Shoah and Intellectual Witness

by Geoffrey Hartman

The culture of remembrance is at high tide, but we cannot foresee how far it will reach, or how much will remain valuable. At present, three generations are preoccupied with Holocaust memory. They are the eyewitnesses; their children, the second generation, who have subdued some of their ambivalence and are eager to know their parents better; and the third generation, grand-children who treasure the personal stories of relatives now slipping away. Bonds of love reinforce the golden chain of oral tradition, which had been in danger of breaking, because of terrible and burdensome experiences that could not be integrated into family life. Among the first generation there are also child survivors, the last direct witnesses, whose significance increases when we focus on adolescence and pedagogy.

As the tide recedes and eyewitnesses pass from the scene, public memory of the Shoah, so crucial to contemporary thought, is increasingly affected by new events and contexts-by the continuance of history. According to an old saying, truth is the daughter of time; we might also say that whatever leads to disclosure, there is always a difference in the reception of that disclosure between a community that feels close to the event and the public at large.

In another twenty or forty years a community sensitive to matters touching on the Shoah will be more of a public; that is, it will respond in a more complex or self-reflective way. I wish to call *intellectual witness* an active reception that is relevant both for our time and the encroaching future, that could address with similar force a community and the public. I will be looking at the possibility of intellectual witness in those who did not directly experience the Nazi era as well as in survivors whose writings are extant and exemplary.

The idea of intellectual witness is overdetermined. "Witness," unless employed in a specifically legal or religious sense, is usually limited to eyewitness testimony. But then we would not ordinarily qualify it by "intellectual," since it is the immediacy, the sheer, wounding weight of experience that counts. In *The Longest Shadow* I used the expression "second generation witness," a concept that made sense because the pressure of the event on the sons and daughters of the survivors was such that "witness" seemed justified. Almost imperceptibly, however, the phrase broadened to embrace what Terrence des Pres and Lawrence Langer name "secondary witness"-a concept without generational limit. It includes all who could be called witnesses because they are still in touch with the first generation or who look at the Shoah not as something enclosed in the past but as a contemporary issue requiring an intensity of representation close to eyewitness report. But should the term "witness" still apply, three generations and over fifty years from the event? And why substitute "intellectual" for "secondary" to characterize those who portray the Shoah with a special sense of obligation?

The first question is somewhat easier to answer than the second. The Holocaust refuses to disappear into time's "dark backward and abysm." It has created a magnetic field stronger than that of the First World War. ("The Great War is a magnet," Wyndham Lewis wrote in the 1930s, "the 'postwar' its magnetic field.") In 1985, on the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war and the liberation of the camps,Jurgen Habermas declared, "The presence of the past remains uncannily real and preoccupies discussion more forcefully today than in the 1950s and early 60s." Nazi history, Arnos Elon wrote in 1997,

"seems more 'alive' now than it did 30 or 40 years ago. Few people then would have foreseen that it would still weigh so heavily in the public life and culture of Germany... It is a shadow that not only lengthens but also darkens as time goes by."

There is nothing mysterious about this. The Germans were unable to mourn, according to the Mitscherlichs, who published a famous book on that subject. A reluctance to confront what happened, both in public life (where many Nazis remained in the government) and in the intimacy of the family, not only postponed the reckoning but made it more painful when public memory refocused on the perpetrators in the 60s and 70s. The delayed impact made Helmut Kohl's remark about a later generation's "luck" (*die Gnade der spaten Geburt*) particularly inept. In France, the role of the police as enforcers in the roundup and deportation of Jews was occulted into the eighties and in Poland, where the Shoah had been an open and daily reality, full acknowledgment has still not come. A battle over the conscience of that nation continues to this day because many Poles were both victims and onlookers. For them the historical trauma is the war itself, the double aggression of Hitler and Stalin. Sometimes collaborators in the Holocaust, more often powerless or unwilling to intervene, they did not face the moral issue until Lanzmann's Shoah appeared and in the wake of a courageous article by Jan Blonski.

