that now I would have to be edified here. (p. 113)

His casual remark that Auschwitz does not ‘belong’ in the classroom suggests two critical issues. First, that no previous historical context included in his curricula could have effectively taught Auschwitz. And second, it could be read as a reflection of the narrator, author, and reader’s retrospective knowledge that Auschwitz will find a place in later education. And yet Gyuri seems to be arguing that perhaps only the experience can provide the edification.

Gyuri considers it natural that he work in the factory with other boys because he has ‘heard that people like me who are not yet old enough to be drafted as fully fit for labor service are nowadays being placed in employment at factories and places of that sort’ (p. 27). During his abrupt deportation despite compliance with these labor conditions, Kertész shows how the boys easily turn serious situations into games, reflecting at times their ingenuousness but also the youngster’s desire to make sense of things through play. When Gyuri and the other boys on their way to the factory are detained with other Jews, rather than worry overmuch about what their detainment means, they make a game out of it. As the policeman forces each boy off his respective bus, the others hide and jump out to scare the new arrival. Indeed, ‘they were killing themselves with laughter’ (p. 41) that all the boys were turning up at the same ditch on the side of the road. The boys’ playful antics elicit an uncomfortable smile from the Hungarian policeman reluctantly in charge of their removal. Although the adult is aware of the outcome of his actions and he desires to be emotionally removed from the boys, the childish play is contagious. Kertész writes, ‘Even the policemen cracked a bit of a smile, like someone who, though more detached, was still joining in the fun to a degree; I could see straightaway that he had nothing against us—nor indeed could he have, naturally’ (p. 41). Gyuri does not identify them as persecuted Jews despite their yellow stars and, because they are merely boys, it is inconceivable that the policeman would have any racial bias against them. Gyuri trusts the policeman while simultaneously not taking his law enforcement position seriously, because he feels erroneously secure with his special ID card and factory job (p. 44). The boys’ primary focus is on keeping themselves entertained rather than investigating the reason for their detainment or its consequence.

However, despite his admitted ignorance, like the boys’ playful response to their deportation, Gyuri’s imagination will serve to rescue him from succumbing to confusion or despair where his prior education has failed him. Arnošt Lustig describes playing as a necessity while living on borrowed time in the camps, remarking, ‘I was sentenced to

death three times. I spent one month in a quarantine, waiting to be gassed. We played soccer in the quarantine because you cannot wait for your death. It would be too depressing'.<sup>194</sup> In such a way, the adventure-seeking child that first volunteered for transport is able to draw comparisons between his experience at Auschwitz and Daniel Defoe's legendary protagonist, Robinson Crusoe. Gyuri describes his early experiences of eating without utensils as '[smearing] the margarine on with my fingers, Robinson Crusoe fashion so to say' (p. 106). It could be argued that the Robinson Crusoe metaphor is merely representative of a typical literate boy Gyuri's age that could have read it and ascribed romantic ideals to the story and its protagonist. However, the similarities to Defoe's literary character may be extended. Having left home to pursue a more adventurous career at sea, Crusoe's steadiness and perseverance ensure he survives the many trials faced at sea and his lengthy isolation. Likewise, Gyuri's desire to experience something new and adventurous when faced with forced labor and belief in his abilities to adjust to camp life could be an attempt to emulate this fictional character. However, despite this boyish affinity for adventure stories, the character Crusoe was older, so Gyuri may also be attempting to separate himself from identification as a child.

#### Playing a part: Recreation and deception in hiding

Play is naturally depicted with greater frequency in the texts where the protagonists have more relative freedom of movement, such as those hiding externally. One recreational activity that the hidden characters engage in is secretly listening to radio broadcasts; the overheard information is used to situate his world within the context of the war as well as manifests in the child's play. In *Wartime Lies*, Maciek describes important historical episodes as they coincide with important events in his life, such as moving to a new city. In such incidents, Begley represents that, while the adult narrator can claim a clear memory, the child character himself 'has a very indistinct one, based on

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<sup>194</sup> Trucks and Lustig, p. 69

a limited grasp of what is happening around him'.<sup>195</sup> Though Maciek's aunt assures him that if they stay alive long enough they will see the Germans defeated, he is unable to look beyond his present understanding, which mostly comes from the biased Wehrmacht radio. He admits, 'Deep in my heart, I did not believe her. The soldiers who were being routed on every front would not suddenly stop being inferior and weak' (p. 62). Maciek re-enacts these broadcasts with his toy soldiers. He chooses the better lead soldiers to be the German Wehrmacht because they are 'winners' and the older toys are the 'tattered Russian army' (p. 66). When the tides of the war shift, his play reflects a changed belief that perhaps his aunt had been correct that the war might end in favor of him living.

Begley writes:

In Smolensk, on the Dnieper, in Kiev, the Russians were beating the Germans; perhaps Stalingrad was not simply a case of von Paulus's incompetence or treachery. I began to move some of my better regiments over to the Russian side.  
(p. 66)

This passage is an example of how Begley combines all the ways in which Maciek processes his life in hiding—radio details, overheard adult remarks, and child's play.

Additionally, much of the text describes Maciek's day-to-day, like a child's journal, providing facts without examination: what was eaten, what was spoken and with whom, games played to pass the time, and descriptions of his surroundings. Aharon Appelfeld, speaking from personal experience, explains this style of writing as the result of how children reacted to their environments, asserting that '[children] would sit for hours and observe. Hunger, thirst, and weakness made us observant creatures'.<sup>196</sup> The survivor-writer suggests that there is no place for thoughtful analysis from the child's viewpoint and the adult narrator may or may not interrupt the predominant free indirect

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<sup>195</sup> Langer, *Literary Imagination*, p. 56

<sup>196</sup> Appelfeld, 'After the Holocaust', p. 91

speech to offer further insight, diminish the reader's potential horror at Maciek's offhand remarks, or defend the child's perceptions and opinions.<sup>197</sup>

Though to greater or lesser degrees each child interacts with other children, what is often actually highlighted is the isolation of the protagonists from their peers. Despite the fact that Maciek is a child, the narrative is 'based on a discourse of childhood suffused with the knowledge that there has already been an end to innocence'.<sup>198</sup> The few scenes of Maciek playing with other children accentuate this loss. Before the war, he was taught to drive horses, went sledding down a snowy hill, and played on jungle gyms and in sandboxes, all of which reflect his privileged early years. Maciek retains remnants of this more conventional childhood while in hiding by reading *Treasure Island*, constructing battles with lead soldiers, and doing homework provided by his non-traditional tutors. However, these remnants are greatly outnumbered by his isolation, lack of consistency in private lessons, and his atypical new acquaintances. During the war, Maciek's diversions with his peers becomes notably darker: secret and often sadistic sexual role playing, throwing stones with gangs of Jewish boys in the T. ghetto, and teaching peasant children to jump over fires when they are not torturing cows. The juxtaposition of pre-war play with activities during the war enables Begley to reflect on the changes wrought by wartime conditions and how these are recreated within childhood behaviors.

Henryk's engagement with others in recreation is similarly transformed in *The Jewish War and the Victory*. When he is first hidden with farmers with whom his parents had been friendly before, the family tries to engage Henryk with their own children in an effort to deflect attention. However, the young Henryk has difficulty with this most basic of child interactions. He remarks that even in these early days of hiding after his sudden dislocation and separation he could not acclimatize:

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<sup>197</sup> Reiter, p. 88

<sup>198</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 152



I had forgotten how to play with children and had no desire to run about, so the disappointed children began to poke me in the ribs and sometimes to smack me harder. I took it all in silence, thinking that it was to be like that. (p. 13)

His failure to play with the other children results in bullying, which he accepts without any self-defense; perhaps this is a reflection of internalized anti-Semitic persecution, or it could be a subconscious recognition of his dependence on the parents of his tormentors. Later, when he and his mother have left their temporary hiding in the cities to seek anonymous shelter in a rural village, their interactions with others take on an immediacy that echoes his earliest experience and that had eluded them in the chaos of bigger cities. The closeness of people who all know each other and are naturally curious of strangers in wartime contributes to their danger as hidden Jews. Because his mother is posing as a schoolteacher, she teaches the village children and Henryk must play and learn with them in her makeshift classroom. This interaction between villagers and masquerading Jews is characterized by a polarizing need to be with them while keeping important secrets:

Now one had to be among people all the time. Talk to them, listen to them, eat with them, go to sleep and get up, pray, fast, and feast with them, be seen wherever they went, because people don't like those who are silent and always suspect them of something. So one couldn't shun people, avoid them, remain alone even for a moment. (p. 44)

While Grynberg is highlighting the necessity of the hidden Jew's interactions with their temporary communities, the constant contact does not actually preclude their essential isolation. Thus, Henryk attends his mother's lessons with the other children and is involved with the community, but he does not develop any close bonds.

When the war ends, Henryk continues to straddle the line of being an outcast among his peers and inclusion, particularly as he chooses to still practice Catholicism in the sparse Jewish survivor community. Henryk is '[searching] for alternative values and

communities, friends, and surrogate families' in order to make sense of his survival.<sup>199</sup> When his mother remarries a Jewish Communist who had spent the war in Russia, Henryk gains a 'stepsister', Ania. This bond is particularly strong because of the early loss of his younger brother. It is later revealed that Henryk's stepfather is not Ania's biological father and he was trying to replace his deceased daughter through her. The Home for Jewish children to which Henryk and Ania are sent is the first place that Henryk is among large groups of other children, who are mostly orphans or, like him, whose parents are unable to care for them. The second such place is the sanatorium for Jewish children in the Sudeten Mountains where the novel ends. Though very little is said about Henryk's relationships with these other children, it can be assumed that he is comfortable with them through the language of the concluding section. The collective group of boys subsumes Henryk's individuality as well as suggests a sense of belonging when he becomes part of a 'we' that acts, thinks, and speaks as one (pp. 148-150). Whereas hiding had separated him from his Jewish peers literally and his non-Jewish peers through the deception, both places isolate Henryk *with* other young Jews; only then does he impart a sense of traditional boyhood camaraderie. Henryk's ability to play with these peers after the war suggests there may be some resolution for the child survivor.

Included in the references to Henryk at play, Grynberg also describes a larger game at play. Henryk calls his mother his 'best companion and a partner in this childhood game' (p. 44). The 'childhood game' is an extended metaphor of the hidden Jews as actors playing parts in a perpetual performance of life and death with no foreseeable curtain call. He must 'always be ready to improvise' his lines and make sure that he 'never [gets] caught by surprise' (ibid.) by his audience of neighbors and potential spies. According to the narrator, hiding externally means to '[play] a part that one did not have time to learn and to play it day after day, at any given moment, without an intermissions for collecting thoughts, catching a breath, taking a look at one's true face' (ibid.). Henryk

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<sup>199</sup> Myers, p. 24

is frozen as an actor behind the mask of his non-Jewish identity, as a player in the involuntary game. Yet, performance is also a pivotal part of childhood play; as Benjamin notes, ‘The performance is the great creative pause in the process of upbringing.’<sup>200</sup>

Perhaps Grynberg is also commenting on childhood as a game that is only a performance of adulthood. Eventually the performance and game supplants the real because Henryk continues to act like his Catholic double even after they attempt to resume life as Jews.

In Appelfeld’s *Tzili*, the title character’s relationship with her peers is clearly defined as one of not belonging to any group. Before she goes into hiding, both classmates and siblings bully Tzili; after hiding, she is considered ‘the child’ by adult refugees who do not count her as a peer. All of Tzili’s pre-war interactions with those her age are decidedly negative. Because she does not excel in her studies, her classmates mistreat her. Appelfeld writes, ‘Even the gentile children knew more than she did. She would get mixed up. A Jewish girl without any brains! They delighted in her misfortune,’ (p. 2). Appelfeld alludes to the Holocaust with a metaphor for the school, where ‘among all the gentile children, she was the butt of constant ridicule and scorn. [...] Every day she went to her torture chamber and swallowed the dose of insults meted out to her’ (p. 4). Separate from other Jews by not being academically gifted, Tzili’s persecution by non-Jews provokes suffering on an additional level because she has no peer support network on which to fall back. Though she has many brothers and sisters, Tzili is not close with her older siblings because they cannot understand her failure in school; when they do not outright ignore Tzili, they are ridiculing her for her faults. Tzili’s unique hiding situation leaves little room for traditional play although, like David and Gyuri, she uses her imagination as a form of escapism when alone and afraid. Her isolation from other children before, during, and after the war negates the possibility of conventional interactions with her peers. The necessities of survival in the wilderness or slaving for peasants also preclude play; she neither has access to toys nor an adult caretaker to

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<sup>200</sup> Benjamin, ‘Children’s Theatre’, p. 205

provide her with time and means for recreation or education. Additionally, once abandoned by her family, Tzili is the only child physically present in the narrative, thus underscoring her essential segregation as both Jew and child. The absence of play also highlights the abrupt ending of any age-related childhood norms.

In contrast to Tzili's solitude, *Shadows of a Childhood: A Novel of Friendship* is very much what its title claims. While at the convent, Léa bonds only with Bénédicte. Though the narrative focuses on Léa's particular experience in hiding and its aftermath, at the center of the character exploration is Léa's friendship with Bénédicte, an almost pathological inseparability built on the fact that they are both hiding. Their relationship necessarily is impacted by their liminal positions, resulting in a distance because of their hiddenness that paradoxically also creates their closeness: 'they never mentioned the secrets of their real lives. They neither confided in nor lied to each other' (p. 29). Like Léa, Bénédicte's parents are mysteriously away and she cannot discuss it, and because she is a few years older and has been at the boarding school longer, Bénédicte unconsciously takes the newcomer under her wing. However, reflecting the often-disparate fates of those targeted for political rather than racial reasons, Bénédicte's French Resistance parents return whereas Léa's Jewish ones do not. After this orphanhood, Léa becomes closed off from others and Bénédicte remains the only person to whom she will even partially open up. Bénédicte's father remarks when he first decides to adopt her and admits that Léa will never be reunited with her parents, "'She has but a single person left in the world: Bénédicte. Something inexplicable has happened to the two of them—let's call it friendship at first sight. Our daughter is the only one capable of helping her survive'" (p. 83).

Léa passes into adulthood without embracing any of the light-hearted fun and innocence that are essential to childhood. Bénédicte enables Léa's misbehavior by helping her to escape school, making excuses for her coldness to adults, and cheating together on their schoolwork. Léa's disregard for the rules of formal education while

obsessively observing the local war crimes trials suggests that the matrix of meaning of normal childhood in which school has a central role has been destroyed. Non-Jewish Bénédicte, however, has a more normal adolescence, experimenting with make up and boys, and enjoying the company of her parents and friends. She tries and fails to engage Léa similarly. At university in Paris, Bénédicte becomes a passionate Communist while Léa's former passion for revenge is muted into apathy toward life as well as peers. Just as Léa begins to engage with others and show interest in something, Bénédicte's death in the automobile accident effectively severs her sole connection to her sanity, others, and the world.

### Desperate play

Play is a significant part of *Herod's Children*, particularly in the first half of the novel when Ellen is younger and nominally a member of a band of Jewish children who explore the city unsupervised. The novel could be outlined as composing two distinct parts, where the first focuses on the children at play and the second leads to their deaths.<sup>201</sup> Shortly after the turning point away from the children playing together, they are separated by deportation to camps, although Ellen will encounter Bibi again briefly after the latter girl's abortive escape attempt. Several chapters focus solely on the elaborate games played by the children, complementing Aichinger's magical writing style that plays with language. For these young characters, survival is inextricable from their play, combining their dangerous realities with childlike fantasies. Klaus Kastberger points out that the emphasis Aichinger places on child's play has appeared to critics as a 'discrepancy between the aesthetic of the text and its intended message'.<sup>202</sup> However, I argue that Aichinger's focus on play emphasizes the ways children incorporate their

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<sup>201</sup> Klaus Kastberger, 'Survival: Child's Play. Ilse Aichinger's Die größere Hoffnung' in Bernhard Fetz and Rachel Magsham, 'Representing the Holocaust. On Paul Celan, Ilse Aichinger, Albert Drach and Heimrad Bäcker, with an Appeal for Critical Reflection on the Cultural and Political Field in Which Holocaust Literature is Inscribed', *New German Critique* 93: Austrian Writers Confront the Past (2004), pp. 72-77 (p. 76)

<sup>202</sup> Kastberger, p. 73

limited understanding of serious events into how they seek to comprehend through play. There is also another game being played in the novel other than those played by the child characters; the children are aware of a larger undertaking in which they are pieces—the game of the war and the Final Solution. For example, as they listen to Jews being pulled from their homes and deported, waiting for the knock upon their own door, the children sense that they are being toyed with: ““Mice in a trap—that’s what we are!”” (p. 78) and ““Pop Goes the Weasel—that’s what they’re playing with us!”” (p. 79).

The importance of diversion when faced with danger and the crucial attempt to retain a sense of being children is underscored in their almost desperate pursuits of play. Aichinger invokes the word itself like a prayer:

Play. It was their only chance left to stand proudly before the inscrutable, to keep their grace in the presence of dark secrets. For this is the most hidden of all the commandments: Ye shall play before My countenance. They had sensed it in the stemtide of their anguish. Their joy in the game was the one bright light in the center of their darkness. (p. 120)

According to the narrative, when the playing stops so do their childhoods. While Ellen observes Bibi’s interrogation by the soldier who has captured her escaping the camp, Bibi stresses that she is only a child through this word and action. The soldier asks her what her ‘previous occupation’ was, to which she insists: ““Play!”” (p. 147). This scene is Ellen’s last interaction with the Jewish children, thus marking the turning point in the novel away from such childhood play and relationships. ‘The awareness of play is constantly foregrounded, carrying with it a concomitantly unrelenting degree of awareness that at any moment things could become deadly serious’.<sup>203</sup>

Prior to the turning point several chapters focus solely on the intricate games the children construct. The first of these games occurs when Ellen meets the other Jewish children. The group has been waiting day in and day out by the river hoping that a child

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<sup>203</sup> Kastberger, p. 73

will fall in so that they can rescue it. This game is also the first with biblical allusions; in this emulation of the Moses tale, the children believe that by rescuing the Aryan child, government officials will pardon and save the Jewish children. As Aichinger writes, ‘[the] child has got to fall into the water if it’s going to be saved’ (p. 32). David Patterson views this particular scene as one in which ‘Aichinger the novelist has to pursue the child into those depths if she is to save herself’, suggesting the layered meanings in the fallen and rescued child.<sup>204</sup> This determination on the children’s part possesses an incredible self-awareness of their precarious situation because they recognize their own need to be saved even if they do not know how to accomplish it. When a child does miraculously fall into the river, it is the newcomer *Mischling*, Ellen, who saves it, unable to call to the others in time. They believe that their own opportunity to be saved has been wasted on the one who needs it least. The rescue scene continues the previously discussed representations of a child taking on the role of adult caretaker or parent because the baby’s mother does not do the rescuing. As Ellen exits the river cradling the infant in her arms, the children claim the rescued baby as their own: ‘This was the child for whom they had been waiting for seven weeks; the child they were going to save to exculpate themselves—their child’ (p. 39).

The chapter ‘The Holy Land’ transports the children’s games into a Jewish cemetery. The chapter’s title suggests the hallowed earth of the burial ground, the group’s failed effort to escape to Jerusalem, and their Jewish identities. The game of hide-and-seek played in the cemetery perhaps most acutely characterizes the children’s positions; they have been excluded from the natural places of childhood such as schoolyards, playgrounds, and parks and thereby go to the only open space available, which is reserved for the dead. Thus, this chapter also highlights the children’s lack of belonging and foretells their fates. When first introducing one another to Ellen, they list how many wrong grandparents each possesses, using the Nazi racial definitions in place of personal

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<sup>204</sup> Patterson, *Shriek of Silence*, p. 97

details. The children despair without the proper Aryan identification pass, the fault of which lies with the ancestors among whom they play in the cemetery. They question their place in this new world order, as Aichinger writes:

If you can't show an identity card you are lost. If you can't show an identity card you are given up. Where shall we go? Who will find us our real identity? Who will help us to ourselves? Our grandparents have failed us. (p. 44)

In this way, the game of hide-and-seek is a search for each other, as the game's rules indicate, but also a search for their own identities. They chant, 'One, two, three; on your mark, hide-and-seek. When you find yourself, you'll be safe' (p. 45). Their search leads them to a place where they find belonging with the dead, who also have no such identity cards and thus are also uncertified or negated. 'The children have no documents, to validate what they might one day become. In this sense, both the living and the dead are absent presences'.<sup>205</sup> They also like the graveyard because it represents the peace that comes with death, and the absence of fear and danger, observing that "no one cries there anymore" (p. 47). Throughout the game of hide-and-seek, the differences between the living children playing among the gravestones and the dead buried beneath them steadily diminish until the language portrays the living and the dead playing the game together. Through this style, Aichinger foreshadows that the children have been marked for extermination and are in a sense already partially dead.

The last chapter in which play is central, aptly titled 'The Big Game', focuses on an elaborate Christmas and nativity play that the children produce. Kastberger calls this a 'reality-flouting game (a last residue of resistance)'.<sup>206</sup> They incorporate their lived experiences of war and persecution into the play. When a stranger asks what they are playing, one of the boys replies, "Looking for peace" (p. 136). The stranger then asks why they play it in the dark; the logical answer would be that they must play in the dark

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<sup>205</sup> Kastberger, p. 73

<sup>206</sup> Kastberger, p. 74



because it is after curfew and the secret police are searching for people violating rules like listening to the radio. However, the boy remarks, ““We see better that way”” (p. 137), perhaps implying that their adjustment to the darkness means they are capable of perceiving things that others may not, either because they are children or because they are persecuted Jews or a combination of the two. The end of this chapter, like the end of the play, seems to also mark an end to their childhoods and their potential endings in the crematoria, with the final line reading, ‘Their play closed over them like a huge dancing flame’ (p. 140). After this, play has a minor role as the novel deals more directly with the fate of the Jews and the war. The second half of the book has more direct discussions of the darker aspects of Ellen’s wartime life such as deportations, bloody beatings, and battles. The final game she is accused of playing will be that of spying when the foreign soldiers confront her as she asks if they’ve seen her friends. One soldier exclaims, ““They say you’re playing games; did you understand? They say we should hold you here!”” (p. 222). Although incorrect, the soldiers’ suspicion about this final game reveals that, while she may no longer be playing with her friends, she is still caught up in the larger game of the war.

Segal’s *Other People’s Houses* describes its protagonist at play and with her peers in a way that underscores her position as both Jew and refugee, and specifically the effect this Otherness has on childhood. Lore plays awkwardly with her peers in Austria as well as in England. In early scenes, she is uncomfortable because she is Jewish and not allowed to play with non-Jews. When her father would take her on his mandatory walks during which he talked and she daydreamed, ‘he used to push me to go and play. The fact was, I always longed to play with other children but never knew how. [...] They also spat [water] down the back of my dress and called me “Jew”’ (p. 12). Her discomfort continues in England because local children view her as an outsider. In Liverpool, Lore quickly bonds with other Jewish refugee children who live with similar Orthodox Jewish families. However, these friendships and games quickly deteriorate. For example, she and

another refugee, Helene, play a competition game about letters from their parents in which they exaggerate how many letters each receives and what the letters convey. This game comes to an abrupt end when Helene ceases to receive any letters after her parents are deported. While also displaying Lore's natural and age-appropriate competitiveness, the letter game represents Lore's longing for her family. She imagines her parents sharing the fate of Helene's:

I got a new picture of my parents standing outside Helene's parents' apartment door, which had been locked and taped and sealed off with an official seal. The neighbors said the Rubicheks had been taken away that morning. [...] I could not face the weeks ahead unless they were divided into periods of which I could see the end, with a letter to wait for. (p. 61)

When this game ends to her dissatisfaction and Helene's loss reminds Lore of her own potential orphanhood, she quickly replaces Helene with a new best friend; without the letter game and the shared hope of reunification with their parents, she does not know how to be friends with Helene.

Lore at one point tries to bond with lower class foster sisters, but her scholastic ambitions clash with the sisters' aspiration only for a good marriage, reinforcing the stereotypes Appelfeld noted in *Tzili* about Jewish academic prowess. When Lore earns a place at a more prestigious school she is further distanced from her foster sisters who view her success as pretentious. However, Lore does not fit in with the upper-middle class girls of the new school either because she is a refugee and a scholarship student. As she ages, Lore is also alienated from other refugees by her desire to remain in England and self-proclaimed Anglophilia. Because of this distancing, Segal focuses less on descriptions of Lore with others and more on her solitary activities such as writing, suggesting Lore's preferred isolation in all communities. Her play and interactions with peers reveal Lore's inability to be fully refugee or fully English, which is representative of a common problem for Jewish refugees from European countries; those from German-

speaking countries in particular faced added persecution in their new homes, often resulting in this alienation.

Comparatively, because *Dita Saxova*'s narrative present takes place two years after the war's end, its children of the Holocaust are now entering adulthood. As such, their play corresponds to their age group and their unique positions, such as attending organized group dances and outdoor excursions. However, these are always darkened by their wartime pasts when the talk frequently turns to the camps even while at dances and parties. Dita's recreation now involves love and the future: 'In her mind she played her secret game; which one might walk by her side—D.E. Huppert or Fitzi Neugeborn—equally close to her?' (p. 69). Daily life and mental stability is also somewhat of a game for Dita: 'The game she played was a constant struggle between restraint and fantasy, the curb and the free rein, between bitter and sweet' (p. 137). The play they enacted during the Holocaust is rarely described; this exclusion could be a strategic move on Lustig's part to highlight the accelerated maturity of these seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds, which forestalled childhood games. However, as in all of the narratives, what little play is mentioned is reflective of this discontinued youth. For example, during his tenure at Theresienstadt, in a reimagining of the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, one of Dita's admirers, Fitzi, 'led a gang of the Knights of the Empty Table. His pals would greet him: "What did you steal for supper?"' (p. 56). This game incorporates the common elements of the ghetto camp, starvation and stealing. This one recollection of wartime play provides insight into Fitzi and the other young survivors and how they used tactics such as this grim amusement as a way of withstanding.

School, play, and peers are fixtures of traditional childhoods. They establish age-appropriate activities, demonstrate how children perceive and understand the world around them, and contribute to their development into adulthood. Literarily, these may serve as important markers of the protagonist's age and perspective. When the child-centered text is set within the Holocaust, these fixtures remain but are naturally altered by

the child's changed circumstances and also reflect a determination to overcome those circumstances. Eisen observes that the organization of play and educational activities for the young 'were turned into an enterprise of survival, a defense for sanity, and a demonstration of psychological defiance'.<sup>207</sup> Instruments of imagination importantly engage the characters with the changed nature of their realities, including those who must utilize individual imagination when playing with peers is not an option. Play can also underscore the abrupt ending of age-related childhood norms, emphasize a lack of belonging inherent in the Jewish child through the isolation of the protagonists from their peers, and contrast the extreme circumstances with traditional childhood innocence and ignorance.

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<sup>207</sup> Eisen, p. 8

### Chapter III: The Formation of a Three-Fold Identity

First I thought I was a writer. Then I realized I was a Jew. Then I no longer distinguished the writer in me from the Jew because one and the other are only torments of an ancient world.

EDMOND JABÈS<sup>208</sup>

A writer can only write what's under his skin and I cannot jump out of my skin.

ARNOŠT LUSTIG<sup>209</sup>

#### Introduction: Three-fold identities

In this chapter I will argue that representations of identity contribute to the concept of the Jewish child as a liminal character, an Other who is both included in and excluded from mainstream societies. The child's unformed sense of self is the vehicle by which the historical Jew may be expressed. Naomi Sokoloff argues that '[young] characters may present continuing challenges to definitions of themselves and their relations to adults, thereby confusing demarcations between self and other, identity and difference'.<sup>210</sup>

Accordingly, challenging questions about the Holocaust may be explored through the young character's process of defining his or her selfhood. Various factors influence the ways in which the child characters develop an understanding of their selves, including: location geographically in Western or Eastern Europe or the migration between them; developmental stage and age before, during, and after the events of their persecution; the child's gender, such as Tzili's terror during puberty or Henryk's fear of exposing his circumcision; social class; parental political affiliations; amount with which the family identified as Jews and practiced the religion; whether the child was alone in the experience like Léa, or shared it with family, as Maciek did; and what Susan Rubin Suleiman calls 'the particulars of the story, or the *kind of story* it was: did it involve the ghetto, deportation, changes in language and geographical location, hiding, living under

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<sup>208</sup> Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Questions: The Book of Yukel and Return to the Book*, trans. by Rosmarie Waldrop (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), p. 195

<sup>209</sup> Trucks and Lustig, p. 70

<sup>210</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 5

false identity'.<sup>211</sup> If the narratives do not take place exclusively in the post-war period as in *Dita Saxova* or if the child protagonist does not survive as in *Moni*, they include episodes that examine what happened after the events of the persecution. In these scenes, the authors explore how the aftermath also influenced identity formation: were families reunited or the child orphaned, were homes returned to or was there further displacement through immigration, were religious practices assumed or resumed, or were original identities regained? The combination of the above elements participates in the development of the character's three-fold child identity of outsider, Jew, and gender.

These novels demonstrate that the Eastern, Western, religious, and assimilated young Jews during the years of the Holocaust had their identities shaped and re-shaped by themselves, other Jews, and non-Jews. Moreover, the development of a specifically Jewish identity comes into conflict when faced with their persecution. Suleiman writes, 'the specific experience of Jewish children was that disaster hit them before the formation of stable identity that we associate with adulthood, and in some cases before any conscious sense of self.'<sup>212</sup> Thus the fictional child's viewpoint can act as a way for the survivor-writer to confront the difficult subject of identity when faced with discrimination. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi claims that, although the Jewish people have often followed the biblical commandment to remember, especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust, '[Jews] are not prepared to confront [history] directly, but seem to await a new, metahistorical myth, for which the novel provides at least a temporary modern surrogate'.<sup>213</sup> The role of the child as protagonist and perspective in the 'death and resurrection of the self' is crucial to the Holocaust novel both thematically and

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<sup>211</sup> Susan Suleiman, 'The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust', *Imago* 59.3 (2002), pp. 277-295 (pp. 289-290)

<sup>212</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'The Edge of Memory after the Age of Commemoration' in *The Future of Memory* ed. by Richard Crownshaw, Jane Kilby, and Antony Rowland (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), pp. 93-109 (p. 94)

<sup>213</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1982), p. 98

structurally.<sup>214</sup> This is particularly the case for the survivor-writer who must confront their personal experiences and the reshaping of their identities in the post-war world at a time of reshaping geographical and political boundaries. For example, Gille was hidden in a Catholic convent and raised in a non-Jewish household, only discovering the identity of her parents, and as a result her own past and ancestry, later in life. Many authors did not continue to identify with or practice Judaism, or came to the religion only after the war. Others fashioned themselves new identities through emigration, particularly in the case of Israeli authors Appelfeld and Ka-tzetnik.

One of the key ways the novels investigate child identity issues is through the representation of the child characters in liminal periods and positions. Some are in between childhood and adulthood in their early adolescence; between Jewishness and non-Jewishness by performing false religions in hiding or as a *Mischling*; biologically between girlhood and womanhood, boyhood and manhood; or geographically between places by moving constantly. The common thread connecting them is their categorization as Jews and, thus, as Others. Sokoloff writes that ‘[the] young make highly mutable Others. Engaged in an accelerated process of growth and change, they find themselves constantly in transition.’<sup>215</sup> These texts represent how, during that period, to be Jewish means to be both different and same; or to be more precise, the Jew is different from the non-Jew and the same as all other Jews. The characters accentuate this sense of being different from others because of their Jewishness, while also developing a consciousness of family and community built upon likewise suffering. The Jew may stand as a metaphor for all Otherness; the child as Other may stand for all Jews. The texts examine how the child may have the lived experience of Jewishness and develop an awareness of ‘that

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<sup>214</sup> David Patterson, ‘Literary Response and Remembrance: A Bakhtinian Approach to the Holocaust Novel’ in *Remembering for the Future: Working Papers and Addenda* ed. by Yehuda Bauer and others (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1989), I, pp. 1513-1522 (p. 1519)

<sup>215</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 4

position of social marginality or exile which the Jew shares in common with other oppressed groups'.<sup>216</sup>

Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault discuss 'the Other' as something that affects how we perceive ourselves and their theories are relevant to narratives about children. Derrida offers in *Of Grammatology*, 'Man calls himself man only by drawing limits excluding his other from the play of supplementarity: the purity of nature, of animality, primitivism, childhood, madness, divinity.'<sup>217</sup> In this way, children can be viewed as ideal representations of these qualities, where they are purer than human adults and, ironically, subsequently less than human, not human, or Other. Lacan writes a similar idea, in *Écrits*: 'The unconscious is the Other's discourse'.<sup>218</sup> He explores how the Other defines the self by being what it is not or lacks. The adults' view of children as both ignorant and innocent, different in a good or bad way, reveals the child's purpose as an Other. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault focuses on how the history of institutions such as asylums and prisons produced a discourse of the Other that is repressive, a connection that may be carried over into schools.<sup>219</sup> It could be argued that ideas about children are interlinked with ideas about inmates of prisons and asylums and all societal Others. These are just several examples of the ways in which theorists have posited Otherness in children.

The ability of Bakhtin's concept of polyphony to reach its full potential in representing the Holocaust child is best achieved in the novel where the child can serve various functions: in its position as separated Other, as a source of an alternative vision to those firmly established by adults; as a reflection of the author's own particular

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<sup>216</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, 'Judaism and Exile: The Ethics of Otherness' in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location* ed. by Erica Carter, James Donald, and Judith Squires (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1993), pp. 57-72 (p. 57)

<sup>217</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 244

<sup>218</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), p. 10

<sup>219</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1991), p. 138



experiences and understandings; or as ‘an instrument for demonstrating the restless play of identity and difference in which Jews, as others, have perceived themselves’.<sup>220</sup> The polyphonic capacity of the adult narrator depicting a child’s viewpoint promotes the representation of children’s Otherness in addition to opening a forum to explore difficult ideas about the Holocaust. Bakhtin explains:

The idea lives not in one person's *isolated* individual consciousness—if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of *others*. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse.<sup>221</sup>

Only by constant interaction with the adult voices around and mediating the child’s perspective can the survivor-writer give expression to the muted Holocaust child’s thoughts and experiences.

