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Tracing Memory: Representation and the Auschwitz
Experience in Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz et Après*

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Tracing Memory: Representation and the Auschwitz Experience
in Charlotte Delbo's *Auschwitz et Après*

by Heidi Grunebaum-Ralph

This study aims to examine the ways in which memory is represented in Auschwitz survivor, Charlotte Delbo's literary trilogy, *Auschwitz et Après*, (*Auschwitz and After*) (1970a;1970b;1971). Its examination of memory is premised on the understanding of survivor narrative as testimonial narrative and testimony as the telling of the memory of historical events which strain or exceed conventional frameworks of representation. As such, the aim of this study is to demonstrate the way that representations of memory of a limit-experience problematise the certainty of its own testimonial transmission. By attempting to theorise the dynamics of narrating personal memory and then by analysing key extracts in each volume of the trilogy, this examination attempts to demonstrate how the event of the Holocaust, the difficulty of being a survivor and an unwilling reception of the survivor's story are collectively implicated in the way that memory contests its own representation. By examining the discontinuities of memory, this study intends to show how, in very different ways, the silences and ruptures of memory which are produced in these readings are a remembering of a different form.

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In loving memory of Adelaide Mhkumbuzi

For Michael

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Ce livre n'est pas un document historique. Si la notion de hasard (comme la plupart des notions) ne paraissait pas absurde à l'auteur, il dirait volontiers que toute référence à une époque, un territoire ou une ethnie déterminés est fortuite. Les événements relatés pourraient surgir en tout lieu et en tout temps dans l'âme de n'importe quel homme, planète, minéral...

(Piotr Rawicz *Le Sang de Ciel*)

Pas de mot, pas de terme, le langage cesse, je ne me suis pas retourné, dérobé soudain à ma vue, soudain si pleinement absent, toi, si totalement dissipés, eux, évaporés, Lui, Elle, annihilé, moi, de la raréfaction de vide, de la quintessence de néant, m'avançant vers le fond sans fond du non-être, rien, plus rien, plus rien de rien, frappé brutalement, brusquement, à hurler, par ce silence

(Serge Doubrovsky *La Dispersion*, p.333)

Textes qui nous apprennent (sans que cela fasse l'objet d'un enseignement) à nous souvenir de ce qui désormais doit faire le fond de notre mémoire, à tous, jeunes ou vieux, juifs ou non-juifs [sic], si cette cassure insensée de l'espèce humaine en deux peut, après Auschwitz, encore faire sens. Cassure voulue par les antisémites et les nazis pour qui le juif signifie la répulsion, l'Autre dans toute son horreur, [...], expulsé, exilé, exterminé.

(Sarah Kofman, *Paroles Suffoquées*, p.14)

FOREWORD

*La fragmentation, marque d'une cohérence d'autant plus ferme qu'il lui faudrait se défaire pour s'atteindre, non par un système dispersé, ni la dispersion comme système; mais la mise en pièces (le déchirement) de ce qui n'a jamais préexisté (réellement ou idéalement) comme ensemble, ni davantage ne pourra se rassembler dans quelque présence d'avenir que ce soit. L'espacement d'une temporalisation qui ne se saisit - fallacieusement - que comme absence de temps.
(Maurice Blanchot L'Écriture du Désastre, p.99)*

In an essay entitled "The Holocaust as Literary inspiration", well-known writer Eli Wiesel, Auschwitz survivor, makes the observation that memory's intervention in contemporary public discourse is in the form of the testimonial utterance. Implicit in his formulation is the idea that if memory gestures to the past, its articulation is in service of a particular vision of the future. Thus, he comments that,

[...] the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony. We have all been witnesses and we all feel we have to bear testimony for the future. (Felman & Laub, 1992:5-6)

Clearly then, Wiesel implies that after the Holocaust the discursive gesture becomes the testimonial. At the centre of this proposition is a break with traditional generic categorisations, precisely as testimonial response to that event, the Holocaust, which has precipitated the rupture.

Taking up Wiesel's formulation of testimony as innovative literary form, literary critic Shoshana Felman outlines what is at stake in such a formulation:

As a relation to events, testimony seems to be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have

not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference. (1992:5)

Thus, as a discursive form, testimony comes to narrate memory's "bits and pieces", that is, its truth emerges in its representation of the shards of memory of an experience-at-the-limits.

The aim of the present study is to examine these shards, the remnants of memory which are represented in Holocaust survivor narrative. What emerges in the course of this study is, however, an interrogation of the ways that these texts, testimonial narrative par excellence, come to reveal self-doubt, confusion and silence regarding their own status as testimony. Fundamental to the historical truth-claim of the survivor's text is his/her immediacy to the event, as eye-witness. Yet the narration of memory in the wake of literally un-believable trauma often proceeds in ways which paradoxically subvert the grounds of the survivor's claims to credibility and veracity. Through the examination of the ways in which memory is represented in Auschwitz survivor, Charlotte Delbo's trilogy, entitled *Auschwitz et Après*, (Auschwitz and After) (1970a;1970b;1971), this study aims to demonstrate that such expressions of hesitation and doubt strain at the very cognitive limits which threaten to explode even the narrative framework of testimony. If testimonial narrative presents the fragments of memory as witness to a historical event that has literally defied imagination, then the silences and discontinuities which conversely emerge *through* that narration problematise the grounds of their own production.

Forgetting what is remembered is as much a question of reception, of the addressee's reading and assimilating

testimony, as it is a question of representation. The trilogy which will be examined, comprising of three volumes successively entitled *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* (None of us will return), *Une Connaissance inutile* (A Useless Knowledge) and *Mesure de nos jours* (Measure of our days) reveal, in very different ways, that the silences and ruptures of memory, are precisely a remembering of a different form. Literary critic, George Steiner addresses this difference when he argues in his gloss of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's theorisations of speech/silence that "[s]ilence has 'another speech than ordinary saying', (*un autre Dire que le dire ordinaire*), but it is meaningful speech nevertheless." (Steiner, 1969:75)

An essential insight into the way that the addressee is implicated in the cognitive reception and assimilation of the events of the Holocaust is offered by Claude Lanzman in his description of his first meeting with eye-witness survivors. In his research which led up to the making of his film on the Holocaust, *Shoah*, he recounts how after consulting archives, books, journals, in short, all sources of scholarship which would provide him with a scholarly foundation he finally approached the survivors only to discover that,

[...]il y avait un décalage absolu entre le savoir livresque que j'avais acquis et ce que me racontaient ces gens. Je ne comprenais plus rien. Il y avait d'abord la difficulté de les faire parler. Non qu'ils refusent de parler. Quelques-uns sont fous et incapables de rien transmettre. Mais ils avaient vécu des expériences tellement limites qu'ils ne pouvaient pas les communiquer. La première fois que j'ai vu Srebnik, le survivant de Chelmno [...], il m'a fait un récit d'une confusion extraordinaire, auquel je n'ai rien compris. Il avait

tellement vecu dans l'horreur qu'il était écrasé. (In an interview with Lanzmann in Chevrie et le Roux, 1990:294)

[...] there was an absolute breach between the knowledge from the books which I had acquired and what these people were telling me. I no longer understood anything. There was the initial difficulty of making them speak. Not that they refused to speak. Some of them were mad and incapable of communicating anything. But they had lived such limit experiences that they were unable to communicate them. The first time that I saw Srebnik, the survivor from Chelmo [...], he told me a story of extreme confusion of which I understood nothing. He had lived so much in the horror that he was wiped out.¹

It is this *décalage absolu* (absolute breach) between the "incredible" story of the survivor, which, outside of the cognitive structures of reason *appears to be* a story of "madness", of "confusion" and of non-sense and its historical assimilation through the confining limits of representational resources which frame reliable historical narratives. (White, 1978; Friedlander, 1993)

Between totalising historical accounts of the past, individual expressions of memory and collective commemorative gestures, the survivor's narration is often appropriated as an underpinning to a cultural, theological, or nationalistic grand-narrative of Memory (and in some cases, competing Memories). (Bédarida, 1993) This examination of the textual representation of memory aims, however, to analyse the expressions of silence, of disbelief, of discontinuity which reside within and between

¹ My translation of the extract from the interview with Lanzmann.

the "bits and pieces" of memory as a necessarily supplementary reading to the historical truths produced in responsible, if hegemonic, histories of the Holocaust. Its supplementarity resides in its retrieval of silenced voices, the unlistened to stories of the "mad", "confused" memories which remain in the caesura of catastrophe. As such, the examination of memory which I have outlined intends to study the "forms of discontinuity" (Todorov, 1994:171) which are presented in Holocaust survivor narrative.

The first section of Chapter One offers a brief biographical background to Charlotte Delbo, before proceeding, in the second section, to examine the title of the trilogy, *Auschwitz et Après*, and how it is implicated in a historical trajectory of theoretical debates which surround the study of the Holocaust. This examination articulates, by way of demonstration, the interdisciplinary underpinnings which inform this study's frames of analytical reference. The third section of this chapter sets up a theorisation of memory, based on a short essay written by Delbo. This theorisation examines the functionings of personal memory as embodied memories which are at the centre of all narrative representations of Holocaust survivor testimony. In this setting out of the processes of the personal memory of the survivor, the body is revealed as an important symbolic and referential presence which becomes central to thinking through the processes and narration of memory.

Chapter Two examines the *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra*, the first volume of Delbo's trilogy as a setting out of an aesthetic programme for the representation of Holocaust memory. The first section examines how the crisis which the Holocaust presents to its representation is symptomatic of a fundamental impasse located in the survivor's simultaneous inability to speak and her/his need to speak,

to bear witness. The dynamics of this impasse is explored with reference to Gregory Bateson's theory of the double-bind (1956) and the way that this explanatory framework operates as a mechanism which produces silences and disruptions within the narration itself. The second section of this chapter explores the tropes of these silences as they are produced in the narration of the Auschwitz experience in Delbo's texts which highlight, in turn, the radical alienation of the individual in the camps and the way in which language becomes implicated as an agency of the dehumanisation process and its representations.

My analysis of the second volume, *Une Connaissance Inutile*, in Chapter Three, examines the way that Delbo's text refers to a literary corpus of poetic and dramatic texts, a national literary tradition. In this way, I proceed, in the first section of this chapter, to determine how the engagement of these "canonised" texts with Delbo's narration of the concentration-camp experience, reflects the way that the literary text becomes implicated in the historicisation, as rupture, of the historical event which it narrates. The second section of this chapter examines the way that representations of text, - literary, dramatic, poetic, topographic and enumerative - as an aid to memory, become a trope of memory and of oral memorisation. This, in turn, offers some insight into what constitutes emotional and psychological resistance in the concentration camp.

Mesure de nos jours, the final volume of the trilogy, is the subject of examination in Chapter Four. The first section of this chapter focuses the signification of "after Auschwitz" on the individuals who survive, return and struggle to find meaning "after Auschwitz" in a world that often cannot acknowledge their return nor listen to their stories. These survivor's are represented as those "mad"

and "confused" voices, referred to by Lanzmann, which are banished to the margins of collective memory. The second section examines the tropes which are employed in representing the experience of the discontinuity of return and survival as a radical ontological alienation, which, as we shall see, calls into question many conceptual assumptions which are central to contemporary theorisations of survivor testimony.

The theoretical framework which informs this study is necessarily interdisciplinary. Literary, historical, historiographic, philosophical and psychoanalytical sources are consulted and critiqued through their engagement with the primary texts. In this way, interdisciplinarity functions as way of making-visible the materiality of theoretical approaches to Holocaust and genocide studies and, by extension, the possible limitations of these positions.