Eventually the "memory-wave" surged everywhere and individual testimonies gained new life. The survivors began to speak and write once more, especially after the Eichmann trial, and the claim of the second generation to family memories of which they had been deprived by the murder of relatives and the destruction of their culture produced an explosive return to the event. Memories that do not exist have to be replaced; with Georges Perec and others new fictional modes are created, not so much to fill a void as to make it visible, to "present memory as empty" (Henri Raczymow).

Despite attempts to forget, then, and dire warnings about the obsessive effect of Holocaust consciousness, interest has reached a new high. The passing of the survivor does not mean the passing of witness. Many have become witnesses by adoption and investigate what happened with religious fervor. What should be called the reception or resonance, rather than understanding, of the Shoah, is, when measured against the lapse of time, a disruptive series of revelations following upon a latency period lasting from shortly after the war to the Eichmann trial in 1961. In this democidal century, each further genocide does not weaken the memory of the Shoah but revives it as an event that founded the exemplarity of testimonial acts.

Let me turn, then, to the second question: how appropriate is the slippery term "intellectual" to this intense and continued interest in the Holocaust? I have indicated that if anything threatens remembrance today it is not, so far, our increasing distance from the catastrophe. A more constitutive distance, however, intrinsic to intellectual inquiry, does matter profoundly and we have some difficulty with it when it comes to radically shocking events. Yet without a struggle for or against that distance, our reception of what happened is impoverished.

The intellectual, a descendent of the Enlightenment's "impartial spectator" (important to Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments), plays a role similar to that of a bystander after the event who observes it from an ambiguous position. On the one hand, detached or belated, he has no obligation to take account of the Shoah. On the other, once he learns what happened and does nothing-treats it as of little or no concern-he is not unlike an observer of the event who failed to react.

The position of those implicated in this way can also be compared to that of a spectator in the theater. This analogy, though it may seem offensive, is challenging and suggests how intrinsic art is to moral perception. Spectators go to see a tragedy and their judgment remains active despite the sympathetic imagination provoked by what unfolds on stage. The distance between spectator and tragic action is bridged, if at all, without psychological transvestism (permitted and even necessary for the actors); yet most viewers, while they might not feel pain, would not admit taking pleasure from a suffering that is known to have been actual rather than imaginary. In fact, we find it so difficult to value the feeling of pleasure, or seeming mastery, that comes from the ability to face painful events through thought

or mimesis, that we justify this voluntary witnessing as a kind of labor. Dominick LaCapra, for example, describes it as a "labor of listening and attending that exposes the self to empathetic understanding and hence to at least muted trauma."

In such statements, the labor metaphor not only removes the suspicion of illegitimate enjoyment but modifies the spectator theory of knowledge by evoking a more participatory state of mind. As LaCapra suggests, it seems impossible to experience something so traumatic as the Shoah, even at a distance, without suffering a secondary form of trauma. In the political sphere, we often talk of a person being "radicalized." A parallel radicalization among the survivors as well as those coming later is evidenced by their consuming effort to "see," to find a way of telling others-and even themselves-what happened.

The artistic intellect, combining with the testimonial imperative, plays an especially effective role in capturing and communicating a traumatic ordeal. In *Literature or Life* (its original title was *Writing or Death*), Jorge Semprun confronts "deadly riches" of memory that surge when he happens on a film about the camps a few months after his liberation from Buchenwald. "Seeing on the screen, under an April sun so near and yet so far away, the *Appellplatz* of Buchenwald, where cohorts of survivors were milling about in the disarray of their recovered freedom, I saw myself brought back to the reality of it, installed once more in the truth of an incontrovertible experience. Everything, then, had been real, and continued to be so: nothing had been a dream." To counter the phantomization or dissociation endemic to trauma and the ensuing fragility of transmission, a medium more permanent than individual mind is necessary. Art and the communal memory interact to achieve this end.