Moreover, the interconnectedness of being a Jew and being a child as conditions of Otherness cannot be overstated. The novelty of outlook expressed in these texts is made possible by inhabiting the child’s specific Otherness, which ‘offers an effective vehicle of expression for a people repeatedly unfamiliar with itself and at pains to define its own difference’.<sup>222</sup> The child characters that are outsiders as members of the minority culture of Jews also have a secondary Otherness in their categorization as Others to adults and as such the child’s individuality is often not fully investigated.<sup>223</sup> By centering their narratives on children using adult’s language, the survivor-writers are able to investigate

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<sup>220</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 21

<sup>221</sup> Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 87-88

<sup>222</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 21

<sup>223</sup> Andrea Hammel, ‘Between Adult Narrator and Narrated Child: Autobiographical Writing by Former Members of the *Kindertransporte*’ in *Children of the Holocaust*, ed. by Andrea Reiter (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), p. 69

the issues of identity elicited by the Jewish child's Holocaust, but from a more mature and often retrospective perspective, demonstrating an awareness of the importance of the often unheard or silenced voices of the child and the Jew.<sup>224</sup>

Explored to various degrees within each novel, the characters' experiences are distinctly gendered and the ways in which these gender differences are represented suggest the importance of viewing the event as perpetrated distinctly against Jewish boys and girls, not just 'children'. Two primary generalizations are made by Holocaust literature scholarship: first, using male-generated and -centered texts as universally representative without recognizing that gender and sexual differences affected the experience; and second, referencing 'children' without gender differentiation, for example in the frequent remark upon the particular vulnerability of 'women and children', which separates these groups from Jewish men but not from each other. Children exist in the weaker categories of the dichotomy between adult and child and belong with other muted and marginalized groups, which essentially feminizes even the male child. This is often further problematized through the text's language by using terms such as 'childhood', 'children', and 'child' without calling attention to their cultural construction.<sup>225</sup> Yet in many ways the ungendered generalization 'children' can also find accuracy in the Holocaust where strict delineation of sexes became less structured and less noticeable physically with stunted growth or shorn heads. Acknowledging the gendered quality to text and character may '[enable] Holocaust scholars to examine the sources which fostered the lethal connection between antisemitism, racism, and sexism'.<sup>226</sup> The characters' relationships to their gendered identities are inseparable from their other identities as children, Others, and Jews. This is particularly resonant for female characters where their female identities are processed through other identities that have

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<sup>224</sup> Goodenough, Heberle, and Sokoloff, p. 1

<sup>225</sup> Jane Eva Baxter, *The Archaeology of Childhood: Children, gender, and material culture* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2005), p. 18

<sup>226</sup> Susan E. Nowak, 'In a World Shorn of Color: Toward a Feminist Theology of Holocaust Testimonies' in *Women and the Holocaust: Narrative and Representation*, ed. by Esther Fuchs, pp. 33-46 (p. 35)

also shaped their alienation or marginalization as Holocaust experiencers as well as girls.<sup>227</sup>

The hidden boy and circumcision also represent one of the ways the characters' experiences may be distinctly gendered. The covenant of Abraham fixes gender on Jews within eight days of birth when male babies are circumcised, thus further setting them apart from Jewish female children and from non-Jewish males. Edmond Jabès calls the circumcision 'the wound of the Jew', which he claims as signifier of his common bond of Jewishness.<sup>228</sup> This holy ritual becomes warped in the Holocaust novel for the male protagonist, predominantly when hiding his Jewish identity is necessary. Anxieties about gender for Jewish female characters are tied to their biological vulnerabilities and pubescent development, particularly when having to contend with menstruation, potential pregnancy, and the greater risk for sexual violence. However, as *Moni* demonstrates, sexual violence is by no means restricted to the female gender. Sexual difference and gender have always played a vital role in identity construction. 'An important component of one's personal identity and self is one's gendered identity, a construct of socio-cultural difference between men and women,' although gender expectations and roles vary with age.<sup>229</sup> Gender is the third way that the child characters are Others in their Holocaust experiences, in addition to their positions as outsiders and Jews.

### **Others to themselves and others: Particular outsiders**

This section argues that the protagonists are in the liminal position of outsider, existing in between traditional boundaries and definitions. The Holocaust child finds himself displaced and, according to Kristeva, '[not] belonging to any place, any time, any

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<sup>227</sup> Karen Remmler, 'Genders, Identities and the Remembrance of the Holocaust', *Women in German Yearbook* 10 (1994), pp. 67-187 (p. 171)

<sup>228</sup> Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Questions*, trans. by Rosmarie Waldrop (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), p. 61

<sup>229</sup> Judy Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, 'The Identity of Women in the She'erit Hapletah: Personal and Gendered Identity as Determinants in Rehabilitation, Immigration, and Resettlement' in *Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities*, ed. by Dalia Ofer, Françoise S. Ouzan, and Judy Tydor Baumel-Schwartz (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), pp. 16-45 (p. 22)

love. A lost origin, the impossibility to take root, a rummaging memory, the present in abeyance<sup>230</sup>. Kristeva also argues that '[the] foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners'.<sup>231</sup> Kristeva's argument is complicated in a period where one historical foreigner has been singled out, expelled, and marked for extermination. Yet, if foreignness were not dictated by nationality or race, as the Nazis would claim, then this logic would lead to both everyone and no one as foreign, as Kristeva claimed. Notable survivors such as Jean Améry and Primo Levi have expressed this imposition of foreignness upon them in their writings. As Améry wrote about his Auschwitz imprisonment, 'I must accept being foreign as an essential element of my personality, insist upon it as if upon an inalienable possession'.<sup>232</sup> Nazi policies would exacerbate the Jews' innate foreignness, a feeling that is already dominant for the characters before the specific events.

However, where the Jews have always perceived themselves as foreigners, Nazi programs formed a *racial* definition of Jews as Others, which was a new development, emphasizing that, in this case, race is a social construction. As Ian Haney Lopez contends, race as a social construction means 'human interaction rather than natural differentiation must be seen as the source and continued basis of racial categorization'.<sup>233</sup> What has been called 'racial formation' is the process by which meanings of race arise, where race stands apart as a combination of multiple societal forces.<sup>234</sup> Pertinent to the Jewish child's racial classification and feelings of foreignness are the four facets Lopez outlines by which race is socially constructed:

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<sup>230</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 7

<sup>231</sup> Kristeva, p. 192

<sup>232</sup> Jean Améry, 'On the Necessity and Impossibility of Being a Jew', in *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*, trans. by Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 82-101 (p. 95)

<sup>233</sup> Ian F. Haney López, 'The Social Construction of Race', in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. by Richard Delgado (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), p. 191

<sup>234</sup> López, p. 191

First, humans rather than abstract social forces produce races. Second, as human constructs, races constitute an integral part of a whole social fabric that includes gender and class relations. Third, the meaning-systems surrounding race change quickly rather than slowly. Finally, races are constructed relationally, against one another, rather than in isolation.<sup>235</sup>

According to Lopez's theory, Nazi racial definitions of Jews are part of this man-made racial fabrication that has darker ulterior motives, such as a possible intent to deceive or harm.<sup>236</sup> The child protagonists who had never before had a racial identity suddenly have to contend with their Otherness as something that could be scientifically classified, as Wojdowski's David explains. Their self-consciousness about this identification also underscores the significance 'that the main characters are conceived as outsiders to the Jewish community, figures too young to know much about the Jews and/or children highly assimilated into secular [society]'.<sup>237</sup>

One of the defining characteristics of Nazi racial policies was the reduction of Jews into a subhuman category, which made their extermination easier to justify. Art Spiegelman offers a direct clue to the reasoning behind his usage of animal facades in *Maus* with his epigraph of Hitler's statement: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human."<sup>238</sup> The desperate circumstances and survival tactics required of life in ghettos and camps perpetuated the policy's aims. According to Emil Fackenheim, the camps spared no efforts 'to make persons into living *things* before turning them into dead things. And that the dead had been human when alive was a truth systematically rejected when their bodies were made into fertilizer and soap.'<sup>239</sup> Although he ends hyperbolically, Fackenheim is emphasizing the transformation of the Jews prior to their

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<sup>235</sup> López, p. 191

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 19

<sup>238</sup> Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 141

<sup>239</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, 'The Human Condition after Auschwitz' in *Understanding Jewish Theology: Classical Issues and Modern Perspectives*, ed. by Jacob Neusner (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1973) (pp. 65-175) p. 168 (emphasis the author's)

deaths. Although Jews were established to be Others or outsiders, the novels demonstrate that these ways differ based on the character's individual experience. Constantly Other as a Jew and as a child, the character's outsider status is also exaggerated and expanded based on such factors as whether or not he or she was in a ghetto or camp, survived, hid externally or internally, orphaned, or practiced Judaism.

#### Animal instincts, characteristics, and roles

Narratives set within ghettos and camps focus on the Otherness of the characters in a very basic human way—they are now Others to the human race. Starvation and its accompaniments, in addition to reducing a character's humanity, can remove his physical appearance of humanness and place him in the role of outsider to other living human beings. In these novels, Jewish characters demonstrate fewer human and more animalistic traits, which are imposed upon them by these external forces. On the one hand, it is overwhelmingly true that this reduction to less-than-human is degeneration. On the other, Terrence Des Pres identifies that any moment of pleasure or satisfaction could also provide a sense of 'animal well-being' that might manage to save a person from succumbing to self-pity or despair.<sup>240</sup> Through the behavior of their characters, authors demonstrate that together the forces acting in the ghettos and camps can easily and quickly reduce a person with traditional values to the level of a caged animal.<sup>241</sup> Lustig comments on this particular attribute in an interview; he explains that inside these settings, loftier ideals, such as what is just or unjust, are suspended because they are the additions of men, where animals can think only very simplistically about their survival. Lustig claims:

If they make you an animal, you gain some animal instincts and these animal instincts are very important because you judge a situation like other creatures: safe

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<sup>240</sup> Des Pres, p. 15

<sup>241</sup> Karen von Kunes, 'Review: *Diamonds of the Night* by Arnošt Lustig; Jeanne Němcová', *World Literature Today* 61.2 The Diary as Art (1987), p. 314

or dangerous, right or wrong, good or bad. Man adds just and unjust, but mostly you just have those animal instincts and you have to judge who is your enemy immediately, and whether he is dangerous or not. And if you misjudge you are dead and you can only be that once.<sup>242</sup>

Lustig's description is exceedingly similar to the closeness of life and death that exists for an animal in the wild. One might argue that the description of the Jewish characters as animals or in opposition to humans is in the spirit of the child's self-definition. There is a gradual but 'consistent process of reduction of the human being in both the abstract and the physical senses'.<sup>243</sup>

Animals themselves play small roles in the narratives, generally as juxtapositions to the humans or to underscore the deterioration of the Jewish prisoners. It is clear that when the texts explore symbolic ideas of animals 'the immediate subject of those ideas is frequently not the animal itself, but rather a human subject drawing on animal imagery to make a statement about human identity.'<sup>244</sup> *Bread for the Departed* ironically contrasts animals to the Jews as a rhetorical opposition. In one scene, David and his friends discuss the fact that the dogs and cats have all run away to the Aryan side (p. 154). As for its human inhabitants, there is only death for them inside the ghetto: the garbage heaps on which they scavenged for food were too often 'disturbed by starvation-crazed people who hid behind the rubbish bins and suddenly threw themselves on cats and dogs, strangling them with their bare hands' (ibid.). However, the animals possess the free will to exit the confines of the ghetto that has been denied the Jews. Their captors are reversing the treatment so long relegated to animals by people onto their human prisoners, caged and hunted. Moreover, children who usually like to possess pets for companionship purposes can no longer view animals so traditionally, or wastefully. One old horse outlasts the cats and dogs in Wojdowski's narrative, though her brief and unpleasant tenure in the ghetto

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<sup>242</sup> Trucks and Lustig, p. 69

<sup>243</sup> Grynberg, 'Polish Literature', p. 132

<sup>244</sup> Baker, p. xxxv

indicates the changing status of animals and humans. The narrator remarks: '[There is] no more room for a horse in this world. People are draft animals for other people' (p. 90). Like the animals before her and the humans after her, the beloved old mare meets a disturbing end one night at the hands of her owner's starving neighbors who stealthily carve her up for meager sustenance. In Ka-tzetnik's work, Moni never references a live animal and he sees meat eaten only a few times. The most important sighting of this substance turns out not to be animal meat but the roasted flesh of a former Piepel traded to men made indifferent by starvation. Ka-tzetnik's startling inversion of animal meat with human unapologetically underscores the transformation of prisoners away from their humanness. Other creatures that are ever-present in the child's life are lice; lice and the diseases they carry are a constant threat to the characters and, like carnivorous humans, the lice are shown to feast upon Kertész's Gyuri, their voracious hunger something he can understand (p. 183).

The reversals of humans and animals begs the question of how a child is to develop any sense of self when he can hardly consider himself a person at all. Richard Tapper views the use of animals in the process of self-definition as a function of society in which 'children have to learn how to distinguish Self from Other; and "people like me" (kin and friends) from "people not like me" (strangers, enemies and witches); and "people" from "not people" (usually animals).'<sup>245</sup> One example of this confused distinction is people fulfilling work roles generally delegated to animals. Wojdowski describes scenes in which people are harnessed to pull a wagon in place of a horse and carts 'pushed by skeletons who were harnessed in pairs' (p. 55). The extent to which characters go to find food is represented as both selfish and primitive; the young characters in particular assume 'animal instincts and tactics, seeking safety in

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<sup>245</sup> Richard Tapper, 'Animality, humanity, morality, society', in *What is an Animal?* Ed. by Tim Ingold (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 47-62 (pp. 49-50)



multitude'.<sup>246</sup> Several times Wojdowski describes children attempting to escape to the Aryan side to procure food; the pack rushes the gate *en masse* so that the guard is only able to fire off a few shots, possibly hitting only one or two while the rest slip through (p. 170). And yet, 'Wojdowski's approach indicates that the actions of the inhabitants of the Ghetto need no justification, have been absolutely justified by the uniqueness of their unprecedented human condition.'<sup>247</sup>

The authors make repeated uses of similes and metaphors such as Kertész's narrator describing people in details that often compare them to animals. But Wojdowski's characters are blatantly called animals; in these scenes, people are not compared through descriptive language, instead implying they have become the animals themselves. For example, David is frightened of the other ghetto inhabitants waiting in food distribution queues because '[the people] had grown fangs and claws, and their hands reached out automatically at the sight of bread' (p. 133). Because to the frightened boy they have actually acquired these attributes, Wojdowski does not use comparative language. Another example is when David and his friends are trying to rob metal from graves, an old man yells hysterically, "Rats have invaded the living body of Israel!" (p. 303), suggesting that the Jews have both been overrun by but also become the vermin. Directly following this scene, the boys meet with the duplicitous merchant who will kill their shy friend Ernest while attempting to steal from the boys what he had promised to buy. The merchant asks them, "Well? How many do you have, rats?" (p. 312). In this case, 'rats' is a kind of earned nickname because of their scavenger thievery, in contrast to the same moniker shouted in anger by the despondent old man. David's morally ambiguous behavior and loss of innocence indicate the loss of his humanity and identity as a child.

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<sup>246</sup> Grynberg, 'Polish Literature', p. 132

<sup>247</sup> Grynberg, 'Polish Literature', p. 133

Moreover, the narrator calls attention to the irony that those who call the Jews rats in their propaganda have compelled the ghetto inhabitants to behave like rats in order to survive. Wojdowski writes, ‘That’s fate: the Jews will imitate the rats and stealthily disappear among cellars and dens, they will descend under the earth and hide in order to live. Who will permit them to live? Sooner or later they will be exterminated’ (p. 326). An earlier conversation alludes to this extermination when discussing the interchangeable uses of poison for either rats or people: ‘Ernest inquired in a matter-of-fact way, “Sh’maya, is that for rats or for people?” Zyga thought a while and answered, “For rats, but it could be used for people, too”’ (p. 105). Presumably Ernest is referring to Zyga by his Hebrew name, Sh’maya, which accentuates their Jewishness and familiarity. Their dialogue could also reference Zyklon B, the cyanide-based pesticide developed for delousing and sterilization later used for human extermination in gas chambers. This emphasis in the text on characters stripped of their human identities underscores how the survivor-writers ‘recruit animals to symbolize, dramatize, and illuminate aspects of their own experience and fantasies’.<sup>248</sup>

In addition to animals, the survivor-writers make use of other non-human terms. Wojdowski’s most frequently used name for the ghetto inhabitants is ‘skeletons’, as well as labeling both the dead and living as ‘corpses’. Often the first indication of the characters’ transformation is a change in terminology when they are no longer ‘people’ or ‘men’ or ‘children’. Ka-tzetnik’s refers to the most hopeless prisoners as ‘camlings’, and then alternates between calling them ‘skeleton’ and ‘shadow’, the latter succeeding in removing all physical presence. And when Moni first arrives at Auschwitz, the Block Chief who is initially smitten with him takes away Moni’s animate or living qualities; rather, he becomes a ‘little doll’ (p. 15) to be played with at Auschwitz’s whim. Conversely, the privileged prisoners who are also depicted as the most sadistic and brutal

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<sup>248</sup> Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, eds., *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 2

toward the Jewish campings are stripped of their humanity by their cruelty. For example, the Camp Senior, Ludwig Tiene, is more than once described as a ‘vampire’, the mythological monster that feeds off the life force of humans.

Kertész’s young narrator relates his first introduction to the ‘Musulmänner’, those who have lost the will to live and will be the first to die, as ‘peculiar beings’ (p. 138), emphasizing their foreignness to the living human. Gyuri also refers to his own deteriorating body as an ‘ever more foreign object that had once been my good friend’ (p. 160). Like other descriptions of accumulations of dying or dead humans, the prisoners take on nonhuman descriptives such as ‘indistinguishable tangle of onetime faces’ (p. 192). The descriptors ‘indistinguishable’ and ‘onetime’ takes away their individuality because in their reduced state they have lost identifiable features and likewise their unique selfhoods. Unlike the questions of self-definition that arise with comparisons to animals, the language that turns human characters into the nonhuman or non-living places them on a liminal plane between life and death, and thus in a unique position from which to represent the inhuman and inhumane.

### The split self in hiding

Narratives about children in hiding explore identity in some similar ways to the incarceration texts, such as physical markers of Jewishness as a source of Otherness, while also focusing on other factors like pretense as a form of Otherness. According to Langer, for those hiding externally, the initial problem was an immediate split of the child’s sense of self. Langer contends: ‘It was unsafe to be who you really were, and even more dangerous to forget who you were supposed to be’.<sup>249</sup> Consequently these characters come to recognize the Otherness in their selves, or as Kristeva phrases it, their “‘strangeness’”.<sup>250</sup> The young characters are born into ‘an age of intense insecurity, of anxiety about themselves and their world that was a response to the level of public

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<sup>249</sup> Langer, *Using and Abusing*, p. 66

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

defamation',<sup>251</sup> and thus the formation of their Jewish identities is integrated with the concurrent anti-Jewish sentiment. In the novels, this manifests itself in identification with their non-Jewish disguises, which results from internalizing the anti-Jewish attitudes of those among whom they hide as well as a constantly reinforced awareness that being a Jew means they are different.

Jews have been called many things in Europe but always 'Jew', and as such they have been marked as foreigners within their respective nations. Perhaps the ultimate historical Other, Kristeva traces the origins of the Jews' foreign status to biblical times and the covenant that established them as 'chosen people'; while also establishing the basis of a sacred nationalism, this status 'nonetheless harbors in its very essence an inherent inscription of foreignness'.<sup>252</sup> Their connections to the countries in which they live are tenuous because of being labeled foreigners by their non-Jewish countrymen. In cases such as Léa's parents in *Shadows of a Childhood*, Russian Jews living in Paris whose daughter is French because she was born in France, the foreignness is further complicated. French policy under Nazi occupation was to deport foreign-born Jews first, so, as the daughter of foreigners and Jewish herself, Léa's identity is complex on multiple levels. The more assimilated the Jew, the harder it becomes to define their foreignness. Kristeva remarks that the incorporation of the foreigner into society has become important in Western civilization:

While in the most savage human groups the foreigner was an enemy to be destroyed, he has become, within the scope of religious and ethical constructs, a different human being who, provided he espouses them, may be assimilated into the fraternities of the 'wise,' the 'just,' or the 'native.'<sup>253</sup>

When the Nazis decreed that this different human being could no longer be assimilated, should not be, should in fact be exterminated, these child protagonists find themselves as

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<sup>251</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 12

<sup>252</sup> Kristeva, p. 65

<sup>253</sup> Kristeva, p. 2

an Other to both the world in which they live and themselves. Jean Améry would define this problem as the necessity and impossibility of being a Jew.<sup>254</sup> Or as Jay Geller phrases it, ‘The Jew’s impossible inclusion was complemented by the Jew’s necessary difference,’<sup>255</sup> which solidifies the Jew as an outsider.

Maciek's unique Otherness as a hidden Holocaust child stems from his wartime lies. A child naturally fibs, cheats on his schoolwork, and asserts independence and individuality by pulling against the constraints placed on him by adult guardians. Maciek's constraints are manifold and his natural inclinations toward small rebellions find conflict in his innate desire to please his aunt. He dimly recognizes that his lies are necessary life saving measures but they also place him outside the bounds of traditional childhood development. According to Begley, ‘The issue was the limit of one’s inventiveness and memory, because the lies had to be consistent—more consistent, according to Tania, than the truth’ (p. 105). The internalization of his lies serve to forever separate him from the larger Jewish community as well as from the Catholics of whom he pretends to be one. Thus he is an outsider from both communities regardless of intent. Ephraim Sicher succinctly sums up Maciek’s outsider status: ‘The child has lost his childhood in the Holocaust, but he can only narrate that loss by telling the lies that saved him’.<sup>256</sup> His Otherness is also compelled from his Aunt Tania who instructs the lies and perpetuates them by procuring false identities. In this way Maciek may even be considered an outsider to himself for he lives the lie dictated by adults. Rather than reflecting his true nature, Maciek models himself on the image of the perfect hidden Jew that his aunt mandates. He remarks, ‘I understood her insistence on perfect behavior, or in any event behavior that corresponded to what she wanted, when the outside world was concerned. One could say that our lives depended on it’ (p. 167).

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<sup>254</sup> Améry, pp. 82-101

<sup>255</sup> Jay Geller, *On Freud’s Jewish Body: Mitigating Circumcisions* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 5

<sup>256</sup> Sicher, p. 15

Like Maciek, Henryk's pretense marks him as Other, neither belonging with the Jews who are being murdered because he is pretending not to be one, nor with the Catholic Poles who he plays because he is actually a Jew. This paradox throws into sharp relief the liminal existence of the hidden Jew, outsider to everyone and living a lie. However, also like Maciek, Henryk's internalization of the pretense means that he 'did not have to play a part. I had been primed so well that in the end I hardly distinguished between invention and truth' (p. 44). This lack of distinction between real and false exemplifies his unique position as an outsider and perpetuates the process of '[eking] out a marginal existence'.<sup>257</sup> Despite Henryk's belief that the deception became rote, Dwork remarks that 'it was enormously difficult to maintain the pretense, the status quo, and very easy to blunder or be betrayed. For children of an age to comprehend this, fear was a constant concomitant of their lives.'<sup>258</sup> Henryk's fear and his lies propel him to declare after hiding ends that he does not want to be a Jew; his continued Catholic practice makes him an outsider to both the small Jewish survivor community and the real Catholics.

Unlike Maciek and Henryk, while Tzili's lie about her identity provides her with a modicum of safety, it is not the primary marker of her Otherness. As the only Jewish family in a rural village, Tzili's outsider status was established at birth and exacerbated by the events that precipitated the flight of her family, imprisonment of others such as Mark, the looting of her abandoned family home, and the chasing away and killing of local Jews (p. 23). Her isolation from the place of her early upbringing is exemplified by her post-war engagement with the camp refugees who feel at once similar because of their Jewishness, but also alien because of their different wartime experiences. Appelfeld writes, 'The familiar words from home sounded wild and foreign to her' (p. 127). Her outsider status among the refugees is thus explained as the result of being a hidden Jew. Moreover, her young age and her status as an orphan also separate her from the adult

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<sup>257</sup> Dwork, p. xlii

<sup>258</sup> Dwork, p. 84

refugees. Kristeva describes being an orphan as also coming from outside: ‘When others convey to you that you are of no account because your parents are of no account, that, as they are invisible, they do not exist, you are suddenly aware that you are an orphan’.<sup>259</sup> And yet Tzili’s orphanhood also brings her into the refugee fold because they too have no one left to claim them, as her relationship with Linda asserts. Tzili’s Otherness is ‘reinforced further by the fact that the child character is female. Her femininity endows her with an additional alien quality’.<sup>260</sup> Tzili’s femaleness makes her alien to the male author who constructs her and to male characters such as Mark who cannot understand her, as well as to her own uninformed sense of self.

In *Shadows of a Childhood*, Léa is introduced as an outsider because she is the newcomer to the convent, arriving late at night and under mysterious circumstances. She refuses to conform to the rules that the other resident students have long since accepted. Bénédicte is also an outsider at the convent because she is being hidden there to protect her from potential harm. However, a schism exists between the two girls because their parents are gone for different reasons; as members of the French Resistance, Bénédicte’s parents are also in danger, but by choice, whereas Léa’s parents have been deported to concentration and extermination camps in the east by force. Hence, although Léa can find comfort and kinship with the older girl who also shares a secret, the differences in their secrets forever separates them. Additionally, as a Jew, Léa’s Otherness fundamentally makes her an outsider in the French convent regardless of the fact that her Jewishness is concealed. When later in life she reads Sartre and decides not to be a Jew (p. 117), Léa is recognizing that her Otherness has been imposed on her by external forces and she is attempting to assert agency over her own selfhood. However, regardless of determination and intent, she is marked forever as an Other: outsider to other Frenchwomen as a Jew with Russian-born parents, outsider to other Holocaust survivors for her survival in

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<sup>259</sup> Kristeva, p. 21

<sup>260</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 205

hiding, and outsider to other Jews for her decision not to identify with them. Despite Léa's choices and lifestyle, she manages to exemplify the hidden Jew as an outsider among Jewish survivors as well as the Jewish Other in society. Elizabeth Grosz contends, 'The Jew strives to be a part of culture, to conform to its laws and customs, while at the same time, remaining an outsider, estranged and alienated the more [she] is included'.<sup>261</sup>

Distinct categories: *Mischling*, refugee, and survivor

The manifold Otherness of the protagonists as Jews and children is part of the ongoing struggle Jews have faced when seeking to define their relationship to both their own religious, cultural, or ethnic inheritance as well as to those majority cultures by which they have been surrounded.<sup>262</sup> This struggle is in addition to the one that all children face in defining how they view themselves in the context of how the world views them and as they grow into adulthood. The figure of the doubly-Othered Jewish child thus becomes 'the Other of the Other', in which capacity they can also 'serve as a useful instrument for observing, criticizing, or celebrating both their elders and the non-Jewish world in its treatment of the Jews'.<sup>263</sup> When confronted with issues of identity in the face of assimilation and persecution, Sokoloff identifies the *Bildungsroman* as an important narrative with its partial attention to childhood capable of emphasizing the multiple relationships in the child's life, such as between the home or family and the rest of the world or comfortable Jewish surroundings to the wider social milieu.<sup>264</sup> In the nontraditional narratives, each survivor-writer depicts an acute developing cognizance of the character as both Other and Jew based on their unique positions within the context of the Holocaust.

Ellen as a central character presents a distinctive case study in a discussion of Otherness as an outsider to several Others. As a *Mischling*, she represents three distinct

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<sup>261</sup> Grosz, p. 60

<sup>262</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 8

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.



categories based on Nazi racial classifications: Jew (maternal), Aryan (paternal), and mixed race (half-Jewish). This categorization is crucial for discussions of identity in terms of religion, nationality, and race as defined by the Nazi policies. Ellen's sense of herself is shaped by how she is perceived by others as a *Mischling*, complicated by the two terms by which she is described as only 'half'—Jew and Aryan. According to Fackenheim, the terms were not unambiguously defined:

The term 'Aryan' had no clear connotation other than 'non-Jew,' and the Nazis were not antisemites because they were racists, but rather racists because they were antisemites. The exaltation of the 'Aryan' had no positive significance. It had only the negative significance of degrading and murdering the 'non-Aryan.'<sup>265</sup>

Ellen also represents the fluidity of racial categorization and the lack of a uniform collective experience of such identification because the Nazi racial categories were themselves frequently fluid.<sup>266</sup> Within the narrative, Ellen also undergoes the emergence of a new identity separate from the *Mischling* one given to her by the Nazis, one she chooses for herself based on her position on the margins of the minority culture of Jews but 'part of the dominant society and as the cultural outsider'.<sup>267</sup>

Aichinger's writing style explicitly excludes mention of Jewishness or an expressly Jewish persecution, including the notable absence of such historical markers as 'Jew' or 'Nazi', instead focusing on Other- and foreignness. The implicitness of Jewishness underscores the lack of comprehension of younger children about the meaning and implication of the post-*Anschluss* racial laws and the lack of a clearly defined sense of a religious self. According to Michaela Grobbel:

The clash between historical reality and visionary mysticism highlights the incongruous perceptions of the children, and serves to foreground that which has

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<sup>265</sup> Fackenheim, 'Human Condition', p. 169

<sup>266</sup> Grobbel, p. 74

<sup>267</sup> Grobbel, p. 79

been repressed. Aichinger's novel finds a language to represent the young victims of the *Shoah* without, however, objectifying them again.<sup>268</sup>

Critics have critiqued *Herod's Children* because it could be dismissed as 'ahistorical', whereby the allegorical writing style subsumes the Jewish Holocaust into a story of universal suffering that may stand for all oppressed groups or Others. However, these understandings discount the unique position and viewpoint of Ellen as a 'mixed girl'.<sup>269</sup> Ellen's story and Otherness is unique precisely because she is branded as partially Jewish and partially Aryan, and undecided by those who categorize her and even by herself.

For example, one of the Jewish children, George, introduces Ellen to the others as having two right and two wrong grandparents, calling her a 'tie game' (p. 32). This phrase echoes the importance of play in the novel where the children describe themselves as pawns in another's larger game, even in the formation of their identities. Ellen's distinctive perspective as a girl that is indirectly persecuted yet chooses to be implicated with her friends 'seems to suggest some kind of unmediated access to the past'.<sup>270</sup> Her Otherness differs from her friends because she is in less immediate danger; she is an outsider to their pain and fear and suffers instead for being a *Mischling*. This is emphasized in the chapter in which her grandmother commits suicide rather than be deported. Aichinger writes:

For a moment Ellen forgot her pain. She forgot that she was free against her will; she forgot that they had let her go, out of the camp, back to the freedom of the damned. And she forgot the sad, jeering laughter of her friends—"We told you all along that you don't belong to us!". (p. 146)

Ellen refuses to be defined only by her *Mischling* category and prefers to identify with her Jewish half rather than her Aryan half in order to belong with her Jewish friends.

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<sup>268</sup> Grobbel, p. 78

<sup>269</sup> Grobbel, p. 78

<sup>270</sup> Grobbel, p. 79

However, Ellen never feels equal to them, implying that regardless of how she wants to be identified, others will always view her according to their own definitions of Other.

*Other People's House* examines the contours of the young Jew's identity in a particular subcategory of representation of the Holocaust child—refugee or exile literature. As the definitions of what it means to be a Holocaust survivor have shifted beyond the confines of camps and ghettos to include exile on the *Kindertransport*, discussions of what it means to be a Jew also must encompass the refugee whose identity journey is both similar and different from other child experiencers. The knowledge that she is different from English children compels Lore to reflect more on her identity. Because as a refugee she is excluded from the mainstream in her foster country with memories of persecution in her home country, Lore develops ambiguous feelings about what it means to be a Jew. Alan Berger notes, 'From the refugee child's sense of *Shoah*-induced anomie and stress, there emerges the adult's reflections on the meaning of Jewish identity and destiny.'<sup>271</sup> Her feelings are shaped by her position as marginalized outsider in English society, a position that allows her an intimate view of the various English social structures while never fully belonging to them. Phyllis Lassner comments:

Positioning her young subject between British and Jewish institutions, Segal creates an emotional and vocal distance from both with her own ironic voice. In so doing, she replaces her tale of woe with a comedy of cultural clashes and social adjustments that reflects the often absurd conflicts about her British and Jewish identities.<sup>272</sup>

In this sense, Lore the refugee remains the outsider in her foster country's mainstream society as Lore the Jew was Other in her home country.

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<sup>271</sup> Alan L. Berger, 'Jewish Identity and Jewish Destiny, the Holocaust in Refugee Writing: Lore Segal and Karen Gershon', *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 11.1 (1992), pp. 83-95 (p. 83)

<sup>272</sup> Phyllis Lassner, *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust: Displaced Witnesses* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 46

Marianne Kroger lists five factors that play a role in how those who were exiled in their youth deal with their changed circumstances. First, she notes that early socialization in the child's family prior to exile may have better prepared some children to deal with the position of an outsider, such as those already living in Orthodox communities or whose parents were active in political oppositions. In Segal's text, Lore's family was assimilated and secular, and her experiences with being an outsider do not begin in earnest until after the *Anschluss*. Second, Kroger identifies emotional factors such as terror and repression and the extent that these were involved, both before the flight and afterwards in the exile country. Third, the child's age was a significant factor where it affected her ability to understand what was happening and why it was happening, as well as to adjust to new surroundings. Fourth, the varied conditions under which the children escaped also affected them, such as were they able to flee with family members or were the departures particularly risky. For example, Lore travels alone and, although the text does not analyze it closely, there is a scene at a border where they wait anxiously to learn if the Germans will let the train full of Jewish children leave the country. And lastly, how they were received and sheltered in their host country was also paramount.<sup>273</sup> All of these contribute to Lore's view of herself as a refugee and how she responds to her outsider position. '[All] kinds of hidden and overt indicators on the consequences of persecution, flight, and exile of under-age youngsters are to be found' in *Other People's Houses*.<sup>274</sup>

Lore is suddenly required to learn new religious customs like Orthodox Judaism and English Anglicanism, cultural intricacies when her formerly comfortable family is now in the position of domestics, and language nuances when her academic English must adapt to regional variations. Compounding this necessity to adapt is the fear and loss she feels because of the separation from her family and home, as well as latent effects of anti-Jewish harassment prior to her flight. However, the ironic benefit of her preoccupation

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<sup>273</sup> Marianne Kroger, 'Child Exiles: A New Research Area?', trans. by Andrea Hammel, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 23.1 (2004), pp. 8-20 (pp. 11-12)

<sup>274</sup> Kroger, p. 19

with rapid acculturation is to somewhat alleviate more extreme anxiety about her parents' wellbeing.<sup>275</sup> The separation from her parents and the uncertainty of their potential reunion forced an acceleration of the child's necessary transferal of attachments from her parents and other adults to peers.<sup>276</sup> This premature shift and the temporariness of these peer groups because of the refugee's frequent change in foster homes means that Lore often has new peers to contend with, from fellow refugees to local girls, a newcomer positioned always as an outsider among her peers. She compensates by becoming skilled at attracting others' attention, while also being more sensitive of rejection. When the refugee boat arrives in England, Lore is desperate to be recognized by reporters, those in charge of the refugees, and foster families. Segal writes:

Newspapermen had come aboard. All morning they walked among us flashing bulbs, taking pictures. I tried to attract their attention. I played with my lunch bag: "Little Refugee Looking for Crumbs." Not one of them noticed. [...] After a while, I sat down on the nearest suitcase and cried. (p. 35)

Lore performs an image of the refugee girl that she believes will win her attention and yet only when she abandons her playacting and surrenders to real emotion does she project a true version of the young refugee.