The engagement of this study with different disciplines is clearly reflected in its presentation of and participation in academic and cultural debates around the Holocaust. It should be noted that in order to effectively reflect the way that Charlotte Delbo's texts reveal what is at stake in her representation of Holocaust memory, my own methodological strategy has been purposefully to avoid resolution. Although I examine what is revealed through the problematisation of the generic categorisation of Delbo's texts and through the question of historical authenticity of her texts I do not attempt to resolve these questions. My contention is that resistance to generic categorisation of fictional or imaginative literature written by a survivor, bears witness to the extent of the dilemma that the Holocaust presents to representation, to assimilation. As such, this would constitute a historical truth in and of itself.

The Holocaust has come to be referred to in many

different terms. Once again the very terms which name the events are problematised, anticipating difficulty in speaking about, remembering and representing the Holocaust. In order to reflect the interpretative strategy of my textual analyses which, in their examination of fragments, silences, discontinuities and ruptures, aim rather to raise questions and to open the texts up to further readings, I alternatively employ the terms Shoah, Holocaust, Lager, Auschwitz as well as the Auschwitz experience.

It is hardly coincidental that this question of nameability of the Shoah is directly linked to the question of "knowing", as historical, those events. Charlotte Delbo frames the theoretical questions relating to the knowability of an event situated at the faultlines of representation as a question of language. Embedding the notions of knowability and nameability in the possibility of surviving trauma and then recalling it, she writes, "*Je reviens / d'au delà de la connaissance / il faut maintenant désapprendre je vois bien qu'autrement / je ne pourrais plus vivre.*" (1970b:191)² (I have returned from a place beyond knowing/knowledge, now I have to unlearn, it is clear that otherwise I would no longer be able to live.)

Can one reconstitute the scattered fragments of life, and the silence of shattering memories after surviving Auschwitz and then frame these questions as a literary project? How, then, can testimony be responsibly, ethically read and what are the limits of such readings? How is testimony to the survival of extreme trauma to be read fifty years later?

² Rosette Lamont has recently translated Delbo's trilogy into English. The English version has been published by Yale University Press (1995). Having been unable to obtain a copy of Lamont's translation, I have, therefore, translated all quoted extracts from the trilogy myself, unless otherwise indicated.

CHAPTER I
CHARLOTTE DELBO AND HOLOCAUST MEMORY

L'oubli effacerait ce qui ne fut jamais inscrit : rature par laquelle le non-écrit semble avoir laissé une trace qu'il faudrait oblitérer, glissement qui en vient à se construire un opérateur par où le il sans sujet, lisse et vain, s'englué, s'enduit dans l'abîme dédoublé du je évanescent, simulé, imitation de rien, qui se figera dans le Moi certain duquel tout ordre revient.
 (Maurice Blanchot *L'Écriture du Désastre*, p.135)

I. FROM RESISTANCE TO SURVIVAL

Not widely known as a writer in France, Charlotte Delbo has been, till recently, even less known outside of France.³ The lack of biographical information available concerning Charlotte Delbo is reflected in her relative anonymity and, as we will see, is disproportionate to the potential impact that her literary works should have on the major debates which have emerged in scholarship on the Shoah.

Prior to her arrest, internment in Paris and deportation to Auschwitz, Delbo had been a member of the Communist Youth organisation and assistant to the renowned director, Louis Jouvet of the *Théâtre de l'Athénée* in Paris. Whilst touring with the theatrical company in Buenos-Aires in 1941 she read about the decapitation in Paris of her friend, André Woog, on allegations of

³ This is all the more striking since Delbo's texts are published by Editions de Minuit, one of the most famous and reputable publishers of the post-Second World War era in France. Initially a Resistance press, Minuit later became specialist publishers of the *Nouveau Roman*, innovative literary form which challenged the limits of representation in the novel. I am indebted to Professor Jean-Louis Cornille for drawing my attention to these details.

Lawrence Langer (1978), Ellen Fine (1986) and Sidra Ezrachi (1980) have written about Charlotte Delbo and her texts in English.

possessing anti-nazi material. Apparently against the advice of Jouvét, Delbo decided to return to France, joining her husband, Communist activist and intellectual, Georges Dudach, in his anti-nazi underground activities in the Communist network of the Resistance. After four months of living under assumed identities in Paris, she and Dudach were arrested by French police on 2 March 1942 and imprisoned at la Santé. Three months after Dudach was executed by a firing squad on 23 May 1942 at Mont Valérien, Delbo was transferred to and kept prisoner in the Romainville fort. There she remained for nine months before finally being deported from Compiègne, in France, on 24 January 1943. It was at Romainville where she made acquaintance with many of the compatriots who shared her experiences and living quarters at Auschwitz-Birkenau and whose voices emerge in these texts, dedicated to those who died as well as those who survived.

Deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau for "*Activités anti-allemandes*" (Delbo, 1965:13) (Anti-German activities) in a convoy with two hundred and twenty-nine other women, Delbo was to be one of forty-nine survivors of that convoy to survive and to return from Auschwitz. She attributes this relatively high number of survivors to the fact that there were no Jewish deportees in the convoy, a factor which would have greatly diminished the survival rate of the convoy, since the difference in treatment of Jewish deportees was great already from arrival. (Delbo, 1965:16) The convoy which transported Delbo to Auschwitz was comprised, for the most part, of combatants and members of the French Resistance, it also included common law criminals and some women, who, through bureaucratic or judicial error, were included in the deportation.

The second text which Delbo wrote on her return, *Le Convoi du 24 janvier* (1965), sketches the biographies, in varying degrees of detail, of all of the women of the

convoy of that eponymous date and offers a sociological and ethnographic analysis of the convoy and its survival rate (16-19). According to her, that specific convoy was the last "political" convoy to arrive at Auschwitz. (20)

Seventy three days after arriving at Auschwitz-Birkenau seventy deportees remained of the original convoy, including Delbo, whose tattooed Auschwitz number was 31 661. On 1 July 1943 she and seventeen compatriots were moved to Raisko, to work in a laboratory near to Auschwitz I, the main camp. Following an agreement with German industrial giant, I.G. Farben, German scientists had imported seeds of "kok-saghyz", a strain of dandylion, back from Russia to see whether the latex contained in the roots of the plant could be cultivated in order to produce a rubber. In Raisko, vastly improved living and working conditions contributed to increasing the chances of her survival. Seven months after transfer to Raisko, ten deportees of the original convoy, including Delbo, were transferred to the women's camp of Ravensbruck. Between 7 January 1944 and 16 August 1944 the remaining of the - at this point - fifty-four survivors of the original convoy were transferred to Ravensbruck. Following the liberation of Ravensbruck, Delbo returned to France, via Sweden, and so, on the 23 April 1945, three years after being arrested there, she finally returned to Paris. Forty-nine deportees from that January convoy had survived.

After the war Delbo worked for the United Nations and, from the sixties, for the Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques in Paris in collaboration with philosopher, Henri Lefebvre. In 1946 she wrote the first volume of her trilogy on Auschwitz. Entitled *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra*, this volume, a literary text, was put aside by Delbo for almost twenty years before being published.

II. AUSCHWITZ ET APRES: SURVIVAL AS RESISTANCE

Auschwitz et Après: Survival as Resistance

12

The *Auschwitz et Après* trilogy is an autobiographical and biographical depiction of the concentration camp experience. The three volumes intersperse narrative vignettes of prose and poetry, conflating and juxtaposing a variety of genres and narrative strategies in a manner which, as we will see in my discussion of Holocaust memory, structurally resembles the difficult passage of memory from repression, selection and substitution to its articulation, narration and textual representation.

In order to understand the ways in which Delbo's texts function as seminal to the debate regarding representation and aestheticisation of the Auschwitz experience, it is useful to examine how the title of Delbo's literary trilogy evokes just what is at stake in discussions regarding the Shoah and then to determine the importance of these texts regarding these discussions.

The trilogy, *Auschwitz et Après*, attempts to examine issues raised by the event of Auschwitz in Western consciousness from three different approaches. I would like to think through the significance of the title since it contains the explicit suggestion that the implications of "Auschwitz" resonate in eternal relation to and beyond Auschwitz, the event. Clearly, then, "after", the temporal deictic, can never be a neutral referent since it is uttered in perpetual reference to Auschwitz. A new beginning is precisely sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman's characterisation of the Shoah whose impact on Western consciousness is theorised as a temporal and modal rupture with Enlightenment project of Modernity. (Bauman, 1989)

Possibly, one of the best-known formulations of a response to the Holocaust which defines the resistance of Auschwitz to cognitive assimilation as, essentially, a problem of language has been that of Theodor Adorno whose well known dictum is an argument against the aestheticisation of the Shoah. "After Auschwitz," Adorno

has written, "it is no longer possible to write poems". (quoted in Felman & Laub, 1992:33) This proposition, oft-cited and often read as an advocacy of silence as the only adequate response in the face of Auschwitz, points to the essential dilemma in which the Shoah survivor finds him/herself. This dilemma, present in Adorno's proposition, clearly suggests that if speech is a solvent whose agency radically dilutes the horrors, carnage, inhumanities and suffering of Auschwitz and its survivor, how much more is the dissimulation of poetic discourse's aestheticising impulse. Predicated on formulations such as Adorno's, aestheticising the Shoah came to be seen, from one point of view, as a betrayal of the memory of those who did not return, the unnamed, unburied, vanished dead. In the face of language and its limited representational resources, silence has been considered to be a more appropriate response. (Steiner, 1969:76) This position has, initially, been empirically supported by the historical response of silence from the survivors, a response which, as we will see in Chapter Four, has often been a question of reception, a resistance to listening on the part of the addressee, and not purely a question of an unsayability on the part of the survivors.

As Delbo's texts demonstrate, Adorno's dictum could be read not as a demand for silence, but as a demand for poetic discourse to make present its submission to Auschwitz and, in its emergence, to make present the traces of breakage, rupture and displacement inherent within the very structures of post-Auschwitz language. This is a position which is taken up later by Jean-François Lyotard when he suggests that it is precisely the rupture or the collapse of language in the face of Auschwitz that must be represented, a move which entails a shift in the very representational strategies of discourse:

Le différend est l'état instable et l'instant du langage où quelque chose qui doit pouvoir être mis en phrases ne peut pas l'être encore. Cet état comporte le silence qui est une phrase négative, mais il en appelle aussi à des phrases possibles en principe. Ce que l'on nomme ordinairement le sentiment signale cet état: « On ne trouve pas ses mots », etc. Il faut beaucoup chercher pour trouver les nouvelles règles de formation et d'enchaînement de phrases capables d'exprimer le différend que trahit le sentiment si l'on ne veut pas que ce différend soit aussitôt étouffé en un litige, et que l'alerte donnée par le sentiment ait été inutile. C'est l'enjeu d'une littérature, d'une philosophie, peut-être d'une politique, de témoigner des différends en leur trouvant des idiomes. (Lyotard, 1983:29-30)

The differend is the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be. This state includes silence, which is a negative phrase, but it also calls upon phrases which are in principle possible. This state is signalled by what one ordinarily calls a feeling: "One cannot find the words," etc. A lot of searching must be done to find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed by the feeling, unless one wants this differend to smothered right away in a litigation and for the alarm sounded by the feeling to have been useless. What is at stake in literature, in a philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them. (Lyotard, 1988:13)

Adorno himself redefines and delimits an ethical aesthetic of Auschwitz in *Negative Dialectics* when he

states that,

[p]erennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems.
(1973:362)

In his clarification of his subject-position regarding ways of speaking about Auschwitz, that is, responses other than silence - as if referring to poet Paul Celan's poetic language-at-the-limits - Adorno concedes that it is, in the final count, artistic response alone, such as that represented by the literary text, which can adequately approach the subject of the Shoah.