Yet a postwar hunt to de-aestheticize art blocked the question as to whether the pleasure derived from it could have ethical value when its subject is the Shoah's enormous, state-sponsored atrocities. The issue was displaced by Adorno's famous strictures. His emphasis fell exclusively on the moral difficulty of representing-or admitting into thought-a catastrophe of such magnitude. Adorno does not doubt our technical powers of mimesis but our moral and intellectual stamina. The horror of the Shoah must never be stylized, or become fodder (*Frass*) to satisfy a craving for entertainment.

Indeed, what pleasure could result from art that depicts the Shoah? Perhaps there is no single, unified feeling and therefore no single word like "pleasure" that adequately describes it. But whatever we name that response, it cannot be related to a delight in imitation and only with many qualifications to emotional catharsis. In part it involves a distinction between memory and imagination. Those who cannot remember because of massive trauma or because they have lost places and people whose names and photos still haunt them must recover some of that lost density of life (or specificity of death) through an imaginative recreation. They work from "post-memory," as Marianne Hirsch calls it, to lessen its emptiness; and that very effort, impossible or grotesque, is often part of the subject.

Some comfort, then, however tenuous, may come from this imaginative effort. Yet those who can remember also need relief-from a tormenting sense of discontinuity, which, as I have mentioned, phantomizes the survivor. So one of Charlotte Delbo's characters declares, "I am not among the living. I died in Auschwitz, and no one notices it." Semprun too, brooding on Primo Levi's suicide, feels compelled to ask: "Have we really survived?"

The rhythm of Semprun's entire book enacts a tension between deathly (*mortiferes*) recollections and his activist postwar life. No incident he recounts is merely punctual or described without being returned to, elaborated, mixed with associations, reprised. Semprun uses these liberties of fiction to integrate threatening anniversary symptoms of his Buchenwald trauma. He objects to the film about the camps by evoking the difference between documentary realism and lived reality. "The film," he writes, "should have been worked through, in its filmic substance, by arresting the march of images, by fixing an image to enlarge certain details: sometimes the projection should have been slowed, and, at other times, speeded up. Above all, the scenes should have been provided with a commentary, to make them less cryptic, to place them not only in historical context but in a continuum of thoughts and emotions.... In short, documentary reality should have been handled like fictional material."

Semprun may be taking his cue from Alain

Resnais' *Night and Fog*, which appeared a full decade after the war. Resnais filters Holocaust reality through the self-conscious use of cinematic techniques and a poetic voice-over commentary. Semprun too, as novelist or memoirist, is influenced by the cinema. Yet he does not share Adorno's anxiety about mass media or the aesthetic exploitation of the Holocaust.

I believe that the problematic nature of Holocaust representation does not arise primarily from a temptation to aestheticize that reality (though Semprun's self-conscious devices serve to buffer as well as acknowledge shock). It comes, rather, from the damaged condition of modern lifedamaged severely enough to affect its communicable core. On this issue Adorno was clear-sighted. Modern experience, he declared in *Minima Moralia*, is becoming less communicable, perhaps even unthinkable. A comment by Jurgen Habermas, the best-known philosopher of contemporary Germany, suggests both this damage and the hope of undoing it. The Holocaust has touched "the deep stratum of solidarity between all who bear a human countenance." Restoring that solidarity, that *entente*, is what motivates public remembrance as a collect of testimonial voices and a collective of hearers. It also motivates our greatest writers after the war.

Their effort is shadowed, however, by a temptation that has not been talked about very much and which stems from intimacy rather than aesthetic or intellectual distancing. Writers often transgress a boundary. Imaginative power can push them across a threshold into over-identifying with victims or a victimized generation, to the point of seeking a mystical correspondence with the dead. (One thinks of Nelly Sachs but also of Walter Benjamin's suggestion that "a secret date" exists between past generations and the present one.) Documentary or reified detail, in any case, does not satisfy the bereaved imagination, which demands a greater, more fully imagined solidarity.