The first chapter is the only one in which Lore is in her native country. Until she arrives in New York in her twenties, and even for several years thereafter, Lore is considered a refugee. In the first-person voice, Lore's repetition of the word 'refugee' used to describe herself underscores this internalized Otherness. Her consciousness of being different extends to the disappointment she senses in her first foster home; she cannot even be the proper refugee girl expected of her (p. 54). Lore fluctuates between identifying herself as a Jewish refugee and wanting to be fully English. Accomplishing Englishness for Lore means to emotionally distance herself from her mother and the other

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<sup>275</sup> Cavanaugh, p. 481

<sup>276</sup> Cavanaugh, p. 481

refugees. Hence in her attempts to be what she considers English, Lore ‘became false and alienated, ill at ease with herself.’<sup>277</sup> The novel is about Lore’s self-discovery, but in such a way that it is shaped by her alien proximity to these English representatives. ‘Segal shares that satiric vision: the snug, narrow-minded English families her heroine encounters are, although kindly, almost willfully uncomprehending of the child’s difficulties and the evil she has escaped.’<sup>278</sup> Jewish and non-Jewish English characters alike avoid discussions of the realities she faced that precipitated her exile, disregarding the fact that the child may in fact need to talk about her family and home for her psychological wellbeing.

In the post-war period, Lore’s inability to assimilate during three years at university in London is followed by time spent in the Dominican Republic waiting for an American visa. In the struggling agricultural community of Jewish refugees, Lore is also an outsider despite being reunited with some family. Having spent the war growing up and acculturating in England, she cannot find belonging with the Austrian Jewish adults. Though she consciously speaks English with a British accent, Lore also deliberately describes herself to others as Jewish and Austrian and boasts that she has lived in multiple countries. Within the context of the small island she attempts to refashion her refugee status into one of worldliness in order to regain some of the control she lost in exile. But her desire to be English has been colored by her sense of not belonging. Lore makes a friend at the British consulate and, in a moment of excitement over a shared adoration for London, enthuses to her, “‘All I want is to get back...’” (p. 258). Her friend easily acquires a visa for her to return to England but Lore is surprised to find that she is ‘horrified’ at the prospect; behind the memories of all the loveliness of an English June day, she recognizes what she identifies as an ‘an agony of loneliness’ (ibid.). Lore’s latent

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<sup>277</sup> Tylee, p. 1136

<sup>278</sup> Tylee, p. 1136

awareness of the discomfort she actually suffered as a refugee in England overshadows any fondness she attributes to her former foster country.

The young camp survivor is also an outsider in both Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Because *Dita Saxova* is set two years after the war's end, the title character is typified by her position as a child survivor of the Holocaust; the survivor status defines how she views herself, those around her, and the world in which she must now live. The maxim Dita operates on demonstrates the extent to which her childhood was changed by the experience and how survivorship influences her present: 'Life is not what we want but what we have' (p. 1). Repeated mostly positively, the aphorism could be interpreted as defeatist; however, it best represents the way these young adults who came of age in extremity interpret the immediacy of their present as survivors returned to their home city. Critics have questioned Lustig's writing in terms of its pacing and plot development, with the wandering narrative emulating the wandering of Dita's own thoughts and life. However, the often-criticized 'proliferation of clichéd utterances that issue from the characters' mouths' serve an important purpose: this speech is Lustig's instrument for emphasizing the failures of language in the post-Holocaust world.<sup>279</sup> The characters rely on clichés and repetition when confronted with the futility of language in the wake of their experiences, among each other, other survivors, and non-Jews, as well as in their own thoughts. Dita in particular accentuates this breakdown with her bittersweet dictum, which convincingly exposes the survivors' struggle to forge new lives or resume old ones. There is an escalating disconnect from past and present, and from her sense of self as a survivor.

Lustig portrays survivorship in such a way that the young orphaned survivors exist together as well as separately, each on their own islands of trauma clustered in the same body of water. In 1947 Dita is introduced as '[eighteen] years of age, she had been

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<sup>279</sup> Joshua L. Charlson, 'Arnošt Lustig' in *Holocaust Literature: An Encyclopedia of Writers and Their Work*, ed. by S. Lillian Kremer (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 779-784 (p. 782)

living there for two years, from the time of '45 after the end of World War II, when she learned definitively about the death of both her parents and all of her other relatives' (p. 2). This description is followed by 'Dita Saxova was alone here' (ibid.), despite the fact that she lives in a household full of girls and is surrounded by people on a daily basis, emphasizing the internal isolation. Dita is conflicted over her survivor identity, wondering what it entitles her to, how it has changed her, what meaning she can take from having survived, and how she can go forward (p. 4). Dita tries to find meaning not only in the survival itself but also in their identities as survivors; Lustig writes on the young survivors' sense of unworthiness:

They carried around with them an impenetrable sense of guilt because the best had died. It had been blind fate, an accident, very rarely any personal quality or service that preserved them from catastrophe. They did not believe that only the strong, stronger, strongest survive [...] But next to their guilt they wore their pride, and the belief that it was their destiny, a sign of some very unusual human qualities. (p. 63)

These ambiguous feelings about survival cause an internal conflict that is not easily resolved. The 'unusual human qualities' that engendered their survival have set them apart not only from the dead, but also from the nonexperiencer. Others view the young survivors as one immense accusation, as Lustig writes:

[It was as] if they were trying to say: 'Just go for at least an hour, a minute, or a second where we have been for weeks, months, years! If by chance you survive, we'll ask you bluntly how you managed to survive. What was the price? And who paid the bill? Why is it that you came back and not somebody else—your mother, father, brother, or sister, your friend or enemy? Then we shall see how you react.' (p. 63)



This passage presents a version of Levi's concept that each survivor has lived in place of someone who died.<sup>280</sup>

Dita's virginity also poses questions about her survival—how had she managed to keep her body from the same abuse as so many other girls? After she loses her virginity to D.E. Huppert, they lounge around the hotel room having an absurd post-coital discussion that mingles companionable conversation and silence with references to and memories of the camps. D.E. unapologetically discusses the rumors about what had or had not been perpetrated on Dita's body, which now lays naked beside him:

‘Somebody told me that you were raped—or nearly raped—in the woods at the end of the war, or soon after it,’ D.E. said, suddenly, in the same tone he had used to tell her where he had worked during the war. ‘You must know that nobody raped me,’ Dita smiled. ‘The things they say about people when they survive.’ (p. 121)

The assumption here is that survivors and nonexperiencers alike imagine that all girls, especially the pretty ones like Dita, were sexually abused in the camps. Dita is unsurprised and knows that misinformed comments are unavoidable. She remarks that these kinds of tales are spun about every female survivor with no small amount of blame attached to the assumption: “‘Always the same old story. It happened so often, and to so many girls [...] If a girl doesn't get herself shot, they always manage to pin some guilt on her, whatever the circumstances’” (ibid.). In this conversation, as in others, Dita casually accepts others' expectations of survivors. However, she is unable to commit completely to her survivor identity because along with her lost childhood and family, she believes that not everything within her survived the camps or that she has never fully left them. She comments, “‘[Sometimes] the whole world reminds me of one concentration camp. Or a network of camps. You can get transferred from a worse camp into a better one, or the other way around. But you can never get out’” (p. 220). Dita's impression of being

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<sup>280</sup> Levi, pp. 81-82

stuck on a carousel of concentration camps highlights her inability to move beyond the experience and that she will forever be trapped in the survivor's outsider position.

**‘Who asks a Jewish boy in Auschwitz who he is?’: Jewishness**

Within their Holocaust childhoods, the characters are thrust inside an unfamiliar societal structure in which they exhibit remarkable abilities to adapt. However, in the process of this adaptation, they must shed their former lives and selves. ‘They search for their identity and a new, unconventional meaning of life; they experience fear and awkwardness, discover the beauty of true friendship in critical moments of death and life, and preserve endless hope in escaping death.’<sup>281</sup> Their classification within the Final Solution has defined their Jewishness and is impetus for these changes; but they must also forge new identities, as people, as children, and as Jews in their attempt to comprehend and navigate the altered course of their lives. Many survivors have written about their relationships with their Jewish identities as a result of the Holocaust. Those raised in religiously observant homes may have become ambivalent or indifferent, perhaps blaming their suffering on the religion. Those raised secularly may have felt similarly in addition to a deep betrayal on the part of their nations, or perhaps were ironically propelled toward Judaism. These are just a few potential responses that contribute to the novels’ examinations of Jewishness. The young characters are also representing the child’s need to define Jewishness and arrive at their own understanding of the relationship to that birthright.<sup>282</sup> As the protagonists encounter the anti-Semitism that alters the course of their childhoods, ‘they become preoccupied with Jewishness, but they maintain a critical distance and a critical eye that coincides with the author’s own stance’.<sup>283</sup>

In his work *Heidegger and ‘the jews’*, Lyotard’s classification of ‘jews’ with the lowercase ‘j’ incorporates all those who were oppressed or persecuted as perceived

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<sup>281</sup> von Kunes, p. 314

<sup>282</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 38

<sup>283</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 19

Others in society. Though this term emphasizes the collective victimization of Jews in the Holocaust and throughout history, Lyotard's lowercase usage also evokes other groups persecuted by the Nazis as well as all oppression in Western culture. Similarly, the novels suggest that Jewishness itself resists strict definition. The question of Jewishness varies in overtness; however, the main characters and their creators are both Jewish and, because the works are constructed retrospectively from the survivor-writer's post-Holocaust imagination, the child characters may represent a latent impulse to reconcile with a Jewishness that was traumatized by the Holocaust.<sup>284</sup> In this way, for Jewish authors, representation may 'form part of a collective identity of catastrophe.'<sup>285</sup> Identification as Jews marked them for extermination, so that, as Langer claims, 'death was not a consequence of life but a consequence of who they were, of having been a Jew'.<sup>286</sup> For example, in Grynberg's work Henryk equates being a Jew with certain death. Améry, who only considered himself a Jew later in life, claimed that '[the Jew] was more firmly promised to death, already in the midst of life. [...] To be a Jew, that meant for me, from this moment on, to be a dead man on leave.'<sup>287</sup> Améry's phrasing highlights the liminality of the child characters where, in this sense, to be a Jewish Other also means to exist between abbreviated life and probable death.

### Sewing on Jewishness

The degrees to which protagonists identify themselves as Jewish and interact with that religious identity is no longer dependent upon family values or personal feelings; rather, it is an identification forced upon them by others' ideologies. Of all of the texts, perhaps *Bread for the Departed* confronts the issue of Jewish identity most clearly and regularly. Judaism is woven throughout the text with biblical allusions. Jewish holidays and the absence of celebrations mark the passage of time and seasons. In the beginning,

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<sup>284</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 18

<sup>285</sup> Sicher, p. xxi

<sup>286</sup> Langer, *Using and Abusing*, p. 111

<sup>287</sup> Améry, pp. 85-86

Wojdowski reinforces these allusions by establishing David's early childhood in an observant home. David also recalls an early incident of anti-Semitism, which is bound up in his happy recollection of the Jewish New Year:

A day like this occurs once each year and it is called Rosh Hashanah. That's when the boys run down to the river with sticks, yelling and splashing water on the praying men. "Hitler's on the way, Jew! Hitler's on the way, Jew!" But that, it seems, is not part of the holy days, nor is the crashing noise of shattered windows.

(p. 6)

The language of this passage shows that David cannot separate the celebrations of being Jewish from their harassment for it. However, David does not explicitly call himself a Jew until the war comes to Warsaw and with it the Nazi racial policies. Only then when non-Jews explicitly tell him he is a Jew, his identity becomes bound to his persecution. Wojdowski writes, 'And then, in the autumn, to the crashing sounds of collapsing walls, the first bombs fell from the sky and also a new word: *Jude. Juuuude*. Now he knew who he was' (p. 16). Like many of the texts, the above example combines broader historical events with David's personal development. In casualness reminiscent of Gyuri's tone, David accepts his given identity in the way that children accept adults' words as Truth. Seeking a frame of reference, David compares German racial science to the subject he had studied when previously allowed to attend school, but he does not question the veracity of this newly learned truth (p. 173). The implementation of these scientifically based racial policies in the form of his mother sewing the armband onto his sleeve solidifies his identity as a Jew, repeating the phrase, 'Now he knew who he was' (p. 17). The arrival of the armband coincides with the commencement of construction on the ghetto walls. The narrator unites these two experiences that will define him because both armband and wall will trap David inside the ghetto.

David's first smuggling venture is the point at which issues of Jewishness can best be explored. When he must remove his armband to sneak outside the ghetto and buy food,

David loses his foothold on his tenuously formed identity and thinks, 'he was an outcast' (p. 171). Yet neither does the removed armband fully conceal Jewishness because of the perfectly faded stripe of cloth that had so long been covered (p. 173). The smuggling provides opportunities for Wojdowski to explore Nazi definitions and stereotypes of Jewishness. David enacts the lessons he was taught about how not to seem like a Jew and recounts the characteristics by which Jews could be picked out from the crowd. 'And his nose? They say you can easily tell a Jew by the shape and length of his nose [...] Eyes, hair, everything can betray a Jew, but the nose is the worst' (p. 171). Signs of poverty and illness also act as indicators of Jewishness to those outside the ghetto. While Wojdowski gives repeated commentary on stereotypes he does so from David's perspective, thus blurring the lines between what David has heard and what he believes in order to maintain the child's consciousness. David also recalls that Jews can be identified by the way they walk, their hand gestures, and their speech patterns. His mother says that when David's father speaks 'you can hear the Jew in him' (ibid.), which is why she will not let her husband take the same risks. David is determined to walk and talk with confidence to better impersonate non-Jews, like his Uncle Shmuel, who has been hiding on false papers; one day while on the Aryan side, David does not at first recognize his uncle because this man possesses such self-assurance (p. 172). David has come to think Jewishness is something to be ashamed of that must be concealed or changed. These scenes act as platforms for Wojdowski to explore stereotypes and Nazi policies in the guileless voice of the child, which exposes the arbitrary cruelty of both.

Like Wojdowski's protagonist, Kertész's Gyuri struggles to define himself in the new racial climate of Nazified Budapest. But unlike David, Gyuri does not attach the yellow star to anything personal. The mandated patch is introduced at the beginning of the narrative and grounds the reader in Budapest's changing attitude toward Jews. Whereas David comes from an observant Jewish family in Warsaw and quickly adapts to his identity as *Jude*, Gyuri's religiously lax upbringing does not provide him with a solid

Jewish foundation. Gyuri is adrift not only ‘because he is a self-absorbed teenager, but [also] because he is a Jew only in the eyes of others’.<sup>288</sup> Though he can recognize that the yellow star separates him from those who do not have to wear it, Gyuri does not associate this separateness with Jewishness or Otherness. The concept of his choiceless identity framed early on by the yellow star contributes to Gyuri’s later conclusions about being fateless; he is swept up in something larger than individual identity. The choices that determine Gyuri’s fate now constitute his identity even though others made them.<sup>289</sup> By the end of the novel, the concentration camps have rendered Gyuri both faceless and fateless.<sup>290</sup> Gyuri’s conception of Jewish identity compelled by external forces emulates Primo Levi’s statement that without his experiences of the racial laws and concentration camp he would not still identify himself as Jewish. As Levi asserts, ‘but at this point I’m a Jew, they’ve sewn the Star of David on me and not only on my clothes’.<sup>291</sup>

The antithesis to Gyuri’s disconnection is his neighbor, Annamarie. Also Jewish and fourteen, Annamarie feels the recent anti-Semitism as a personal affront. She tells Gyuri that she can intimate from the way others look at her as she walks around wearing her yellow star that they hate her (p. 35). He tries to make her understand ‘that they did not really hate her, that is to say not her personally, since they have no way of knowing her, after all—it was more just the idea of being “Jewish”’ (ibid.). Gyuri separates the individual person from their Jewishness and recognizes neither a personal connection nor association with the yellow star. But Annamarie sees in their situation the Otherness that Gyuri does not, ‘[feeling] for the first time that, as she put it, something singles her out from those people, she belongs to some other category’ (ibid.). Her epiphany comes in the form of recognition that “we Jews are different from other people” and that difference

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<sup>288</sup> Stuart A. Scheingold, *The Political Novel: Re-Imagining the Twentieth Century* (New York and London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 65

<sup>289</sup> Scheingold, p. 67

<sup>290</sup> Imre Kertész, ‘Nobel Lecture: Heureka’, Nobelprize.org (2002)

[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/2002/kertes-lecture-e.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2002/kertes-lecture-e.html) [accessed 4 April 2012], para. 10 of 14

<sup>291</sup> Ferdinando Camon, *Conversations with Primo Levi* (Marlboro, VT: Marlboro Press, 1989), p. 68

was the crux of it' (ibid.). The few direct quotations of the exchange are embedded with others into the larger narrative paragraphs, thereby making them subordinate inside Gyuri's consciousness. This style of interchange facilitates a view of the novel as one continuous internal dialogue, which merely incorporates the voices of others.<sup>292</sup>

Gyuri then provides a very astute example in order to win his argument with her, describing a scenario in which Annamarie had been switched at birth and sent to a family 'whose documents were in perfect order from a racial point of view' (p. 37). Importantly, Gyuri's word choice demonstrates his view of current identity trends as definitions on paper, reciting propaganda speech. In Gyuri's example, the hypothetical girl who was raised in Annamarie's family would be the one wearing the yellow star and perceiving others' alleged hatred of her, while Annamarie, now in the properly documented family, would not recognize any difference in her self. Rather than comforting his neighbor, Gyuri's hypothetical situation makes the racial prejudice insufferable (p. 37). Annamarie laments, '[If] our own qualities had nothing to do with it, then it was all pure chance, and if she could be someone else than the person she was forced to be, then "the whole thing has no sense"' (ibid.). Again, direct speech separates Annamarie's conclusions from Gyuri's personal beliefs. This dialogue clearly delineating the two youngsters' opinions serves a dual purpose: it highlights Gyuri's ignorance while using Annamarie as a vehicle through which Kertész can express the arbitrariness of the persecution.

In the camps, Gyuri must wear a different patch on his prison uniform, a yellow star with a U signifying the German word for Hungarian. This signification forces Gyuri to confront his identity anew when he believes himself to be Hungarian and Jewish according to the insignia, but he is informed differently by other inmates who perceive Jewishness based on knowledge of the Yiddish language, participation in the Yiddish cultural life, and level of observation of Jewish customs. Religious Yiddish-speaking Jews single Gyuri out so that not only has he been imprisoned because of Nazi

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<sup>292</sup> Derwin, p. 81

discrimination, but he also receives discrimination from other Jews for not being the right kind of Jewish or Jewish enough; in fact, they treat him as a ‘nonperson’ (p. 139). In Yiddish, they tell him that he is not a Jew at all, but rather a Gentile boy. As these other Jews continually reject him as one of their own, Gyuri is able to distinguish the Otherness that he had, in fact, felt outside of the camps, but not been able to identify as clearly as Annamarie until this new exclusion. Gyuri relates:

That day I learned that the discomfort, the skin-crawling awkwardness which at times took hold between us was already familiar to me from back home, as if there had been something not quite right about me, as if I did not quite measure up to the proper ideal, in short as if I were somehow Jewish—a rather odd feeling to have after all, I reckoned, in the midst of Jews, in a concentration camp. (p. 140)

In this passage, the equation of being Jewish with falling short of a ‘proper ideal’ echoes the propaganda as well as Gyuri’s developing feelings about and understanding of his Jewishness while accurately providing a definition for the Jew’s Otherness. Gyuri grows frustrated by his outsider positions; he recognizes that he was sent to the camp because his yellow star and his documents clearly identify him as a ‘Jew’, which the Yiddish-speakers are now disputing. They inform Gyuri that he is ‘no Jew’ to which he demands: “‘So why am I here, then?’” (p. 164). Gyuri’s presence inside the camp hinges on this identification, if not for which he would still be in Budapest. Gyuri now views his own Otherness as a case of mistaken identity and angrily judges the more-Jewish Jews based on his captors’ anti-Semitic stereotypes.<sup>293</sup> The text is stressing the manifold dimensions of Jewish identity, which varies by person, location, and context, and how religious identity can function to make the child an outsider.

Identity in *Moni* is organized around the hierarchy within Auschwitz whereby every character wears a patch that identifies his position in the camp. Ka-tzetnik underscores that the worst of the offenders in Auschwitz’s gray zone are those with the

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<sup>293</sup> Scheingold, p. 65



positions of power and who often cannot be classified by traditional definitions of cruel perpetrator and imprisoned victim, Nazi and Jew; rather, these characters are criminals who were already in prisons, mostly for sex crimes or murder, German political prisoners, and non-Jewish Poles. The sole Jewish Block Chief, Fruchtenbaum, overcompensates for his Jewishness by beating anyone who dares call him by his recognizably Jewish surname or claim recognition of him from his former life (p. 175). Ka-tzetnik offers two insightful suggestions as to why Fruchtenbaum would ‘seek to drown his name in a sea of blood’: ‘Perhaps he fears that his aristocratic birth will hinder his career in Auschwitz; or perhaps he does not want anyone to survive who might later bear witness to his deeds in Auschwitz’ (ibid.). The character of Fruchtenbaum suggests that one cannot be a perpetrator and a Jew both, and that the two identities clash where one seeks to dematerialize the other. By hating his own identity, Fruchtenbaum endeavors to become like those who hate him; yet however brutal he is, however many other Jews he beats and kills, Fruchtenbaum cannot escape the Jewishness branded on him by the yellow triangle he wears, by his surname, and by the other Block Chiefs’ perceptions of him.

While all campings are Jews with yellow triangles, many of those with privileged jobs are not Jewish. Thus, Moni’s identity is also tied to his *Funktion*: he is more often called ‘Piepel’ and, later as a camping, ‘Old Whore’, than by his given name. Hayim-Idl uncovers Moni’s original identity through the Rabbi of Shilev, whose life Moni had saved when once in a position of influence over the Block Chief who had been beating the rabbi. Aside from Moni’s youth, it is hard to distinguish him from the other inmates, all of whom once had a father, a mother, and a home (p. 132). Because Moni is just one Jewish boy among a million nameless victims, ‘[it] would never have occurred to anyone to ask Moni who he is and where he had been brought from. Who asks a Jewish boy in Auschwitz who he is?’ (ibid.). Ka-tzetnik’s understated question calls attention to the camp’s indifference to individual identity. Later, even Moni’s notable eyes that provisionally suspended his death sentence are no longer distinguishable in his camping

face. He admits that '[nobody] recognizes him. Nobody know who he is' (p. 228). Moni's personal identity belongs to life outside of Auschwitz and as such it can only be returned to him by leaving the camp, either in freedom or in death.

### Lies and masquerades: Hidden Jewishness

While those in ghettos and camps were imprisoned for being Jews, children in hiding suffered for their persecuted identities distinctively. The novels about hidden children discuss the changes to the protagonists' sense of themselves because of their hiddenness. It is implied in the endings of each narrative that the costs of living in hiding under the Nazi occupation have been internalized by the child characters. Because 'even very young children below the age of five have a "core" Jewish identity established',<sup>294</sup> the characters must not only construct a new non-Jewish identity but also expunge the one already firmly rooted. As Langer contends, '[the Nazis] assaulted Jewish identity before they attacked Jewish life,' so that children were practicing concealment of their Jewish selves publically before events forced internal or external hiding.<sup>295</sup> Anti-Semitism preceding the war compelled children to view their Jewishness negatively, with the events of the Holocaust only extending their adverse perceptions of their own Jewish identity. Furthermore, their doubled Otherness is emphasized elementally because they were persecuted as Jews and yet they have survived when most of the Jews were killed.<sup>296</sup>

Younger children find it easier to forget their Jewish identities because they have little concept or memory of their former Jewish lives. Older children have to be more vigilant in adaptation and pretense while living as Christians and aware they are Jews. This awareness causes a division between the ways in which they think about themselves as individuals and as members of the world, in particular in relation to Jewishness. The

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<sup>294</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 85

<sup>295</sup> Langer, *Using and Abusing*, p. 64

<sup>296</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 19

confusions elicited by their deceptions often cause the characters' pretend identities to eclipse their real ones:

[The] passing years, the constant barrage of anti-Semitic propaganda current in Nazi-occupied Europe, and the persistent strain of living life as someone else did their work. Everyday incidents, such as hearing a common anti-Semitic remark and not being able to reply to it as a Jew, gave rise to shame – shame for failing to respond, shame at one's own impotence, and, ultimately, shame about being a Jew. It would be so much easier, so much more comfortable, simply to live the lie as truth, to be like the others, to be a Christian in fact, not fiction.<sup>297</sup>

Dwork also argues that this particular brand of self-deception could serve a useful purpose when hiding their Jewish identity not only from others but also from themselves because it 'was a wonderfully direct way to resolve their anxieties, conflicts, and tensions.'<sup>298</sup> The masks worn by children in hiding, the performances played out, the hardships endured, and the natural progression of time may have culminated in these characters' wartime survival, but the fallout permeates their post-war lives and selves.

In *Wartime Lies*, when Maciek reaches an age where non-Jewish Polish boys study with a priest to take first Communion, they cannot risk his abstention. Maciek must then face the new concept of Catholic sin. He analyses his situation as such: to lie about his Jewishness puts his soul at risk, but not to do so puts his and his beloved aunt's lives at risk. He finds this position to be 'desperate and despicable' because he cannot find salvation without grace but grace can only be achieved through baptism and he is an unbaptized Jew (p. 115). Maciek cannot reconcile a false Communion with his real Jewish identity. According to Sue Vice, '[children's] *internal* worlds [become] coloured by the new rules and behavior they must adopt in extreme circumstances.'<sup>299</sup> Despite his best efforts to assimilate and the natural internalization of his wartime lies, Maciek

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<sup>297</sup> Dwork, p. 103

<sup>298</sup> Dwork, p. 105

<sup>299</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 79

perceives that he will always be separate from his Catholic peers, in part because his circumcision has permanently marked him so.

He tries to reconcile what he must do as a hidden Jew pretending to be Catholic with what he is being taught by the priest. Maciek debates with himself:

It was evident that every Jew, even if he did not break the Commandments, was damned. If that was true, my case was worse than that of a savage. [...] Baptism would wash away the Original Sin I was born with and, I thought, my other accumulated sins as well, but how could I go on lying and not fall again into mortal sin that would put me on the road to damnation? (p. 116)

Maciek seeks advice on this quagmire from his aunt, but Tania gives one consistently logical answer in an effort to deflect the blame away from Maciek and assuage his guilt. She tells him, ““You have to do it, it’s not your fault, if Jesus Christ allows these things to happen it is the fault of Jesus Christ, not your fault”” (p. 117). Maciek is not so easily convinced; he believes his lies are a sin he commits knowingly, whereas the practical adult views them as necessary and thus blameless. Moreover, in her view, a Catholic Communion should not affect his Jewish soul. But Maciek cannot distinguish anymore between the lies and truth. Maciek’s earlier conclusion that every Jew was damned exemplifies this regular imposition of Catholic values and adoption of Catholic practices by hidden children, which ‘throws into relief the ordinary and everyday, including the psychological construction of Jewish identity, particularly in assimilationist or adverse conditions’ and displaces their Jewish identities.<sup>300</sup>

The hidden child’s Jewish identity is defined by a paradoxical combination of pretense and awareness. The final chapter of *Wartime Lies* reveals that Maciek never recovers his original and rightful Jewish identity and name. Instead, his remaining family consisting of his aunt, his father returned from the East, and a new stepmother, procure new false identities and take up non-Jewish lives in a city other than his hometown. It is

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<sup>300</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 80

as if the lies can never end because they believe it will never be safe to openly be a Jew in Poland; Begley is implying here that every time is wartime. This concealment is now second nature for Maciek as he admits that he is ‘chained to the habit of lying’ (p. 171). The ambiguity of Maciek’s name, both the pseudonyms of Maciek and Janek as well as the unrecovered Jewish one, which has been concealed even from the reader, is indicative of a larger concern for children who survived in hiding. Though Maciek’s Jewish name is never revealed in the narrative, it is averred to have existed: ‘Has the unmentionable Jewish family name been resumed? Certainly not’ (p. 192). In fact, the name Maciek, which we have been calling him throughout, was bestowed upon him ‘*for the sake of an old song*’ (p. 5) by the narrator. False papers later change this pseudonym to ‘Janek’, which the Warsaw lodgers call him, although the narrator still refers to him as Maciek. That the original Jewish names are never disclosed, ‘as if these names can no longer be uttered’, implies the historical prolongation of the dangers of being Jewish in post-war Poland and the on-going traumas of their wartime deceptions.<sup>301</sup> Maciek’s silence about his true self can also represent the silence of so many children, both alive and murdered, and other Holocaust survivors, as Begley explains that ‘children become almost silent when hurt or under extreme pressure’ (p. 222). Maciek must forever be silent about his Jewish self, his real history, and his given name. In this way, even the old song for which the child was renamed is also a lie: ‘No matter how long or how gaily the music plays, Maciek will not rise to dance again’ (p. 198). The boy who has survived the war is not the same one who entered into hiding. Begley emphasizes the questionable identity of post-war ‘Maciek’ through the unnamed italicized man who is presumed to be the adult version of the boy, who is always separate from his younger self by the italics.

In Grynberg’s work, Henryk’s mother constantly reinforces the message that people are out to uncover Henryk’s Jewishness. On Easter, she announces to any Polish ears that may be listening that she is taking Henryk to see ‘Lord Jesus’ grave’ (p. 33);

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<sup>301</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 87

instead, she takes him to watch the burning of the Warsaw Ghetto. She uses this symbol of the destructive aims against the Jews as another vital lesson for why he must hide his Jewishness, emphasizing the uncertainty as to how long this deception may last. At the same time, the great loss of family is underscored because while they have been hiding, their extended family was being murdered.

‘Look at it closely,’ she said. ‘And, remember, over there lived our aunts and uncles and your small cousins, same age as you are. Many of them. You wouldn’t have liked to be there, would you?’ ‘No, I wouldn’t...’ ‘So, remember once again, no one must know that you’re a Jew! Ever!’ ‘Never?’ ‘Perhaps never....’ (p. 33)

After this spectacle, Henryk perfects the behavior he believes is necessary to shed his Jewish persona, such as walking upright with confidence and looking people in the eye, a transition he claims was easy because of the adaptability of youth (*ibid.*). Henryk believes that adults like his father who are unable to change are all destined to die. Henryk’s father, like many religious, rural Jews, could not be separated from aspects of his identity that could not be as easily covered up as a circumcision, such as his distinctive manner of speaking and comportment (p. 23). This powerlessness to erase the traces of Jewishness and therefore pass as or become a Polish Catholic is judged to be a death sentence.

As shown with Maciek, one of the most significant issues for the hidden characters is exposure to and practice of non-Jewish religious customs and how these may conflict with earlier memories of Judaic practices. In Poland, they are inescapably bound to Catholicism, either superficially exposed or taught to practice it, often internalizing this contact with Catholic doctrine.<sup>302</sup> Henryk remarks about his Catholic instruction, ‘We took [the Bible] to heart. We were glad that, unlike the people [the Jews] the priest was telling about, we did not hate, did not betray, and did not want to kill anybody’ (p. 48). His use of the plural pronoun ‘we’ demonstrates Henryk’s adapted image of himself as belonging with the Polish Catholic boys rather than the Jews in the Bible’s story.

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<sup>302</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 81

Although the Catholic education conflicts with Henryk's still-unformed ideas of Judaism, he excels at his Communion classes ironically because of his early exposure to Hebrew (p. 49). Henryk is profoundly impressed with the story of Jesus and seeks theological guidance from his mother about the contradictory religious messages he is receiving. However, she was raised an observant Jew and cannot give him the answers he seeks as to why Jews killed Jesus, only providing unsatisfactory adult logic. She says, "I don't know, my child. But I think that, if he hadn't been born among Jews, he would have been killed by non-Jews" (p. 51). According to Sue Vice, 'what is a version of theological debate for the child is an external, pragmatic concern for the parent'.<sup>303</sup>

Ultimately, Henryk is wearied by the danger his Jewishness poses to his life and the pervasive negative perceptions of Jews in general. In this scene his mother asks him if he remembers his hometown and his family and he replies that he remembers but he does not want to return, although it is ostensibly safe to do so. When his mother asks why, he tells her, "Because I don't want to be a Jew anymore," and she does not press him to recant because she admits there may not be any Jews left anyway (p. 63). Henryk is the embodiment of Cathy S. Gelbin's argument that because of the instability of children's identities, they were less able to resist the negative implications of their imposed identities. Gelbin notes that 'children frequently accepted contradicting models of racial, religious and national identities, and their personal narrative indicate conflicting identities from the very beginning'.<sup>304</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the war, Henryk continues to practice Catholicism, separating him from the other Jewish survivors, but he is also separate from 'real' Catholics who stare at him in church and know he does not belong. The Jewish women chastise his mother and mock Henryk for his church attendance and kneeling in prayer, but his mother defends his actions. She exclaims, "So what if he prays? Praying doesn't

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<sup>303</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 83

<sup>304</sup> Cathy S. Gelbin, 'Between Persecution and Complicity: The Life Story of a Former "Jewish Mischling"' in *Children of the Holocaust*, ed. by Andrea Reiter, pp. 74-93 (p. 77)

hurt anybody.” “Praying to Jesus Christ?” “He’s still young; it doesn’t matter who he prays to” (p. 84). Like Henryk’s earlier claims, his mother stresses that his youth indicates his capacity for constant change, also recognizing his behavior may merely be the residue of hiding externally. Though they survive together, Henryk is nonetheless separated from his mother during the difficult post-war conditions for survivors and refugees who have lost everything. His mother struggles on the streets while he recuperates in an orphanage-like sanatorium under the pretense of a mysterious lung ailment discovered in a Jewish Committee medical examination. The young Jewish patients attend a nearby school where they are required to identify themselves, though their understanding of this identity and sharing it are conflicted. Even in a place of safety, Henryk and the other Jewish children vehemently protest identification as Jews:

In school we were asked about our ‘persuasion.’ Those who didn’t understand the question answered, ‘From the sanatorium.’ They were marked down as ‘Judaic.’ The older boys said, ‘None!’ in protest. The teacher would smile, say, ‘None? Impossible,’ and write down ‘Judaic’ (pp. 148-9).

Grynberg is emphasizing that the children have internalized the dangers of being Jewish to such an extent that even victorious peacetime cannot expunge the lessons learned during wartime hiding.