TRUTH/TRUTHFULNESS/AUTHENTICITY: APPROACHES TO MEANING

Delbo's texts assume particular importance when read as critical responses to contemporary theoretical approaches to Auschwitz. Read in the original French, the phrase, "*Auschwitz et Après*" sets up a multiplicity of different, often contradictory, readings which are reflected in discussions of representation and historical memory. As "*Auschwitz...et après?*", the phrase becomes a construct which in its ironising, open-ended interrogative structure, continuously problematises itself as historical referent. As such the title of the trilogy announces its own subverting instability and introduces the ensuing conflation of discursive categories of truth (historical/juridical discourse) and verisimilitude (imaginative/literary discourse) in the narration of experience *in extremis*. Indeed, the very first page of written text in *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, an epigraph, echoes this reading of the trilogy's title, plunging the

testimony into uncertainty: "*Aujourd'hui, je ne suis pas sûre que ce que j'ai écrit soit vrai. Je suis sûre que c'est véridique.*" (1970a) (Nowadays, I am not certain that what I have written is true, but I am certain that it happened/is authentic.) The French text employs the words *vérité* (truth) and *véridique* (meaning both authentic and truthful in French) and places the epigraph on an unnumbered page in order to highlight the problematic of representation and historical truth in survivor narrative. The epigraph encapsulates the interplay between truth, reality and verisimilitude in representation. This formulation is a warning that what follows places the witness and her testimony at a the threshold of crisis. It also highlights the essential paradox which underpins both the discursivity of the "fact" of Auschwitz and the process of bearing witness, as a survivor to Auschwitz, a paradox which is played out in the narrative itself.

The conflation of narrative categories in survivor narrative underlines the effects of trauma on memory and, by extension, on the narration of memory. This collapse or overlap of narrative categories also underlines the ways that narrating memory are influenced by those factors which shape the survivor for it is at the point of overlap of imaginative and historical discourse that these factors come to be revealed. From the title, and followed by the texts themselves, the survivor's essential dilemma emerges which demands the addressee to persistently re-evaluate categories and notions of historical discourse, fictional or imaginative discourse and historical truth. Delbo's narratives cannot be committed to a master narrative of historical certainty and yet, it is precisely the survival of such a certainty to which they testify. Indeed, as Delbo's trilogy will demonstrate, survivor testimony is constructed as one which is unable to reach closure in its perpetual speaking of unspeakability, of fragmentation. As

such, Shoah survivor narrative is constructed as ambivalent, presenting itself as self-doubting, and sometimes, even contradictory.

Testimony which, emerges from ambiguity, disbelief, doubt and paradox is problematic not least because it challenges the consensual contract implicit in historical narration, its modes of representation and its reception. As Jean-François Lyotard reminds us, the empirical or objective "authentication" of historical evidence presented by survivor testimony is subverted by the very nature of the event of the Shoah. (1983:16) To be an "eye-witness" to the gas chambers and crematoria is a contradiction in terms, people cannot witness their own death. Lyotard's intention is to demonstrate the absurdity of the logic implicit in Holocaust revisionist "historian", Faurisson's syllogistic arguments which ignore the referential reality of Auschwitz (1983:16)

The question which Delbo's trilogy raises, is how do we think through an event where all terms of reference become relative, unverifiable and hence, disputed, contended? The title of the trilogy then, raises the difficult and important question of what ethical considerations can provide the conceptual limitations to responsible scholarship of the Holocaust? Lyotard seems to suggest that scholars have to investigate innovative epistemologies in order to approach Auschwitz. In order to do this it is necessary, he writes, that the historian,

[...] rompe avec avec le monopole consenti au régime cognitif des phrases sur l'histoire, et s'aventure à prêter l'oreille à ce qui n'est pas présentable dans les règles de la connaissance. Toute réalité comporte cette exigence pour autant qu'elle comporte des sens inconnus possibles. Auschwitz est la plus réelle des réalités à cet égard. Son nom marque les confins où la connaissance

historique voit sa compétence récusée. Il ne s'ensuit pas qu'on entre dans le non-sens. L'alternative n'est pas : ou la signification établie par la science, ou l'absurdité, mystique comprise [...]. (Lyotard, 1983:92)

[...] break with the monopoly over history granted to the cognitive regimen of phrases, and he or she must venture forth by lending his or her ear to what is not presentable under the rules of knowledge. Every reality entails this exigency insofar as it entails possible unknown senses. Auschwitz is the most real of realities in this respect. Its name marks the confines wherein historical knowledge sees its competence impugned. It does not follow from that one falls into non-sense. The alternative is not: either the signification that learning [science] establishes, or absurdity, be it of the mystical kind [...]. (Lyotard, 198:57-58)

Saul Friedlander soberly reminds us that the "playful" fragmentation of meanings generated by certain postmodernist reading strategies can trivialise understandings of Auschwitz. As he puts it,

[...] it is precisely the "Final Solution" which allows postmodernist thinking to question the validity of any totalizing view of history, of any reference to a definable metadiscourse, thus opening the way for a multiplicity of equally valid approaches. This very multiplicity, however, may lead to any aesthetic fantasy and one again runs counter to the need for establishing a stable truth as far as this past is concerned. (1992:5)

Unchecked by ethical obligations and historical truths,

such readings can relativise the Holocaust and key into the ideological narratives of negationist and denialist discourse. This brings us to the converse or counter-reading of the trilogy's title as "Auschwitz....so what?"⁴ which resonates in revisionist and denialist discourses which, in seizing upon the essential dilemma inherent in survivor testimony claim that the event must be, by logical extension, untrue because unverifiable. (Davidovicz, 1981; Vidal-Naquet, 1992; Fresco, 1994)

Ultimately the phrase points to the essential futility of the experience which resists integration in human cognitive systems and, hence, resists all assignment of meaning. This understanding pre-empts the title of the second volume, *Une Connaissance Inutile*, "A useless or futile knowledge". The trilogy's title, read in the context of the title of this volume generates speculation as to the futility of bearing such a knowledge. Lifted off a phrase in a Camus' notebook (Langer, 1978:202) the original French text clearly articulates the difference between knowledge and cognition. Hence, the etymological formation of "connaissance" points to cognition and the cognitive processes, as opposed to "savoir" which signifies knowledge or, according to the *Larousse, Dictionnaire de la langue française*, "[l'e]nsemble des connaissances acquises par l'étude". Thus the futility or senselessness of the Shoah qualifies both its knowability as well as its resistance to assimilation. Whether Auschwitz can be "known", that is, whether the survivor/witness, using available resources of language and cognitive structures, can make Auschwitz knowable, is one of the underpinning questions of all Shoah narrative. The question of knowledge raised by the title of this second volume frames

⁴ In colloquial French, a statement which is followed by the question "et après?" translates, into English, as the dismissive "so what?".

the epistemological problematic which Auschwitz poses by constructing the narrative as a sustained meditation of interpersonal, historical and intertextual relationships in order to explore the representational resistance of Auschwitz.

If Auschwitz has become an important reference point in contemporary debates on the role of memory in culture, religious studies, philosophy and historiography, the third volume evokes the disembodied bearers of that memory, the survivors themselves. Through a series of conversations, interviews, anecdotes, meditations in prose and poetry, this third and final volume, entitled, *Mesure de nos Jours* (Measure of our Days), symbolically offers the survivor the last word in his/her appraisal of the post-Auschwitz condition. This volume presents the survivor as different to those survivors represented in the heroic narratives of resistance, survival, and healing/integration. This serves as an important reminder that the ways in which memory is appropriated in collective representations of the past often dispossess the survivor of the experience which they have survived, threatening, once again, to silence them. By invoking the survivor as doomed-to-survive *Mesure de nos Jours* debunks many popular theories of survival of limit-experiences and received notions of healing through telling the story, through closure. Having already contested the limits of narrative categories, the text's presentation of the doomed-to-survive survivor challenges the addressee's expectations of a teleological narrative, of a cathartic engagement with the text and its internal logic.

III. AUSCHWITZ MEMORY: BODIES/BORDERS/BOUNDARIES

Central to this trilogy's preoccupation with representation both of the survivor and of the Auschwitz past is the way in which memory is individually articulated, narrated and received. The very act of ordering memory as a structured narrative, oral or written, is an act of editing. (Todorov, 1993; Langer, 1988) The sequence of images and events, the privileging of certain memories over others, the ways that generation, gender, culture, language, ethnicity and political conviction as well as trauma, grief, guilt and fear collectively shape memories, its sublimations and amnesiac lacunae (Grunebaum-Ralph, 1996:17). Since the act of recollecting is one of ordering and selecting, of forgetting as well as remembering and of editing the way that something is remembered, Memory's impulse is, by extension, revisionist (Robbins, forthcoming). Thus, personal memory and the narratives appropriated by collective memory suture the lacunary silences into a seamless, unproblematic Memory, a gesture which is both revisioning as well as anti-Revisionist. It is important, however, to examine how the formalisation of memory in survivor narrative manifests, through its structural organisation, self-doubt, self-conscious alienation and silence regarding its own status as testimony and, importantly, its historical authenticity. This concern is clearly demonstrated by the refrain of "I was there, I saw with my own eyes and still, I could not believe what I saw" expressed in so many Holocaust survivor testimonies (oral and written). This sentiment draws on the credibility of the eye-witness's empirical truth-claim, central to the establishment of a legalistic and juridical narrative of events, at the same time as it suggests that central to the nature of the Holocaust is a resistance to its cognitive assimilation.

Since individual memories are directly implicated in questions of representation in survivor narrative it would be helpful to turn, firstly, to one of Delbo's later texts, *La mémoire et les Jours* (1995) (Memory and Days), where she discusses the operations of memory and of Holocaust survivor memory in particular. This discussion of memory, its discontinuities and disruptions, will be read back to the trilogy as a fulcrum around which my interpretative approaches to the texts will turn.

It is important to consider Delbo's discussion of memory in the context of the moment in which she publishes her text. *La mémoire et les Jours* appears in 1995, fifty years after Delbo has been liberated from Ravensbruck. Publication takes place in an era of ageing survivors, against the backdrop of an increase in revisionist and denialist 'narratives as well as an explosion of publications, films, monuments, commemorations of the Holocaust as it is increasingly commodified. As Auschwitz replicates, in the mass media, it belongs to everyone and it belongs to no-one. The past two decades could best be described as an era which has witnessed the fragmentation of the master-narrative of "The Holocaust" : the dispersion of the meanings of the Auschwitz experience into contested and competing narratives. (Friedlander, 1993; Hartman, 1994; Stier, 1996) And yet the multiplication of narratives of memory has witnessed new narratives of amnesia. Thus, the beginning of the Historikerstreit (the historian's debate) in Germany in 1986 and American president, Ronald Reagan's controversial memorial visit to SS graves at Bitburg cemetery, are two examples which stand out as symptomatic of the historical relativisation which precipitates the explosion of competing Holocaust narratives onto the scene.

The survivor's text emerges at a time when debates on normalisation, historicisation and historical relativism in

representations of the Holocaust and of memory on the academic and cultural scene could be seen to invalidate the survivor's experience of Auschwitz through multiple appropriations of the individual experience.