This desire for solidarity is reinforced by a fraternal ideal inspired by the French Revolution and the international camaraderie of the Spanish Civil War; it makes Semprun choose for one of his epigraphs Malraux's "I seek the crucial region of the soul where absolute evil stands in opposition to fraternity:' As an *imaginative* need, however, the solidarity-drive is equally present in Ida Fink's stories. Having escaped death by passing as a Christian, she looks back from the position of bystander as well as victim and expresses in various ways a temptation to join those who disappeared, to envision their end by merging with them. Yet the compassionate thinker should not try to identify with the victims any more than the teller of a story with its characters. "I should not have written `we,"' one of Fink's narrators confesses, "for I was not standing in the ranks [of those rounded up for deportation and death].....

Every identification approaches over-identification and leads to a personiyving and then appropriation of the identity of others. The distance between self and other is violated and the possibility of intellectual witness aborted. So, too, Lanzmann's identification with the witnesses in his film *Shoah* is bound to be anti-intellectual. His angry, quasi-religious comments about the "obscenity" of seeking to understand the Holocaust betray this. He remains, at the same time, very present in the film as an ironic and often domineering questioner. He relentlessly pressures the victims as if uninterested in their human needs or their life beyond the traumatic event and subordinates all other considerations to a revelation of the event in its full horror.

Artists like these reveal that the intellectual part of consciousness always keeps us in the position of spectator or bystander. It is a deeply uncomfortable place to be in, because we are exposed, at one and the same time, to trauma *and* the anxiety of not empathizing enough. In this crucial area little can guide us. We say, for instance, that, on the part of historian as well as artist, there must be partial identification or some kind of emotional relation: a rational or therapeutic empathy that does not result in compulsive bonding or ecstatic loss of self. Like LaCapra we are tempted to use Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" to distinguish between "working through" and "acting out."

Yet everything we know about empathy suggests how destabilizing it is. The memory of atrocity is often haunted by images of the human body violated by torture, as in the case of Jean Amery, or by random and savage acts of mutilation. What can empathy mean here? It is at best an excape from disremembering dismemberment, and somehow

pieceing together the afflicted body through a narrative courage that evokes the once *integral* person. Empathy can also surprise and go out to the ex-perpetrators, the very people who betrayed the principle of human solidarity. Drawing a lesson from his own imprisonment in Dachau and Buchenwald, Robert Antelrne insists that the perpetrators remain persons, subjects with rights, members of humanity. "From now on a man who is imprisoned is a man we have to 'think' about; we are able to identify with him" (*nous sommes darts son intimité*).

Fraternity, however, extended from immediate blood relations to nation or mankind has proved to be a corruptible ideal. Instead of reinforcing the concept of humanity, of Antelme's *espèce humaine* it turned coercive and underwrote the political religions of fascism and Stalinism. Even in its Christian form it is not as universal as it claims to be, and it often subordinates humanitarian perspectives to fervid national demands. An exploited ideal, then, helped to promote the German *Volksgemeinschaft* and its crimes against humanity, yet it could not be discarded after the Holocaust.

The quality of postwar intellectualism, however, is influenced by that fact. Hoping to discover less corruptible forms of solidarity, contemporary writers have subjected the language of social and ethical thought to a painfully complex scrutiny. As a consequence, public discourse is sometimes jeopardized by the very means adopted to save it, the deconstruction of commonplaces and the outwitting of words emotionally abused by totalitarian regimes. I will instance only Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship*, which explores, among other texts, Maurice Blanchot's *Friendship* and *The Writing of the Disaster*. Blanchot belongs to the generation that matured before the war, but he survived an earlier self marked by right-wing journalistic agitation. Central to Blanchot's and Derrida's efforts is the attempt to reexamine and radicalize an older ideal: that of friendship. By the time they have analyzed it and removed solace and sentimentality, it poses a significant challenge to the intoxicating mass appeal of fraternity, community, humanity. Yet the anxiety of being seduced by words also creates a less communicative style, one that saves friendship by becoming less readerfriendly. The style may have a realism of its own, however: in the words of Yves Bonnefoy, it "aggravates instead of resolving, points to what remains obscure, takes clarities to be clouds that can always be dissipated...."