The title character of *Tzili* fails as the stereotypical Jew, which perhaps positions her to succeed at hiding her Jewishness. Tzili is introduced as ‘dull-witted’, ‘devoid of charm’, and from a ‘large, poor, and harassed’ non-observant Jewish family (pp. 1-2). Appelfeld’s descriptives are perhaps indicative of his deliberate use of biases and Tzili’s quiet nature may in fact merely be others’ interpretations of dull-wittedness. Or it could be, as Sara Horowitz claims, that Appelfeld is presenting ‘a post-Holocaust recasting of one of Jewish literature’s stock characters, the feeble-minded but righteous silent



sufferer'.<sup>305</sup> Before the events that propel her into hiding, she is ridiculed for her academic failings because she does not fit the stereotypes about Jewish intelligence. Because of her shortcomings at the public school, she alone of her family receives some semblance of religious instruction from an old tutor, although the tutor is hired more to benefit Tzili's parents who feel absolved for their own lack of religious practice by this good deed than out of a desire to help their daughter. However, her studies with the old man seem to be the one tool her parents unwittingly provided her with that helps her survive in hiding because she turns to prayer in times of confusion and hopelessness. These brief moments of Jewish faith denote the entirety of Tzili's religious identity and yet each serves to highlight the importance of it to her spiritual survival.

Appelfeld is asking the question 'What is Jewishness?' through Tzili, who quietly puzzles over questions of her own identity as a girl, Jew, and Other. Is Jewishness Tzili's passive acquiescence to her fate, her plodding resilience, her muteness, her inability to express or know herself, or her ultimate flight to the Holy Land? Naomi Sokoloff identifies these questions in Appelfeld's writing: '[What] are the differences between Jews and others? What constitutes Jewishness, and what are its limits? Does something of it remain after the metamorphoses these characters endure?'<sup>306</sup> With Tzili, he examines anti-Semitic Europe and the Jews' response to themselves, 'where Jews are both alien others and fully capable of assimilating into the surroundings. He asks readers to ponder whether Jewishness is predetermined and fixed or mutable and as easy to shed as old skin'.<sup>307</sup> The recitation of stereotypes is one way that authors can address questions of Jewishness. As in Begley and Grynberg, Appelfeld's fictional characters readily voice prejudices and repeat common biases. For example, Katerina remarks to Tzili, "The Jews are gentle. The Jews are generous and kind. They know how to treat a woman properly.

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<sup>305</sup> Horowitz, *Voicing the Void*, p. 135

<sup>306</sup> Naomi B. Sokoloff, 'Jewish Character?: Stereotype and Identity in Fiction from Israel by Aharon Appelfeld and Sayeh Kashua' in *Boundaries of Jewish Identity*, ed. by Susan A. Glenn and Naomi B. Sokoloff, pp. 43-63 (p. 43)

<sup>307</sup> Sokoloff, 'Jewish Character', p. 45

Not like our men, who don't know anything except how to beat us up" (p. 31). Later, Mark ruminates on his escape from the camp and insists, "I'm a coward. All the Jews are cowards and I'm not different from them" (p. 77). The nurse in Italy who tends to Tzili after her miscarriage describes how her fiancé strikes her, then concedes, "With Jews, perhaps, it's different" (p. 176), agreeing with Katerina's presumption about Jewish men. Exaggerating stereotypes highlights the author's particular view of Jewishness and anti-Semitism, but also the child's vulnerability to their influence. Sokoloff considers Appelfeld's view of Jewishness as not only chosen or performed and subject to each individual's interpretations and representations, but also inescapable. She writes, 'Because of their history, their family connections, and the prejudices directed against them, Jews cannot deny that they are Jews.'<sup>308</sup>

Posing as the daughter of the gentile prostitute, Maria, allows Tzili to work in peasant homes for the winter; this ironically questions the morality of those who would reject a Jew when rejection would often mean death but who grudgingly accept the offspring of a notorious local prostitute. Despite the early aspersions about Tzili's mental acuity, choosing a false identity that is logical but requires no verification is certainly clever. However, as a prostitute's illegitimate child, Tzili is not exempt from the negative corollaries of the religious fervor of the peasant's mix of rustic superstition and devout Catholicism. Although she still faces abuse, Appelfeld makes it clear that to suffer for being the daughter of a non-Jewish prostitute is better than exposure as a Jew. During the one winter Tzili stays in the home of a peasant couple, after the old man tries to sexually assault her one night, his wife beats Tzili for the sins of her 'mother' as well as the potential sins of her own husband, 'as if she were performing some secret religious duty' (p. 51). The old woman determines that it is her responsibility to show Tzili that enticing married men, prostitution, and bearing illegitimate children are all sins (p. 53). The beatings make Tzili nostalgic for Katerina's, despite her fear of the men to whom

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<sup>308</sup> Sokoloff, 'Jewish Character', p. 53

Katerina would sell her, imagining Katerina's voice to give her comfort (p. 51) just as her old visions of her less-than-idyllic home and family had comforted her early days alone in the wilderness.

There were often not many options for hidden children after the war, especially because so many had lost all the adults in their lives. Tzili represents one of the more common choices for orphaned children of resettlement in the British Mandated Palestine despite the arduous process that taxed already traumatized survivors. 'In the earliest postwar years, [refugees] were survivors of death camps and clandestine hiding places who were physically and psychologically suffering from the consequences of their experiences.'<sup>309</sup> Tzili has suffered abandonment by her family, abuse by peasants, displacement from home, and the loss of her unborn child, and now she will attempt to enter Palestine, the reasoning for which is not revealed to the reader. Appelfeld's deliberate suppression of Tzili's internal rationale could suggest that the *why* is not what matters; Tzili will go because she has no home or family to return to in Eastern Europe even if she so wanted. Although Tzili has never expressed any Zionist or particularly Jewish inclinations, Appelfeld views the mass exodus toward a potential Jewish haven as the culmination of Tzili's story simply because it was her only possibility: '[The] children, of course, had no choice. No one wanted orphans'.<sup>310</sup> In this way, though Tzili makes the decision to go to the ancient Jewish homeland, such emigration could also be considered another form of forcing identity upon her, for lack of an alternative and not for any self-chosen beliefs.

Like Henryk, in *Shadows of a Childhood* Léa is on the younger side of children in hiding, and her identity is perhaps more plastic, as the nun remarks that she 'could be molded' (p. 20). Gille describes the newly orphaned girl's arrival at the Catholic convent and the erasure of her Jewish identity in close detail. The lie of Léa's new identity begins

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<sup>309</sup> Earl E. Huyck and Rona Fields, 'Impact on Resettlement of Refugee Children', *International Migration Review* 15.1: Refugees Today (1981), pp. 246-254 (p. 251)

<sup>310</sup> Appelfeld, 'After the Holocaust', p. 91

with her first introduction to the other student boarders; she is simply a new student who has arrived in the middle of the night because of a delayed train (p. 5). The man who brings Léa to the convent is a Communist member of the French Resistance and brother to one of the nun's. He explains that Léa's parents are well-to-do Jews of Russian origin though Léa herself was born in France. Like many foreign-born Jews who believed converting to Catholicism at the beginning of the war would protect them, Léa's parents converted in 1939 and Léa was baptized. The baptism and convent immediately conflict with any solid sense of Jewishness she might have had. Originally living in Paris, the family had escaped previous roundups into Bordeaux and, with great reluctance, Léa's parents turned her over to the Resistance when they were told that children are also being deported. Her parents are believed to have been sent on to the camp, Mérignac, a stopover for the Jews of the Bordeaux region and from there, the rumor is that the Jews will be sent to a suburb of Paris, the transit camp of Drancy, and from there perhaps to labor camps in Poland (pp. 7-8). These details of Léa's parents' deportation mirror the historical path of many Jews in France and emphasize the likely orphanhood of the young girl.

The nun in charge, Sister Saint-Gabriel, determines that her primary concern is how to keep Léa's Jewish identity secret (pp. 10-11). She briefly contemplates turning Léa over to the authorities so that the child can be reunited with her parents, because if the rumors are true about relocation to Poland then she may be well cared for there. The nun ruminates: 'Poland was supposed to be a very Catholic country: the Jews would probably be well treated there. Yet wasn't France, the eldest daughter of the Church, behaving most uncharitable toward foreigners now?' (p. 11). The nun's conflict between rumors and doubt is further complicated by the fact that if she turns Léa over to the police, her arrival at the convent will betray the man who brought her, whom the nun calls Léa's 'savior'. Even as Sister Saint-Gabriel's concern may be self-interested, this language reflects her understanding that the Jewish girl is in need of saving. If she is to remain, the nun's first goal is to make Léa anonymous so that she will look just like all

the others (*ibid.*), suggesting that at this point Léa's Jewishness is apparent. Sister Saint-Gabriel removes Léa's old clothing, which are silk and lace embroidered with her initials, symbolically burning all physical traces of Léa from outside the convent and effectively erasing the evidence of her Jewish past. However, the nun keeps her documentation so that Léa can know herself after the war. But, '[aside] from the papers hidden at the very bottom of [the nun's] pocket, nothing remained of what had once been Léa's identity' (p. 13). By the end of Léa's first hour in the convent, she has not only been displaced from family and home, but her identity has also been expunged. Lastly, as in Maciek's symbolic name changing, Léa Levy must adopt a French name. Sister Saint-Gabriel relies on Léa's deficient memory to accomplish the rest of the erasure because 'at that age, they forgot quickly' (p. 12). The nun assures Léa that she'll take back her old name when her parents come to get her (p. 19); the name, which symbolizes her Jewish identity, is treated like an article of clothing to be shed for a time and ostensibly put back on later.

But Léa's orphan status has been assumed to such an extent that she is forever displaced from both her Paris home and her Jewish identity. Léa's fixation on her loss would be the archetype of the child survivor, according to Susan Rubin Suleiman, where she is preoccupied with 'an anguished questioning about what it means to be Jewish after the Holocaust'.<sup>311</sup> Although Bénédicte's parents take her into their home after the war, they are unable to adopt her formally and give her their name as they desire, which would have forever subsumed her real Jewish identity. The bureaucratic ambiguity preventing the adoption states that Léa must wait at least ten years for her parents to be declared officially dead, by which time she would practically be of age. While Léa will take back her surname, she will not attach a Jewish identity to it. Léa never returns to live in or retrieve the stolen belongings from her former apartment in Paris and she never identifies herself as a Jew, despite the fact that people recognize her as such because of her name.

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<sup>311</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 184

For example, after he learns her blatantly Jewish name, an American she meets in Paris is confused when she answers in the negative to his question if she is Jewish. He grumbles, ‘[Now] she was telling him off with that flagrant lie, that idiotic denial. From cowardice? Stupidity? Fear of an anti-Semitic remark, even though the war had been over for almost ten years?’ (pp. 116-117). The American cannot understand that European anti-Semitism does not just belong to the war, or that the Jew whose parents were murdered in Nazi camps might not want to be asked if she is Jewish. Léa later tells Bénédicte after reading Sartre’s *Reflections on the Jewish Question*, “‘Sartre also says one is a Jew only through the gaze of the Other and that one can simply decide not to be Jewish. I’ve decided that I’m not’” (p. 117). Léa’s use of Sartre to support her pronouncement demonstrates that she is attempting to reclaim the autonomy denied her by the Holocaust, deciding that she alone defines her identity. Léa’s decision is motivated by the association she makes of being a Jew with the traumatic loss of her parents and identity.

Although the war has ended and with it the characters’ hiding, their wartime displacements and deceptions remain, their personal wars endure, and their identities are conflicted. Sokoloff proposes that ‘all is a sham, an extension of having had to cover up the basic truth of [their identities] for so long’.<sup>312</sup> Though some of the characters find that life after hiding includes people to care for them, their childhoods and identities have been forever altered. The example of Maciek in *Wartime Lies* is perhaps the starkest of the surviving hidden child: the child may have survived by hiding, even with some family, but he has been denied his Jewish identity and the future of Judaism by doing so, that which the Nazis sought to exterminate in the first place. So it would seem that Grynberg is justified in ending his work with the question of whether or not the end of World War II and lack of complete annihilation by the Nazis did indeed represent a victory for the Jews.

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<sup>312</sup> Sokoloff, ‘Childhood Lost’, p. 26

### Incomplete Jewishness

As in some of the other novels, a central characteristic of what defines Jewishness in *Herod's Children* is being forced to wear the star, which Ellen's *Mischling* status precludes. The star as a motif takes on several guises, most notably as the required badge for Jews, but also ironically as a symbol of hope. The star's first intangible appearance occurs in Ellen's drawings on the map in the Consul's office and represents her childish faith that she will get a visa and join her mother across the ocean. The Star of David worn by her friends is also as unattainable and admirable. While to the others the star means fear of deportation, to the half-Jewish Ellen it is 'that wonderful star' (p. 89), which, when she first applies it to her coat, 'gave her wings' (p. 91). However, Ellen is quickly disillusioned of her admiration for the star when she tries to buy a birthday cake from an Aryan bakery, just as she would have done before affixing the star. The baker will not sell to her and the patrons are hostile revealing that the price of belonging with her Jewish friends is abandoning her half-Aryan privileges. Aichinger writes:

Suddenly she knew the price of the cake. She had forgotten it. She had forgotten that people wearing the star weren't allowed in the stores and still less in a bakery that served coffee and cakes at tables. The price of the cake was the star. (p. 93)

The scene indicates that Ellen could not have both the star and her freedom. In contrast to Ellen's initial joy over the star, her older friend George whose birthday cake she had intended to purchase, views the star as a blemish: 'If only the star hadn't been there, the big yellow star on his handsome jacket. It spoiled all George's joy' (p. 94).

The children go on a mission to uncover the meaning of the star because the adults refuse to tell them. One member of the group, Bibi, overhears her parents talking when they thought she was asleep and reports to her friends, "the star means death" (p. 98, p. 109). Ellen's grandmother warns Ellen not to choose to identify with her Jewish half and the uncertainty Jewishness implies, exclaiming, "Don't you dare take out that star—be glad it doesn't apply to you! No one knows what the star means. And no one knows

where it leads” (p. 100). There is also mention of a star in the sky, representative of reaching for the stars and the greatest hope of the original title. Shortly before her death, Ellen spots the remains of the bridge she seeks that will lead her home and she cries out, “George—George, I see the star!” (p. 238). Aichinger does not explain which star Ellen intends: the bridge, the star worn by her friends, the star in the sky, or the metaphorical hope. She calls out to her presumably deceased friend, perhaps foreshadowing her own imminent death through her failure to reach it. Immediately after this joyful sighting, ‘an exploding grenade blew her to bits. Over the beleaguered bridges stood the morning star’ (ibid.). The star’s benevolent positioning over the bridge and the site of Ellen’s demise underscores that Ellen could not have both her Jewish identity and her life.

However, in Aichinger’s implicit style, the star worn by the children is never described as a ‘Star of David’, the children have ‘wrong grandparents’ not Jewish ones, and there are many restrictions to their lives but these are never explained as the result of anti-Jewish regulations in Nazified Austria. More often than not, the children being Jews is equated with something ‘wrong’ or ‘foreign’. This language emulates propaganda as well as expresses internalized feelings of not belonging. The first chapter presents an image of Jewish children fleeing Nazi-occupied territory on a ship that Ellen hopes to join. These children ‘had something wrong with them’ and ‘none of them had permission to stay and none had permission to go’ (p. 4), which establishes the liminal state of the unwanted Jews. Ellen’s view of herself is similarly muddled when she rescues the child from the river, displacing her feelings about who she is as a *Mischling* onto the baby:

‘It’s an awful child! Its mother has emigrated and its father’s in the service. When it meets its father, it’s not allowed to talk about its mother. And wait a minute...there’s something the matter with its grandparents: two are all right, but two are all wrong.’ (p. 27)

The children identify themselves as Jewish based on the number of Jewish, or ‘wrong’, grandparents they have; they recognize Ellen’s difference from themselves based on the



fact that she is not wrong enough, or only partially Jewish (p. 30). Ellen accurately if unknowingly identifies her *Mischling* status as the reason that she is not required to wear the badge: “I’m not allowed to wear one! I’ve got two wrong grandparents too few. And so they say I don’t belong” (p. 104). Ellen’s desire to identify with her more-Jewish friends ‘[follows] the Talmudic precept that it is better to be persecuted than to persecute’.<sup>313</sup>

Like Wojdowski, Aichinger uses biblical allusions to connect the child’s experience with Judaism allegorically. Jewish identity, and its relationship with the Christian or non-Jewish, is underscored through these ‘allegorical images, many of them containing Jewish and Christian iconography, that express the children’s feelings of fear and utter hopelessness’.<sup>314</sup> For example, the section that focuses on the children’s failed attempt to flee the country in which the hearse driver takes their money and drives around in circles, interweaves the children sharing feverish dreams of King David and Jerusalem. The yearning for both the biblical hero and the holy city underscores the idea of Jews as foreign in their homelands. This is expressed more directly in the scene in which secret police hunt the buildings for people listening to illegal radio broadcasts. Someone declares, “Anyone who listens to foreign broadcasts is a traitor; anyone who listens to foreign broadcasts deserves to die” (p. 79). When they are discovered, the leader shouts at them, “You’re in the service of a foreign power!” (p. 88), emphasizing Jewish foreignness despite any nationalistic loyalty and despite the improbability of these children being in service to anything but themselves. Not altogether incorrectly, the children describe how their parents, frantic for emigration, are learning new skills and languages in anticipation of new lives in foreign countries. They concede, “The grown-ups in our houses speak to each other in foreign languages” (p. 99).

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<sup>313</sup> Lorenz, p. 6

<sup>314</sup> Grobbel, p. 75

In *Other People's Houses*, Lore is thrust into her position as a Jew from the outset, first in Nazifying Austria and then in her refugee placement in an Orthodox Jewish home, demonstrating how Lore's particular Jewishness develops out of her secular upbringing and is shaped more by external forces than by the religion itself. Lore's Jewish ignorance is highlighted by that first placement at the Orthodox Levines; she is sent to them to escape persecution as a Jew and yet she is unaware of all the Jewish religious customs the Levines expect her to know that would have necessitated her flight. Not only was Lore a refugee in a foreign country, '[there] also existed a schism between English Orthodox Jews and assimilated Jews from Central Europe'.<sup>315</sup> When she is first assigned to the Levines, her ignorance is highlighted by a letter to her parents, in which she writes requesting 'would they please write and tell me what did "Orthodox"' mean' (p. 46). The knowledge that she is different from the English children with whom she interacts compels Lore to reflect more on her Jewish identity. However, because of her experience of Otherness in her foster country and of discrimination in her home country, Lore develops an ambiguous position on the meaning of Jewishness.<sup>316</sup> About this struggle with post-Holocaust Jewishness, Fackenheim writes that '[the] Holocaust, too, challenges Jewish faith from within, but the negativity of its challenge is total, without light or relief.'<sup>317</sup> He asks about Jewish identity, 'What does, can, shall it mean to be a Jew, today and tomorrow?'<sup>318</sup>; *Other People's Houses* could be viewed as one response to the issue of identity posed by Fackenheim's question.

Lore's early life is distanced from religion by an assimilated Viennese upbringing, or as she describes it, Jewish 'mainly on the High Holidays' (p. 147). In all of the texts, but perhaps more so in those in which the Jewish children live among Christians, what is revealed about Jewish identity is 'the fact that Christians were the people against whom

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<sup>315</sup> Berger, 'Jewish Identity', p. 90

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p. 26

<sup>318</sup> Fackenheim, *Jewish Return*, p. 228

even assimilated Jews defined themselves'.<sup>319</sup> As a refugee in England, she receives both non-Jewish and Jewish aid. She describes a certain contest between 'the Jewish Committee, which saved me from Vienna, and the Church Refugee Committee, which had the care of my bodily needs in England. Each strove for my soul, without much passion' (p. 247). Yet Lore is not so eager to become English that she will allow anyone to change her fundamental self. When she overhears a conversation between her favorite guardians, in which one chastises the other about making her into a Christian (p. 147), Lore vehemently resists the idea, but not on religious grounds; rather, she 'felt a sudden furious loyalty to myself: *No one* was going to make anything out of me' (p. 154).

However, Lore seeks and fails to find a meaningful connection to Judaism during a hastily assembled Yom Kippur service in a restaurant for the Jews of Allchester who are too few to have a synagogue. Although she ritually strikes her chest and confesses to various transgressions, Lore's conduct reads more like playacting than any real sense of connecting with her Jewish self, peers, or the holy day. Lore admits that the service did not move her and that the multitudes of people praying and singing were too distracting to feel like she could pray properly (p. 158). This scene of forced participation in an awkward makeshift Yom Kippur service, emphasizes that '[at] this point, Jewish identity was still being imposed from the outside—not, to be sure, in the brutal, vicious, and fatal way of the Nazis, but in the vacuous and contentless manner of the Jewish community itself'.<sup>320</sup> Through her failed attempts to participate in her Jewishness despite it being the reason for her exile, like Ellen, Lore may be perceived as not being fully Jewish.

In Lustig's novel, Dita's Jewishness influences her sense of self profoundly, but, like Ellen and Lore, this is primarily because it is the reason for her suffering. With Dita's Aryan looks perhaps contributing to her survival and as a survivor who did not share the Jewish fate of extermination, her belonging to other Jews is destabilized. However, she is

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<sup>319</sup> Berger, 'Jewish Identity', p. 87

<sup>320</sup> Berger, 'Jewish Identity', p. 88

also aware of being Jewish and not ashamed of it, though Lustig does not indicate that she is particularly religious and suggests she came from a mostly assimilated home in Prague similar to Lore's in Vienna. Like all the young Jewish survivors, she participates in the youth activities organized by relief and Zionist organizations, but for the advantages they offer rather than for their being Jewish-affiliated. Dita accepts she is Jewish as a part of herself and a part of her pain without reflecting seriously on how her Jewishness contributed to her fate. She posits, 'To be a Jew in the twentieth century is a privilege when you look behind yourself, a catastrophe when you see what lies before you. Or vice versa?' (p. 58). While nonexperiencers are often described as uncomfortable around the young survivors, they are also a source of discomfort to other Jews and themselves. Lustig writes: 'By their ways they had become a living reproach, and a burden, to the surviving remnants of the Jewish Community' (pp. 62-63). Occasionally Dita will recall a pre-war memory that represents how she and her family ended up in the camps. She evokes a memory of the Jewish custom of receiving apples from her mother for a sweet New Year (p. 129). The evocation of this positive image of a Jewish tradition frames the religion positively for Dita in juxtaposition to her suffering because of it.

Dita frequently questions whether or not being Jewish is something that defines her because of her current place in life or her past experiences. She does not view it negatively, but seems to accept it as fixed within her. She queries, "'Do you think a Jewish girl from Prague could ever be something else if she were in a different place? [...] What's so wrong with being Jewish? Why should I be ashamed? Is everybody who survived?'" (pp. 190-191). Dita asks herself 'what was so Jewish within her, even though she was blond and did not pray' (p. 322); this reinforces her belief that what identifies a person's Jewishness is physical appearance and adherence to religious customs. So if, as she acknowledges, she does not practice the religion and does not look stereotypically Jewish, something for which she is singled out from her Jewish peers, what is she to make of being Jewish? Dita also seems to recognize that she does not belong in the city

that was her home before the deportations, with the other Jewish survivors or with the other Czechs. Despite being almost indistinguishable from others, Dita identifies the feeling of foreignness or alienation common to the Jew (pp. 207-208).

### **Sexual identity: The body and gender**

This section argues that the texts frequently focus on a character's gender and, by extension, gendered body, which may be considered another form of marginalization. As Phyllis Lassner notes, 'Just as their lives are beyond their control, so are their bodies.'<sup>321</sup> Judith Butler's concept that 'gender is a fluid variable and a performance—what you do—and not necessarily who you are [...] is often expressed in times of war, a state which shakes up preconceived notions of gendered behavior and identity.'<sup>322</sup> The narratives set inside the ghettos and camps focus more on the characters' identities as human beings and bodies than as particularly gendered people. In *Bread for the Departed*, David's primary relationships center on other young boys with whom he smuggles food, robs graves, and seeks entertainment. Ghetto life seems to preclude the development of interest in the opposite gender. Although David expresses no budding sexual interest, he demonstrates the prepubescent's fascination with sex by commenting on its uniqueness in the ghetto. He observes 'men who were turning stiff in the arms of women, and women who were turning stiff from hunger' (p. 263). Wojdowski also reinforces the traditional gender roles of the observant Jewish family whereby the father works and the mother takes care of the home, expounding on the frustrations of both when the ghetto invalidates those roles.

In *Fatelessness*, Gyuri appears aligned with his age group's average sexual development. He experiences his first kiss shortly before deportation, enjoying the physical act without emotional attachment. His recognition of her as a pubescent girl is juxtaposed with her being Jewish, when he observes that she 'is already starting to round

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<sup>321</sup> Lassner, p. 24

<sup>322</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, p. 23

out under her yellow star' (p. 13). In their interaction Gyuri is placed in the role of pupil and the more experienced girl tutors him on the arts of kissing in which they 'made use of tongues as well' (p. 33). The boys in the factory occasionally joke about their prowess with girls, claiming that 'back at home [one of his friends] was reputedly very slick in his dealings with girls' (pp. 42-43), although Gyuri does not elaborate on said dealings. In Auschwitz, Gyuri has two rather disturbing encounters with female prisoners. In the Gypsy camp he observes 'strange women', one of whom he immediately turns away from because she is openly breastfeeding (p. 108). What happens to the female prisoners after selection is particularly jarring to the newcomers as they struggle 'to recognize them as being women' because of their shorn heads (p. 115). After Auschwitz, there is an unwritten emphasis on the male because of the absence of women and girls, emphasized by Gyuri's language and the repetition of 'boys' in reference to himself and those deported with him. This male-centered aspect of *Fatelessness* is significant because '[if], as Saul Friedlander has pointed out, a master narrative of the Shoah had been emerging, it had until recently been a *master* narrative, one that reflects the male voice, the male experience, the male memory as normative'.<sup>323</sup> However, while Kertész's novel might resemble this narrative by gender, the child's perspective also challenges it through its position of marginalization often attributed to the female.

Eventually Gyuri's identity is so subsumed by the camp that, as Kertész explains in his Nobel lecture, 'The hero of my novel does not live his own time in the concentration camps, for neither his time nor his language, not even his own person, is really his. He doesn't remember; he exists.'<sup>324</sup> At the Buchenwald hospital when a doctor asks his name, Gyuri gives his number '*Vier-und-sechzig, neun, ein-und-zwangzig*' (p. 201). Though the doctor writes down the number, he also presses Gyuri for his birth name, the name the readers are only given once, and Gyuri acknowledges the difficulty

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<sup>323</sup> Sara R. Horowitz, 'Gender, Genocide, and Jewish Memory', *Prooftexts* 20.1 & 20.2 (2000), pp. 158-190 (p. 159)

<sup>324</sup> Kertész, 'Nobel Lecture', para. 13

he has in understanding the demand, ‘for it may take a while before you understand that he wants to know your name, “Name,” and then a further while, as indeed happened in my case, before, after some rooting around among your memories, you hit upon it’ (p. 212). This poignant interaction with the doctor is also important for Gyuri’s switch to the second person ‘you’, thereby separating himself from the scene and bringing the reader into it. This inability to recall his name underscores that all that remains is Gyuri’s physical self because everything else has been stripped from him. He comments with a new mature depth, ‘my body was here, I had precise cognizance of everything about it, it was just that I myself somehow no longer inhabited it’ (p. 184). Unlike Bakhtin’s analysis of grotesque realism in medieval parody, degradation in these narratives cannot be viewed as a positive regeneration. In Holocaust literature, the degradation of the body is in fact destructive; it is a means of ‘coming down to earth’ but in such a way as to be buried under it in mass graves or to mingle with it as ashes, where the character is swallowed up without reproduction.<sup>325</sup> *Fatelessness* may challenge this concept because Gyuri’s physical decline is a large part of the impetus for his moral awakening. Gyuri’s body mistakenly being collected with already deceased bodies rouses enough life in him to protest, despite his inability to prevent the degradation in the first place. Gyuri’s above recognition of his body as separate from himself suggests that being alive no longer means to have an identity or a name, but to have a semi-functioning body.

Moni’s gender is perhaps most important for a discussion of the body because he is used specifically and only for his body. Like Gyuri, Moni’s body betrays him by refusing to keep on weight, a source of teasing from his nanny at home but a source of great anxiety in the camp. The Block Chiefs do not want to have a ‘skinny Mussulman’ for a Piepel (p. 16) because his purpose is as a substitute for female companionship. As such, descriptives often used to describe the Piepels are feminine, such as Benyek with

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<sup>325</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 21

'his chubby angel face, his cherry red lips, and the naughty girlish look in his eyes' (p. 137). Benyek's juxtaposition with the opposite gender based on his appearance and ability to flirt indicates the breaking of the gender divide for Piepels and Block Chiefs. When Moni's eyes tear up, the Block Chief reverses his gender, shouting, "'You've gone and shot my girl's maidenhead full of tears!'" (p. 33). Identification of Moni as a young boy is relegated to flashbacks and to other prisoners' perceptions of him. Apart from these gender reversals and comparison, like Kertész's, Ka-tzetnik's camp is male-centered. Like Gyuri's remarks upon the shocking sight of female prisoners in Auschwitz, in *Moni* when the Theresienstadt transport arrives, the prisoners are most shocked to see "'Girls!' [...] Hair! [...] Not bare skeleton-heads, but hair under this Auschwitz sky!' (p. 62). With the young girls are also women and whole families, which elicits as much surprise and longing as the unshorn girls. Ka-tzetnik mentions the Women's Camp but because Moni does not step foot in it, neither does the reader; rather the camp is symbolic of hope for a fellow Piepel, Lolek (p. 93). The Women's Camp and by association, women and mothers, represent the unattainable desire to be cared for and loved.

Another way that the body is represented is through agency. The Block Chief Fruchtenbaum's violence toward others Jews is particularly shocking to the secondary protagonist, Hayim-Idl, who is surprised that more Jews are not willing to help others in the camp. He asks the cantor, Bergson, if he would give his life for another Jew, to which Bergson replies, "'You're talking foolish, Hayim-Idl. Do you really think we have a life left to give?'" (p. 193). Bergson's explanation as to why more Jews do not demonstrate selflessness in Auschwitz is particularly resonant—how can Jews risk their lives for others when their lives are not actually theirs to risk? By the time the characters are imprisoned in the camp, they have lost all claims to the assorted components of their identities: religious practices, professions, homes and possessions, families and friends, towns, and free will. Essentially all that remains are their physical bodies, which are now the possessions of their captors. The reduction of the characters from individuals to mere



forms emphasizes the prisoner's loss of selfhood, the necessity of stripping individuality to conduct mass murder, and the challenges faced by the young to develop any solid sense of self in such an environment.

Moni reiterates this idea when considering whether or not to flee from his current Block Chief before he is killed. Moni acknowledges, 'His life is not his own, but his Block Chief's. [...] By what right can he take it and run off?' (p. 79). But with self-preservation foremost in his mind, he does indeed run away from the Block Chief, the language underscoring that his body has become a material object that can be taken away: 'Moni snatched up his life. Caching it away in his person like a stolen article' (p. 80). In this respect Moni is reclaiming sovereignty over himself and over his physical body, which has been the possession of the camp and his Block Chief since his arrival. Upon imprisonment, the prisoner's life was forfeited, whether by immediate death or in slave labor. It became an object of the state in which the planet Auschwitz orbits, and in which, as a child, Moni has very little value. As a Piepel, insofar as he serves a purpose for his Block Chief, Moni is in many ways just his body.

For hidden characters, bodies represent their Jewishness because many physical markers, like the 'Jewish nose', could presumably betray Jewish identity. However, the primary focus on the difference of the Jewish body seems to be on the paradigmatic mark of a male's Jewishness, the circumcised penis. According to Jay Geller, 'On the imagined Jewish body, the genital, the primary marker of gender and sexual difference, was also, as the always already circumcised penis, the pre-eminent marker of ethnic and, eventually, racial difference.'<sup>326</sup> Sigmund Freud notably equated the castration complex with circumcision and deep unconscious anti-Semitism.<sup>327</sup> Although the character experiences circumcision as inseparable from his knowledge that he is Jewish, it is often unclear how he comes to know himself as Jewish other than by his circumcision. He knows his penis

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<sup>326</sup> Geller, p. 10

<sup>327</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Frontiers: Essays on Bodies, Histories, and Identities* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 98-99

is different from his Polish Catholic peers and he knows this difference is the mark of his Jewishness. 'Freud emphasizes not the act or trauma of circumcision but its status as a *rumor*: Little boys do not consciously experience circumcision; they *hear* about it'.<sup>328</sup>

Maciek and Henryk know that they are circumcised and recognize that this feature makes them Jewish, but they are unable to attach meaning to the circumcision beyond the superficial application of it to their relationships to other Jews and non-Jews.

Unlike the texts with female protagonists, these boys are physically marked as Jews; though it is true that both genders have been historically portrayed as physically different from non-Jews, this particular mark of difference is reserved for the bodies of male Jews and usually hidden from sight by clothing.<sup>329</sup> Circumcision was performed as both a cultural and religious rite, despite Maciek's rather secular upbringing in *Wartime Lies*, and establishes his link with the Jewish identity he is then forced to hide. Thus, as a practice, circumcision has the power to maintain Maciek's connection to the traditional definition of Jewishness regardless of individual choice. However, the circumcision does not guarantee that the circumcised continues to practice Judaism even with the physical reminder of his inheritance of those Jewish obligations for which the Abrahamic covenant stood, as shown by Henryk choosing not to be Jewish and Maciek's post-war false non-Jewish identity. The boys may choose not to practice Judaism or 'be Jewish', but their bodies will always mark them as Other. For example, in Grynberg's narrative, what is unique about Henryk's particular fear about the revelation of his circumcision to public scrutiny is that the circumcision itself becomes, in Freud's words, uncanny. Citing an excerpt from the philosopher Schelling, Freud writes: 'Everything is uncanny that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.'<sup>330</sup> In this way, Henryk's circumcision is uncanny to both himself and potential observers. Not only could the

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<sup>328</sup> Gilman, *Jewish Frontiers*, pp. 98-99

<sup>329</sup> Gilman, *Jewish Frontiers*, p. 116

<sup>330</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The 'Uncanny'', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919)* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1955), pp. 217-256 (p. 225)

revealed circumcision identify the Jewish boy as different and inferior to the non-Jew, but also the male Jew then becomes the model of ‘the Jew’ based on his difference.

According to Sander L. Gilman:

Thus there was an immediate dichotomy—all Jews, male and female, are different from the ‘neutral’ scientific observer (who is male and Aryan in his ideology), but male Jews are uncanny, in that they superficially appear to be males but are not because of the altered form of the genitalia.<sup>331</sup>

In Western society, where many Jews had become so assimilated as to be indistinguishable from non-Jews by mode of dress, language, occupation, neighborhood, and even hairstyles, the circumcision was relied upon to identify the Jewish difference.<sup>332</sup>

In *Wartime Lies*, Maciek begins his hiding period by learning not to say he’s a Jew and to always hide his circumcision because, for him, the hiddenness of Jew and circumcision correspond. When the family first decides to go into hiding rather than be deported from the T. ghetto, his aunt is preoccupied with covering his circumcision: ‘Therefore, the attention of Tania now became focused on my circumcised penis; in the new life stretching before us, it was for grandfather and me the mark of Cain oddly placed on the body of Abel’ (p. 54). The language of this passage combines biblical allusions to the covenant of Abraham and the brothers Cain and Abel, identifying their conflict as particularly Jewish. Begley positions the grandfather and Maciek as being marked with guilt while in possession of innocent bodies, artfully calling attention to their unfounded persecution. If the circumcision is a mark of Cain then it may also be aligned in this way with the yellow star, another blemish on their innocent bodies; like the infant Jewish male who is not given a choice about circumcision, the Jew living under Nazi policies must wear the insignia.