Delbo's preoccupation with memory and its contexts of expression, reflected in the title of the text, needs then to be examined in the context of these challenges to essentialist narratives of Holocaust memory as well as to revisionist and denialist negations of the Holocaust. A conceptualisation of memory emerges, prefaced precisely as an intention to "explain the inexplicable", in *La mémoire et les Jours* through the metaphor of a snake which routinely sheds its skin:

Expliquer l'inexplicable. L'image du serpent qui laisse sa vieille peau pour en surgir, revêtu d'une peau fraîche et luisante, peut venir à l'esprit. J'ai quitté à Auschwitz une peau usée - elle sentait mauvais, cette peau - marquée de tous les coups qu'elle avait reçus, pour me retrouver habillée d'une belle peau propre, dans une mue moins rapide que celle du serpent, toutefois.(11)⁵

Explaining the inexplicable. The image of the snake which emerges from its old skin, clothed in a fresh and shiny skin, comes to mind. I left behind, at Auschwitz, a used skin - it smelled bad, that skin - marked by all the blows that it had received, to find myself dressed in a clean new skin, in a moulting which was, all the same, less quick than the snake's.

This biologically framed representation of memory betrays an awareness of the problematics of the premises on which

⁵ All quotations from *La Mémoire et les Jours*, in this chapter, will be referenced by page number only.

memory is theorised, for, memory, like skin, must change with time, it ages and alters just as its representations and transmissions. As such, built into this metaphorical conceptualisation of memory is a self-reflectiveness, an element of doubt which is a fundamental component of both memory and its praxis and, hence, the truth-claims of the survivor-as-witness. It is important to recall that, in a discussion dealing with the dynamics of memory and the body as a site of memory, the body has historically been figured as a key trope in the representations of immutable difference constructed by biological/scientific race discourse of late nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century Western Europe, specifically in Germany and France. As a political prisoner of the Third Reich, Charlotte Delbo would know how this discourse functions as a marker singling out the different prisoner groups/strata in the concentration camp for different treatment. In addition, she would be aware of the function of this discourse in the carrying out of genocide against Jewish and Gypsy populations.

Both the snake and its shed skin bear the trace of the other as a "memory", by virtue of this previous organic embeddedness. Just as the snake's skin falls away from the snake, the survivor emerges from the Auschwitz experience. Auschwitz "falls away" like the dead skin, yet unlike the snake it remains wrapped around the survivor, separated, detached but enclosing. By illustrating how the new and old skins of the snake metaphorically represent the dynamics of memory and of remembering, Delbo presents the traces of Auschwitz and its memory as a bodily inscription, an impression in flesh, an embodied memory. In this way the body becomes the symbolic locus for conceptualising the materiality of memory and its referential operations in

textual, cultural and commemorative practices⁶. In this way, "disembodying" Holocaust narratives of a collective, unsutured memory are personalised and reappropriated by the victims and survivors.

The metaphor continues to describe how the snake's shed skin retains its "memory", that is, the trace of the snake, who, meanwhile, retains the memory of the skin through which it has passed and through which it will once again pass precisely because the process of shedding skin is a returning, ritualising occurrence. By gesturing to the way that the image of shed skin recalls the snake, the metaphor calls our attention to the metonymic operation of both the trope with which Auschwitz memory is figured as well as of memory itself. In this way, we are reminded that the representations and transmissions of memory can only rely on metonymic tropes in order to represent the subject remembered (or forgotten), in order to function as memorial or historical narratives.

By referring to the process of sloughing, shedding, fading and disappearing skin, the metaphor explicitly sets up a temporal distinction which determines the visibility of the *material* traces of memory. In this way, memory as the faculty of recalling past experiences, is located, through the shedding skin metaphor, as a spacio-temporal construct. Thus, the less temporally immediate the Lager becomes for the (ageing) survivor, the less the survivor's skin retains the visible imprint of its submission to the Lager. The more the trace itself becomes absent the more Memory is charged with the responsibility of "authentically" signing or signposting the past. It would follow, then, that immediately after the survivor's return, the body which returns from Auschwitz (like the snake's old skin) bears the visible -and in the case of tattoos,

⁶ This study, however, focuses only on textual representation and narration of memory.

indelible - traces of the camp. This temporal distinction, predicated on the fading of traces over the passing of time, highlights Delbo's concern with the way in which memory facilitates the transposition of the materiality of an event to its representation in narrative as historical. I would also suggest that Delbo's insistence on the presence of the "invisible" trace of trauma functions as a veiled gesture to the silences and dislocations within survivor narratives as sites of these absent traces.

The significance of the site of the body, figured by the metaphor of the skin, in theorising memory impacts on discussions concerning the survival of limit-experiences and must be more closely examined. By comparing the snake's skin to that of the survivor's and then by employing the snake's skin as a metaphor for the dynamics of memory, Delbo conflates the faculty of recall with the flesh of the survivor, powerfully underlining the present absence of those who did not return, as well as evoking the altered, marked and damaged corporeality of those who did. Following the description of the snake shedding its skin, Delbo suggests that the flesh is a site inscribed with a memory of the senses, those receptors at the somatic boundaries. This recall of experience through sensation or impression on the senses, is conceptually clarified further when it is defined as "*la mémoire profonde*" (13) (deep memory) and placed in opposition to and differentiated from "*la mémoire ordinaire*" (13) (common memory),⁷ the faculty of recall which resides in the intellect and, therefore, in language. Deep memory recalls the sensory imprint of the camp:

A Birkenau, la pluie faisait ressortir

⁷ Both the translation of *la mémoire profonde* as deep memory and *la mémoire ordinaire* as common memory are Lawrence Langer's translations of Delbo's concepts of memory (1978)

l'odeur de diarrhée. C'est l'odeur la plus plus fétide que je connaisse. A Birkenau, la pluie rabattait sur le camp, sur nous, la suie des crématoires et l'odeur de chair qui brûle. Nous en étions imprégnés. (11)
 At Birkenau, the rain brought out the odour of diarrhea. It is the most fetid odour that I know. At Birkenau, the rain beat down on the camp, onto us, the soot of the crematoria and the odour of flesh which was burning. We were impregnated with it.

The recurring imagery of skin in recollecting its sensations and disfigurements would suggest that a representation of memory, as a specifically sensory/sensual faculty, as organic tissue, literally embeds the traces of Auschwitz in the body and its sense organs. I will return to this presentation of memory as bodily/embodied inscription further on in a demonstration of how this presentation functions as a mandate for the survivor to speak/testify on behalf of the dead.

TORTURED MEMORY: THE SURVIVOR AND THE TRUE WITNESS

Unlike the snake which separates and emerges from its sloughed skin, Delbo suggests that the survivor remains permanently enclosed by the outer layer of skin/memory and does not *emerge from* that shed skin/memory. This fleshy mask which has survived the camps, "impregnated" with the "soot of the crematoria" is, according to Delbo, both "*la mémoire et la peau de la mémoire*" (the memory and the skin of the memory) which is neither shed nor renewed and becomes a literally embodied memory of Auschwitz. (12 -13) For literary critic Rachel Ertel, the body's traces as testimony to Auschwitz are not symbolic but, rather, immanently material and literally embodied. Thus, in a

discussion of Claude Lanzmann's film on Holocaust memory, *Shoah*, she writes that

Après Shoah, il nous arrivera devant un objet très ordinaire -un train, un camion -, devant un paysage serein, d'être pris d'un frisson, d'un spasme. Ce sera, dans notre corps, la mémoire du génocide. (Ertel, 1990:54)⁸

After Shoah, faced with a very ordinary object - a train, a truck -, in front of a peaceful countryside, we will be shaken by a spasm or a shiver. This will be, in our bodies, the memory of the genocide.

Although Ertel's remarks refer to the body-as-witness to genocide of a later generation of addressees, they resonate powerfully in Delbo's description of the survivor's body as living, organic memorial site, as both historical and personal. Moreover, it is this presentation of the memory of genocide inscribed on the body which endows the survivor with the emissarial function of witness.

As the enveloping impenetrable outer layer of Auschwitz memory, *la mémoire profonde* retains the sensations and experiences of the Lager, intact and unmediated, and is presented as being an impermeable membrane which is separate and separating. As such deep memory defines the survivor as Survivor and emerges as the separating boundary between survivor and non-survivor. In a development of the original snake's skin metaphor, Delbo's narrator in *Mesure de nos Jours* articulates the boundaries of survivor identity as layers of memory which are constructed as three successive masks. The face of Survivor: tired, used-up, ruined; the face from Auschwitz: alive, mobile; and a third face which covers over the others: a "passe-partout" mask which engages with the

⁸ My translation

anxieties of a post-Auschwitz world. (1971:187) Referring to her co-survivors, the narrator suggests that *[s]ans doute n'y a-t-il que nous qui voyions la vérité de nos camarades, sans doute n'y a-t-il que nous qui voyions leur visage nu par en dessous [le masque].*" (1971:187) (no doubt it is us alone who saw the truth in our comrades, no doubt it is us alone who saw their naked face beneath [the mask].) Here, the survivor is constructed as the bearer of an incommunicable truth, embedded in the body as an invisible or esoteric mark whose presence functions as the dead victim's proxy to tell the story.

By locating memory as an inscription on the body, Delbo not only recalls the bearers of the true memory of the camps, the literally effaced/defaced dead, she locates in the very flesh of the survivor the traces of the dead and, in doing so, the mandate to speak on their behalf. This is illustrated in *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra* where the narrator describes how men and women, who work in the drained marshes in springtime with sacks around their wastes,

[...] plongent la main dans la poussière d'os humains qu'ils jettent à la volée en peinant sur les sillons avec le vent qui leur renvoie la poussière au visage et le soir ils sont tout blancs, des rides marqués par la sueur qui a coulé sur la poussière. (1970a:19)

[...] sink their hands into the human bone meal which they spread in handfuls above the furrows with the wind which blows the dust back into their faces and at night they are all white, lines marked by the sweat which has trickled through the dust.

Cinders of human remains trace the stories written on the very faces of the survivors.

Many survivors, writers, historians and philosophers have reiterated that the true witness to the Auschwitz experience are those who did not return from it. Thus, in *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi insists on the distinction between the "true witnesses", the drowned or those who died, and the saved, those who survived:

I must repeat - we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses. This is an uncomfortable notion, of which I have become conscious little by little, reading the memoirs of others and reading mine at a distance of years. We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the 'Muslims', the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have a general significance. They are the rule, we are the exception.
(1989:63-64)

Thus, the representation of memory as body empowers the narrative to bear collective witness *on behalf* of the dead whose absent presences are "impregnated" in the narration as the "soot of the crematoria".

REMEMBERING THE BODY'S EFFACEMENT

Re-presenting, re-inscribing the remnants of bodies, Delbo's conceptualisation of memory represents a post-Auschwitz reclamation or recovery of the body whose hegemonical boundaries have been transgressed in the Lager, by the Lager. Indeed Jean Améry's proposition (1986:21-40) that the violation of the corporeal boundaries of the body - in systematic torture - was fundamental to the *raison*

d'être of National Socialist ideology is precisely the recognition of "wiping out" by assaulting the body: the individual is rendered "invisible"/powerless and stripped of potent will through the transgression/penetration of that somatic frontier, the skin, in the first blow of torture.