Having described some aspects of intellectual witnessing, I want to turn to the intellectual as witness. Without seeking a firm definition of the intellectual, I can say that the Holocaust made his status even more problematic. The obvious reason for this is related to the behavior of many well-educated Europeans, especially those Max Weinreich called "Hitler's professors." After Hitler and Stalin, Irving Howe once wrote, "intellectuals must never, no matter what the occasion or pretext, allow themselves to provide ideological rationales for the suppression of liberty" But there is also a less obvious reason for doubt about the professional thinker: while writers, journalists, and academics in Nazi-occupied Europe were often active accomplices, there was also a large group who waited it out as bystanders. The very concept, therefore, of bystander seems tainted. Given the passivity of so many who knew or could have known, is it possible *now* to "stand and wait"?

A clear sign of our impatience with the bystander mentality is the controversy over America's and also the Yishuv's (relative) inaction during the War Against the Jews. The dubious claim, moreover, that most Germans were ignorant onlookers, shielded from or accidentally happening upon the murderous events, has often been challenged and may not recover from Daniel Goldhagen's recent book. Also important is a renewed and exacting interest in rethinking agency and culpability.

The intellectual's situation is paradoxical. If, yielding to the call for action, he engages himself on one side or the other and that side loses, he finds himself compromised. If, avoiding action, he becomes a bystander who takes his time, anti-intellectualism increases. Intellectuals tend to be among the most pressured groups in society. But the most significant factor affecting all bystanders since 1945 is that the technology of real-time reporting now brings every disaster and evil in the world to our attention and so takes away all excuse. Through the media we become onlookers exposed to daily violence and global misery in the same quasi-involun-

tary way that Germans after 1933 were directly exposed to overt incidents and vicious propaganda. These bystanders saw yet did not see what was before their eyes.

Media exposure, then, may lead to more tension than ever between knowing and not-knowing, between a guilty conscience and deliberate palliation or forgetting. The constant spectacle of misery is already causing a low-grade, perpetual anxiety. The very absence of feeling pains us instead of the pain we think we should be feeling. We suffer a split, so that one part of us cannot accept an insensibility for which the other quietly decrees forgiveness. And, after Bitburg, the issue of premature closure, or what Adorno called *erpresste Versöhnung* (coerced reconciliation), comes to the fore. Instead of the passage of time setting a limit to liability, the delay-as often in fictional narratives-may now be deemed necessary to a full disclosure of trauma or guilt. In sum, the innocence of the bystanders has become less clear with the passage of time.

It is natural to focus on the bystander, for in the last fifty years, while scholarly and critical interest shifted from perpetrator to survivor (or rescuer) and back, the bystander was often neglected. The category is somewhat vague and confronts us with the ambiguities of Primo Levi's "gray zone," in which the demarcation between victim and collaborator, or bystander and collaborator, remains unclear. Bystanders after the event, however, such as the belated thinker and artist, struggle with a different dilemma. As in epitaphic inscriptions admonishing the traveller, a voice comes from the past and each must decide whether to heed it or pass by.

This moment of brooding is essential. We know that during catastrophe there is not enough time; thought is needed for coping, for meeting the emergency. After the crisis, however, an awareness that it had, if not an end, then a datable structure leads to a repeated act of recall that tries to become a reflection. We experience, as after a nightmare or serious illness, a feeling of relief, even of gratitude, that the immediate danger is over. The intolerable, though we did not know it directly, gives way to perplexity: how could it happen, how could they let it happen? And, since daily pressures, not only catastrophic ones, short-circuit this kind of reflective time, it has to be maintained and refurbished-despite the taint of spectatorship or the bitterness of the victim. So Tadeusz Borowski writes in *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*: "We were filthy and died real deaths. They were 'aesthetic' and carried on subtle debates."