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<sup>331</sup> Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, p. 49

<sup>332</sup> Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, p. 51

Even more so than Maciek, Henryk in *The Jewish War and the Victory* is an example of the complex internal conflict that the hidden male character experiences. Though young, Henryk is aware that his age, religion, and gender make him a danger to himself, his mother, and those hiding them. The potential betrayer, his circumcised penis, is the source of great anxiety. When lost in Warsaw alone, he believes he cannot cry because everyone who might notice a crying child is a perceived spy out to uncover his Jewishness. This fear, though seemingly irrational to the reader, highlights the fact that those hiding externally always feared exposure and the child's reaction to this fear was all the more acute. Henryk agonizes:

*They were just waiting for it. Who? I was not sure who, but I knew they were there, around me, everywhere, in the clatter of the feet on the pavement. [...] Because I was circumcised. This is what I was thinking about when running around in despair among the Sunday crowd who should know nothing about it. [...] Because by then they would have noticed that my hair was too dark, or my shoulders were too high, or my ears were sticking out too much. (p. 34)*

The merging of real and fantastical fears about his circumcision symbolizes Henryk's Jewish identity. Like many of the other authors, Grynberg also makes use of stereotypes, producing the kind of image of the Jew that Henryk might have seen in caricature on propaganda; the discovery of these stereotypical attributes would logically follow the revelation of his circumcision.

Appelfeld's Tzili is an important figure of the female Jew as the site for the future of the Jewish people. Because while in hiding Tzili experiences her first menstruation, her first sexual encounter, and her first pregnancy, she undergoes all the potential growth of the female body between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, including a miscarriage and beatings for a body that tempts men. In this way, Tzili's Otherness is reinforced by her gender because her femaleness imbues her with a further alien characteristic that poses a threat to her safety. Tzili's position as a female protagonist may, as Naomi Sokoloff

argues, ‘bring to fictional life Bakhtin’s premise that it is the most marginalized discourse that can most fully transform established opinion’.<sup>333</sup> The creation of life between Tzili and the escaped camp inmate, Mark, suggests the potential for Jewish life after the Holocaust. The loss of the baby in Italy as she awaits a boat to the Holy Land indicates that in order for Tzili, who is still a child herself, to move forward with her life, she must relinquish the past. Tzili’s resilience to her body’s suffering counters the universal vulnerability attributed to both females and children. Similar to *Moni*, in many ways the narrative reduces Tzili to a body that must change and suffer without individual agency.

In Gille’s novel, Léa’s gender identity begins with her early introduction at the convent and repetition of the description ‘little girl’, clearly identifying her as young and female. When Sister Saint-Gabriel takes Léa into Paris to look for her parents, she is advised to hand her over to the proper welfare services. But, the nun resists, noting that they ‘hadn’t time to pay attention to the fate of one little girl, and a Jewish one at that’ (p. 52). This language suggests that Léa’s status as a little girl who is also Jewish makes her negligible. Likewise, as a site that has the potential to reproduce Jews, Léa’s post-war refusal to participate in her Jewishness or in relationships with men suggests that the Holocaust has successfully prevented the perpetuation of Jewishness through herself and her potential children. Léa’s body also participates in this refusal to reproduce; at the age of eighteen, she has still not menstruated, ‘which serves to reinforce the idea that she is still, and always will remain, a child in hiding.’<sup>334</sup>

The female gender of the three protagonists in the non-traditional narrative category strongly influences their particular positions of marginalization. Contrary to traditional literature that portrays the female gender as weaker and more vulnerable than the male, as well as in need of protection by and from them, these female characters act as agents for their own lives as much as they are able to under societal constraints. The

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<sup>333</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 205

<sup>334</sup> Berger, ‘Hidden Children’, p. 26

authors remove both the female and the child from the role of victim by attempting to define the characters' own identities within and despite the Holocaust. Ellen, Lore, and Dita all grow into young womanhood within the Holocaust and each demonstrates the capacity for survival that was least expected of female Jews. However, the character's relationship to her female identity is itself 'filtered through other identities that have shaped the experience of being alienated and/or marginalized not only as survivors of the Holocaust, but also as women'.<sup>335</sup>

Within Holocaust literature Ellen's position as a *Mischling*, or mixed girl, presents a unique perspective from which to narrate. The mixed girl who is coming of age may represent a space between cultures and generations and may also function as a mediator for history and the present.<sup>336</sup> According to Michaela Grobbel, Ellen's 'ethnically and "racially" "mixed" body of the girl is both recovered from historical invisibility and functions as a *figura* to represent a configuration of past and present, in which "difference" does not constitute the basis for persecution and violence.'<sup>337</sup> As a signifier of the girl's innocence and yet sexual difference, Ellen's *Mischling* body is representative of multiple differences, ethnically, culturally, religiously, racially, and so forth. The mixed girl's body suggests these differences while also acting as a form and place of resistance to persecution, violence, and definition, underscoring the connection between female subjectivity and representations of the past.<sup>338</sup>

One example of the function of Ellen's body in *Herod's Children* is that she is not subjected to the same physical cruelty that her more-Jewish friends experience. The scene in which Ellen is questioned about suspected resistance activity and is confronted with the separate capture of her friend, Bibi, demonstrates the separateness of Ellen's body as a mixed girl from that of the fully Jewish girl. Bibi is subject to severe beatings whereas

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<sup>335</sup> Remmler, p. 171

<sup>336</sup> Grobbel, p. 71

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Grobbel, p. 79

Ellen is spared, denied sharing the physical suffering of her Jewish friends with whom she sought to belong. Fully Jewish Bibi is stripped of her appearance as a body when she is described as only ‘a wet bloody mass’ (p. 185). And, although Bibi comprehends their helplessness, Ellen declares that she will free all of their friends (p. 186). Through the suffering inflicted on Bibi’s body and the denial of equal suffering on Ellen’s half-Jewish body, Bibi is represented as a victim and Ellen as an agent for resistance, though not the active kind of which she is accused and seeks to accomplish. Ellen’s derisive attitude toward the guard’s position of power is ‘typical of the kind of spiritual resistance marshaled in the novel against Nazi violence’.<sup>339</sup> Although the guard has captured and beaten Bibi, Ellen’s refusal to show fear suggests a private strength that perhaps stems from her identity as a *Mischling* girl.

Similarly, as a refugee, Lore’s marginalized position represents the position of women and their Holocaust stories within the field. Here the muted voice of the refugee child can merge with that of the woman. Lore does not develop interests in the opposite sex through adolescence and relinquishes her one university crush to an American who she views as being more beautiful and less awkward. Like Léa’s inability to connect romantically in *Shadows of a Childhood*, Lore’s underdevelopment stems from being a Jewish refugee. In conversation with a friend of her mother’s, Lizzi, who is also a refugee, Lore wonders what fault she possesses that makes her invisible to and awkward around the opposite gender. Lizzi replies that nothing is wrong with Lore, “‘but you may be one of those women who take a long time to grow up,’” (p. 181). Lizzi’s response pinpoints one of the consequences of Lore’s experience in that her refugee childhood has shaped her post-war young adulthood. Her feelings of inadequacy about her appearance develop out of Lore’s marginalized Jewish refugee identity. Like Ellen, Lore is positioned on the outside of the physical violence inflicted on other Jews who have stayed behind in

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<sup>339</sup> Marlene E. Heinemann, *Gender and Destiny: Women Writers and the Holocaust* (New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 145-146

Austria, leaving her body free from bodily suffering at the hands of the Nazis. Thus, the pardoning of her Jewish body from the same Jewish suffering positions Lore as an outsider to other persecuted European Jews.

For different reasons, the female body plays a significant role in *Dita Saxova*. Lustig's choice of a young woman as a protagonist has invited scrutiny from critics and readers because he deliberately focuses on female experiences 'such as rape or prostitution, while obscuring the experience within [the] male perspective'.<sup>340</sup> However, Lustig's exploration of the young female Holocaust and post-Holocaust experience also invites introspection because he unselfconsciously admits that his representation of the female comes from his opinions and observations of them, which underscores my argument that identity was compelled from outside. Hence, while the reader is seemingly being given an intimate examination of Dita's interior workings, the author always gestures to their external origins.

Dita's sexuality is ambiguous because on the one hand it turns her into an object of male desire in ways that could be dangerous while on the other hand it may be used to fortify her own power and security.<sup>341</sup> This exploration of the duality to Dita's budding sexuality reinforces Lustig's claim of respect and admiration for women.<sup>342</sup> In an interview, he explains:

I like women, I respect women, and I tell you, I had a beautiful mother. [...] Strong. Really a beautiful woman. And I saw women in camps, and I tell you it has nothing to do with sex, only respect. [...] You know, I saw, in Auschwitz, my mother naked. It's not very nice to see your mother naked in mud and in the rain and freezing, because there is a beauty about women, and we all feel it. [...] So I

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<sup>340</sup> Heinemann, p. 4

<sup>341</sup> Charlson, p. 782

<sup>342</sup> Trucks and Lustig, p. 74



learned to respect them very much because when two people suffer and one is male and one is a woman, the woman suffers ten times more.<sup>343</sup>

Although this final edict on degree of suffering is controversial, Lustig comes from the position of having observed his mother, completely vulnerable and victimized, naked and brutalized, and the internalization of this memory is transformed into his writings about women. Another potential reason for choosing a female protagonist could be that it afforded the opportunity to narrate the non-traditional story of the survivor: it does not '[describe] daily life in a concentration or death camp, as many of the stories focused on men do', even as the events and aftereffects of the Holocaust are ever-present in the central consciousness of the novel.<sup>344</sup> The emphasis on Dita's body is one way that Lustig represents the female experience; at times her body is what defines her through her Aryan beauty, her youth, and her ability to give pleasure through sex. Dita not only is aware of the effect her body has on others but also of a feeling of nakedness with them and with herself, a rawness and exposure that perhaps comes from her survivorship (p. 97). In this way, Dita is an example of representing the female body as both a site and source of shame and as place of resistance to loss of identity.<sup>345</sup>

Dita is particularly remarkable as a body because she survived the war without being sexually abused. Her scars and her survivor status are not visible to the naked eye because 'outwardly, a person could look normal' (p. 1), and she is able to 'enjoy her fresh skin and unscarred body, which not everyone else could boast' (ibid.). The caretaker of the girls' home, Mr. Goldblat, remarks about the young survivors: 'They were all hungry, for better and for worse, for everything. Their bodies demanded more than pleasure—hidden appetites with anxiety' (p. 3). The survivor's body is personified here, capable of appetite and anxiety, the incarnation of cravings previously denied. Their bodies are the site and source of their pain but also the hope for the future and the promises they

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Charlson, p. 782

<sup>345</sup> Remmler, p. 176

suggest. Lustig portrays Dita as acutely aware of living in a sexualized world and possessing a sexualized body, though she is yet unsure of its meaning. She thinks, 'Everybody and everything was obsessed with bodies. She did and did not understand why' (p. 17). Just as girls and women often used their bodies to survive during the war, Dita wonders how she can or should use her body in her present, capitulating to what others want without knowing fully what she wants: 'She thought about her mind and her body. How far could she go in using them for an end that would inevitably lead to further complications?' (p. 20). Ultimately, though she will trade her body in exchange for a brief connection, she does not view her physical maturity positively, reflecting that 'a girl's body changes from a promise into a burden' (p. 88). And, even in the moment of her death, Dita is just a body, her accidental suicide reducing her to the very thing that perplexed, terrified, and empowered her: 'She slipped and fell. Her body collided with rocks, ice, and snow' (p. 350). Like Moni's death in which Ka-tzetnik focuses on his free-willed limbs, Lustig tellingly writes that 'her body', rather than 'Dita' herself, is what crashes to the bottom.

Many of the texts explore the inverted gender roles in the Holocaust world, such as the man's inability to provide for his family or the young boy's feminized sexuality. The authors frequently focus on how a person's experience is reduced to or dictated by their body such as through hunger, disease, pain, puberty, or sex. The authors emphasize an inherent betrayal on the part of the protagonists' bodies such as Gyuri's in its degradation, Moni's by being too skinny, Henryk's with its circumcision, and Dita's for its desirability. The novels also explore the particular concepts of the Jewish body that separate the characters from others, especially the male circumcised penis. Naturally occurring changes to the body such as a girl's menstruation take on new and terrifying meanings in extremity. All of the changes of the protagonists' bodies, from illness to puberty, serve to emphasize their feelings of Otherness.

### Three-fold identities and prematurity

Through a discussion of how children were perceived and perceived themselves, these works represent how the youngest victims experienced and responded to the event differently from adults, expanding a reader's awareness of the complexities of the Holocaust. Susan Rubin Suleiman identifies 'premature bewilderment and helplessness'<sup>346</sup> as key aspects of the uniqueness of the child's experience, which counteracted complete identity formation. The operative word for Suleiman is 'premature' because 'the specific experience of children was that the trauma occurred (or at least, began) before the formation of stable identity that we associate with adulthood, and in some cases before any conscious sense of self'.<sup>347</sup> The novels all highlight the significance of the war and its aftermath in the formation of a solid sense of personal identity separate from, say, 'the Jews'.<sup>348</sup> They represent children of the Holocaust who are never able to separate their Jewish identity from the experience, whether it is in hiding, incarceration, exile, or survival. Having once been defined and their childhood shaped by the consequences of that definition, they must confront their identities through this frame of reference.

Representations of the Holocaust child reveal 'a place where childhood intersects with other categories of social identity. The analysis of multiple categories of identity is an inevitable part of the process.'<sup>349</sup> The child characters exemplify what it meant to be defined under Nazi laws and how these imposed definitions shaped not only their childhoods but also their sense of self as they matured. In ghettos or camps, the texts emphasize the degradation of body and spirit and animal qualities necessary to survive, becoming the embodiment of Nazi classifications of Jews as not human. This factors into an examination of how animality and other nonhuman properties figure into explorations

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<sup>346</sup> Suleiman, '1.5 Generation', p. 277

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Suleiman, '1.5 Generation' p. 290

<sup>349</sup> Baxter, p. 83

of the young identity and what constitutes being a person. Through the lens of daily degradation of the human body and spirit, the characters confront what it means to be a Jew conflicted from all sides. Narratives about hiding explore identity in many similar ways to those of incarceration while placing particular emphasis on being an outsider, how Otherness is marked physically and practically, and close examinations of the characters' post-war selves. The non-traditional narrative examples approach their female protagonists primarily through how each particular experience influenced her identity before, during, and after the events of the war. The authors focus on the influences of partial persecution, exile, and survival in conjunction with their ages, identification with Judaism, and their position as a girl. Together, these attributes structure the characters' three-fold identities, which contributes to the survivor-writers' examinations of the child's perspective on the Holocaust.

## Chapter IV: Child-space – Places of the Holocaust Novel

We felt at home nowhere, we found help nowhere.  
SAUL FRIEDLÄNDER<sup>350</sup>

“There is a place on earth that is a vast desolate wilderness, a place populated by shadows of the dead in their multitudes, a place where the living are dead, where only death, hate and pain exist.”  
GIULIANA TEDESCHI<sup>351</sup>

### Introduction: Places of the Holocaust

This chapter argues that the novels create a Holocaust child-space, which may be defined as a new world fashioned from the changes compelled on traditional places of childhood in extremity. This space is explored in the various ways through which the children relate to the places around them and their place in the world, highlighting the transformative potential of place for the Holocaust child. The new child-space raises important questions: When place is often equated with the destruction of communities, deaths of families, loss, and absence, how do these narratives about the Holocaust reconstruct the concept of place, give it meaning, and represent it from a child’s perspective? How may place be narrated when its young experiencer is displaced, uprooted from home, and in a state of constant transformation? The scope of representations of the child-space includes pre-war cities and villages, ghettos, rural hiding places, the transitional and disordered spaces of the period after liberation of refugees roving or returning to homelands, and sites of exile as in the *Kindertransport* and resettlement after displacement. The authors examine how the characters’ relationships to the places of their particular Holocaust period also construct the more general war and genocide in significant ways. Representations of the child’s experience offer glimpses into the relationship to temporary or emergent spaces that ‘come to be recognized as full-fledged, autonomous places with their own identities and internal dynamics’, such as the concentration

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<sup>350</sup> Saul Friedländer, *When Memory Comes* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 161

<sup>351</sup> Giuliana Tedeschi, *There is a Place on Earth: A Woman in Birkenau*, trans. by Tim Parks (Suffolk, UK: Lime Tree, 1993) p. 1

camp.<sup>352</sup> These glimpses offer a new site of exploration of the Holocaust in the establishment of the child-space.

French Buchenwald survivor, writer, and political activist David Rousset coined his term ‘concentrationary universe’ to signify a particular space and its system, disclosing the hidden and hierarchical structure of a unique space of systematic terror.<sup>353</sup> However, it can extend to other spaces of the Holocaust, such as the ghetto or hiding places, to depict the ‘political system of terror whose aim was to demolish the social humanity of all its actual and potential victims within and beyond the actual sites.’<sup>354</sup> The concentrationary concept can also be applied to the child-space, describing a world of inverted meaning in which the ordinary rules by which people lived no longer applied and were replaced by other, more troubling, standards. Additionally, Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi notes that Rousset’s term may not be confined to the geographical limits of the concentration camp, but could indicate the universal state of the European Jew during World War II who was marked for extermination, whether imprisoned in a ghetto or camp, hiding on false papers, or physically hidden away.<sup>355</sup> Ezrahi also identifies a linguistic reading of Rousset’s term as ‘a self- contained world [that] both generated its own vocabulary and invested common language with new, sinister meanings’.<sup>356</sup> Rousset’s universe implies the novel space of the Holocaust in which these works represent the restricting and rearranging of persecuted Jews across both broad and narrow geographical boundaries. In particular, for the youngest victims, whose natural growth was inhibited by such restructuring and restricting, these narratives convey childhood places such as play areas or homes that are distinct from traditional definitions, thereby generating a child-space unique to the Holocaust.

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<sup>352</sup> Eric Prieto, *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 1

<sup>353</sup> David Rousset, *A World Apart*, trans. by Yvonne Moyses and Roger Senhouse (London: Secker and Warburg, 1951)

<sup>354</sup> Pollock and Silverman, p. 19

<sup>355</sup> Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature* (Chicago and London: The University of London Press, 1980), p. 10

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

Place also plays an important role in the survivor-writers' post-war and post-liberation lives, which trickles into their literature. Some authors were faced with displacement from pre-war places and forced to deal with traumatic dislocation to new unfamiliar settings and homes. Appelfeld and Ka-tzetnik immigrated to Israel, Begley and Segal moved to the United States, and Grynberg followed two decades later to escape Communism. Survivor-writers that remained in or returned to their home countries faced different kinds of space-related traumas. The pre-war landscapes had changed during long years of occupation and war and with new political regimes, while the absence of entire Jewish communities changed the fabric of life. Aichinger remained in Austria and was one of the first to write about the Holocaust for German-speaking audiences, and orphaned Gille remained in France, only finding her place as a child survivor later in life. Lustig stayed in Czechoslovakia, Wojdowski in Poland, and Kertész in Hungary, all countries that fell in the post-war Eastern Bloc, which brought its own official narrative of anti-Fascism while discouraging stories of a Jewish Holocaust. The places in which the authors wrote their novels thus profoundly influence the writing of these wartime narratives, their publication, translation, and dissemination.

The novels themselves are the survivors' attempts to 'contain the overpowering enormities of experience in some manageable space' and to find meaning in liminal spaces.<sup>357</sup> The author is also placed in a space between understanding the Holocaust and endeavoring to find a middle ground between justifications and bemusement. Giorgio Agamben argues that understanding of the event will take place in the liminal space, writing that '[some] want to understand too much and too quickly; they have explanations for everything. Others refuse to understand; they offer only cheap mystifications. The only way forward lies in investigating the space between these two options'.<sup>358</sup> Although Agamben speaks metaphorically, the novels navigate the liminal space of the Holocaust

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<sup>357</sup> Rosenfeld, *A Double Dying*, p. 51

<sup>358</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 13

and the child. Jewish authors who have survived the Holocaust confront these issues in their literary imaginations, focusing on the losses, absences, and liminal spaces of those who were deprived of traditional spaces such as cities, homes, workplaces, parks, and proper burial sites.<sup>359</sup> In this way, the novel can be a space where survivor-writers investigate responses to the particular experience of the child during the Holocaust, moving beyond established categories to combine witnessing with invention.<sup>360</sup> Like the child-space in which it is set, the survivor's novel is also liminal; set between the real and imagined, it acts as a site for working through and discovering meaning, which parallels the child's development.

These works take into consideration the different ways that not only Jews knew space but also how children view it in contrast to adults. The new Holocaust child-space evolves from the inversion of traditional places of childhood for play, education, and nurturing. Jane Eva Baxter explains the age-related differences:

Adults use inference to estimate relationships between different places and things, while children do not have the range of previous experiences or the level of cognitive development required to use inference as an effective means of interacting with the environment.<sup>361</sup>

Tuan's analysis is represented in the narratives by the characters' quick adaptation to the changed nature and expectations of their environments, such as Aichinger's use of the cemetery for a game of hide-and-seek when the children are deprived of parks and playgrounds. Before the protagonists are compelled out into the inverted world where they must discover place independently from traditional and adult understandings, the texts often include a view of the protagonist as situated in a unified world, such as Segal's first chapter in Austria before Lore becomes a refugee or Begley beginning with Maciek's

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<sup>359</sup> Amir Eshel, 'Cosmopolitanism and Searching for the Sacred Space in Jewish Literature', *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 9.3 (2003), pp. 121-138 (p. 133)

<sup>360</sup> Horowitz, *Voicing the Void*, p. 8

<sup>361</sup> Baxter, p. 68



early years in T. before the occupation. This sets the stage for the contrast between the characters' pre-Holocaust places and the narrative present's child-space, which emphasizes the importance of place to the child character by confronting the issue of space in the context of the Holocaust. Scenes of post-war life may suggest an affirmation of a potential place for the Jewish characters beyond the framework of death and dislocation, one that the survivor-writer must find for him or herself. The child-space acts as an alternative worldview that has access to the adult world as well as the underrepresented child's one.

More generally, places may be considered 'centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied';<sup>362</sup> these needs are also necessary for a child's normal development. The novels represent the often distorted and deficient fulfillment of these needs in extremity. Tuan describes place as space that has been endowed with value and knowledge. He argues that as ideas, 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition; 'from the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa.'<sup>363</sup> Ezrahi articulates the spatial changes for Jews after the Holocaust as one of a double cultural loss because the Jew has lost the ancestral home and sacred center of Jerusalem after the destruction of the Second Temple and now experiences the loss of their diasporic homelands in Europe.<sup>364</sup> This is trebled for the Jewish children who also lose the traditional places of childhood, from home to school. The formation of the child-space highlights the fact that places are changeable sites of everyday life and power, which influence identity and experience.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1977), p. 4

<sup>363</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 6

<sup>364</sup> Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 144

<sup>365</sup> Dalia Kandiyoti, "'Our Foothold in Buried Worlds' Place and Holocaust Consciousness and Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*", *Contemporary Literature* 45.2 (2004), pp. 300-330 (p. 302)

The Holocaust and war-torn Europe are instances of vast landscapes of fear for the young protagonists. In *Landscapes of Fear* Tuan originates the titular term, which signifies both concrete environments and psychological states.<sup>366</sup> He describes such landscapes as ‘almost infinite manifestations of the forces for chaos, natural and human’ and that human constructions are efforts to contain the chaos.<sup>367</sup> But places themselves are not solely responsible for the fearful landscapes that the characters traverse, as the Final Solution attests. Tuan claims:

People are our greatest source of security, but also the most common cause of our fear. They can be indifferent to our needs, betray our trust, or actively seek to do us harm. They [...] haunt our landscapes, transforming the countryside, the city streets, and the schoolyard—themselves designed to nurture the human enterprise—into places of dread.<sup>368</sup>

In some of the texts these are clearly Nazis and Germans, in others unspecified soldiers or secret police, and in still others their very friends and neighbors. Tuan argues that the child’s fears are manifold; as children age and move away from their known worlds, they become more aware of dangers both real and imaginary.<sup>369</sup> As the characters enter the child-space, their consciousness of the reformed environment also heightens their awareness of the danger to their lives.

The changed experiences of space and meanings of place in the Holocaust shapes the child-centered novel not only by providing setting but also in the establishment of the distinct child-space. When examining the representations of child-space in ghettos, camps, hiding places, exile, and post-war sites, several important strategies that the authors use are revealed. Each of the child-spaces are both a part of and separate from the space around them: the ghetto is a walled off portion of a bigger city; the camp is a

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<sup>366</sup> Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 6

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, p. 8

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

structured place that may or may not be close to cities or villages but is always separated by high fences and guard towers; hiding places require either physical seclusion or identity suppression; exile necessitates physical removal from previous homes and installation in unfamiliar places; and post-war returns to pre-war places suggests the changed nature of both space and inhabitants. The characters are often either confined in their movement or frequently moving between spaces, between cities or from the city to the wilderness or countryside, which contributes to the destabilization of identity as explored in the previous chapter. The characters occupy liminal and paradoxical spaces in their shifts between rural and urban environments. Through an examination of the specific sites to which the protagonist attaches meaning, which may or may not include a solid concept of 'home', the author illustrates how the child-space investigates built environments during the Holocaust. As the survivor-writers explore the range of geographic experience, the characters' attachments to and the degree to which they identify with their nationalities and homelands finds parallels between disparate locations. The authors construct this new child-space by composing their narrative spaces in particular ways, such as the recurrent creation of the sense of a 'closed world' in which both the character and reader are confined.<sup>370</sup>

In order to highlight the importance of the child-space, this chapter is organized into four sections that each focus on one approach of the narratives about young Jews that span the divide of differing experiences and places. The first section focuses on the characters moving between traditional boundaries and definitions of rural and urban spaces. Part two emphasizes the meaning ascribed to certain sites, such as built places like homes. The third section examines how identities may be tied to place through notions of nationhood and homeland or lack thereof. And the fourth section looks at how authors create their particular narrative spaces with the child's viewpoint. While many of the places described in the narratives may be real or based on real places, this chapter

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<sup>370</sup> Reiter, p. 87 and Des Pres, p. 115

explores representations of place and not the places themselves. How do these fictions contribute to an understanding of the places of the Holocaust through representations of iconic sites such as the Warsaw Ghetto and Auschwitz as well as recognizable but more indefinable sites such as the wilderness and therefore construct a new child-space unique to the Holocaust? Ascribing to Tuan's description of place as space that has been transformed by acquiring definition and value,<sup>371</sup> this examination of the child-space is shaped around how the characters give them meaning or how meaning is placed upon them externally.

### **Liminal and paradoxical spaces: Between boundaries of the rural and urban**

Central to all of the narratives are the concepts of spaciousness or movement and placelessness, suggesting that the child-space is not fixed and immutable. In some, such as Begley or Aichinger, the ability to move beyond boundaries from one place to another provides the child with an illusion of autonomy, whereas in others, like Wojdowski or Ka-tzetnik, the inability to move is what defines the characters' relationships with place. Tuan associates spaciousness with a sense of freedom, which implies having room and power to act. He argues: 'Fundamental is the ability to transcend the present condition, and this transcendence is most simply manifest as the elementary power to move. In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced.'<sup>372</sup> People require both the freedom of space and the stability of or attachment to place; the child-space is defined by an absence of this transcendence. Clearly, as Jews experiencing the Holocaust, a lack of freedom is implicit in their representations. However, definitions of confinement and openness are not immovable, as Tuan expounds, '[in] open space one can become intensely aware of place; and in the solitude of a sheltered place the vastness of space beyond acquires a haunting presence.'<sup>373</sup> Built environments also clarify social roles and

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<sup>371</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 136

<sup>372</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 52

<sup>373</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 54

relations so that the young characters learn how to act based on their surroundings;<sup>374</sup> one example of this corollary is how Moni features in the hierarchy outlined in Ka-tzetnik's Auschwitz. The ghetto and camp are examples of how manmade places of confinement influence those who occupy them, the differences between cities, rural villages, and the wilderness highlights the positions of those hiding in them, and in exile or post-war settings, place has ambiguous meanings of belonging and insecurity. This movement between urban and rural spaces underscores the liminality of the characters themselves.

The child-space is a liminal space where the young characters frequently occupy places that have been refashioned for Final Solution purposes or that exist between worlds, which exaggerates their essential placelessness. As Appelfeld remarks on the way that he became familiar with these absurd new spaces, 'I had come from the camps and the forests, from a world that embodied the absurd, and nothing in that world was foreign to me'.<sup>375</sup> In analyzing Kafka's work, Appelfeld reads much of the Jewish experience of the pre-war world into the Holocaust one, writing, 'behind the mask of placelessness and homelessness in [Kafka's] work stood a Jewish man, like me, from a half-assimilated family, whose Jewish values had lost their content, and whose inner space was barren and haunted'.<sup>376</sup> This placelessness, the comfort in the absurd, and the disturbed inner space can be recognized in many of the works discussed here in which mostly assimilated children must confront their Jewishness in the changed landscape of the Final Solution. For example, narratives that include time in the wilderness often have the motif of both escape and return, emphasizing its liminality through its dual purpose.

The ghetto and concentration camp are more iconic places for representations, but the wilderness could also be host to a variety of interesting characters. 'Occupied by forest fugitives, peasants, partisans and, frequently, Nazi troops, the forest [was] another

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<sup>374</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 102

<sup>375</sup> Aharon Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair: Three Lectures and a Conversation with Philip Roth* (New York: Fromm International Publishing, 1993), p. 63

<sup>376</sup> Appelfeld, *Beyond Despair*, p. 63

important socio-spatial arena for agency and power relations,' as well as one charged with subjective meaning and culture.<sup>377</sup> The novels may illustrate how these were also transformed spatially with its inhabitants building shelters below and above ground, which both posed dangers and offered protection. For example, the forest as a liminal space acts as a reflection of Tzili's liminal position as a Jew and a child and facilitates her transformation. Conversely, Henryk's time in the forest emphasizes the temporary nature of the human presence there, as the extreme discomfort leads his mother to expedite their departure and the narrator stresses that those who stayed were killed. The Holocaust's occupation of every available space including forest and field departs from traditional images of 'unpeopled wilderness'.<sup>378</sup> Western thought about nature that is preserved in literary representations comprises several meanings. According to Suzanne Weiner Weber:

First, forests symbolize natural purity. Second, forests are comprised of trees both new and ancient, tangled shrubs and swamps - a home to various types of flora and fauna, but devoid of cultural production. Especially within Western ideologies, forests are scary places. They represent pre-human, uncultivated and uncivilised spaces controlled by Mother Nature rather than humans.<sup>379</sup>

This traditional view of the wilderness is in part one of the many reasons that characters may seek to hide there presumably beyond the reach of those who hunt them. However, the multitude of characters within its confines bring with them their cultural ideologies and reconstruct them within the forest; for example, the Polish partisans in *Wartime Lies* have brought their anti-Semitism so they unsurprisingly turn the Jewish partisan, Bern, over to the Germans.

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<sup>377</sup> Suzanne Weiner Weber, 'The Forest as a Liminal Space: A Transformation of Culture and Norms during the Holocaust', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 14.1 (2008), pp. 35-60 (p. 37)

<sup>378</sup> Weber, p. 38

<sup>379</sup> Weber, p. 38

The countryside, which may be defined as the agricultural fields and rural villages that generally border the wilderness, often looks picturesque to outsiders but its inhabitants are exposed to different kinds of violence and dangers, from highwaymen to natural elements, oppression from landlords to the powerlessness of the migrant, shattering earlier illusions of the peace of the countryside. In contrast, the city has been perceived as the pinnacle of human achievement and yet exemplifies the chaos they seek to control: the disparity between classes, noise, clutter, grime, confusing labyrinth of streets and buildings, dangers of traffic, fire, overcrowding because of growing populations, violence in the streets, disease spreading in close quarters, and social environment.<sup>380</sup> Although the city represents human power over nature, it is also paradoxically where old fears persist. As Tuan remarks, ‘The urban sprawl, for example, is seen as a jungle, a chaos of buildings, streets, and fast-moving vehicles that disorient and alarm newcomers.’<sup>381</sup> The characters that occupy either or both of these spaces absorb their earlier meanings while also transforming them into Holocaust places to create the child-space.

In his work examining literary representations of the English countryside and city, Raymond Williams notes that the concepts of the places ‘country’ and ‘city’ have changed over time and carry both positive and negative connotations. Positive attributes associated with the country have included ideas of a more natural living, innocence, and peace, whereas the city has been associated with ideas of achievement, learning, and communication.<sup>382</sup> In such a way, the contrast between the country and city resembles the child-adult dichotomy. On the other hand, Williams notes that powerful hostile associations relegate the city to ‘a place of noise, worldliness and ambition [...] [and] the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation’.<sup>383</sup> Many of the texts highlight

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<sup>380</sup> Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, pp. 130-174

<sup>381</sup> Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, p. 9

<sup>382</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 2011), p. 1

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*

the intricacies of communities in the city or country, and the distinctions between the two, by representing how experiences differed based on location. Although literature has often separated the country and the city,<sup>384</sup> within the child-space these works necessarily combine attributes of each as their characters navigate them both for different reasons and to different ends. When examining rural and urban spaces, Williams draws on authors such as Balzac, Dostoyevsky, and Baudelaire, who share representational ideals of the Holocaust narrative. For example, Balzac has shown the social intricacy of the city and its constant mobility, although never understating the danger of this position.<sup>385</sup> Some examples of the ways the novels illustrate this complexity are by portraying characters who are comfortable in their social positions in the city thrust into a world of hardship, the changed interactions between hidden Jews and those among whom they hide, or the struggles of returning home after the conflict's end. For those characters from the country, the city is viewed with less comfort, more in line with Williams' analysis of Dostoyevsky who 'emphasised the elements of mystery and strangeness and the loss of connection'.<sup>386</sup> The city itself also has a social character: 'its transitoriness, its unexpectedness, its essential and exciting isolation and procession of men and events— [which are] seen as the reality of all human life'.<sup>387</sup> But Williams' analysis of Baudelaire is perhaps most relevant to the Holocaust child-space; Baudelaire identified the same isolation and loss of connection among city dwellers, but found from these conditions a new and lively perception, perhaps most conducive to the Jew seeking to reinvent himself.<sup>388</sup>

### Iconic incarcerations

Wojdowski's novel is an entirely urban work confined to Warsaw, Poland; David and his family originally live in the city proper and are then confined to the ghetto with

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<sup>384</sup> Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 264

<sup>385</sup> Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 234

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.



brief glimpses of occupied Warsaw. Essentially, *Bread for the Deported* is a profile of the Warsaw Ghetto itself, which is a unique space in history and for David's child-space. The focus on every day life of ghetto inhabitants explores the particular place of the Jewish urban ghetto under Nazi policies. Although Jewish ghettos were not new places in European history, the Nazi ghettos transformed these old means of confining Jews into a more conscious effort of decimation 'through pauperization, epidemic, and increased death rates'.<sup>389</sup> Thus, although situated within the city of Warsaw, the ghetto is a unique urban space whose history and development is inextricable from David's experience inside it. Tuan writes that '[an] ethnic ghetto can often give a deceptive impression of unity. The houses, streets, people, and activities have a distinctive stamp, from which an outsider may infer a community of interests, a wide social bond that is not there.'<sup>390</sup> Through David's development in his child-space, Wojdowski highlights the contradictory sense of belonging and isolation of being forced into the Warsaw Ghetto.