If the first moment of torture represents the unrecuperable sovereignty of the body and, so, of the individual as Other, then the concentration camp represents the systematic and progressive effacement of the entire body's presence prior to its biological death.⁹

I would suggest that the significance of the skin as trope to figure memory is underscored further if we consider that in the concentration camps the transgression or blurring of the body's boundaries is directly linked to the process of humiliation, degradation and dehumanisation of the prisoner. The individual's identity, indeed, the very notions of individuality and identity/identification are powerfully renegotiated in the concentrationary universe. For those deportees who were not immediately sent to the gas chambers following arrival in the death camps the shaving of hair on the head and entire body, the tattooing of numbers as identification and delousing treatments signify the beginning of a systematic process whereby the physical signs of humanness are dismantled through the negation, the desacralisation, of the body and its presence in the camp. Thus, standing in the camp yard, the first order given to the newly arrived prisoner, prior to shaving, classifying, and tattooing, is to undress, to expose the naked skin, to be stripped of the first sign of "human" social identity. This "coercion of nudity" (Levi, 1989:90) dehumanises through recurrence. As

⁹ Améry speaks of torture as a system where the tortured is an extension of the will of the torturer and that the torturer experiences her/his subjectivity as "expanded into the body" of the tortured (35)

Primo Levi points out, in the Lager "shaving was total and weekly; public and collective nudity was a recurrent condition, typical and laden with significance." (1989:90) Through the systematisation, ritualisation of deprivation, deprivatation, transgression of and assault to the body's presence, the physical markers of individual identity are obliterated and conventional terms of identification are defamiliarised, subverted.

The image of the *Musulman*, the walking dead, identified by their haunting/haunted, gaunt faces, lifeless eyes, emaciated bodies and automaton-like movements stands out as a symbolic refrain of the body's obliteration, the effacement of the material self prior to physiological or clinical death in the camps.

As a recurring figure in survivor accounts, the *Musulman* is represented as possessing neither an identity nor a name, effectively constructed as embodied memory of effacement. Thus, Delbo's narrator describes the movements of such a woman as " *[u]ne danse de mécanique. Un squelette de femme qui danse.*" (1970a:45) (a mechanical dance. A dancing skeleton of a woman.) Importantly, both the identity as well as the gender of the woman are erased and as the narration of her robotic dance progresses the narrator speculates as to whether she is "[...] *une de ces vieilles folles qui font peur aux enfants dans les squares. C'est une femme jeune, une jeune fille presque.*" (1970a:43) (one of these crazy old ladies who frighten children in parks. She is a young woman, a young girl almost.) In the following paragraph the same woman is

[...]enveloppé dans une couverture, un enfant, un garçonnet. Une tête rasée très petite, un visage où saillent les mâchoires et l'arcade sourcillière. Pieds nus, il sautille sans arrêt [...]. Il veut agiter les bras aussi pour se réchauffer. La couverture s'écarte. C'est un femme. Un squelette de femme. Elle est nue. (1970a:44-45)

[...] wrapped in a blanket, a child, a little

boy. A tiny, shaven head, a face whose jaws and brow stand out. Barefoot, he jumps without stopping. He also wants to wave his arms in order to stay warm. The blanket falls open. It is a woman. The skeleton of a woman. She is nude.

By transexualising the woman from old woman, young girl, small boy and young woman, the narrative effectively constructs the *Musulman* as the essential witness-as-effaced-memory, encompassing those "walking dead" who were literally disfigured by emaciation, disease and torture as well as the Jewish deportees who passed from the camps' station platforms directly to the gas chambers: the old, the children, the sick and frail and the pregnant women.

DISMEMBERED BODIES, DISPLACED MEMORIES

After biological death, bodies are incinerated, altered as human remains. It is after death that the body becomes truly effaced as body, as memory of a body, stripped of its "human" referentiality, and commodified as "material" in a process of exchange whereby the dismemberment/re-memberment of body parts effectively erases memory by transposing another identity onto those remains.¹⁰ The identity of the body is recalled, not as the death of a person, but as a commodified object. This would, in effect, bring about a double displacement of memory for the dismemberment/re-memberment of body parts simultaneously covers over the body's identity as a dead person as well as the history of how and why the person died.

Commodification of body parts as a strategy which displaces memory is clearly illustrated when Delbo's

¹⁰ In the language of the Nazi bureaucracy the term employed for human remains is *Materiel*.

narrator describes how in Auschwitz [...] *au printemps des hommes et des femmes répandent les cendres sur les marais asséchés pour la première fois labourés et fertilisent le sol avec du phosphate humain* [,] (1970a:18), ([...] in the spring men and women scatter the ashes over the marshes, drained and ploughed for the first time, and fertilise the soil with human phosphate). In a perversion of burial rites as memorial practice the use of human remains as fertiliser effectively replaces/re-places the memory of the victims through a linguistic and material exchange which literally disperses the memory of the victims. Primo Levi supplements Delbo's narration of the obliteration of victim memory with a literal image of *walking over* the remains of the victim when he notes that:

[t]he human ashes coming from the crematoria, tons daily, were easily recognised as such, because they often contained teeth or vertebrae. Nevertheless, they were employed for several purposes: as fill for swamp lands, as thermal insulation between the walls of wooden buildings. as phosphate fertiliser: and especially notable, they were used instead of gravel to cover the paths of the SS village located near the camp. I couldn't say whether out of pure callousness or because, due to its origins, it was regarded as material to be trampled on. (Levi, 1989, p.100)

The use of human hair for upholstering furniture and skin for making lampshades underscore how the dismemberment of the body represents the literal dismantling of the material vestiges of individual humanity as such. These images of the dismemberment (and reconstitution in different form) of human remains are central to many representations of the Holocaust. These images are powerfully evoked by Alain Resnais and Jean Cayrol in their famous cinematic indictment of fascism -

essentially symbolised, in their opinion, by the Nazi concentration camp system - in their film, *Nuit et Brouillard*.¹¹ The notion of dismantled humanity, articulated in the dismemberment and reconstitution of the body as "stuff" is best summed up by Theodor Adorno who states that "in the concentration camps it is no longer an individual who died, but a specimen [...]". (Adorno, 1973:362)

COLLAPSING MEMORIES, NARRATING MEMORIES

The identification of and distinction between the two memories which Delbo makes is central to the narrative project itself for deep memory

[...] garde les sensations, les empreintes physiques. C'est la mémoire des sens. Car ce ne sont pas les mots qui sont gonflés de charge émotionnelle. Sinon, quelqu'un qui a été torturé par la soif pendant des semaines ne pourrait plus jamais dire: «J'ai soif. Faisons une tasse de thé.» Le mot aussi s'est dédoublé. (14)
 [...] retains the sensations, the physical imprints. This is the memory of the senses. For it is not the words which are filled with emotional charge. Otherwise, someone who had been tortured by thirst for weeks on end would never again be able to say, "I am thirsty. Let's make a cup of tea." The word itself has also split.

¹¹ This film performs a simultaneous effacement of the memory of the dismembered Jewish body. We are reminded that, on the hierarchy of the camps, "the Jews are at the very bottom. Then come the victims of the Night and Fog Decree, political prisoners, common criminals, and, above them, the Kapo; still higher is the SS, and highest of all, the Commandant." (Avisar, 1988:8) The film's title effectively silences the memory of those camp inmates who were "lower" on the hierarchy of the camps. Moreover, Jewish genocide is not specifically mentioned in the film, eliding the murder of the Jews into a universalised cinematic narrative of the Holocaust.

Through this operation of a linguistic truncation which enacts a separation between the survivor, the Auschwitz experience and its return in deep memory, Delbo suggests that a primary memory which defies historicisation and resists narrativisation can be identified in survivor narrative. Thus, *la mémoire profonde* comes to represent a perpetual present time of the Lager, what literary critic Lawrence Langer calls a "disintegrating time". (1994:72) Indeed, Eli Wiesel presents the anti-narrativising movement of *la mémoire profonde* as an imploding temporality when he notes that "Auschwitz is the death of time, the end of creation [...]" (Wiesel, 1978:198). Thus, the very temporal structure of deep memory represents an anti-historicising current which challenges the return or the "after Auschwitz" life-world of the survivor, by continuously threatening to plunge the survivor into the Lager. Hence, when Delbo's survivor/narrator acknowledges that when deep memory unexpectedly and spontaneously punctures her reconstructed universe she fears that "*le camp me rattrape*" (13) (the camp catches me again). Through its undistilled virtualisation of the horror and trauma of the camp experience, the sensory memory which is *la mémoire profonde*, replaces the sensation itself and re-places the survivor back in the camp. The motif of the recurring dream, narrated, in *Mesure de nos Jours*, functions, as we will see further on, as a narrative of threatened replacement. Here, we are presented with a shifting from representation to reality which emerges when the distantiating constructs of common memory are no longer in place such as in dreams, delirium, ill-health, moments of mental/emotional "collapse". Illustrating this point, we turn to the same text where a Jewish survivor, Ida, narrates, her survival, return and reconstructed life-world as a mirror of "normality". She describes how, after her having returned and discovered that she is the sole

remaining member of her entire family, she marries and has a child. Just when it appears that everything is going well, she describes how an unforeseen and insurmountable anxiety grips her and threatens to destroy her replicated life-world. "*Ma gorge s'étranglait, ma poitrine était écrasée dans un cerceau de fer, mon coeur m'étouffait. Je me suis mise à crier de terreur*", she tells us (1971:19). (My throat was being strangled, my chest was crushed by a hoop of iron, my heart was smothering me. I began to shout in terror.) She is hospitalised, "treated" and returns home to discover that the original anguish takes the form of a split consciousness. "*Quand j'ai repris mes esprits, j'ai eu un choc*", (When I returned to my senses, I got a fright) she continues (1971:119). At this point Ida/the narrator brackets her statement of shock with a discovery, in direct speech and in the present tense, enacting, in turn, a return to the camp which is narrated as a shift in temporal consciousness:

<<Pourquoi suis-je ici? Qu'est-ce que je fais ici? Je suis enfermée. On va me garder enfermée.>> J'ai eu peur. Attendre et laisser passer l'occasion, non. Je devais fuir. Vite. En un clin d'oeil ma décision était prise. J'ai enfilé ma robe de chambre et j'ai sauté par la fenêtre. [...] J'avais voulu fuir. D'ailleurs, c'est difficile à expliquer. J'étais double et je ne parvenais pas à réunir mes doubles. (1971:119-120)

"Why am I here? What am I doing here? I am locked up. I will be kept locked up." Should I wait and let the opportunity pass? No. I had to flee. Quickly. In a wink my decision was made. I took off my dressing-gown and I jumped out of the window. [...] I had wanted to flee. Besides. it is difficult to explain. I was double and I did not manage to bring my doubles together.

Deep memory - and the language which represents it - precipitates the expression of both a re-placement of the narrator in the camp and her threatened subjectivity. By projecting the narrator back to the camp, the narration of deep memory threatens the very fabric of the survivor's reconstructed universe, metaphorically signified by the "dressing-gown", and explodes existing interpretative and narrative frameworks ("I jumped out of the window").

The trilogy presents survivors in varying stages of struggle with their memories. Indeed the very notion of a survival narrative, a traditionally heroic genre of narrative, is subverted by these representations of survival as perpetually doomed consciousness. Thus, when the division between deep and common memory is blurred, the texts present survival as sustained (as opposed to post-) emotional, psychological and emotional trauma, a perpetual suffering of debilitating and pathological illness. Indeed, certain vignettes in *Mesure de nos Jours* narrate anamnesis precisely as amnesia. However, when the boundaries of separation which are set up by the clear distinction and opposition between the two memories Delbo's survivor/narrator is presented as ontologically different, split, from the prisoner-self in Auschwitz:

Au contraire de ceux dont la vie s'est arrêtée au seuil du retour, qui depuis vivent en survie, moi j'ai le sentiment que celle qui était au camp, ce n'est pas moi, ce n'est pas la personne qui est là, en face de vous. Non, c'est trop incroyable. Et tout ce qui est arrivé à cette autre, celle d'Auschwitz ne me gêne pas, ne se mêle pas de ma vie. Comme si ce n'était pas moi du tout. Sans cette coupure, je n'aurais pas pu revivre. (13)

As opposed to those whose life stopped at the threshold of the return, who live as survivors, I have the impression that the person who was in the camp is not me, she is not the person who is there, in front of you.
N o , t h a t i s t o o

unbelievable/incredible. And everything that happened to this other, that person at Auschwitz, does not trouble me, does not become mixed up with my life. As if she was not me at all. Without this cut, I would not be able to live again.