Catastrophe, then, reduces time. As the threat advances, we rapidly lose the reflective space needed for decision-making. Any kind of playing for time becomes impossible. Fink describes how haste and hesitation prove equally fatal during the Nazi roundups. In such moments, however, moral actions do occur, whether or not they succeed. The father in "A Spring Morning" fails to save his child: she runs at his urging toward the safety of some bystanders and is shot down. If we see his decision, nevertheless, as a brave act, it is because of the closeness of the family previously portrayed by Ida Fink. We infer the father's moral courage in separating from the child.

Eventually an indefinite respite allows us to make time for time; and this recapture is humanizing. Those murdered in the Shoah, Habermas writes, "have a claim to the weak anamnestic power of a solidarity which those born later [he is thinking mainly of young Germans] can now only practice through the medium of memory." Habermas's "weak anamnestic power," and Benjamin's "weak messianic power" to which it alludes, suggest something potentially redemptive, insofar as historical knowledge is converted into remembrance or the risk-through art-of an anabasis, a descent to the dead, is undertaken.

But is there an aesthetic truth-is art a form of intelligence as trustworthy as historical or scientific inquiry? This long-standing debate revives again. Before "aesthetic" became a dirty word, the rubric of "aesthetic distance" had a place in the analysis and judgment of works of art. Though often superficially understood, the concept made us aware of the artist's responsibility vis-it-vis subject-matter and audience. The Greeks fined playwrights who merely quickened their pain or fear; and Primo Levi, in "The Memory of Offense," shows how difficult it is to be a messenger of bad news-also to oneself. I suspect that aesthetic distance struggles with a dissociation that results from trauma and seeks to achieve a balance between over- and under-identification. The key factor here is art's decorum of disclosure, its

sense of *timing*.

We receive a strong impression of such timing from a text which represents the opposite of Holocaust annihilation: the ritual creation-sequence that opens *Genesis*. (Tod takes time out to recognize or bless what He has made. An image of sheer power is modified by this predialogic acknowledgement of creature by creator. But periods of decreation-when we are devastated or returned to nothing-are something else. Time as the steadfast ground of being has disappeared; how do we talk *then* with the traumatized part of ourselves or others? What kind of dialogue or recognition is possible?

Entmündigte Lippe, writes Paul Celan, *melde / dass etwas geschieht, noch immer*, / *Unweit von die*. I can only paraphrase, not translate. "Mouthless, disenfranchized lips: announce that something is still happening, not far from you." Those who are lost, though far away, never disappear completely. Active in memory or activated by fantasy, their internalized presence may be so haunting that our own voice is jeopardized and becomes mute. Written words, silent but not mute, represent a compromise; and the tradition of written art, or rhythmic and ritual forms, will try to reintegrate something of the lost world, despite pain or trauma. The combination of form and feeling in art or some other, more discursive recovery of hermeneutic patience is especially effective in creating a mode of disclosure. The very difficulty, however, of "seeing" an event of such human ferocity, or of presenting it untramatically, should make us more cautious about an axiom of our culture: that, to quote Justice Brandeis, "Sunlight is the best disinfectant."

What are the chances, then, of encouraging an inter-generational conversation, through art or essays, to forestall silence and solipsism? Though "conversation," in this context, is a misnomer, I have yet to find a better word. To introduce facts about the Shoah into casual talk-or even into the less casual space of the classroom-produces an embarrassed silence. Silence of this kind can be propadeutic, however, a step toward mature conversation, toward that very *Mündigkeit* by which Kant defined the enlightened person or humanity's collective exodus from a self-incurred *Unmündigkeit*.