Like Wojdowski's focus on the Warsaw Ghetto, *Moni* is set exclusively at another well-known Holocaust location, Auschwitz. The isolation of the camp in rural southern Poland facilitates Ka-tzetnik's closed world and emphasizes Moni's liminal position within it. With its intricate system on a large scale, Auschwitz recreates traditional places as well as establishes its own in order to become an autonomous world, separate from the rural or urban environments that exist outside its gates. Ka-tzetnik's Auschwitz is representative of the concentration camp system or the Final Solution, 'in a metonymic sense, as a synecdoche, a part – particularly an important part – which signifies the whole'.<sup>391</sup> Ka-tzetnik textually recreates the complex system that Rousset described as 'a world set apart, utterly segregated, a strange kingdom with its own peculiar fatality.'<sup>392</sup> As such, Auschwitz and the child-space are comparable as unique worlds developing out

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<sup>389</sup> Christopher R. Browning, 'Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland: 1939-1941' in *Central European History* 19.4 (1986), pp. 343-368 (p. 344)

<sup>390</sup> Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, p. 173

<sup>391</sup> Mary D. Lagerwey, *Reading Auschwitz* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 1998), p. 18

<sup>392</sup> Rousset, p. 12

of the Holocaust. Although the camp is set rurally, Ka-tzetnik's construction of Auschwitz lends it city-like properties because of the nature of the hierarchy of positions and the roles each character fulfills. Furthermore, the use of the word 'Block' to describe the buildings in which groups of inmates live is reminiscent of city blocks. The organization and description of the camp in formerly familiar terms supports the definition of the child-space as traditional places warped by the Holocaust.

Kertész's narrative centers on the movement between urban and rural spaces, beginning and ending in Budapest with the middle set primarily in a labor subcamp of Buchenwald in the agricultural Weimar region of Germany. Rousset describes the location of Buchenwald as positively picturesque: 'The vast, isolated city of Buchenwald: a little guidebook town on the banks of the Weser, *Porta Westfalica*, with hollow hills along the river, and factories which slowly emerge under a world of roots and trees.'<sup>393</sup> Gyuri's description of the scenic site mirrors Rousset, remarking, 'Buchenwald lies on the crest of one of the elevations in a region of hills and dales' (p. 123). The isolation of the camps, which were often removed from large municipalities, accentuates Gyuri's personal separation from home, family, and community. But, like Ka-tzetnik's account of the camp's hierarchy, its structure also emulates the city from which Gyuri was taken. As Rousset describes it, 'Buchenwald was a chaotic city, a kind of half-built metropolis, akin to a mining town in its hastily and summarily established living quarters and its teeming life.'<sup>394</sup> Before Gyuri's deportation, the Budapest of his childhood is gradually disappearing under Nazi occupation. He is no longer allowed to attend school, his father is deported for labor, and Gyuri is conscripted with other boys to work in a local factory. When Gyuri returns to Budapest determined to resume life as before, he finds that while he has changed over the course of his imprisonment, he cannot recognize change in Budapest and its inhabitants. Gyuri's movement between urban Budapest and the rural

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<sup>393</sup> Rousset, p. 1

<sup>394</sup> Rousset, p. 22

camps not only facilitates his own change but also underscores the position of the assimilated Hungarian Jew. He believes he belongs in Budapest but his deportation as a Jew suggests otherwise; his rejection by other Jews in the camps reinforces that Gyuri does not belong in either place, underscoring the liminality of his child-space.

Hiding places: Cities, villages, forests, and fields

The majority of *Wartime Lies* takes place in the urban cities T., Lwów, and Warsaw, and finally on a farm in rural Poland. In the post-war chapter, Maciek lives in the city of Kielce. At the beginning of the narrative, Maciek recounts how he spent holidays at his grandparents' house in the country, describing those visits in classically bucolic terms. The countryside of Maciek's grandparents' home and the Jewish holidays represents the older generation and a reflection of the past, and celebrations, which depict the sentimentalization of Maciek's childhood and escapism from the chaos of lives in the city, juxtaposing what will become his Holocaust child-space. The first important urban transformation takes place when Maciek's grandparents, aunt, and he are moved into T.'s makeshift ghetto with other Jewish families. While the move is jarring on the heels of his father's absence and the 1939 occupation by German forces, the close proximity of family and friends allows for Maciek to accept the new living situation within his hometown; the narrator is suggesting that although Maciek is aware of his new space, he does not yet understand its meaning.

From T., Maciek's move to Lwów is punctuated by further losses—the move of his grandfather to Warsaw, separation from family friends in the apartment building, and the deaths of their German protector and Maciek's grandmother. The departure from T. also precipitates the break from his Jewish self, leaving the ghetto to live under assumed non-Jewish identities where his aunt is now his mother and his name is Janek. From Lwów, they join his grandfather in Warsaw, although they live in separate lodgings to prevent discovery. In Warsaw, they rent rooms in a large apartment shared with other

lodgers; the common displacement of people from their homes during wartime does not necessarily signal ‘hidden Jew’ to their landlady or fellow boarders. This trajectory of Maciek and Tania’s movements between cities is one of the ways in which the narrative illustrates the child-space and is also able to explore many significant events in Poland, such as the Warsaw Uprising. The failed Polish Uprising instigates the expulsion of many Poles from Warsaw; Maciek and Tania are caught up in the chaos of this and they narrowly escape transport to Auschwitz before finding final refuge on a farm. Maciek’s experience of rural places had until then been limited to the aforementioned holidays with his grandparents, but he quickly adapts to and thrives in the demands of country life. However, the welcome anonymity of large cities is replaced by the suspicions of closely connected communities where few outsiders seek entrance.

The presence of the space most commonly associated with the Holocaust, the concentration camp, is keenly felt, despite the fact that Maciek is never in one. As Sue Vice writes, a ‘backdrop of mass murder implicitly infuses Maciek’s experiences’.<sup>395</sup> There are many instances of *Judenaktionen* in the T. ghetto before they go into hiding. These roundups are followed by comments such as ‘My grandparents and I never saw him again’ (p. 48) or that the town has now ‘become *judenrein*’ (p. 59), which signifies the deportees’ fatal destinations. As the round-ups become more frequent, Maciek’s grandfather attempts to explain why Maciek must not be deported alone. The warning implies the grandfather’s insightful presumption that deportation from the ghettoized city leads to death (p. 45). He also mentions ‘concentration camps where people were meant to die’ (p. 71), but if he has any details the grandfather does not provide them within Maciek’s earshot and the narrator provides no explanatory intervention. These menacing spaces outside the city are vague and shapeless, constructed out of legitimate rumors and fear. Any explanation as to how the adults recognize the dangers of events or places is unnecessary because Maciek will accept them unquestioningly. Tania knows that the

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<sup>395</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 72

‘Jews in T. and everywhere else in Poland were as good as dead, but she intended to live and to save [her family]’ (p. 47). The author and reader’s retrospective knowledge of history is reflected in Tania’s keen intuition. Therefore, when they are caught up in the expulsion of Poles from Warsaw and Tania learns the train’s destination is Auschwitz, she intuits the destination’s meaning and the importance of escaping that route (p. 148).

Like *Wartime Lies*, Grynberg’s narrative is also about a hidden child in Poland. However, apart from a brief time in Warsaw, Henryk spends the majority of his time hiding in rural Poland: at a local Polish farm, a dugout in the forest, and an Eastern village. On their way to their first hiding place, his parents decide to leave Henryk's younger brother with a peasant family because he is too young for the demands of internal hiding, especially when his cries might give them away. The loss of the baby marks Henryk’s entrance into the countryside: ‘But Mother turned back with Buciek in her arms, and Father and I reached the countryside without her’ (p. 7). His mother later re-joins them without Buciek and the narrator supplies the boy’s fate: he had been taken into the cottage while his mother watched from a hiding place as soldiers uncover his circumcision and he is taken away. Despite the painful and confusing separation, Henryk remarks, ‘Life was good in the country’ (p. 8). Grynberg juxtaposes the loss of his brother with this praise to reveal how young Henryk innocently views his child-space despite its danger as represented by Buciek’s death.

The difficulties of hiding in the city, such as the close proximity to occupying and betraying forces, are different to those of hiding in the country, which include the suspicions and curiosities of close-knit communities in which neighbors frequently interact. Grynberg highlights the differences between hiding places through Henryk’s extreme anxiety in the city and his relative happiness outside of it. When Henryk is in Warsaw, the sheer number of people disrupts his way of thinking about space that has developed out of hiding in the country. Grynberg writes:

I had not imagined that there could be so many people still left in the world. How could I have? Since the time when our shtetl disappeared I had thought that nothing remained except the fields and forests where we were hiding, that towns had ceased to exist. (p. 29)

Henryk had only known the *shtetl* and the wilderness; the first is a closed off Jewish community isolated from non-Jews in the town and the second his experience of hiding. Grynberg is highlighting the fact that young children perceive their worlds in relation to the places in which they live. Few people occupied Henryk's child-space so he naturally assumed the equivalent for the world at large.

Henryk's mother determines that a remote location where no one could possibly recognize them would be the best place to outlast the war. The remoteness of this countryside village accentuates the emotions of hidden Jews. Henryk claims that the village itself appears 'melancholy':

Or perhaps it only seemed so to us because we knew this was our last refuge. Not because we foresaw that here everything would come to the final resolution and conclusion. We only knew for certain that there was no more escape for us from here. (p. 42)

Unlike other temporal breaks, Grynberg deliberately does not explain how or why Henryk and his mother determine that the melancholy place is the end of their road, which emphasizes the grim reality of their positions. The rural village is in a paradoxical position because it is as far as they can travel eastward and small communities often suffer from superstitious and suspicious natures; however, it is also positioned as a refuge, which is in stark contrast to Warsaw, the city from which they fled for its many dangers. The importance of the village as their ultimate hiding place is marked by the narrator's comment that the last of the Jews who they had first hid with in the forest 'were being wiped out by cold, hunger, and by the band of villains who believed that their bodies and souls contained gold' (p. 44). However, this village is besieged first by the

Germans then the Russians and the civilians are marched and burned out of their homes. They are inadvertently caught in the war itself, which physically changes their landscape. Henryk observes that when the fighting is over, they emerge from where they had fled into the fields onto 'land washed clean with bullets' (p. 58). The cleansing of the land by the battle marks the end of their time under German occupation, suggesting that Henryk's child-space is not fixed and the war has the potential to shape it in a multitude of ways.

After initially trying to resettle in their former *shtetl*, Dobre, Henryk and his mother find it impossible to return to old ways with the decimated Jewish community and occupied property. Joining other refugees, they relocate to war-torn Łódź; the inability to return to pre-war homes and the necessity of replacement reinforces the changed quality of Henryk's child-space. The city has transformed, the burned ghetto becoming this 'exotic, stony landscape' (p. 103), a heap of rubble that his mother cannot bear to see. Henryk discovers that the city is alive in a way that Dobre could not be in the shadows of the dead, observing that 'the streets and gutters were overflowing and pulsed with life' (ibid.). However, the city is also not a suitable place for young children and Henryk and his stepsister are sent to a Jewish Children's Home outside Łódź, while his mother tries to secure visas and money to emigrate out of Poland altogether. This temporary departure from the city is recommended because the poor conditions are perceived to jeopardize the health of children who have been weakened by wartime deprivation (p. 126). Once again, the darker and dirtier image of the city is contrasted with the clean healthfulness of the country. The narrative ends with Henryk in a sanatorium in the mountains, elevated above both city and countryside, suggesting that neither of those wartime places is habitable if he is to move beyond his Holocaust child-space.

Appelfeld deliberately equates wartime with the rural and post-war with the urban when Tzili only enters cities as a refugee, suggesting movement beyond her Holocaust child-space. At the time of an occupation by unnamed soldiers searching for Jews, Tzili lives in a small, unidentified village. During the war, Tzili hides in the woods throughout

the warmer months and poses as a local prostitute's daughter to labor for gentile peasants in the winter; her child-space occupies both an untamed environment and built villages with their tenuous hold on nature. Although not a conscious decision, Tzili flees into the wilderness around her home when first abandoned. Like the denseness of city populations and architecture, the denseness of the wilderness can conceal, illustrating its double-edged image. It can provide sustenance as well as danger, such as from exposure to the elements; its inhabitants can find safety or madness in the isolation. For an ignorant child such as a Tzili, the typical frightening characteristics of the forest may be heightened, or she may find peace in its strangeness. As Tuan describes:

The forest also frightens by its vastness, its breadth and the size of its towering trees being beyond the scale of a child's experience. It is haunted by dangerous beasts. It is the place of abandonment—a dark, chaotic non-world in which one feels utterly lost.<sup>396</sup>

Appelfeld consciously sets Tzili up to succeed in such a place where she could not elsewhere. Tzili's early life experience of solitude and fear have perhaps better prepared her for the traditional fear found in the forest.

Tzili's hiding place is periodically transplanted from open space into village huts in order to represent the population as extremes of the backwardness of historical country stereotypes. Their rural location seems to shelter the cottages from the events of the modern world and warfare, even if not from Jew-seeking soldiers. Tzili's experience with what Appelfeld calls the local 'peasants' demonstrates a less-idealized version than Williams describes, where the closed ranks do not successfully bring neighbors together despite differences.<sup>397</sup> Appelfeld's peasants align more with historical stereotypes whereas city dwellers are depicted as slightly less anti-Semitic, more willing perhaps to help someone in need or, at least, to turn a blind eye, more educated, less dependent on

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<sup>396</sup> Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear*, p. 20

<sup>397</sup> Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 106



religion or superstition, and more worldly about foreigners. Appelfeld's use of the more archaic and pejorative term to designate the uneducated, poor laborers inverts the negative language from the Jews to the Polish peasants.

Tzili's experience of hiding in the countryside also separates her from other Jewish survivors who she meets later. Tzili's differences from others who survived elsewhere are not only spatial but physical and psychological as well, affecting how fellow refugees view her and how she views herself. Because Tzili spent the war years in rural hiding places where she exercised, ingested more vitamins, and enjoyed the sun and fresh air, she does not share the same starved, stricken, and shorn look of the Jews who endured the camps. She is perceived as being healthier and, consequently, less Jewish than the camp refugees with whom she ends the narrative in Naples. Additionally, Tzili survived within a child-space and these adult survivors belonged to a different Holocaust space. Appelfeld's separation of Tzili runs throughout the narrative, from pre-war to post-war, frequently through his trope of muteness; the 'essential silence and control of language in his prose'<sup>398</sup> establishes a child-space that positions her as a universal victim.

When Tzili joins the camp refugees in southward movement out of presumably Eastern Europe, the group never enters a town or city; they sleep in fields and along rivers, walking open roads. Appelfeld's emphasis on the absence of built environment gives the impression of land devoid of civilization, destroyed by war and depleted of people. When the group reaches the Croatian city of Zagreb, the crowds and people are overwhelming after the prolonged period of empty, open space. Appelfeld positions the city as a place of paradoxical pain and hope because in Zagreb Tzili endures her miscarriage but she also receives instructions to continue to Naples for the journey to the British Mandate for Palestine. Appelfeld utilizes the city to highlight Tzili's exit from her Holocaust child-space. Once there, she is able to relinquish some of the responsibility over her life and her choices that had been forced on her in hiding, regaining some sense

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<sup>398</sup> Sicher, p. 19

of childhood through the end of her young pregnancy and receiving aid from the Joint Distribution Committee and the hospital. However, although Tzili is in the midst of a renewal, Appelfeld also stresses that, like the characters, no place has remained unchanged by the events of the war. For example, Naples is described as a place that before the war 'had evidently been a jolly seaside promenade. A few traces of the old life still clung to the peeling walls' (p. 179). Moreover, even though she had been mostly alone in the wilderness, Tzili's sense of isolation is heightened in the bustling city and with the crowds of refugees. 'There was no familiar face to which she could turn, only strange refugees with swollen packs on their backs and hunger and urgency on their faces' (ibid), Appelfeld writes. Tzili's child-space is defined by isolation from others and the world beyond, which is stripped from her by the post-war city.

The wartime setting of *Shadows of a Childhood* is in rural Bordeaux; Léa's post-war years are divided between Bordeaux and urban Paris. The work begins with Léa's arrival in the convent, which is representative of the non-Jewish and frequently Catholic institutions in which Jewish children hid during the war. Léa is a city child with memories of her parents' wealth and the boulevards of Paris. The countryside into which she is transplanted alone is deeply entrenched in the occupation and war, demonstrating that rural isolation does not preclude the war's encroachment. Removed from the cosmopolitan metropolis, Léa's installation in the remote Catholic institution also emphasizes the 'backwardness' of strict adherence to religion in the country. Bordeaux is significant as the place to where her family fled from Nazi-occupied Paris and where she will live with Bénédicte's family after the war despite never feeling at home. Conversely, when the nun and child go to Paris in search of word of Léa's deported parents, the country nun feels out of place in the bustling city, whereas Léa temporarily comes alive when she knows she is on familiar streets. However, the reality of the post-war city does not match her childishly embellished memories and she can no longer recognize it. Space

functions here as a visible manifestation of the changes wrought on the young protagonist.

Despite Léa's post-war experience of relative freedom of movement, her traumas restrict her emotionally and psychologically; her obsession with war crimes trials and all Holocaust-related news is consuming, trapping her forever in her Holocaust child-space in the place of victim, hidden child, and Jewish orphan. However, in her post-war future, she feels the attraction of her original home city, Paris, heedless of her guardians' misgivings. Williams notes that it is significant that 'the common image of the country is now an image of the past, and the common image of the city an image of the future'.<sup>399</sup> He identifies the struggle between the pull of the country and the idea of the city as one between, on the one hand, older human, natural ways and, on the other, progress, modernization, and development.<sup>400</sup> Léa's move from the country into the city as a young adult signifies the movement away from her Holocaust child-space toward a post-war future and the potential to put her trauma behind her, a movement that was unique to her geographical location in France and particular experience of hiding and orphanhood.

#### The unchosen choice of movement

The majority of *Herod's Children* is confined to an anonymous city, first occupied by secret police or soldiers who are likely German and lastly under siege by liberating forces. Ellen's child-space is defined by her essential captivity within this city. One chapter depicts its protagonist attempting to flee the city but only being driven in circles, emphasizing the futility of attempting escape from her child-space. In another chapter, Ellen successfully leaves the city hidden on an armament train, following the path of her deported friends and seeking to rescue, or join, them. Ellen's inability to reach the camp symbolizes that she is not Jewish enough to join her friends in their spaces. She is captured by policemen and interrogated for suspected resistance activities before the

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<sup>399</sup> Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 297

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

guards realize she is both too young and too innocent to partake in the crimes of which she is accused. The interrogation occurs in a rural town celebrating Christmas Eve; the guardhouse is isolated and the village is shuttered from the snow, excluding Ellen from the warmth of their houses and their Christian celebrations. Ellen returns to the city after this brief unsuccessful sojourn into the countryside where she will spend the rest of the war hiding beneath the city's rubble, neither a part of the city or outside of it. When she determines to find the bridge, she steps out into a strange almost post-apocalyptic image of her former city. Combining motifs used throughout such as the star and mirror, Aichinger writes, 'An eerie tumult surged to meet her. Screams clashed like dark stars. Horses were loose. It was like a thousand years before or a thousand years after. The image in the mirror was broken' (p. 237). Ellen's death on the ruined bridge and the wreckage of her hope reveals that Aichinger has tied Ellen to the city so that she cannot leave it in life and will be consumed by it in death.

In contrast to Ellen's city, an important feature of Lore's child-space in *Other People's Houses* is that what she likes best about her life in England is placement in the English countryside. However, Lore's preference for the country is not exclusive to England; the first chapter describing her early life in Austria is divided between urban Vienna and rural Fischamend. While she describes the increasing changes to her city life as the result of Nazification, Lore portrays her grandparents' home in Fischamend as idyllic: 'My mother and I went to the country to live with my favorite grandparents, and I had the happiest summer of my life' (p. 5). Lore connects the countryside with happiness and all that is fun and beautiful. Lore associates beauty with a local girl, Mitzi, using descriptors such as 'a fine country color' (p. 6); in this way, what is beautiful is also not Jewish. Her first foster placement in England is in Liverpool with a wealthy Orthodox Jewish family; as such, Segal has arranged for Liverpool to fail in Lore's estimation if only because it is a city and associated with Jewishness.

Much of what Lore believes she loves about England as a place is embodied in the English countryside. She introduces her happiest and final placement with Miss Douglas and Mrs. Dillon in tranquil terms because of the picturesque landscape. Lore comments, ‘Everything looked rich and green. A gardener was weeding among the vegetables. There were rows upon rows of berrybushes—gooseberry, raspberry, and red and black currants—ripening’ (p. 119). Lore’s departure from the pastoral English countryside by moving to London is marked by two important events: living with her mother for the first time since fleeing Austria and thus regaining a belated sense of normal childhood, and attending her second-choice university. Lore’s life in London is not the urban cosmopolitan experience dreamt of by little refugee girls; she feels out of place even in a city full of immigrants, her stunted emotional growth accentuated by her foreignness and isolation. Lore’s child-space of the England of her exile will only allow partial belonging, which corresponds with the refugee’s loss.<sup>401</sup>

*Dita Saxova* is set primarily in the urban city center of Prague, a significant site for Dita and her friends because it was their home before the war, from where most of them were deported to camps, to which their families did not return after the war, and to where they returned as teenaged orphans. Lustig employs the city itself to represent their shattered sense of home and the desire to rebuild. Dita’s attachment to the city is linked to her past, not only because it was her pre-war home but also because during the war the longing to return had a sustaining value. Lustig uses Dita’s blunt musings to express their previous fears: “‘I like wandering through Prague,’” Dita said. “‘I suppose it’s because during the war we looked forward to it so much, and at the same time nobody really believed we’d ever come back’” (p. 187). Scenes that deviate from Prague represent significant shifts for the protagonist. The first important departure is her day trip to a hotel in the surrounding countryside with D.E. Huppert; this excursion marks Dita’s

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<sup>401</sup> Kandiyoti, p. 301

transition from childhood into adulthood through sexual initiation. Dita expresses to D.E. how her feelings alter when she enters the countryside:

‘When I’m in the country like this, when I lie in the pine needles or the grass or the moss, I feel time in a different way. As if everything that has been, stretching far back, and everything that is, and everything that will be could last forever.’ (p. 104)

Dita believes that the change in environment temporarily transports her away from her Holocaust child-space, providing the impression of endless possibility rather than liminal impermanence.

Later Dita moves to a nameless town in Switzerland where she appears to drift along, unable to escape either her identity as a Holocaust survivor or as an object of male desire. Dita’s departure from Prague is significant because unlike her earlier deportation, the freedom of movement makes her an agent of her own fate. As a country, Lustig suggests that Switzerland represents neutrality and clean slates, embodying her hopes of starting over where she is not known and where memories and ghosts are not attached to every place. Yet in a letter to a friend, she writes, “the longer I am here, the more attractive home seems” (p. 281). In this way, Lustig uses the movement away from the city to represent the unfulfilled desire of the survivor for change and the countryside’s failure to deliver on its promised peace. Space in *Dita Saxova* thus functions to highlight the young survivor’s inability to find a place of belonging in the post-war world.

### **Specific sites, homes, and places of meaning**

Like the importance of rural and urban settings, one of the ways in which the authors differentiate the Holocaust child-space from those of traditional childhoods is by contrasting the characters’ homes or places to which they attach meaning with every other place. According to Rosemary Marangoly George, ‘Homes and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered “Not-home,” with the foreign, with

distance.’<sup>402</sup> The authors use these differences to describe how the characters adapt to and are altered by their changed spatial circumstances. George argues that what are considered ‘homes’ are not neutral places.<sup>403</sup> For many characters, their homes are exchanged frequently and often occupy unconventional spaces, which highlights the uniqueness of the Holocaust. An important characteristic of places called home is their inclusionary feature:

The inclusions are grounded in a learned (or taught) sense of a kinship that is extended to those who are perceived as sharing the same blood, race, class, gender, or religion. Membership is maintained by bonds of love, fear, power, desire and control. Homes are manifest on geographical, psychological and material levels.<sup>404</sup>

Homes may engender the sense of belonging in the character, and yet, following on the inclusionary aspect, home establishes difference and is also exclusive.<sup>405</sup> The narratives use this concept of home to emphasize the liminal position of the Jew, excluded from former homes. For a child, the idea of home is significant because it is their first identification of place with a sense of belonging and security. Yet the events of the war and Final Solution, the destruction, deportation, and death, permeate the narrative places, forever severing experiencers from place-based anchors.<sup>406</sup> For example, Léa’s return to her family’s former apartment forces an unwilling confrontation with her parents’ likely deaths and Henryk’s return to the family’s former *shtetl* underlines the overwhelming absence of the once-vibrant Jewish community of extended family and friends.

If space is place made meaningful by people as Tuan and other theorists define, although they vary by text and character, specific sites of importance and places they consider home play key roles in the narratives’ spatialized examinations of the Holocaust.

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<sup>402</sup> Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial relocations and twentieth-century fiction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4

<sup>403</sup> George, p. 6

<sup>404</sup> George, p. 9

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Kandiyoti, p. 300

These works explore concepts such as homelessness or placelessness by disrupting boundaries between traditional expectations of a place and its Holocaust meaning. George argues, ‘As imagined in fiction, “home” is a desire that is fulfilled or denied in varying measure to the subjects (both the fictional characters and the readers) constructed by the narrative’.<sup>407</sup> Consequently, the concept of home actually moves between positions, contrasting with conventional ideas of a stable point of belonging for the children. Although belonging and home are ideas intricately connected to the domestic space, what constitutes a home is not fixed. In order to develop the Holocaust child-space these fictions explore how it is possible to make a home in the least likely of spaces or under conditions of duress and the altered nature of traditional buildings, structures, and landscapes. The characters may not assign meaning to original or implied homes, instead fashioning new places of value from unconventional sources, as in Tzili’s forest bunker or Aichinger’s bridge, finding meaning in places beyond home and in the not-home.

#### New homes behind wire and walls

In *Bread for the Deported*, the family’s relocation into the ghetto disrupts David's sense of home and his place in the world. He describes his early period in the ghetto as one of essential placelessness: ‘Gray, dark days arrived. And during those first weeks behind the wall, David wandered about aimlessly, frightened, in a daze, without the courage to imagine the coming day. What does “adjusting” mean?’ (p. 44). Wojdowski juxtaposes David’s wandering through the Warsaw Ghetto with the historical representation of the Jew as ‘a perennially landless, homeless wanderer, an exiled nomad, the Jew is both familiar with, yet excluded (and estranged) from the cities, the cultures, and the communities within which he or she circulates’.<sup>408</sup> The Warsaw Ghetto itself also emphasizes this image of the Jew by interning David within and yet apart from his home city. However, because David’s family lived a working class lifestyle in Warsaw prior to

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<sup>407</sup> George, p. 2

<sup>408</sup> Grosz, p. 60



ghettoization, they initially have less adjustment than many other ghetto inhabitants. The narrator describes:

There wasn't much difference between the life they had led before on Srebrna Street and their present exile on Krochmalna, and it was thanks to that good fortune that they had a little bit of resilience, of strength to endure. David looked at his father with new eyes and slowly began to understand that the straitened circumstances to which entire generations now had to accustom themselves had made his father's eyes burn with a terrible feverishness and obstinacy. (p. 44)

The change that David recognizes in his father due to their new environment precipitates David's own adjustments to life in the ghetto and recognition of his child-space. In contrast to his father's quiet and intense reaction, his mother stridently pronounces their ghettoization as being "Walled up alive!" (p. 45). Wojdowski uses exclamations like this to represent the ghetto as a place without escape, associating it with a coffin in which living Jews have been interred and space acts to foreshadow their post-liquidation fates.

Specific sites of meaning to David also adjust; for example, the child's attachment to home decreases and he endeavors to spend as much time out of the family's rooms as possible. David is determined never to return home empty-handed because in their inverted roles, he imagines his parents waiting for whatever life-saving sustenance he is able to provide. Accordingly, home becomes a place of unbearable responsibility for the child. As his behavior grows increasingly desperate on the streets, David maintains separate lives—one out in the ghetto with his friends and one at home with his parents. David believes he cannot share his fears with his parents about his activities and observations: 'He had to keep quiet about all this; at home, too, he could not discuss it with anyone. He became secretive, uncommunicative. He grew instinctively nasty [...] [and] he judged himself harshly' (p. 256). David deems it necessary to separate the horrors of the streets from his home life, paradoxically attempting to shield his parents from the horrors outside. Particular sites of import for David are the line to pick up

rations where he must fight for scraps, the point in the wall where they attempt escape to the other side, and the cemetery where children scavenge among corpses for metal. Each of these places represents David's efforts to survive and provide for his parents. The absence of traditional spaces of childhood such as schools or parks underscores the premature end of David's childhood upon entrance to the ghetto.

Whereas Wojdowski provides brief pre-ghetto and extra-ghetto glimpses, Moni's movement into the camp occurs immediately prior to the beginning of the narrative, establishing Auschwitz as his new child-space. Several places within Auschwitz possess special meaning, particularly within the hierarchy Ka-tzetnik has outlined. The Block is the prisoner's home to which he is assigned, but the Piepel does not belong to any one Block; instead, he belongs to a Block Chief. Accordingly, while Moni is imprisoned in Auschwitz his position is doubly tenuous because he does not have the temporary safety of a Block that adult laboring prisoners do; sometimes he does not belong to any Block Chief and is essentially homeless within the camp, escaping the gas chambers merely through avoiding notice. Ka-tzetnik uses Moni's spatial instability to imply that even those with *Funktionen* are at the whims of the larger Auschwitz system and that nothing is within the prisoner's own control, especially his place in the camp.

The latrine is an important site within Auschwitz where it serves the more important function of a trading post. Ka-tzetnik writes, "[Everybody] knows that "latrine" means "stock exchange" (p. 111), the language indicating that the latrine's function has been distorted for character and reader alike. The focus on the repurposing of the latrine allows for an examination of Auschwitz's hierarchal systems of trade. The new purpose of the structure emphasizes the warped uses of both language and place in Auschwitz. Many of Moni's most significant moments occur at the latrine. In his first days as a Piepel, Moni meets the former Piepel Berele behind the latrine and in exchange for giving Berele bread he receives life-prolonging advice on how to cope with the Block Chiefs. Later, it is at the latrine that Berele is roasted and sold to other prisoners. For the

secondary protagonist, Hayim-Idl, the peelery is a significant site as an impermanent refuge; the peelery represents one of the many privileged jobs that prisoners could perform that are granted and rescinded abruptly. Ka-tzetnik assesses Auschwitz as a world by describing only a few of the many places within the camp to represent the closed nature of Moni's child-space.

Gyuri's home at the beginning of *Fatelessness* is in an apartment he shares with his father and stepmother, highlighting his age through his dependence on his parents. When he returns from the camps, he cannot understand why there is a stranger occupying his home; neighbors explain to him that after news of his father's death, his stepmother married the business partner and moved out of the apartment. Although Kertész does not describe Gyuri at his mother's home in the narrative, it ends with his decision to go there, perhaps to separate his pre-camp space from his post-. Gyuri had previously decided that he would honor the divorce agreement that stipulated he live with his father and stepmother (p. 30), but his death and her remarriage negates these pre-war contracts. In this way, Kertész establishes Gyuri's child-space as a separate place from the one dependent on his parents.

Although he only spends a few days there in transit to Buchenwald, Auschwitz is a significant place not only for its metonymic quality in Holocaust culture. Arrival at Auschwitz marks the first sign that something has changed for Gyuri. He could still rationalize the uncomfortable train journey and the old woman's death, but the arrival at Auschwitz coincides with the first crack in his confidence because he cannot place its location in his knowledge of geography. He observes the iconic entrance to the camp:

I could in fact make out two words: 'Auschwitz-Birkenau' was what I read, written in spiky, curlicued Gothic lettering, joined by one of those wavy double hyphens of theirs. For my own part, though, I cast around my geographical knowledge in vain, and others proved no wiser than me. (p. 76)

He watches a friend's selection to the non-labor side by the infamous doctor, admires the soldiers, and receives his first beating, and yet the most disturbing aspect of Gyuri's time in Auschwitz is his lack of previous experience and knowledge of the place. Gyuri concedes that Auschwitz did not actually belong in his school's curriculum, but he finds it a drawback that his education must now occur concurrently with the experience (p. 113). Unlike the detailed descriptions of horrors that are expected from accounts of the infamous camp as in Levi and other nonfictions, Kertész employs the benefits of the fiction genre to invert reader expectations and infuse the experience with irony.

Auschwitz is also used as a benchmark against which all camps are measured. For example, Gyuri's concern about the prisoner number being tattooed on him at Buchenwald is soundly rejected by an inmate who exclaims, "*Aber Mensch, um Gotteswillen, wir sind doch hier nicht in Auschwitz!*" (For God's sake, man, this isn't Auschwitz!)' (p. 124). The prisoner's outcry positions Buchenwald as a softer version of the concentration camp. The language in this scene not only distinguishes between camps but also separates Gyuri himself from the experience by using 'you' rather than 'I' to describe Gyuri's induction into the new camp. Kertész employs expressions such as 'you are, after all, a Hungarian', 'you can read a printed number—64921 in my own case, for example', and 'if you were worried on that score and had inquired about it beforehand' (p. 124). The second person pronoun disconnects Gyuri from his account and includes the reader in it, inviting the reader into the camp with him. Emphasizing the importance of his three days in Auschwitz, which was both his first camp experience and later the most iconic camp for the reader, Gyuri continually refers back to Auschwitz throughout his edification at Buchenwald and its subcamp, such as comparing methods of death or numbers of crematoria. Although it is in Buchenwald that Gyuri wastes away from starvation, labor, and illness, it is always favorably compared to Auschwitz, which symbolizes the worst of the camp system. Kertész is playing to the reader's retrospective knowledge of Nazi concentration camps to accentuate Gyuri's new space.