Other anecdotal presentations of survivors manifest the survivor as profoundly anguished, awaiting the release offered by death and unable to distinguish between the self in Auschwitz and the survivor. Thus, Mado concludes in *Mesure de nos Jours* (1971), that since all her comrades who died at Auschwitz were stronger and more resolved than her, she, by sheer logic, could not have survived in the sense of being animated by any signs of life other than physiological. Her narration presents survival as a post-Auschwitz, pre-death purgatory. Thus, punctuating her narration as evidence to this suspended state of limbo is the refrain "*Je ne suis pas vivante*" (I am not alive/living). (1971) Clearly then, by thinking through a morphology of personal memory, Delbo suggests that both survival and memory is irreducible, subjective and resistant to essentialising explanations.

COMMON MEMORY, HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND NARRATING RUPTURE

Common memory is described as an "external" memory which resides in the intellect, in thought and in language. As such, it would seem that common memory is the faculty of recall which enacts the spacio-temporal distanciation between the survivor and the Lager, the consciousness of which permits a narration, however problematic that narration may be. Common memory is therefore constituted by and through a historical consciousness which enables a speaking of Auschwitz. Hence, "[...] *lorsque je vous parle*

d'Auschwitz ce n'est pas de la mémoire profonde que viennent mes paroles. Les paroles viennent de la mémoire externe, si je puis dire, la mémoire intellectuelle, la mémoire de la pensée." (14) ([...] when I speak to you about Auschwitz my words do not come from deep memory. The words come from external memory, so to speak, intellectual memory, memory of thought.) Clearly, the two memories of the survivor emerge as parallel sites of recall which constitute opposing modalities of spacio-temporal consciousness. While common memory facilitates speaking, enabling return, deep memory threatens integrity.

It is significant that Delbo locates *la mémoire ordinaire* in the "external" or common space of language, of intellect. This would imply that ordinary memory, while challenging the boundaries of representability, can both frame narration and be narrated. By narratability of ordinary memory, I mean that the survivor account is able to be placed in a temporal framework whose linearity, chronology or circularity bears out a consciousness of historical time, time of narration, narrative time and the discursive distance between these temporal modalities.

The organisation and temporal structuration of Delbo's texts is significant regarding the narrativity of common memory. The thematic treatment of Auschwitz is different in each volume yet in all three texts the narrative is structured through a series of narrative vignettes interspersed with poetry in verse and prose. The specifically anti-linear structure of the first and third volumes presents a temporality which is neither progressive nor chronological, manifesting a narration which structurally represents common memory punctured by the traumatising, collapsing moments which trace deep memory.

In *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra*, the narrator describes a scene during morning roll-call at Auschwitz where she watches a woman being killed by the dog of an SS guard. She punctuates this narration with the comment that "[...]

maintenant je suis dans un café à écrire cette histoire - car cela devient une histoire." (1970a:45) (now I am in a café writing this story - for this is becoming a story). A little further on she notes that "[...] *nous restons debout dans la neige. Immobiles dans la plaine immobile. Et maintenant je suis dans un café à écrire ceci.*" (1970a:45) (we remain standing in the snow. Motionless on the motionless plain. And now I am in a café writing this.) The narration of the event breaks down, yet at the faultlines of representation, the resources of common memory which are invoked to narrate the collapse are the *constitutive terms* of the narration itself. Thus, the narrator signals the breakdown of the testimony by drawing attention to its discursive framework: the becoming of a story. By presenting the narration as "mere story" the narrator succeeds in making visible the limits of "story-telling" in narrating Auschwitz. Hence, the "story" becomes the presentation of collapse of the narration whose progression is interrupted by the compression signified by the "motionlessness" of both temporal and spacial consciousness which has emerged at this point.

Delbo's narratives are presented as shot through with the tension engendered between the impulse of two memories - one producing a narration; the other collapsing a narration - which are present and continuously overlap, and sometimes are mutually indistinguishable, in the narrator/survivor's consciousness and in the narrative. In this way, the narration of Auschwitz proceeds through a structure whose organisation imitates the effects of massive trauma on the narration of memory.

Delbo's notion of common memory seems to straddle seemingly conflicting positions regarding debates on communicability and representability of the Auschwitz experience. Surviving the concentration camps and consecrating a testimony as a specifically literary text reveal Delbo's conviction that memory of the Shoah resides

in the trajectory of the literary text and its canonic status in historical consciousness. Supporting Theodor Adorno's reformulated conviction that perhaps it only artistic representation which, however limited, can respond to Auschwitz, Delbo's exploration of imaginative discourse and its possibilities as an approach to historicisation and transmission of the event of the Shoah raises important questions regarding literary form and historical truth, or more precisely, literary form as historical truth (White, 1978). In an interview with the French actuality magazine, *L'Express* (1966), Delbo gestures to the resource offered by common memory's idiom:

Certains ont dit que la déportation ne pouvait pas entrer dans la littérature, que c'était trop terrible, que l'on n'avait pas le droit d'y toucher... Dire ça, c'est diminuer la littérature, je crois qu'elle est assez grande pour tout englober. Un écrivain doit écrire sur ce qui le touche. J'y suis allée, pourquoi n'aurais-je pas le droit d'écrire là-dessus ce que j'ai envie d'écrire? Il n'y a pas de mots pour le dire. Eh bien! vous n'avez qu'à en trouver - rien ne doit échapper au langage.

Certain people have said that the deportation was not able to become literature, that it was too terrible, that no-one had the right to touch it... To say that is to diminish literature, I believe that literature is big enough to encompass everything. A writer has to write what touches her/him. I went there, why shouldn't I have the right to write about whatever I feel like writing? No words can express it. Well then, you only have to find them - nothing has to escape language.

Delbo's statement is important in that it challenges received notions of incommunicability. What her texts

reveal, rather, is a rendering immanent of something indefinable, incommunicable, unnameable. Her narrative strategy, echoed in this newspaper interview, proceeds from a narration of fragments, of silences and interrupted continuity, and yet, they do not disperse signification into a Borgesian mirror of infinite word-play and endless meaning. Coherent meaning is produced through the narration of fragments which are underpinned by the very referential reality named in the title of the trilogy: *Auschwitz and After*. Thus, Delbo's belief in the inclusivity of literature, in literature's ability to adequately present survival of and experience in the camps suggests that the challenge to representation is not for lack or poverty of resources within the literary system/canon, Delbo's common memory. Literature is produced at the faultlines of human experience and imagination. If the faultlines are extended, or if human experience is reconstituted along different faultlines, new imaginary and representational strategies must be produced. In this way, Delbo suggests that it is the creators and contributors of the literary and historical canons who are charged with examining innovative representational modes. By focusing on the role of the artist, Delbo emphasises how it is the *communicative* capacity of common memory's resources which underlies the problematic representation and narration of the Auschwitz experience. Shoshana Felman has persuasively argued that testimonial narrative, which blurs the boundaries of conventional narrative categories, responds to Delbo's call to explore new representational modes. (Felman & Laub, 1992)

It becomes evident that Delbo's conflation of memory and skin is in itself a narration of memory whose enacted remembrance becomes a powerful gesture of resistance which negates the very essence of the Nazi aim: to erase every trace of racially/genetically abhorrent existence and to

negate the very possibility of bearing witness to genocide, that is, to erase the memory of the annihilation. Illustrating this point clearly in his Poznan speech, Heinrich Himmler refers to the Nazi genocidal endeavour as being [...] a page of glory in our history which has never to be written and is never to be written [...]." ¹ This now famous reference to a never-to-be written history refers simultaneously to the Nazi enterprise of extermination of target-groups: "Jews", "Gypsies", "homosexuals", "mentally ill" (LaCapra, 1994:88), to the endeavour to ensure that no witnesses remained to testify to that enterprise, and, finally to the resistance to representation in language of those very events.

In a reference to Auschwitz, German philosopher Jurgen Habermas hints at this notion of the unrepresentable in the writing of a history of Auschwitz, of history after Auschwitz, when he suggests that "Auschwitz has changed the basis for the continuity of the conditions of life within history - and this not only in Germany". (Quoted in Friedlander, 1993: 49) To speak, then, as a survivor of Auschwitz, about Auschwitz is to edify resistance to the effacement of history-as-memory.

CHAPTER II

AUCUN DE NOUS NE REVIENDRA¹²

Garder le silence. Le silence ne se garde pas, il est sans égard pour l'oeuvre qui prétendrait le garder - il est l'exigence d'une attente qui n'a rien à attendre, d'un langage qui, se supposant totalité de discours, se dépenserait d'un coup, se désunirait, se fragmenterait sans fin.
(Maurice Blanchot, *L'Écriture du Désastre*, p.51)

I. SHATTERED/SHATTERING MEMORY: A PROGRAMME FOR REPRESENTATION

The first volume of the trilogy is Delbo/the narrator's account of the first weeks in Auschwitz, but in its fragmented form and unsettling style, this volume will be read as the setting out of an aesthetic programme for the representation of Holocaust memory and the silencing ruptures of deep memory.

When the narrator of *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra* (None of us will Return) says on the final numbered page of text that "[...] nous avons perdu la mémoire // aucun de nous ne reviendra." (182)¹³ ([...]we have lost our memory. None of us will return), she is suggesting that memory which has been lost is obviously not the faculty of recollection itself, but the medium of referential language which frames a shattered and shattering remembering, which renders fragmentation immanent. By examining the way in which memory functions in narrative as its own subverting, self-doubting counter-impulse we can understand how the survivor, as a witness, perpetually finds her/himself on the threshold of contradictory and paralysing injunctions which problematise both memorialisation as well as the act

¹² A first draft of this chapter was presented as a paper entitled, *Charlotte Delbo: Language, crisis and identity after Auschwitz*, at the "Literary Responses to the Holocaust" conference, University of Cape Town, 11-12 August, 1994.

¹³ All quotations from *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, in this chapter, will be referenced by page number only.

of bearing witness.

A clue to understanding how the crisis of survival and memory is articulated around language and identity is provided by the title of this first volume. The "return" to which the title, *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra* refers is literally to the certainty of "life" from the probability of death, a return to an integrated self which is presented as a return to language but not as a return to "wholeness". Return to language, in these texts, is understood as the making visible, the uttering of the traces of fracture represented by survival of limit-experiences. Thus, by juxtaposing the notions of an integrated identity and a hesitating language, the psychoanalytically framed proposition that by narrating an event we come to "master" or to possess it is demonstrated to be both authentic in its unconditional validation of the survivor and the survivor's testimony and invalid in its supposition that telling, narrating necessarily precedes a healing of that trauma. The relationship between the identity of the survivor as a speaking subject and her/his return to language is therefore interconnected and important in the narration of this text.

By return to language I mean to both figurative and literal referential language, inherent in Delbo's definition of "common memory" which, until the watershed trauma signified by Auschwitz, had been bound to the historic or poetic reality which it represented. Contemporary literary theory (for example, Barthes, 1972; Kristeva, 1974; Foucault, 1975; Lyotard, 1983; Foucault, 1975; Derrida, 1977) has demonstrated that the relationship between language and the reality which it produces is contingent and arbitrary and has been placed in a state of conflict, ambiguity, and self-conscious irony. Thus, if we understand language, in a post-Auschwitz world, as having lost its "innocence", it is precisely this "idyllic" state of language (Kofman, 1987:23) to which *none of us will*

return.