The conversation I consider essential to intellectual witness includes such questions as: Was suffering meant to end in a book or a movie? Must every good story presuppose a fascination with crime and disaster, with the heart of darkness? Can we look at the calamity of the Holocaust without taking some comfort from representation, discursive or artistic? Has the culture in which it happened changed? Does emphasis on the Shoah raise the suspicion that the Jewish community is monopolizing suffering, or is there a -way of bringing this disaster into the framework of comparative genocide? Are there moral lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust, more compelling than a vague appeal to humanitarian or democratic values?

As time passes and the terror that threatened to blank the screen is lessened by the very stories and pictures that accumulate as partial defenses against that blankness, we are obliged to think of the problems that surround the transmission of the Holocaust as a living memory. What if such a legacy-as it is now called-has a despairing or traumatizing effect and the "Never Forget" becomes an impossibility? Finally, is there a limit to the bitter logic of accusation or does that always depend on the triage of particular ideologies?

When the topic is the Holocaust, moreover, the cautions that weigh on intellectual essays are sometimes distinct from those that burden artistic or fictional projects. In art, scruples about representability often take over: can or should the Shoah be depicted in graphic and realistic ways? But in intellectual witness the constraint comes more from an equivalent to the third than the second commandment: "Thou shalt not refer to the Holocaust in vain.

We are always under the injunction not to multiply words needlessly. In the matter of the Shoah, however, "silence" takes on a particular value, and speaking and writing are more at risk than in fictional modes, which often experiment with shock, or create, through the magic of art, what Boileau called "agreeable monsters:" Silence as a value does not mean keeping quiet but evokes an internal monitor or threshold demon. The way we write about the Shoah has a bearing on the viability of culture after the Shoah.

In conclusion, "intellectual witness" is partial to itself it brings forward those aspects of rationality that contribute to humanity, those writers who

refuse to sacrifice their intellect despite the inhumanity of modern experience. Although I will not enter into arguments about Gadamer's ideal of "conversation" or Habermas's "communicative action," these relate rationality to democracy and continue to challenge a skeptical or *realpolitik* doctrine of social survival. In such debates the intellect becomes a witness to its own survival rather than being seduced into guilt, self-flagellation or abdication.

Witnessing, moreover, cannot take place without some hope in the future, in generational transmission. Perhaps all writing presupposes this hope-the manuscript in a bottle as well as the buried milk canisters of Ringelblum's "Oneg Shabbat:' Yet the scorched intelligibility Nazism left behind and modern efforts to rebuild and recover from it in a time of accelerating change have produced an uncertainty about who will transmit, or who can identify long enough with a self to become a subject, to establish a consistent sense of place, emplacement, belonging.

Because the identity of the survivors is so thoroughly shaped by their experience, this may not seem to be an important consideration. But the literature puts us on our gurard. The Nazi Holocaust systematically denied the victim any identity except of the most shameful and dehumanized kind. An unbridgeable gulf appeared between being human and being a Jew. "If This be a Man" is Primo Levi's title for his Auschwitz experience. "A different creator made me," Dan Pagis writes, comparing the shade (*zel*) he has become to the booted, uniformed guards usurping the *zelem elohim*, the image of God. The victim's identity became a non-identity. It is far too easy to claim that 1945 brought reversal and restoration. Who is speaking, who is testifying, if Paul Celan speaks truly when he says: "Speaks true who speaks shadow"?

Here the necessary function of intellectual, or secondary, witnessing is disclosed once more. It provides a witness for the witness, it actively receives words that reflect the darkness of the event. For "blackbird" Celan, for Ancel/Amsel, intelligibility is not the aim of witnessing. His poetry does not shine in the darkness to abolish it. Rather, the poetic word is as "darkness to a dying flame." Celan's skeletalized "I" testifies to the missing other as well as the missing self, the "you" or "we," what Maurice Halbwachs called the "affective community" (basis of all memory) and Michael Pollak called the need for social identity. Intellectual witness stands in for that "you" or "we" by a commitment to the survivors' or eyewitnesses' words. Like literature itself it moves within the damaged space of speech, specifically conscious of past betrayals and caught between the distancing and the discovery value of time.