Within Buchenwald, the hospital is a significant building for its paradoxical purpose in the camp. The reader's historical knowledge and the rumors Gyuri hears in the camp dictate that prisoners ill enough to be taken to the hospital are also quickly moved to the crematorium. Gyuri was bound for the crematorium on a cart full of dead and dying bodies when he managed to voice protest enough to be transferred to the hospital. The hospital is a liminal place within Buchenwald where unprecedented kindnesses occur, such as a friendly orderly giving Gyuri extra rations, a doctor actually treating his wounds, and being asked his real name rather than his prison number. The conflicting messages of the hospital, offering cleanliness, surgery, and food only for the patients most likely to die regardless, are contradicted by Gyuri's miraculous survival in it. He had been near death at arrival and while other patients disappeared, presumably dead rather than returned to work, he slips through until the camp is liberated. The added irony of Gyuri's survival of the camp hospital is that, in all the conflicting understandings of his identity, he had been persecuted as a Jew and survives when most Jews are killed.<sup>409</sup> Gyuri's rather atypical experience of a concentration camp hospital that actually fulfills the traditional function of hospitals underscores the incomprehensibility of the place itself. Moreover, Gyuri's peculiar attachment to the concentration camp highlights the exchange of places that are given meaning.

#### Constantly changing attachments

In *Wartime Lies*, Maciek's attachment to the places in which he lives mostly revolves around his relationship with his aunt. His upper class childhood home in T. is confiscated for Gestapo headquarters; from there they are moved into an apartment in the new Jewish section of T. that has no running water or indoor toilet. Yet Maciek never expresses any sense of loss, remarking upon these new facts forthrightly and without emotional analysis. Begley uses Maciek's ironic acquiescence to introduce his child-

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<sup>409</sup> Sokoloff, *Imagining the Child*, p. 19

space. He comments on the transformation of T. under German occupation in such a way that he reflects upon places of good childhood memories now used for other purposes. For example, his father and another Jewish doctor are allowed on Russian trains evacuating necessary people without their families, but another colleague does not opt for the eastward evacuation. Maciek remarks:

Instead, Dr. and Mrs. Kipper were shot by the Germans a few days later, together with some other Jews. It was all done in the early afternoon, in the field on the other side of T. where Zosia and I used to go sledding, but they brought the bodies back to town in a truck and rounded up some other Jews to unload it. (p. 31)

Maciek's detachment from the transformation of his hometown and the first murders of Jews he had known occurring there is emphasized by his compliant acceptance of the move from his home. He comments, 'There were no apartments for Jews in T.; Jews were all being thrown out' (p. 34), but does not include himself with the Jews of T., underscoring Maciek's placelessness.

In Lwów, Maciek and Tania live in a luxury apartment confiscated from a Jewish family; here Maciek plays with toy soldiers left behind by the apartment's former occupants and notes that their quality exceeds his own, however he does not dwell on their former owner. In this way, Begley restricts the narrative to the self-centered consciousness of a young boy, establishing his child-apace as one he enters into unquestioningly. For Maciek, the apartment is merely the place where he and Tania have been taken to be safe and not a symbol of the Final Solution's goals. Notably, after leaving the T. ghetto and his friend Irena, Maciek is the only child in his living arrangements for the remainder of his time hiding in the cities. Additionally, Begley holds back an important detail about Maciek's hometown; Maciek names many of the places in which they spend their wartime years as well as settling in Kielce afterwards, but his hometown T. is always denoted by its abridgment. The deliberate anonymity of the

hometown, a place so important to a child, highlights the loss of Maciek's childhood and identity tied to the place.

Perhaps a characteristic of the hidden Polish boy's narrative, like Begley, Grynberg limits the amount of attachment Henryk ascribes to specific sites, focusing instead on the abrupt movement between them. Henryk's young age at the beginning of their wartime hiding suggests that he lacks distinct memories of his home in Dobre and malleably acquiesces to his mother's decisions about each new hiding place. However, he clearly identifies preferences, such as the countryside over the forest dugout. He feels a particular attachment to churches in post-war Dobre proportionate to each new anti-Semitic violent act or Jewish survivor death that he is not allowed to mourn. He remarks:

When the church was empty, I would kneel before the painted figures and ask them this one to use their almighty power to make me not be a Jew anymore.

'Kind saints,' I'd whisper, 'isn't it enough that my father and my little brother and both my grandfathers and grandmothers and all my aunts, uncles, and cousins were murdered? Who hadn't done anything wrong. Isn't that enough for you?

What else do you want?' (p. 102)

Through Henryk's pleading with the saints, Grynberg gives voice to the survivor's feeling of despair but the child's voice emphasizes the arbitrariness of their on-going struggles. The church represents a safe space for Henryk to question his experiences, returning to the comfortable Catholicism of his hiding years.

The road is another important site for Henryk as the vehicle for his placelessness. A road has the power to connect places but it may also be considered a site in and of itself. *The Jewish War* and the war itself ends with Henryk and his mother walking an uncertain road, feeling alone in their survival and in the nameless and placeless state of hiding on false papers because the people they once loved and lived with are all dead. Grynberg writes, 'They had died along other, earlier roads while we were not with them. But they died under their own names, whereas, if we perished here, no one would even

know who we were' (p. 57). The road then is both a metaphor for their life and for physical roads, such as the one alongside which his father died.

Tzili's hiding experience is different than Maciek and Henryk's because she is alone and dependent on a false identity without documentary support. Specific sites of meaning fluctuate based on Tzili's current situation and she almost always attributes positive feelings about them only after she is in a new place. For example, while Katerina's home was a haven from the winter elements, Tzili is forced to flee it before Katerina can sell Tzili's body to a man she could no longer serve because of illness. Yet Tzili longs for Katerina's place during the warmer months when she is again alone in the wilderness, as well as when Tzili spends the next winter with an elderly man who desires her and his wife who beats her. She purposefully misremembers the danger and instills the cottage with a safety and warmth that did not exist (p. 45).

Similarly, although her early life with her family is defined by their indifference to her, in their absence she reflects fondly. For example, in times of uncertainty Tzili clings to the image of the house's yard where she tended the garden, reflecting upon them with unexpected affection:

Tzili can remember the little yard at home, where she had spent so many hours. Every now and then her mother would call, 'Tzili,' and Tzili would reply, 'Here I am.' Of her entire childhood, only this was left. All the rest was shrouded in a heavy mist. She was seized by longing for the little yard. As if it were the misty edge of the Garden of Eden. (p. 158)

This passage emphasizes her mother's neglect while Appelfeld's use of biblical allusions converts the neglect into something idyllic. And yet, the yard is only on the edge of Eden, recognizing Tzili does not quite belong. The wartime hiding place that has the most meaning for Tzili is the bunker that Mark scratches out for them and in which she adopts the role of domestic, caretaker, and, eventually, lover. However, like all of Tzili's homes, the dugout is far from ideal; she is uncomfortable with Mark because of his drinking and



his 'shadows' while simultaneously wanting to please him so that he will stay. The place is referred to as 'their temporary shelter, their small happiness' (p. 101), which indicates that Tzili knows it is impermanent even as she attaches strong emotions to it. This concept of temporariness underscores the placelessness of the child-space, as well as Tzili's belief that '[everything] beyond her little corner of the world seemed alien and remote' (p. 123).

Of Gille's protagonist, Alan Berger remarks that 'Léa is portrayed as the perpetual rootless soul, at home nowhere.'<sup>410</sup> Although it is the place responsible for sparing her life, Léa never feels at home in the convent or Bordeaux. Perhaps stemming from her frightening arrival, the convent is described in haunting language as a deteriorating haven because the buildings are in disrepair and bombings further degrade its structure. However, the poor condition is what allows the girls to maintain its residency because the Germans had decided against requisitioning it (p. 10). Léa has a fascination with the corpses and rubble, transforming the orderly convent space into one of chaos:

[It was] as though reality had turned inside out overnight and this apparition in a long black habit and a coif concealing every last strand of hair were the eruption of something fantastic into a universe where catastrophe had become a commonplace of daily life. (p. 35)

In this way Gille establishes Léa's child-space in the convent as one of chaos, the inverse of traditional childhood homes.

Immediately after France's liberation, Sister Saint Gabriel takes Léa to Paris in search of news of her parents. They return to the apartment that Léa had lived in prior to the family's flight to Bordeaux. Returning to the old neighborhood, '[it] was as though she had recovered her memory all at once and wished to forestall any future lapses by taking inventory of her possessions' (p. 55). However, she is disappointed in the building because it does not coincide with her image. The flat has been occupied and the concierge

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<sup>410</sup> Berger, 'Hidden Children', p. 26

has stolen most of the family's possessions, emphasizing Léa's declaration that "this isn't it" (p. 57); it is no longer her family's home. When she sees the concierge's child playing with her own toy, she instinctively snatches it back, becoming strongly possessive of this property in response to the seemingly sudden loss of everything else.<sup>411</sup> The appropriation of her family home and former belongings signifies that her pre-war space cannot be reclaimed.

Léa and the nun proceed to the Hotel Lutétia where others are looking for word of family members; however, being in Paris again, Léa is displaced temporally, believing that her parents would logically go to this luxury hotel because they had stayed at similar places before. The hotel, however, has been converted into a displaced persons center, another site of her former life that has become unrecognizable. Gille writes:

‘Why do you think my parents might be here?’ asked Léa. ‘If they were back, they’d certainly have gone to get me before coming here to help all these poor people.’ Sister Saint-Gabriel simply stared at her. ‘But, well, Léa,’ she said finally, choosing her words with care, ‘don’t you think they might themselves be among these unfortunate souls?’ (p. 65)

She is unable to comprehend that her parents may be among these concentration camp inmates returned from the East. Her experience in Paris and the profound disappointment and shock has left her numb and aloof; just as she refuses to allow herself to become attached to people except for Bénédicte, she similarly does not permit attachments to places. In such a way, Gille suggests that Léa's child-space did not revert back to traditional childhood with the Holocaust's end despite her young age. This is accentuated by her life with Bénédicte and her parents; '[Bénédicte's mother] muses that she lacks family, memories, documents, a language, a culture, even an ancestral cemetery,' emphasizing her essential placelessness.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 32

<sup>412</sup> Berger, 'Hidden Children', p. 26

Non-traditional places of meaning and other people's homes

Place is a central element to Aichinger's novel and several places play significant roles in defining Ellen's child-space: the river, Jewish cemetery, apartment building attic, and bridge. The unnamed river is a force of nature that has not been altered or built by man. Aichinger uses this natural watercourse to counteract the manmade bridge; both are sources of hope and despair for Ellen and the Jewish children. The children have paradoxically imbued the river with life-saving qualities but only in its ability to drown; it may snatch the life from a baby, but if the children save the baby the act of heroism could spare their own lives. Aichinger describes the children's hope in the river by infusing the scene with allusions to the story of Moses, the Jewish baby who is rescued from biblical extermination by the river Nile and later rescues the Hebrews from slavery.

Conversely, the bridge is an important site for Ellen, one that leads in many ways.<sup>413</sup> At its most basic, a bridge is built so that people may cross the river without interacting with or being impeded by it and without disrupting the watercourse.<sup>414</sup> It is both a symbol and a thing, as Martin Heidegger describes, and 'by this site are determined the localities and ways by which a space is provided for'.<sup>415</sup> In Ellen's childhood memory and despite the ruined city, the bridge remains fixed as signifying the path home, although her homeward quest is interrupted by a foreign soldier, Jan. Ellen is desperate to reach the bridge to return home and Jan needs to get an important message to the soldiers holding the bridge. However, Ellen discovers that the bridge has been destroyed in the fighting. The destruction of the bridge not only blocks her actual passage home, but symbolizes the impossibility of returning to pre-war spaces. Aichinger does not clarify which home Ellen is determined to reach, whether the attic where she played with her friends or the apartment in which she lived with her grandmother or, as she explains

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<sup>413</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking' in *Poetry, Language, Thought* by Martin Heidegger, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), pp. 143-162 (p. 152)

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p. 154

to the foreign soldiers, to the cemetery: “I want to go to my grandmother,” said Ellen. “She’s in the last graveyard. Can’t one of you take me there?” (p. 222). Ellen’s desire to reach the dead perhaps foretells her own death. In the final scene, while Ellen observes the ruins of the bridge, she imagines a conversation with George, long since deported, in which he assures her they will build a new bridge that they will call “The Bridge of Good Hope—our hope!” (p. 239). The need for a new bridge expressed in Ellen’s consciousness by her presumably dead friend foreshadows her ultimate failure to ever return home.

A Jewish cemetery is one of the places that the children spend their time, representing the changed nature of their landscapes of childhood. The children take refuge in the cemetery when they are refused entry to normal sites of childhood such as playgrounds and parks. Aichinger ironically contrasts the existing site of Jewish burial for those who died before them with the presumed mass anonymous burial or cremation the Jewish children are likely to experience. The inscriptions on the tombstones also stand for Jewish individual identity, which at the time of burial had been acceptable. The children play hide and seek among these tombstones, transforming a place reserved for the Jewish dead into one that also embraces the Jewish living. Nazi disregard for the Jew in life and death negated the ‘overriding principle of Jewish burial customs, [...] *kavod hameit*, respect for the body of the deceased’.<sup>416</sup> The literary depictions of Jewish corpses as tangled anonymous piles, former Jewish burial grounds being used as playgrounds, and current burial processes of mass graves and cremations underscores the desecration of the Jew and Jewish culture, both in life and in death.

The cemetery is a place where the Jewish children who are marked for death in the present can connect with the Jewish dead of the past who had received the respectful burials commensurate with their religious customs and positions as human beings. The

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<sup>416</sup> Rochel U. Berman, *Dignity Beyond Death: The Jewish Preparation for Burial* (Jerusalem and New York: Urim Publications, 2005), p. 30

dead who rest peacefully in this Jewish cemetery are a remnant of a place no longer available for the Jewish children; their fates are more closely aligned with the dead as described in the other narratives such as in Wojdowski, where the dead and the near-dead are thrown into carts from the streets for mass burials, or in Ka-tzetnik, where corpses are stacked against buildings for mass burnings. Aichinger's focus on the cemetery is a fictionalization of the challenges of memorialization in a time when traditional grief and burial processes have been disrupted. If memorialization is the process by which the dead are remembered or honored and 'takes place through gravestones and mausoleums but also through mourning customs and rituals',<sup>417</sup> then the Jews' inability to properly do so is emphasized by relegating the Jewish cemetery to history. In the narrative present, the site has been transformed ironically into a playground. Aichinger clearly consigns its traditional purpose to the past, contrasting it with the Holocaust present of the implied deaths of the children in the camps or Ellen's death by grenade. They will receive no markers to act as 'reminders and extensions of the dead'<sup>418</sup> other than Aichinger's fictional acknowledgement.

Another place the children frequent is the attic of one of the Jews' apartment buildings. They hide in the attic as deportations occur below, including that of their friend Hannah, enacting an elaborate play and celebrating George's birthday. Traditionally sites for unwanted or old objects or in literature for locking away madwomen, like the cemetery the unlit attic has become the last refuge for the children. They continue to play long after their childhood innocence has been abolished because they obey a desperate 'hidden' commandment to play (p. 120). The hidden directive to play symbolizes the Jewish children hiding in the dark attic; they are the secrets that the attic hides. The attic emphasizes that despite the many places she occupies, Ellen's child-space is one of essential homelessness although she also shares an apartment with her maternal

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<sup>417</sup> Heather J. Kichner, *Cemetery Plots from Victoria to Verdun: Literary Representations of Epitaph and Burial from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century through the Great War* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 6

<sup>418</sup> Kichner, p. 7

grandmother. Ellen is rarely home with her grandmother, instead spending her time abroad in the city in the company of her friends. The single chapter set within the grandmother's apartment depicts the grandmother's suicide in the face of deportation. In this way the traditional place of a nurturing home is inverted into one of despair and death. Accordingly, the grandmother's apartment is the site of Ellen's ultimate abandonment; her grandmother chooses to succumb to her fear rather than care for her granddaughter. Aichinger narrates this scene from the perspective of a personified young night who acts as a witness, observing but unable to intervene on Ellen's behalf.

Sharing Ellen's sense of placelessness and movement, Lore's experience of anti-Semitism in Austria and as a refugee in England necessitates frequent changes of homes and circumstances. Although the family is not forced out of their large apartment in Vienna, they must share it with five other Jewish families. Lore remarks with characteristic dry humor that 'Jewish apartments, in those days, were infinitely expandable, to take in the newly homeless' (p. 20). Lore offers no clarification that the homeless Jews are displaced because of Nazification. She seems most at home at her grandparents' in Fischamend where her mother and she spend much of their time, although the rising anti-Semitism is not exclusive to the city; indeed, after vandalism, eventually everything in the shop and home above it are simply carried away (p. 19). Lore's first foster home in Liverpool presents her with luxury, but her uncomfortable position as an ignorant refugee never allows her to feel at home with the Levines. Segal uses the large, empty Levine mansion to stress Lore's feelings of emptiness as a new refugee. She most associates her final placement in an idyllic all-female country house with feeling at home. Until her father dies and she and her mother move to London, Lore prefers to be a guest in others' homes. As a Jew in Austria and a refugee in England, Lore's position of a foreigner in the countries she calls home means that she is never in a fixed place. As Kristeva explains, '[the] space of the foreigner is a moving train, a plane

in flight, the very transition that precludes stopping. As to landmarks, there are none.<sup>419</sup>

Lore's lack of strong connection to any particular site results from her state of constant transition. Lore's ambiguous feelings about the concept of home are conflicted by her acculturation; this is embodied in the sausage she carries with her from Austria to the camp in England. When at the moment of her departure Lore's mother wants to provide her with something for the journey, a last measure of taking care of her, Lore requests the representative sausage although she does not eat it. Instead, unwilling to throw it away because of its symbolism of home, she secretes it away and agonizes that the rotting stench will reveal its existence. This comic sausage incident indicates 'a lingering sign of the child's conflict between attachment to home and adaptation.'<sup>420</sup>

Dita does not have Lore's rejected option to live with her family; instead, she lives in an orphanage for Jewish girls. Dita and many of her fellow young survivors fervently consider Prague to be 'home,' but in part they may have returned only in order to fulfill the longing they had when forced to be away. One of the young men vying for her affections who also spent time in Theresienstadt explains that he often calculated the short distance between the camp and the city. About Prague, he thinks, '[that] was where his home was. He could not feel at home anywhere else, nor did he wish to. And for God's sake, why should he?' (p. 60). He cannot understand Dita's restlessness when juxtaposed with their previous desire only to return home. Dita emanates a sense of placelessness because she has returned to her former home city only to feel that she does not belong without a family or family home. Her move to Switzerland is an endeavor to attain a future and a home that is less connected to her wartime experiences and losses. However, Dita's lack of connection to Switzerland inspires defeatist thoughts about surrendering the search for the right place. The cliff in Switzerland from which she falls is a meaningful site even before her death as Dita pauses there to debate the meaning of

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<sup>419</sup> Kristeva, pp. 7-8

<sup>420</sup> Lassner, p. 24

her life and the potential to end it at this particular place. Dita reflects, ‘She no longer wanted to ask: “Where shall I go, what shall I do, to be happy?” only to receive back, like an echo: “You have nowhere to go. Do what you wish”’ (p. 347). A running theme among many of the narratives is this inner dialogue, which often provides the character with the conclusions they are not at that age or time able to formulate. She has been living in Switzerland for some time without feeling any connection to it. Dita reflects on her journey and its significance, ‘from the chimneys in Poland—from fire, smoke, and ashes, and from the longing in Prague—to this morning, to this place and this moment’ (p. 347). This reflection on her Holocaust child-space connects the experiencer’s position in paradoxical and liminal spaces with the survivor’s inability to find peace anywhere.

### **Nation states and cities**

In addition to their constructed homes and living spaces, many of the narratives highlight that senses of belonging and isolation extend to homelands, representing an important identifier of the Jew of the period—the country in which he or she lives. While the Holocaust child-space is not dependent on a nation-state, it may be a contributing factor to their disparate experiences. Historically, each country reacted differently to Nazification and as such each character’s experience is shaped by geographical location. The movement of the characters between cultural traditions as a Jew in a European country is also reflected by the different geographical settings and the structure of the text. Representations of the post-war transitional state of European countries indicate that the protagonists’ understanding of place is also transitional. Place in this sense is the way these narrative supply ‘a sense of geographical, cultural, and sociopolitical location.’<sup>421</sup> The children feel attachments to homelands that have rejected and betrayed them. As Tuan argues, ‘Homeland is an important type of place at the medium scale. It is a region (city or countryside) large enough to support a people's livelihood. Attachment to the

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<sup>421</sup> Nyatetū-Waigwa, Wangarĩ wa, *The Liminal Novel: Studies in the Francophone-African Novel as Bildungsroman* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 15



homeland can be intense.<sup>422</sup> He finds that in nearly every culture, groups identify their homeland as the center of worthiness in their particular location.<sup>423</sup> Apart from overall pro-Aryan anti-Semitism, these characters also display homeland preference among Jews of different nationalities. The emphasis on national identity varies by country of origin, but its presence in the text ‘also seems to stress how this sense, was of course, denied the Jews, deprived of their statehood and the trappings of their cultural identity, interpellated according to Nazi propaganda and condemned to death as a community.’<sup>424</sup>

Wojdowski meticulously names streets inside the ghetto, clearly situating the narrative within Warsaw and the Warsaw Ghetto, as well as identifying David as a Polish Jew. Wojdowski describes the guards and soldiers as German, unequivocally identifying them as the perpetrators. Brief indications of attitudes outside of the ghetto are provided, such as Polish nationalism. One anecdote involves a motorman whose route takes him past the ghetto walls and the place where people are shot and hanged. The motorman throws loaves of bread from his window into the ghetto until he is pulled from his trolley and shot along with thirty random Jews. The man's kindness not only gets him killed but also sacrifices those he had sought to help. Wojdowski writes:

People from the other side pressed their white faces against the windows of the trolley, exhausted by their own impotence and terror, and stealthily bade them farewell. The motorman who was shot was survived by his cry, ‘Long live Poland!’ And for a couple of days the trolleys passed slowly, like one funeral procession after another. (p. 279)

Wojdowski’s descriptions of this Polish sympathy for the motorman and the hanging bodies indicate grief more for their lost homeland than for the plight of their Jewish countrymen. The motorman's actions of generosity to the Jews in spite of German directives are received as Polish nationalism rather than sympathy for the ghetto

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<sup>422</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 149

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 336

inhabitants. Like the ghetto, Wojdowski separates the Polish Jews from the Polish non-Jews in order to show how space may be both exclusionary and inclusionary.

Although Ka-tzetnik readily uses the designation ‘Auschwitz’ for his camp setting, Moni’s national background is pseudonymic. Ka-tzetnik references the fictional Metropoli ghetto from where Moni’s family was deported; the ghetto could signify any of the larger historical ghettos while also playing on the word ‘metropolis’ for any densely populated urban area (pp. 134, 225). Moni and his family lived on the generically named Park Street in the fictional city of Kongressia, which could be a thinly veiled Łódź, and the Metropoli ghetto is most likely based on Sosnowiec in Upper East Silesia.<sup>425</sup>

Although Moni is never classified as a Polish Jew, the text draws clear distinctions between the Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners, in particular the Poles. Ka-tzetnik exaggerates the anti-Semitism of the Polish prisoners at Auschwitz, as well as their privileged positions in contrast to the Jews. He writes, ‘The handful of Poles, who gagged at the very idea of sitting on a bench together with a Jew, gnashed their teeth and felt in the peelery like Jews in exile. [...] They sit there sulking, taking it as a personal insult’ (p. 166). Unlike the Jewish prisoners who appear to consistently just die, the narrator reflects that Poles rarely become Mussulmen. Their *Funktionen* sustain them by providing them with better conditions; additionally, they have the opportunity to ‘receive letters and packages from home’ (p. 167), thereby retaining a connection to the world outside of Auschwitz and knowledge of their loved ones’ well being. Moni attempts to find connection outside of his current child-space through the memory of his mother linked to the knitted red socks; his ultimate inability to conjure her image from the socks prove his inability to escape. The traditional routine of Auschwitz and the familiar camp language may also not apply to non-Jewish Polish prisoners: ‘They are not even required to line up for the *Selektions*. *Selektion* does not mean Poles’ (ibid.). Ka-tzetnik is implying that

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<sup>425</sup> David G. Roskies and Naomi Diamant, *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2012), p. 106

while they might be in Auschwitz, they are not *of* Auschwitz, reserving the greatest suffering there for the Jews.

The narrator also expresses disdain for those Polish prisoners who will survive Auschwitz where their Jewish counterparts will not, exclaiming: ‘After the war those Polacks will show off the numbers on their arms—martyred saints! They were in Auschwitz! The Jews won’t be able to show their arms, because Jews there won’t be’ (p. 184). Ka-tzetnik underscores nationality over ideology, referencing ‘the Germans’ in regards to the soldiers, guards, and some of the Block Chiefs rather than ‘Nazis’. The patriotism of certain German prisoners is also described to explain or underscore their cruelty: ‘At such festive moments Auschwitz-camplng Robert hears and heeds the call of nation and blood. His sense of duty towards the Führer’s extermination decree fills him with a grave sense of patriotism’ (p. 260). Ka-tzetnik laments the destruction of the Jewry through the loss of their places, claiming that while the victim’s place will be gone, their persecutors’ will remain. He writes, ‘There will be no Jewish towns or Jewish townlets [...] But there will still be the world and the Germans, cities and villages. Everything. Except Jews’ (p. 258). In *Moni*, the notion of the camp as ‘a world set apart, utterly segregated, a strange kingdom with its own peculiar fatality’,<sup>426</sup> a nation-state in and of itself, is underscored by the recognition that there is no place outside Auschwitz in which the Jews can exist. Consequently, Ka-tzetnik establishes the camp as the only available space for Moni, foreshadowing his death.

Unlike Moni’s unclassified nationality, Gyuri’s camp tenure is clearly affected by his Hungarianness. As an assimilated Jew from Budapest, Gyuri associates more with his Hungarian identity than his Jewish one. The label of Jew attributed to his yellow badge undermines his strong sense of being Hungarian as represented by the U on the same badge. Gyuri’s Hungarianness is underscored through language as it separates him from the other Jewish prisoners with whom he cannot converse because he cannot speak

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<sup>426</sup> Rousset, p. 12

Yiddish: ‘Among one another and with the Latvians they use Yiddish, but they also speak German, Slovakian, and a smattering of who knows what, only not Hungarian’ (p. 139). Kertész uses the absence of Hungarian to highlight Gyuri’s isolation in the camps. Yet, he also recognizes a deep betrayal on the part of Hungary who has allowed him to be deported and imprisoned here, claiming that ‘Hungarians did not consider me as one of them’ (p. 197). His attachment to Budapest in particular, while not directly stated, is reflected by his frequent references to it, his discussions of the city with fellow Hungarian prisoner Bandi Citrom, and his determination to return as soon as possible following liberation. However, his connection to the city is not emotional, but rather his only frame of reference. Citrom’s pride in being from Budapest situates him and his fellow ‘Budapester’, Gyuri, above other prisoners. Citrom keeps Budapest present for Gyuri as he gradually loses strength and will:

He often spoke about, evoked, and also reminded me of other places too, squares, avenues, houses, as well as certain well-known slogans and advertising signs that blazed on their roofs and in various shopwindows—‘the lights of Budapest’ as he called them, though here I had to correct him, being obliged to point out that those lights no longer existed on account of the blackout regulations, and the bombing, to be sure, had knocked the city’s panorama about a bit here and there. (p. 141)

Gyuri’s practical vision of Nazified Budapest contrasts with Bandi’s idealized version of the same place, inverting the traditional impressions of child and adult.

The conversation between Gyuri and the journalist he meets upon his return to Budapest illustrates the dichotomy between the Jewish survivor and the non-Jewish non-experiencer as well as the inversion of child and adult in regard to place. Both the journalist and Gyuri’s former neighbors describe a desire to relegate the concentration camps to the past, where Gyuri knows that he still carries those places with him. Even though he has returned to Budapest, Gyuri does not express the relief or joy that the journalist expects:

‘You must have seen a lot, young fellow, a lot of terrible things,’ he rejoined, but I said nothing. ‘Still,’ he continued, ‘the main thing is that it’s over, in the past,’ and, his face brightening, he gestured to the houses that we happened to be rumbling past and inquired what I was feeling now, back home again and seeing the city that I had left. ‘Hatred,’ I told him. (p. 245)

Although the single word ‘hatred’ is delivered in the same characteristic deadpan with which he replied ‘naturally’ to the question of having been at a concentration camp, the response indicates that his imprisonment has altered his perceptions of his homeland. Also characteristic of Gyuri, he does not elaborate on the sentiment or offer explanations to either the journalist or reader, leaving both in uncomfortable silence after the word. This response could be viewed as the essence of Gyuri’s adaptation to his Holocaust child-space; he cannot provide the expected reaction on returning to Budapest when the camps have honed Gyuri’s ambivalence about his Hungarianness.

Similarly, the narrator of *Wartime Lies* displays an evident Polish pride also darkened by irony within the Jewish narrative. Begley’s text is replete with nationalism, ironically utilizing clichés, propaganda, and prejudice to delineate between Germans, Polish Catholics, and Polish Jews based on each of their various opinions of the other. However, Maciek repeats these sentiments without differentiating his own thoughts or offering explanation, thus providing the reader with a constant stream of adult nationalist preconceptions in the child’s unbiased voice. Maciek relates political moves such as surrendering land, military failures, and political leaders as if he is participating in the dialogue; however, these utterances are clearly a collective adult voice and he acknowledges that he misses important conversations because he is not actually part of them. Maciek recounts:

Kristallnacht happened and was spoken about in embarrassed whispers. Rydz-Śmigły and Beck, Poland’s new leaders, would know where to draw the line; nationalism was not the same as lower-class bestiality. There were certain subjects

that my father and Tania did not want to discuss before Zosia. We would both be sent out of the room on some indispensable errands. Less than one year later came September 1939, and it was all over. (p. 20)

A Polish Catholic surgeon compares assimilated intellectual Polish Jews like Maciek's family with religious Jews who do not demonstrate the same nationalist pride. Maciek describes this opinion without any tone differentiation: 'Of course, we weren't really responsible; it was the other Jews, who did not know how to lead a Polish national life. Unfortunately, it was too late for that sort of distinction as well' (p. 38). The last sentence calmly recognizes the fate of the Polish Jews, assimilated or religious, as being one and the same—doomed. The nationalist distinction is emphasized by a change in language where the Jews can no longer be considered the same as non-Jewish Poles (p. 39), indicating Maciek may no longer consider himself a Pole now that he has been identified as a Jew and severing his affiliation with his homeland.

Grynberg's narrative is also a consciously Polish Jewish experience. If a place name is known, Grynberg provides it in full; there is no deliberate vagueness about where the protagonist is hiding or living. The significance of Poland's geography for the Jew in hiding is underscored through each of Henryk's movements, as well as the position of the Jew in post-war Poland. First, Henryk's family hides on the farm of a local Polish family in exchange for payment, a common occurrence. They then join maternal family members in a dugout in the forest; although the name of the forest is not supplied, Poland's forests were renowned for the many people they concealed. Later, the narrator remarks that nearly everyone who had hidden in the forest had died (p. 38), implicating the forest itself in the deaths. In Warsaw, Henryk is exposed directly to violence through the German occupation and the ghetto uprising. When their final hiding place aligns with the Eastern Front, Grynberg clearly identifies the combatants, marking the shift of the battle's momentum with the departure of the Germans and the arrival of the Russians. Although the family will struggle with Soviet Communism in post-war Poland, the

Russians' initial appearance is described in such a way that they are simply the lesser of two evils for the Jews. Poland's identifiable topography and its historically shifting boundaries provide the framework for Henryk's Holocaust child-space. The only constant throughout his interactions with the Germans, Poles, and Soviets is that Henryk is Jewish in a country that does not want Jews.

Appelfeld universalizes Tzili's experience with deliberate dislocation in time and place. He resists naming a village or country of Tzili's occupancy until she arrives in Zagreb; naming the cities in Tzili's post-war transformation marks an end to Tzili's hiding and narrows the novel's closing focus onto 'the struggle of the individual survivor to reconstruct [her] private world in postwar Europe or Israel'.<sup>427</sup> She loses the individuality she had by hiding alone and becomes just one in a sea of refugees, recognizable only to the merchant who gets her medical help in Zagreb and by Linda who joins her on the ship. The movement of refugees suggests that Tzili was hiding somewhere in Eastern Europe, perhaps near Appelfeld's own birthplace in Romania, modern day Ukraine. Camp escapee Mark mentions that he had wanted to study medicine in Vienna but his parents could not afford to send him, perhaps indicating he is from somewhere in Austria; however, Jews were frequently sent to camps in other occupied territories so it cannot be determined they are in or near Austria. This lack of identifying markers in Tzili's hiding reinforces Appelfeld's parable-like authority in which the seasons and landscapes are often represented with equal intensity to Tzili's development. The war itself is never named nor are the aggressors, isolating Tzili still further from the historical event that has precipitated her child-space, although he clearly identifies the Jews as victims. Appelfeld names Palestine as Tzili's final destination but does not imbue the place with particular meaning for Tzili; the vagueness of even the Holy Land underscores Tzili's overall placelessness.

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<sup>427</sup> Ezrahi, *By Words Alone*, p. 107

As narratives such as those by Grynberg and Wojdowski deliberately distinguish themselves as Polish, Gille clearly identifies hers as a particularly French Jewish one. Léa's flight, her hiding, and her parents' deportation all mirror the path of some Jews in France under German occupation. Regions and cities are clearly named and French identifiers such as berets (p. 7) are used in descriptions of characters. Anti-Semitism, sympathies, Catholic doctrine, Communism, and the French Resistance are represented; in a sense, all of France's distinct wartime sentiments are utilized to reinforce its geographic location and the young Jew's position within it. At the convent, girls and nuns join in singing the unofficial anthem dedicated to Philippe Pétain: "Children of France, always..." (p. 17). Léa is considered French despite her parents' Eastern European origin because she was born in that country; however, her French nationality does not preclude her from being deported as a Jew. Gille is examining the paradoxical position of Léa's nation rejecting her. Although Rousset writes that "[in] France, despite the occupation, they still do not know what terror means: permanent and universal terror",<sup>428</sup> the young French girl knows her own breed of terror forged from displacement and separation.