THE DOUBLE-BIND OF REPRESENTATION

Central to an examination of *Aucun de Nous ne Reviendra* is an analysis of how both the fragmentary nature of memory as well as the dispersing nature of silence impacts on the literary representation of the Auschwitz experience in Delbo's trilogy. This examination is preceded by a consideration of Gregory Bateson's theory of the double-bind which will then be read back to the survivor/narrator's "return to language" as a way of representing, in the wake of massive trauma, the silences of memory, or rather, memory as fragmentation.

The notion of the double-bind has evolved through behavioural theory's formulation of a theoretical framework for the study of schizophrenia. The most notable exponent of the double-bind hypothesis has been Gregory Bateson (1956) whose theorisation is based, significantly, on *communications* analysis. The scene is set for the hypothesis of the double-bind when the communication patterns - derived from the theory of Logical Types - between mother and child break down and produce a pathological reaction (in the child) whose most radical manifestation of a pathology is schizophrenia. According to Bateson's theory, the double-bind situation relies on a series of contradictory injunctions, alternatively negative and positive; verbal and non-verbal; literal and non-literal, which place conflicting demands on the addressee/"victim" (sic) (Bateson, 1956:253). A tertiary negative injunction prohibits the addressee from leaving the space of conflict with the effect of paralysing the potential for reaction. Thus, the addressee becomes immobilised at the very threshold of response. Moreover, the double-bind situation arises when the addressee of the

seemingly contradictory injunctions understands the injunctions as *literal* when they are produced and intended as *metaphorical*. By demonstrating how communication of the message generates its own breach, Bateson shows how the double-bind is constructed as a problem of language and meaning.

The notion of the double-bind is a useful interpretative tool in examining how Delbo's ruptured narrations function as formal constituents which collapse the possibility of both teleological narratives and linear narrations. Fragmented memories, constructed as such in response to massive trauma, are represented through the very form which resists them. (Felman & Laub, 1992:57-74) The double-bind therefore demonstrates how a point of conflict upon which Delbo's narrative is contingent enacts the very dilemma which it attempts to represent and which, in turn, reflects the survivor/witness's struggle with credibility and self-doubt in post-Auschwitz narrative. Hence, if we understand the formal features of the narrative as resembling the structure of the double-bind situation, Delbo's narratives aesthetically render the very crisis or rupture which resist representation.

Delbo precedes the narration proper with an epigraph on an unnumbered page: "*Aujourd'hui, je ne suis pas sûre que ce que j'ai écrit soit vrai. Je suis sûre que c'est véridique.*" (Today, I am not sure if what I have written is true. I am certain that it is truthful/authentic.) Like the epigraph at the beginning of the text the final page of text is also unnumbered and bears one short sentence: "*Aucun de nous n'aurait dû revenir.*" (None of us should have returned.) By following and preceding the narrative proper with these paratextual *avertissements* (warnings), Delbo is constituting her narrative between a subjective expression of doubt and an expression of disbelief which, by subverting the forensic certainty of first-hand memory signified by the narratorial status of survivor-witness,

highlights the conflicting and destabilising mechanisms inherent in the very process which constructs narrative-as-testimony. Thus, the narrative which is placed within these paratextual parentheses has to be read in the light of this problematisation of truth modalities raised by the prologue and epilogue. In this way, Delbo seems to suggest that the essence of post-Auschwitz narrative resides in a non-closure where something remains both unsaid and unsayable. Geoffrey Hartman refers to this idea of the unsayable when he invokes Jean-François Lyotard's suggestion that post-Auschwitz narrative must "present the existence of the unrepresentable" (Hartman, 1992:321).

SILENCE: DEEP MEMORY ON THE THRESHOLD OF TESTIMONY

In her book, *Paroles Suffoquées* (1987), dedicated to her father who died in Auschwitz, Sara Kofman moves towards a striking definition of what it means to write after Auschwitz. Motivated by an ethical imperative that no narrative (denoted by the French word "*récit*") is possible after Auschwitz, Kofman's critique examines the possibility of a post-Auschwitz aesthetics through her reading of Maurice Blanchot's *L'Idylle* (The Idyll) and *Après coup* (After the Event). What is this ethical imperative? Shoshana Felman suggests it is a demand that post-Auschwitz narrative bears both the traces of rupture and negation imposed by the Auschwitz experience with previously immutable values represented by the Enlightenment legacy in Western consciousness (Felman & Laub, 1992). This means that narrative *qua* narrative bears witness to the event of Auschwitz, as well as to the traces of the contradictions inherent in the process of bearing witness. In this way the complexities of telling and writing engendered firstly by the survivor/witness's claim to silence, and secondly by the impulse to testify to the event witnessed, would be

underscored.

Finding no adequate rendering offered by the distorting and limiting modes of representation and experiencing a betrayal of the sanctity and magnitude of the experience which only silence upholds, the survivor resorts to being a silent witness. On the other hand, to testify on behalf of the self and on behalf of the dead as well as to validate the survivor's crossing from the fate of Auschwitz to the arbitrary fate of life, impel the survivor/witness to tell the experience. Articulation of memory in Shoah survivor narrative, then, bears out multiple dilemmas raised by this near-impossibility of speaking about the event. As we have seen, the title to the trilogy already evokes one of the essential dilemmas of the survivor/witness, who find themselves at the threshold of contradictory injunctions to *remain silent* in the face of the unutterable as well as to *bear witness* for the dead and returning self.

Jean-François Lyotard outlines the ways in which silence is implicated in the testimonial utterance when he writes that,

Le silence ne signale pas quelle est l'instance niée, il signale qu'une ou des instances sont niées. Les survivants se taisent, et l'on peut entendre (1) que la situation en question (le cas) n'est pas l'affaire du destinataire (il n'a pas la compétence, ou il ne mérite pas qu'on lui en parle, etc.) ; ou (2) qu'elle n'a pas eu lieu (c'est qu'entend Faurisson) ; ou (3) qu'il n'y a rien à en dire (elle est insensée, inexprimable) ; ou (4) que ce n'est pas l'affaire des survivants d'en parler (ils n'en sont pas dignes, etc.). Ou plusieurs de ces négations ensemble. (Lyotard, 1983:31)

Silence does not indicate which instance is denied, it signals the denial of one or more of the instances. The survivors remain

silent, and it can be understood 1) that the situation in question (the case) is not the addressee's business (he or she lacks the competence, or he or she is not worthy of being spoken to about it, etc.); or 2) that it never took place (this is what Faurisson understands); or 3) that there is nothing to say about it (the situation is senseless, inexpressible); or 4) that it is not the survivors' business to be talking about it (they are not worthy, etc.) Or, several of these negations together.). (Lyotard, 1988:14)

Clearly then, the survivor/narrator desires to testify and yet is unable to. Silence imprisons the survivor/narrator at a crossroads of multiple contradictory injunctions: to remain silent in the face of the unutterable for language cannot adequately represent the memories; to speak and to bear witness for the vanished and the dead as well as for the returning/surviving self. Lyotard, however, goes further by implicating the addressee, and by extension, the reception of testimony, in the silencing of the survivor's story, an important consideration which contests received ideas regarding the historical silence of the survivor and which will be examined further in Chapter Four.

It is precisely and only *through* language, the survivor's resource of "common memory", that the telling of the self and the telling of the dead after Auschwitz can be narrated. Such a narration would necessarily separate the self or the survivor/narrator from the dead, those "silent others", and would therefore facilitate the survivor's inscription of the self in the world of the living. In this way the very narrative process of telling the story of the dead, silenced anonymous - literally effaced - in the context of their death save for their tattooed numbers, becomes a mourning, that is, the ordering of an eulogizing ritual whose enactment facilitates the speaking subject's survival as a return to "wholeness" through language.

Besides facilitating this re-inscription of the individual into the world of the living, telling erects a memorial for the dead. Telling the story and remembering the dead become the self-same act. This memorialising function of testimony fulfils the survivor's self-imposed mandate to return precisely in order to tell the stories of the dead and so to inscribe them into a collective memory, into a historical consciousness. In this way memorialising embeds a ritualised/ritualising mourning, a eulogising testimony into the survivor's testimony.

II. CRISIS OF NAMING: DYING EFFACES DEATH

At the beginning of the text, the question of language, of an unsayable testimony, is constituted as a *crisis of naming*. The narration of contested representation as a crisis of naming disputes, in turn, the proposition that the writing of death in Auschwitz can be a eulogising inscription. In this way, the narrative defies a rhetoric of death at the same time as it edifies a textual memorial for those who died.

When the train transports arrive at Auschwitz the narrator suggests that the new arrivals

[...]voudraient savoir ou ils sont. Ils ne savent pas que c'est ici le centre de l'Europe. Ils cherchent la plaque de la gare. C'est une gare qui n'a pas de nom. (12)

[...]would like to know where they are. They do not know that this is the centre of Europe. They look for the name of the station. It is a station which has no name. A station which for them will never have a name.

Later, Auschwitz is described as a town which has no name. By separating herself from the nameless "them", those who

will never return, who will never bear witness, the narrator demonstrates the survivor/witness's concern with the representation of unnameability. To name after Auschwitz, then, is to speak about unnameability, in other words, to bring into question the ways in which we think about the world, the ways in which we name.

This problem of language and intelligibility resonates throughout the narrative. Describing the scene of a dying prisoner attempting to climb a snowbank in order to suck some water from the snow and then, turning to her fellow prisoners for help, we read that "*[s]a main s'agite une fois encore comme un cri - et elle ne crie pas. Dans quelle langue crierait-elle si elle criait?*" (46-47) ([h]er hand waves once again like a cry - and she does not cry out. In what language would she cry if she were to cry out?) Only the body bears traces of the decipherable signs of dying, of approaching death. Thus,

[...] la mort se peint sur le visage, s'y plaque implacablement et il n'est pas besoin que nos regards se rencontrent pour que nous comprenions toutes en regardant Suzanne Rose qu'elle va mourir, en regardant Mounette qu'elle va mourir. La mort est marquée à la peau collée aux pommettes, à la peau collée aux orbites, à la peau collée aux maxillaires. (107)

[...] death presents itself on the face, it announces itself implacably and there is not necessary that our glances meet for all of us to understand by looking at Suzanne Rose, that she is going to die, by looking at Mounette, that she is going to die. Death is traced on the skin clinging to the cheekbones, on the skin clinging to the eyesockets, on the skin clinging to the jawbones.

The repetition of "la peau" (the skin) serves to underline how the body functions as the locus of the obliterating and

transfiguring violence perpetrated by the concentrationary system against the individual. Moreover, I would suggest that the repetition of "la peau" serves to enumerate the material signs of death as a way to re-embody the dead in the testimonial narrative. Significantly, in this instance, re-embodying the dead is preceded by naming those prisoners who bear the signs of approaching death. Later, however, the narrator's *nameless* neighbour is dying beside her and calls to her. The narrator asks:

Appelle-t-elle? Pourquoi appelle-t-elle? Elle a eu tout d'un coup la mort sur son visage, la mort violette aux ailes du nez, la mort au fond des orbites, la mort dans ses doigts que se tordent et se nouent comme des brindilles que mord la flamme, et elle dit dans une langue inconnue des paroles que je n'entends pas. (181)

Is she calling? Why is she calling? All of a sudden she has death on her face, violet death on the sides of her nostrils, death at the depths of her eye sockets, death in her fingers that twist and crumple like twigs devoured by a flame, and she speaks in an unknown tongue words which I do not hear.