Like Appelfeld, Aichinger is ambiguous about the name of the city and country in which the narrative is set, as well as the political affiliations of the 'secret police' or nationalities of the foreign soldiers like Jan. The reader may assume the city is Vienna in post-*Anschluss* Austria and that the soldiers at the end are Soviet, if basing Ellen's experience on the author's. Aichinger's deliberate vagueness lends universality to the place, which underscores the essential homelessness or placelessness of Ellen. Aichinger does not provide significant sites such as the river or bridge either with fictional or real monikers. Names are however granted to places that exist only outside of the narrative setting, such as Ellen's mother having gone to America, the children attempting escape to Jerusalem, and her neighbor's assignment to forced labor in Poland. By avoiding naming places within the narrative setting, no meaningful attachment can be placed on the

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<sup>428</sup> Rousset, p. 107



concept of nationality or homeland. The threat of deportation from the unnamed city is countered by the children's desire to leave through escape when legal emigration fails, suggesting a tension between a desire to stay in the city by avoiding deportation and a desire to flee before they are caught. As in *Tzili*, Aichinger's writing, 'eschewing at times a clarity and full contextualization of plot and setting, could be read as authorial irresponsibility' toward the historical event, but might also be read as an entrance into the ethical debates of Holocaust representation.<sup>429</sup>

As a realistic novel, often called a memoir despite the title's assertion otherwise, *Other People's Houses* regularly mixes fictional and real place names. Each of the locations of Lore's homes, her parents' homes, or somewhere she visits is clearly identified and the constant naming of places infuses them with meaning. Lore distinguishes between her life and the people in it based on each new location. Her frequent movement is a critical part of her refugee identity; each new foster home provides new basis for Lore's development, such as less attachment to her Jewishness or her parents, or more identification with her Austrianness. Additionally, coming from Austria to England specifically shapes her experience because her native language is German, which complicates her position when Nazi Germany becomes the aggressors at war with England. Lore's national identity as Austrian often contrasts with her Jewish identity, as well as clashing with her refugee identity and her desire to acculturate in England.

In *Dita Saxova* there is a deep sense of nationalist pride in the characters that wanted to return to Czechoslovakia and to its capital in particular. However, despite their strong connections to the place, memories and ghosts also eclipse it. The young survivors possess the innate desire to return home only to discover that the Prague they knew has changed and that their time away from the city has also changed them. Lustig describes

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<sup>429</sup> Jenni Adams, 'Traces, Dis/Continuities, Complicities: An Introduction to Holocaust Literature' in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Holocaust Literature*, ed. by Jenni Adams (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 1-24 (p. 6)

their particular attachment to Prague as vulnerable in the moments where the city seems to be quiet and peaceful and the survivors enjoy a party: 'For the community of Jewish kids in 1947, the words *home* and *land* were equivalent to the word *Prague*. It was not their fault that the water was to carry it all away' (p. 185). Lustig is implying that even their post-war home is impermanent and its loss would be as beyond their control as their previous deportations.

### **Narrative spaces**

Another way the authors develop the child-space is through their narrative construction, such as choosing to restrict the narrative space to the also restricted spatial frame of reference of the child.<sup>430</sup> The more common settings for Holocaust literature are those two primary places created by the Nazis to incarcerate the Jews: ghettos and camps. Because the historical purpose of the ghetto and the camp was to keep their victims both inside and separate, the characters' interactions with each other and the world are more limited. Although ostensibly a choice instead of incarceration, hiding provides its own sense of being trapped or confined. The nontraditional narratives suggest that the characters are trapped not spatially but in their positions of *Mischling*, refugee, and survivor. Thus, many of the authors choose to limit the intervention of the outside world into their narratives, restricting it spatially by means of the setting or conceptually through the child's consciousness. Regardless of how they are accomplished, closed worlds are carefully constructed so that the narratives uphold the antagonists' aims and trap the reader inside with the characters. Through focusing solely on the viewpoints of the young Jew and avoiding panoramic perspectives of historical matters, many of these narratives reinforce a perspective of suffering and captivity.

*Bread for the Departed* is primarily confined to the ghetto with one chapter transporting David outside of the walls to smuggle back food, which emphasizes David's

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<sup>430</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 26

absorption into life within the ghetto. David feels rootless when he is on the Aryan side of the wall. The armband with its Jewish star and his movement in the ghetto has supplanted David's belief that he belongs in the rest of Warsaw, his former home. He thinks, 'no longer was there a place for him in that world' (p. 171). Apart from this brief interlude, Wojdowski encloses the reader within the ghetto, mirroring the characters' lack of movement. The ghetto is a relatively large space though crowded and claustrophobic because of its number of occupants. By contrast, those moments outside of the ghetto in Warsaw proper, although not devoid of crowds, signify the freedom unavailable to those confined to the ghetto—the lanes are wide, shops are open, and life seems to be flourishing rather than guttering. In this way, Wojdowski uses the closed space and narrow narrative lens to highlight the constriction of the ghetto, as well as the effect of it on the young protagonist.

A reader with historical knowledge of the Warsaw Ghetto liquidation and the survival rates of children David's age once deported to a camp will assume that David will die after he leaves the narrative's closed world, although his fate is not directly stated. When characters depart from the ghetto alive through deportation, they also depart from the narrative and are generally presumed dead thereafter. During the ghetto liquidation, some characters go outside the closed world, escaping to the other side of the wall; they are also never present in the narrative again aside from in others' speculations. Wojdowski ends the narrative with David and the reader at the train platform in the ruined ghetto's final deportation, poised to exit the closed narrative space where the reader is unable to follow David outside either ghetto or text. As such, the child-space works in the novel to prevent David and reader alike from leaving the Warsaw Ghetto.

Part of the paradoxical nature of *Moni* is that it 'enables proximity and facilitates the production of a testimony from within. Artistic stylization is designed to diminish, rather than enlarge, the gap between the texts and the historical events they seek to

represent'.<sup>431</sup> Like Wojdowski's representation of the ghetto, Ka-tzetnik creates a portrait of the closed world of the concentration camp. Ka-tzetnik's characters and his readers are contained completely within Auschwitz, with only occasional flashbacks and references to 'before the Hitler period' (p. 57) or 'outside, in the world' (p. 94). Despite the availability of potential information with the omniscient narrator, the author restricts the narrator to the consciousnesses of the characters inside the camp and thus what they know at the time without retrospection. Through his child protagonist, whose individual identity is subsumed within the larger collective of prisoners,<sup>432</sup> Ka-tzetnik produces a naturally isolated internal world.<sup>433</sup> A critical way that Ka-tzetnik accomplishes this is through his depiction of language. Words used in ordinary circumstances are differentiated from those within the camp by preceding them with 'Auschwitz', so that 'sleep' is actually 'Auschwitz sleep' and seven days is an 'Auschwitz week'. This narrative strategy identifies Moni's extermination camp world as a closed system that is detached from any surrounding context.<sup>434</sup>

Ka-tzetnik focuses on another area inside of this exclusive system, 'the gray zone', in which Primo Levi describes the morally ambiguous or inverted space between clear identities of perpetrators and victims, or protagonists and antagonists.<sup>435</sup> With this phrase, Levi confronts the uncomfortable issues that are highlighted from Ka-tzetnik's first page—the hierarchy that unavoidably develops in the camp, which intensifies Nazi methodology, and the extreme conditions under which people will harm others in order to survive.<sup>436</sup> Moni's Auschwitz is situated almost entirely within this morally ambiguous hierarchy; as a participant in the fold and sometimes observer on the margins, he exists among prisoners who perpetuate the cycle of abuse designed by the SS. The extreme representational choice to position Moni entirely inside the closed Auschwitz world poses

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<sup>431</sup> Milner, p. 115

<sup>432</sup> Yudkin, p. 37

<sup>433</sup> Yudkin, p. 56

<sup>434</sup> Milner, p. 114

<sup>435</sup> Levi, pp. 36-69

<sup>436</sup> Levi, p. 42

a challenge for the reader who is trapped inside with him. Similar to Wojdowski's David, Moni cannot leave the closed world; he lives and dies within the Auschwitz narrative space, reflecting the common theme of the Holocaust child entombed in their child-spaces.

Moni's death at the end of the book is a final reminder by the author of the inability to leave the child-space Ka-tzetnik has created. In a remarkable scene, Moni has just survived the kind of beating that has killed stronger campings and in a burst of unprecedented life, he makes a manic dash toward the Auschwitz fences, attempting to break from the closed world. Unknowingly putting on a performance, Moni is observed by camp Prominents who had both done him harm and helped him, fellow inmates who knew him outside of Auschwitz, and the SS in the figure of camp commandant Rudolf Höss who embodies the constructors of the spaces of the Final Solution. It is unclear if Moni is futilely trying to escape or attempting to commit suicide by throwing himself on the fence, which, although electrified during the night, is turned off during the day. Moni's dash toward the usually electrified fence emulates the death of Moni's fictional sister at the end of *House of Dolls* who succeeds in taking her own life by electrocution on the fence. In this moment, Moni appears to exist outside of Auschwitz because he is not behaving like a defeated camping; the onlookers are amazed at the way his limbs seem to be '[driven] by a life and will of their own. Here, in Auschwitz, no one has such free-willed arms and legs' (p. 286). Ironically, Moni's death is compared to 'Life manifest' (ibid.). In the last lines with its final simile, the reader is reminded that Moni is, after all, just a child: 'The earth gathered him in like a mother cradling her little one to sleep. Hush...' (ibid.). The hush attempts to soothe and silence any cries or protests that might come from the dying protagonist, the narrator, or the reader. The manner and description of Moni's death also give Moni back his free will and his sovereignty over his body in a place that had taken them both from him. Yet, Moni dies before he can reach

the last barbed wire barrier, therefore he is forever interred in the earth of Auschwitz and unable to leave the closed world of his child-space.

*Fatelessness* also depicts the unique Holocaust space of the concentration camp. Although the majority of the text is set within the interior of camps, it is the inside of Gyuri's mind and his present that defines Kertész's closed world. The reader is subject only to Gyuri's perspective and only those incidents that he chooses to relate. This technique pulls the reader into both Kertész and Gyuri's world from which all are equally unable to escape.<sup>437</sup> This does not preclude the narrator from commenting on past knowledge and experiences, but restricts intervention beyond the narrative present. By maintaining strict chronology, Kertész forces the reader to live through all of the mundane details of the concentrationary universe with Gyuri. In this way, Gyuri's child-space is as much dictated by time as it is by space. The narrator knows Gyuri survives whereas Gyuri lives each moment without that certainty. 'Although these two "I's" are the same person in the broad sense, they do not share the same knowledge and they do not share the same time and space.'<sup>438</sup> Gyuri's calculatingly casual descriptions of each place provide the reader with a detailed image of the inner workings of the camps without the embellishments of adult retrospection, which allows the child-space to speak for itself. Kertész is representing the child's consciousness without mimetically replicating it so that the ironic tone of the narrator does not detract from the unique viewpoint of the young experiencer or provide any panoramic perspectives.

Kertész' ending is also not ambiguous—Gyuri clearly lives beyond his ordeal. He departs from the concentration camp and re-enters his former home city of Budapest, which has remained relatively unchanged in his absence. However, the boy that emerges from the camp is not the same one who was first imprisoned there and Gyuri now

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<sup>437</sup> Reiter, p. 87

<sup>438</sup> Mary Galbraith, 'Pip as "Infant Tongue" and as Adult Narrator in Chapter One of *Great Expectations*' in *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature*, ed. by Elizabeth Goodenough, Mark A. Heberle, and Naomi Sokoloff, pp. 123-141 (p. 125)

perceives his life to be essentially meaningless. Gyuri's survival and departure from the camp is troubling when he returns to his former apartment only to discover that it is no longer in his family's possession. This initial homelessness precipitates nostalgia for the camps, implying his child-space has been internalized. He reflects, 'It was that peculiar hour, I recognized even now, even here—my favorite hour in the camp, and I was seized by a sharp, painful, futile longing for it: nostalgia, homesickness' (p. 261). Gyuri's symbolic return to his former home only to find it empty of family provides the impetus and rationale for his nostalgic reflections on the camp as a home, reverting to the comfort of his Holocaust child-space when he has been barred from entrance to his pre-camp traditional childhood space of his parents' home.

Gyuri acknowledges his survival in a way that perpetuates his fatelessness. He still does not have control over his place, life, or future; he will go to his mother, let her rejoice, and follow the career path that she had conceived for him before his deportation. He views his existence almost abstractly: 'I am here, and I am well aware that I shall accept any rationale as the price for being able to live' (p. 262). What Gyuri cannot seem to reconcile is how every non-experiencer he encounters describes the camps as a hardship or atrocity, which conflicts with his nostalgic memories of his child-space. Gyuri's inability to make nonexperiencers view the camps how he does answers the question asked by Primo Levi in *The Drowned and the Saved* that opens his essay 'The Gray Zone': 'Have we—we who have returned—been able to understand and make others understand our experience?'<sup>439</sup> Despite his best efforts and intentions, Gyuri cannot impart his wisdom onto those unwilling to listen or believe and unable to empathize. He resolves that 'the next time I am asked, I ought to speak about that, the happiness of the concentration camps. If indeed I am asked. And provided I myself don't forget' (p. 262). With characteristic irony Gyuri continues to invert his audience's expectations. He states that he cannot move beyond the past because it is reality and

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<sup>439</sup> Levi, p. 36

cannot change based on will.<sup>440</sup> Additionally, in Gyuri's typical doublespeak, it is only fitting to end with the possibility that his perceptions of the concentrationary universe and his child-space may in fact be forgotten with distance in time and place.

Begley's narrative has three voices, which provides a broad narrative scope and facilitates a move beyond the narrow focus of the young protagonist's child-space. The primary voice is Maciek's first-person retrospective, which is childlike in tone and expression and yet provides historical information and insight into others through free indirect speech. An italicized third person voice brings the reader toward the present, viewing a man who is presumably the adult Maciek suffering as a survivor. These sections are suffused with literary references, perhaps pointing to *Wartime Lies* as literature as well; he is particularly drawn to Dante's *Inferno*, drawing connections between the Holocaust and Hell, a highly allegorical place of its own. This voice also addresses aspects of the story that are beyond the child-space. The final voice occurs in the last chapter, switching from Maciek's first person to a third person omniscient narrator, describing how the family lives after the war. Perhaps even more than the first-person viewpoint, the narrator of this last chapter is the most revealing about Poland. It comes from the sarcastic perspective of a non-Jewish Pole in post-war Poland, detailing the continued anti-Semitism and Maciek's disappearance from the narrative altogether through the continuation of a false non-Jewish identity, indicating that Maciek has never left his wartime child-space.

Grynberg's story is narrated in the first person past tense, although its tone is more adult-like than Begley's and he provides both contemporaneous and retrospective information on events. Frequently, Grynberg introduces a new character in the narrative present and also provides that person's later fate—whether a character survived or when, where, and how he or she died. He also presents the time frame for historical events in such a way. An example of this specific narrative framework is the brief help they receive

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<sup>440</sup> Yudkin, p. 188



from the Orlińskis: ‘Mr. Orliński went with Mother to Wołomin and got us a room at Stawki. This was a year before the Uprising in Warsaw in which both Mr. Orliński and his son, Wacek, lost their lives’ (p. 39). Grynberg vacillates between chronicling events from a position external to the action and distanced from Henryk by time and space, and recounting experiences where he is in a position of internal participation. Yet these narrators are one and the same individual. However, Grynberg carefully does not reach beyond the narrative present and child-space for Henryk himself; as in *Fatelessness*, the child Henryk is trapped in the linearity of his Holocaust experience in the child-space.

Appelfeld uses the omniscient third person narrator to restrict the narrative to Tzili’s child-space, but with a distant tone that presents the story of her life like a fairy tale ‘and results in the novelistic representation of evil as an absence or privation’.<sup>441</sup> In this way, *Tzili* reads like a parable in which Appelfeld’s narrative space is an allegorical Holocaust world. Focusing on the nearly mute Tzili is central to how Appelfeld constructs the narrative from a child’s-eye viewpoint. Silence pervades Appelfeld’s world, where the absences in the child character’s consciousness are supplemented by imagination. Along with the exclusion of identifying place markers, Appelfeld excludes mention of the historical events that involve the unnamed soldiers or camps. ‘Like indirection, ambiguity and polyinterpretability can also be expressed by means of a chronology that deviates from the generally accepted one and so does not respect the usual succession of hours, days, months, and so on.’<sup>442</sup> Appelfeld’s flow of time centers on Tzili’s maturation and the seasons, the temporal discontinuity mirroring Tzili’s spatial opacity. Additionally, her movement between unidentified places, written in language as drifting as the time, underscores the ambiguity of the geographical and historical place.

Gille perhaps makes the most of the omniscient narrator’s potential. The narrative focuses on Léa while entering the consciousness of other characters in her world and

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<sup>441</sup> Berel Lang, “An Introduction” in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. by Berel Lang, pp. 1-17 (p. 3)

<sup>442</sup> Dresden, p. 48

describing overarching historical events through their dialogue. However, by restricting knowledge of particular events to those that the characters would know in the narrative present, Gille encloses the characters within France chronologically in time. As such, external knowledge is provided only through rumors and newspapers. For example, whereas Grynberg's narrator delivered the fate of Henryk's father, which was at the narrative present unknown to the characters, Gille does not supply the reader with the fate of Léa's parents, which can only ever be guessed. The Resistance fighter predicts the route of their deportation and the reader's knowledge can supplement this by predicting their immediate extermination, but their deaths are never verified. Thus, Gille's narrative space is both open and closed, encouraging the reader to engage with Léa's sense of placelessness in the broader world.

Aichinger's narrative space is limited to Ellen's child-space, from where she plays with her Jewish friends to the bunker in which she hides from the aboveground offensive. Consistent with the allegorical image of a novel whose characters are given no overt religious or national identifiers and whose places are given no official names, no broader historical context is provided. The focus is mostly narrowed on Ellen's perceptions and experiences without the omniscient third person narrator commenting on, for example, the fate of her deported friends or her mother's life in America. This concentration on Ellen has an isolating effect, underscoring the feeling she has of not belonging and her essential loneliness after her mother's abandonment, her father's indifference, her grandmother's suicide, and her friends' deportations. However, Aichinger's writing style also includes other perspectives on Ellen's life, such as when the personified Night watches Ellen futilely try to prevent her grandmother's suicide. Despite the temporal and spatial ambiguity of Aichinger's text, Ellen acts as a fixed point around which the narrative revolves, enclosing the reader within her child-space.

Conversely, *Other People's Houses* incorporates retrospective historical and personal facts into the narrative. Like Grynberg, Lore might explain what happened to a

certain character after the current story's events: 'I didn't know until a year later, when I came back to Allchester for the Christmas holidays, that Herta had jumped out of her bedroom on the third floor into Mrs. Montgomery's garden, and was dead' (p. 168). Parenthetical comments are also used as asides that break from the present, such as when Lore remarks on their departure from the happy rural Austrian home, adding, '(It was in fact, the last time any of us saw Fischamend)' (p. 19). Mostly told chronologically, these shifts in narrative time to explain outcomes or discoveries that she did not have as a child prevent the mingling of the adult author and the child narrator in judgments, observations, and emphases. A good example of the way in which this is accomplished is the description of the day the *Anschluss* became a reality: 'On the eighth of the following March, I had my tenth birthday. On the twelfth, Hitler took Austria and my mother called Tante Trude a cow' (p. 4). Lore combines her reflections of a personally meaningful event (birthday), a historically important event (*Anschluss*), and daily life anecdotes (argument), which maintain the child viewpoint. It could be argued that in this fictional narrative, the child observer and adult narrator merge to create a special dramatic irony.<sup>443</sup> Lore's position of liminality as a refugee or exile enables the narrative to utilize her perspective as an outsider to provide insight into a system that those fully within it might not be able to see.<sup>444</sup> And yet, '[at] the same time that her use of graphic detail and narrative immediacy brings us very close to her experiences and responses, it also registers a strain that reminds us that what we share is a terrain where like her, we can never really know.'<sup>445</sup> By focusing on Lore's marginalized position and perspective, Segal constructs an exclusive and inclusive narrative space that provides as much vagueness as it does clarity.

More so than the other texts, perhaps because of its post-war present, *Dita Saxova* incorporates outside perspectives that comment on Dita in more historical and

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<sup>443</sup> Cavanaugh, p. 479

<sup>444</sup> Grosz, p. 69

<sup>445</sup> Lassner, p. 43

philosophical scopes. While focused on the title character, the narrator does not restrict the narrative solely to Dita's thoughts and experiences nor to 1947. Through dialogue and flashbacks the reader receives glimpses of Dita's and other characters' wartime years, facilitating exploration of their new position as survivors in the changed post-war European space. The narrator also provides overarching historical data about the Jewish children who have returned to Prague, those who did not survive, and other facts that contribute to attempting an understanding of Dita herself. Lustig's often-meandering writing style gives the impression of the narrator mirroring the thought processes of the characters. Thus while the narrator includes external historical information, the narrative style maintains a closed world for the child-space from which the survivors can only truly escape in death.

### **New spaces of understanding**

This chapter has identified a child-space unique to the Holocaust novel in which several spatial themes provide a major unifying thread running through the child-centered narrative to represent the protagonist's changed world. The emphasis on the character's liminal placement and movement and the ways the author engages the character with particular places emphasizes the Jewish Holocaust, whose experiencers were bound by the limited spaces available to them. A survivor might have been more geographically remote from killing centers, such as when exiled on the *Kindertransport*, yet still have known persecution in the prelude to escape, as well as lost many or all of their family members. The lasting impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish child is not limited to the concentration camps and so these narratives do not solely ascribe to that one space, instead incorporating the Final Solution into each experience distinctively. Terms such as Rousset's 'concentrationary universe' and Levi's 'gray zone' reflect the physical changes of traditional spaces to those of hiding, incarceration, extermination, exile, and post-war into a unique child-space.

Some authors choose to clearly label neither nation nor nationality; suppositions can be made based on descriptors or author biography, but the absence of explicit national markers deliberately universalizes the experience. This method could be criticized for reducing the specific impact of the Holocaust in particular regions and on particular peoples to general war and genocide. Or this method has the potential to strengthen the narrative by not limiting it to one geographical location. Naming is one way that people attach meaning to space so that it thereby becomes a place.<sup>446</sup> Outside of the physical building that is a home, there is a bigger geographic place where people also feel the sense of belonging and exclusivity: ‘country, city, village, community. Home is also the imagined location that can be more readily fixed in a mental landscape than in actual geography.’<sup>447</sup> Furthermore, the novel can demonstrate that home country and nationalism are not the same.<sup>448</sup> Each narrative represents the character’s child-space distinctly, such as withholding nation names or exaggerating national prejudices. The connection to homelands is represented by disruption so that, even if a character survives and is so inclined, reintegration into former cities and countries is complex. However, this reincorporation into society presumes that a community exists to which the protagonist can return, which was frequently not the case.<sup>449</sup> The common post-war dislocation of the characters, even upon returning to their pre-war homeland, universalizes the distinctly modern ‘feeling of disorientation, a sense of the fragmentation of local cultures and a loss, in its deepest meaning, of a sense of place’.<sup>450</sup>

Although I have identified four primary spaces within the Holocaust child-space, my list is not exclusive. The liminal and paradoxical spaces may extend beyond only the boundaries between the rural and urban, for example, because an existence between

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<sup>446</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Place: a short introduction* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 10

<sup>447</sup> George, p. 11

<sup>448</sup> George, p. 11

<sup>449</sup> Wangarĩ wa Nyatetũ-Waigwa, *The Liminal Novel: Studies in the Francophone-African Novel as Bildungsroman* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 15

<sup>450</sup> Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1994), p. 162

spaces is a trait of the Jew as the historical Other within his home country. A characteristic of the Holocaust child-space is also to be positioned within both iconic and lesser known places, representations of cities such as Warsaw that were at the core of the conflict as well as the Polish wilderness that served as a crucial terrain for many Holocaust experiences. Narrowing the field of the child-space, the survivor-writer also brings the focus to the child's built environment and how they perceive their place in the world based on specific sites of meaning. Perhaps most important for children is the concept of home, the image of which was often shattered along with physical removal. Lastly, the examination of the characters' particular national countries or cities may contribute to an understanding of the differences and similarities to each character's particular child-space.

The representations of children within these spaces were compounded by their age-related physical and psychological vulnerability and lack of understanding. As definitions of what constitutes a Holocaust survivor adapt to accommodate younger ages, these narratives open a discussion of the less-examined spaces. The narratives share many similarities: they encourage examination of the isolation and difficulties of coming-of-age in hiding; they examine the identity struggles when wartime years are spent in Catholic institutions or living Christian lives; and they suggest an underlying cohesion. The texts underscore the importance of space for understanding child-specific events by creating their own distinctive child-space. The survivor-writers reveal that the Holocaust child-space occupies the liminal or inverted spaces of traditional childhoods. Because they exist within the realm of fiction, the novels 'may contribute to our understanding of the problems posed by emergent places in ways that extend far beyond the documentary demand for representational accuracy attributed to philosophical or scientific discourse.'<sup>451</sup> Reading representations of the altered and constructed places can communicate to readers what was unique to the Jewish child during the Holocaust, not

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<sup>451</sup> Prieto, p. 9

only imagining a younger point of view of the historical event, but also making accessible a type of horror that may be difficult for contemporary readers to comprehend.

## Conclusion

To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.  
THEODOR ADORNO<sup>452</sup>

Human memory is a marvelous but fallacious instrument.  
PRIMO LEVI<sup>453</sup>

### Issues of ethics and aesthetics

Lawrence Langer proposes a question that condenses the anxiety about the historical, literary, ethical, and theological responsibilities of Holocaust representation: ‘How should art—how can art?—represent the inexpressibly inhuman suffering of the victims, without doing an injustice to that suffering?’<sup>454</sup> Similarly, Ruth Franklin explains the general ethical concerns:

The questions raised in the aftermath of Auschwitz have ranged from “How can one write poetry?” (as Adorno is often paraphrased) to “How can one eat lunch?” (the facetious retort of Mark Strand)—questions about the legitimacy of aesthetic representation of catastrophe that lead to even larger questions about the difficulty of continuing to live in a world where such horrors have occurred.<sup>455</sup>

Adorno was not alone in his fear that the horrors of the subject may be stylized for popular consumption. If all Holocaust art is to be viewed with an element of caution, if not distrust, this merely highlights the challenges of communicating the Holocaust’s specific kind of horror.<sup>456</sup> In the effort to make representation conform to a set of rules, the purpose of art itself is lost; creative representation has always offered itself for such consumption and criticism and is always aware of the limits linked to reception.

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<sup>452</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), p. 34

<sup>453</sup> Levi, p. 23

<sup>454</sup> Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 1

<sup>455</sup> Franklin, p. 122

<sup>456</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, ‘The Holocaust, History Writing, and the Role of Fiction’, in *After Representation?: The Holocaust, Literature, and Culture*, ed. by R. Clifton Spargo and Robert M. Ehrenreich, pp. 25-40 (p. 30)



Adult victims of the Final Solution often became like children in circumstances beyond their frames of understanding, the incomprehension translating into disbelief that the world was capable of such atrocities. When David Rousset coined the phrase ‘concentrationary universe’, he described this conflict between actuality and comprehension. Within the experience, it was as if the Holocaust was a separate universe from the one previously understood, including the changed world in its aftermath. Rousset’s description of the camp as a world apart not only describes the unique structure and function, but also emphasizes the incomprehension and disbelief of the experiencer.<sup>457</sup> The concept of the concentrationary extends beyond the historical space of the physical camp into the realm of aesthetics and representation, in which the child perspective can represent the survivor-writer’s incomprehension.<sup>458</sup>

Among the obstacles that this subgenre must navigate, the ethical concerns about representations of atrocities perpetrated against children also become paramount. There is a specific anxiety shared by authors of Holocaust literature that their writing may only be profound for its ability to appeal to the reader’s emotions, when they also seek to inspire their readers to think. This is particularly true for works that focus on children, whose suffering seems all the more horrific for their innocence. One of the ways survivor-writers have sought to counteract this is through a narrative style that delivers atrocity in an ironic detachment, which is frequently the result with the child protagonist. As Sue Vice asserts, ‘[irony] of various kinds characterizes children’s-eye-view texts about the Holocaust, due to the temporal and cognitive gap between narrator and character.’<sup>459</sup> But, irony or humor do not necessarily preclude emotional connection; rather, because the authors also aspire to thinking about the Holocaust in new ways, narrative sentimentality is frequently limited in favor of these other, more provocative tactics.

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<sup>457</sup> Rousset, p. 12

<sup>458</sup> Pollock and Silverman, p. 20

<sup>459</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 5

### Limitations of this study and points of future research

Although this thesis endeavors to establish the importance of a subgenre within Holocaust literature of survivors who wrote child-centered fiction, it is not a comprehensive study but should lead to rethinking the Holocaust in future research. Not only have I defined the category as meeting the three components of survivor-writer, novel, and child viewpoint, I selected only a sample of texts that satisfy this definition. There are countless memoirs by survivors about their Holocaust childhoods; a study of these texts would have perhaps been more comprehensive, but served different purposes since I sought to argue that through fiction the survivor is able to better represent the child's perspective. I identified four main themes within the narratives, but these are by no means the only ones available for examination. I chose these for their significance in advancing my argument about the importance of this particular kind of text, but they may also be applicable to the Holocaust literature canon as a whole. I have deliberately been broad with my definition of 'child' and 'childhood' to comprise children 'aged eighteen or younger at the war's end'.<sup>460</sup> I do not separately discuss the differences between the young child and the adolescent's experience, although these are naturally examined within the context of the narratives. Although I focused on survivors writing because of the ambiguity their survivor status lends their fictions, the child-centered subgenre could also be expanded to include non-survivor writers who choose the child protagonist for their adult fiction. Several examples of contemporary non-survivor fiction utilizing the child's perspective include: second-generation Israeli author David Grossman's *See Under: Love*, French author Tatiana de Rosnay's *Sarah's Key*, and American author Louise Murphy's Holocaust fairy tale *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel: A Novel of War and Survival*. The proliferation of Holocaust fiction from the child's point of view suggests that non-survivor-writers may also find greater access to the Holocaust through this perspective.

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<sup>460</sup> Vice, *Children Writing*, p. 1

### **Summary of key points**

In Chapter One, I argued that the survivor-writers emphasize the dichotomy between child and adult characters, which highlights the increasing powerlessness and vulnerability of the Jews. I pointed out that one of the key ways these works accomplish this is by focusing on the role reversals and relationships between the two age groups. The novels stress the abrupt end of childhood by representing children assuming adult-like actions and attitudes, while concurrently instilling adults with child-like qualities. Placement inside the devastation of family structures and functions breaks down the traditional definitions of adult caretakers and child dependents and establishes the tone for the world-devastating Holocaust. In addition to exploring the changing relationships and roles of children and adults, the survivor-writer also underscores the prematurely adult-like actions of the young protagonist, which altered the course of their development. The chapter showed how the author's particular use of language expanded upon the disparities that naturally exist between children and adults by merging child and adult voices. The representation of this dichotomy from the viewpoint of some of the most vulnerable victims can assess the interactions of children and adults as well as how traditional connections and characters are transformed in extremity.

Chapter Two also examined how the novels highlight the inverted development of children during the Holocaust, but through attention to representations of several established identifiers of childhood: peers, school, and play. I argued that despite often assuming adult responsibilities and attitudes, survivor-writers represent the ways in which children adapt to their Holocaust childhoods through play. While play is considered an activity within the dominion of childhood and imagination, it is also interconnected with the adult world in which it exists and from which it acquires inspiration. Although traditional indicators of childhood are present in the form of interaction with peers, attempted education, and toys and games, these standards are modified as the children adapt to changed surroundings. I showed that imagination and mimetic behavior of their

surroundings are central to how the child protagonists attempt to understand their new realities while highlighting the importance of the young perspective through contrast.

In Chapter Three, I identified the child character's three-fold identity because of their outsider status, Jewishness, and gender, underscoring the emphasis survivor-writers place on the distorted search for and development of selfhood. Representations of identity in the subgenre reinforce the image of the Jewish child as a liminal character, or, an Other. I explored the various factors that influenced the ways the child characters develop an understanding of their identities and sense of Otherness, including geographic location, developmental stage and age, gender, social class, parental political affiliations, religious practice, family support, and the particulars of each experience. One of the key ways this Otherness is accentuated is through the marginalized voice, which focuses on the child's experience and perspective in adult language; this technique facilitates exploring the questions of identity that the child provoked from a more mature and often retrospective outlook. I argued that the survivor-writer focuses identity formation on the position of the young Jew as an outsider based on each character's unique Holocaust involvement. Another strong common thread between the characters' often vastly different experiences is their categorization as Jews and children, both historical Others. Finally, I noted that each novel investigates the distinctly gendered nature of each narrative through issues of gender and sexual identity that include anxieties about circumcision and puberty, as well as sexual interest and exploration.

Like the unique creation of a three-fold identity, Chapter Four argues that the novels create a new child-space defined by the changes wrought on traditional places of childhood during the Holocaust. The survivor-writers explore the child-space through the ways in which the child characters understand the places around them and their place in them, underscoring the transformative potential of place. The child-space pays particular attention to the ways that the Holocaust could be perpetrated upon Jewish children dissimilarly from adults. To highlight the importance of relationship to place, I focused

on four particular aspects of this child-space: liminal spaces between traditional boundaries and definitions of the rural and urban, significant sites such as homes, nations and homelands, and narrative spaces with the child's viewpoint. I claimed that child-space in the novels is constructed around the meaning given to them by the characters themselves or the meaning compelled externally.

### **Conclusion**

I maintain that the Holocaust novel can be considered an imaginative place where the real or historical may merge with elements of metaphor, allegory, symbolism, and myth. The fictionalization of real events, such as those that appear consistent with autobiographical details, is a tool by which the survivor-writer can confront the issue of representing the so-called unrepresentable. Even so, these authors are not fictionalizing in the traditional mode; while they may be inventing some places and people, sustained undertones of the Holocaust itself preserves the verisimilitude.<sup>461</sup> This is still the case in narratives where the Holocaust is less explicit, such as when the perpetrators go unnamed or in which the iconic concentration camps are only implied. The ability to suggest experiences that could have happened or did happen similarly, rather than documented cases, gives the survivor-writer the opportunity to rethink and re-evaluate actual events and emotions in a space that is freed from presumed boundaries that restrict the narration to strict truth or reality. In this way, literature offers readers new or alternative possibilities of access to the Holocaust.<sup>462</sup> Regardless of generic categories such as realist or postmodernist, 'specific understandings and characteristics of memory, identity, and identification are the ground of possibility of these novels.'<sup>463</sup>

As a subgenre within Holocaust literature, fiction from the child's viewpoint is one answer to questions about how the survivor's narrative can be conveyed in a

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<sup>461</sup> Jeffrey M. Peck, 'The Holocaust and Literary Studies' in *Literature of the Holocaust*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), pp. 231-236 (p. 233)

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Eaglestone, pp. 109-110

meaningful way. Works that possess the three qualities examined here can enlighten readers, offering one form of argument against issues related to Holocaust representation. The desire is to create a mode of remembrance or representation that will facilitate the movement of such an event from survivor testimony to ‘the collective consciousness of humanity’.<sup>464</sup> If all readers who come after and all who were not there are outsiders to the event, survivor-writers, who should be considered insiders, are also questioned because they choose creative means to express themselves. In order for survivor-writers to transmit the unimaginable to the reader-as-outsider, fiction can be more effective in facilitating identification.<sup>465</sup> The aesthetic pleasure associated with literature has been viewed as inappropriate or incommensurate with an event like the Holocaust. Nonetheless, I have argued that the suspicion under which aestheticized Holocaust narratives fall can be allayed somewhat by the work of the survivor-writer and the child’s perspective.

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<sup>464</sup> Hartman, p. 32

<sup>465</sup> Hartman, p. 34

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