Here, language's primal communicative function is lost, the intermediary between speaker and listener has been irrevocably altered and the ungraspable language serves rather to highlight the alienation of the individual in her death. The face, nostrils, eye sockets and fingers are inscribed with the testimony of their own destruction, an inscription resisted by the *unknown tongue* which is language. By presenting death in Auschwitz as irreducible to language but as possessing, at the same time, its own unknowable system of signification, the narrator implies that the narration of death in the camps, while belonging to its own hermetic (unnameable) logic, defies a poetics of

death. In this way, death in Auschwitz narrates the process of dying as an impenetrable, unknowable and solitary experience (Améry, 1986:17). Thus, the trope of the crisis of naming, figured by the "unknown language" of death manifests the narrator/survivor's concern not to ascribe to death in Auschwitz a meaning. Jean-François Lyotard's statement that " 'Auschwitz' est l'interdit de la belle mort[,]" (Lyotard, 1983:149) ("Auschwitz is the forbiddance of the beautiful death[,]" (Lyotard, 1988:100) clearly echoes the narrator/survivor's concern to avoid a rhetoric of death in Auschwitz. Such a rhetoric is to give those who died a beautiful death, to ascribe a sense to their death and therefore to death in Auschwitz. At the same time, a rhetoric of death in the death camps and in the concentration camps is impossible. Illustrating this point, Jean Améry comments on the breakdown of death as aesthetic construct in the camps:

For death in its literary, philosophic, or musical form there was no place in Auschwitz. No bridge led from death in Auschwitz to *Death in Venice*. Every poetic evocation of death became intolerable, whether it was Hesse's "Dear Brother Death" or that of Rilke, who sang: "Oh Lord, give each his own death." The aesthetic view of death had revealed itself to the intellectual as part of an aesthetic *mode of life*; where the latter had been all but forgotten, the former was nothing but an elegant trifle. In the camp no Tristan music accompanied death, only the roaring of the SS and the Kapos. (1986:16-17)

In the face of the collapse of representational resources with which to write about death/dying in Auschwitz, Delbo's narrator brings attention rather to this very collapse of representation. She describes how the

physical signs of death: "*les langues gonflent noires, les bouches pourrissent*" (180) (the swollen black tongues, the rotting mouths) resist the signification that language claims to assign to them. Hence, "*Toutes les paroles sont depuis longtemps flétries / Tous les mots sont depuis longtemps décolorés*" (180) (All words have for a longtime become faded / All words have for a longtime become discoloured.) Neither written nor spoken language (denoted by the French distinction between "*paroles*" and "*mots*") has the same referential capacity to figuratively render death after the Shoah. By juxtaposing the attempt to narrate the signs of death with the ironic presentation of the aesthetic impossibility of transmitting these signs in poetic verse, the narrator makes visible the limits of her own story.

DYSFUNCTIONAL THROATS: THE STORY OF AN UNTOLD STORY

Placed, so to speak, at the threshold of language, place of conflict, tension and contradiction imposed by the ethical imperative, writing after Auschwitz therefore testifies to its own impossible articulation. Referring to Robert Antelme's testament to the Lager, *L'Espèce Humaine*, Kofman characterises the writing of Auschwitz as well as writing after Auschwitz as a contradictory impulse: A frenetic desire to tell, which Kofman significantly describes as *un délire de paroles* (Kofman, 1988:44) (a delirium of words), and at the same time an inability to speak. Such a writing is, precisely, the writing out of a double-bind. Fraught with tension, the process of writing after Auschwitz is,

[...] un étrange **double-bind** : une revendication infinie de parler, un **devoir parler à l'infini**, s'imposant avec une force irrépressible - et une impossibilité quasi physique de parler

: une **suffocation**; une parole nouée, exigée et interdite, parce que trop longtemps rentrée, arrêtée, restée dans la gorge et qui vous fait étouffer, perdre respiration, vous asphyxie, vous ôte la possibilité même de commencer. Devoir parler sans pouvoir parler [...] (Kofman, 1988:46)
 [a] double-bind which is the infinite revindication of speech, a command to speak which endlessly imposes itself with an irrepressible strength and an almost physical impossibility to speak: a suffocating, a choking, a demanding and forbidden language, which returns, stops and remains in the throat, suffocating, smothering, negating even the possibility of beginning. To have to speak and not being able to speak [...].¹⁴

The contradiction and difficulty inherent in the process of bearing witness as well as the paradoxical role of language in this process is characterised metaphorically by the physical motion of choking, a motion significantly generated at the physiological point of vocalisation. The trope of the disfigured and fragmented body functions here as a projection of a witnessing interrupted by inevitable death. Kofman's description of choking, signified by the wounded and dysfunctional throat resonates throughout Delbo's text.

In a description of the emptying out of "block 25", the dreaded transit block of the old, sick, mad, infirm and selected prisoners on the way to the gas chambers, the narrator remarks that the remaining live prisoners alighted the truck and they "[...] *hurtaient parce qu'elles savaient mais les cordes vocales s'étaient brisées dans leur gorge.*" (57) ([...] screamed because they knew, but their vocal cords had fractured in their throats.") In this way the dysfunctional throat becomes the symbol of witnessing the annihilation of the self and never bearing witness to that

¹⁴ My translation

death.

In another instance the same prisoner attempting to drink water from the snow is attacked and killed by a guard-dog on the order of an SS guard and we read:

Le chien bondit sur la femme, lui plante ses crocs dans la gorge. Et nous ne bougeons pas, engluées dans une espèce de visqueux qui nous empêche d'ébaucher même un geste - comme dans un rêve. La femme crie. Un cri arraché. Nous ne savons pas si le cri vient d'elle ou de nous, de sa gorge crevée ou de la nôtre. Je sens les crocs du chien à ma gorge. Je crie. Je hurle. Aucun don ne sort de moi. Le silence du rêve. (48)

The dog pounces on the woman, sinks its teeth into her throat. And we do not move, stuck in a viscous substance that prevents us from making the even a gesture - as in a dream. The woman screams. A sustained scream. We do not know if the cry comes from her or from us, from her punctured throat or from ours. I feel the teeth of the dog at my throat. I scream. I shriek. Not a sound comes out of me. The silence of dreams.

The conflation of narrator and prisoner as well as of dream and reality highlights the narrative threshold crossed by the survivor/witness from the living of her own death enacted here through death of the mauled prisoner, to the narration of the experience.

The following extract, which, again, is underpinned by the image of the ravaged throat, is, significantly, a description of the narrator's nightmare.

Les pieuvres nous étreignaient de leurs muscles visqueux et nous ne dégagions un bras que pour être étranglées par un tentacle qui s'enroulait autour du cou, serrait les vertèbres, les serrait à les craquer, les vertèbres, la trachée, l'oesophage, le larynx, le pharynx et tous ces conduits qu'il y a dans le

cou. les serrait à les briser. Il fallait libérer la gorge et, pour se délivrer de l'étranglement, céder les bras, les jambes, la taille [...] (87)
 The octopi were strangling us with their viscous muscles and we freed an arm only to be choked by a tentacle that wrapped itself around our necks, squeezed the vertebrae, squeezed them until they snapped. The vertebrae, the trachea, the oesophagus, the larynx, the pharynx and all the passages of the throat, squeezed them till they broke. We had to free our throats in order to save ourselves from strangulation, we had to sacrifice our arms, our legs, our waists[...].

Survival is contingent upon freeing the passages of the throat, that is, upon telling the story. Here the narrator's nightmare provides a detailed description of the threat to each part of the anatomy which is used in vocalisation/giving voice. Once again, the enumeration and dislocation of body parts serve to stress that, after Auschwitz, transmission proceeds through the articulation of rupture and dislocation. However, the inverted order/sense signified by the nightmare universe and the context of description of the threatened witness, obviates the possibility of articulation, and the mud threatens to pore into the narrator's throat, nose, eyes and ears. Witnessing Auschwitz is silenced as the sense organs, locus of "deep memory's inscriptions on the body are drowned out.

The nightmare of suffocation of assault to the organs of vocalisation is the narration of a threat to the telling of the story, to surviving in order to speak, of an unsuccessful witnessing.

BURNING THIRST AND THE NEED TO BEAR WITNESS

Two of the many vignettes comprising this volume narrate, under the title, *LA SOIF* (The thirst), the

prisoner's experience of a tormenting and unrelenting thirst. Before examining the way in which the thirst functions as a metaphor for one of the constitutive elements of the double-bind situation, the survivor's internalised injunction to survive - improbable in itself - in order to bear witness to the Shoah, I would like to examine how the trope of thirst is introduced in Delbo's text. In Shoshana Felman's discussion of Paul Celan's poem *Todesfuge* the metaphor of the action of drinking is linked, through an association of images, to the act of writing (Felman & Laub, 1992:30). Significantly, Felman points out that,

[...] the act of drinking, traditionally a poetic metaphor for yearning, for romantic thirst and for desire, is here transformed into the surprisingly abusive figure of an endless torture and a limitless exposure [...] (1992:30)

It is precisely this transformation which Felman comments on that Delbo's narrator presents as the possibility of an unfulfilled witnessing (the death of the narrator). Drinking, trope of physical and metaphysical yearning, of life-infusing desire - signifying here the possibility of bearing witness as the certainty of survival - is subverted by the narration of unending thirst, of the perpetual denial of drinking. Thus, the narrator precedes the narration of thirst in Auschwitz precisely with a presentation of the traditional narrative genres which will be subverted by the trope of thirst in the camp. She writes:

La soif c'est le récit des explorateurs, vous savez, dans les livres de notre enfance. C'est dans le désert. Ceux qui voient des mirages et marches vers l'insaisissable oasis. Ils ont soif trois jours. Le chapitre

pathétique du livre. A la fin du chapitre, la caravane du ravitaillement arrive, elle s'était égarée sur les pistes brouillées par la tempête. Les explorateurs crèvent les outres, ils boivent. Ils boivent et ils n'ont plus soif. (114)

Thirst is the narrative of the explorers, you know, in the books of our childhood. It is in the desert. Those who see the mirages and walk towards the unreachable oasis. For three days they are thirsty. The pathetic chapter of the book. At the end of the chapter, the caravan arrives with fresh provisions, it had lost its way on the slopes, clouded by the storm. The explorers burst the goatskins, they drink. They drink and they are no longer thirsty.

Thirst in the Lager, however, has no respite. It is "*le soif du marais*" (114) (the thirst of the marsh) which is more burning than the thirst of the desert, in the face of which, "[l]a raison chancelle. La raison est terrassée par la soif. La raison résiste à tout, elle cède à la soif." (p. 114) (Reason waivers. Reason is flattened by thirst. Reason can resist everything, it yields to thirst.) Clearly then, it is not only a literary tradition of heroic narratives ("*le récit des explorateurs*" and "*les livres de notre enfance*") of triumph and victory, represented by the climactic imbibing of the libidinal, life-giving liquid counterpointed by the narration of struggle ("*Le chapitre pathétique*") against physical hardship, psychological torment and cosmic elements which is being challenged. What is contested here is the very epistemological foundation which underpins the literary/historical tradition of these narratives: reason. If the narration of the Holocaust disrupts reason, it follows then that not only is thirst in Auschwitz a narrative trope with which to figure the corollary of Felman's drinking/writing proposition, that is, to represent the impossibility of surviving in order to write, but a defiance of the grounds through which a writing of

survival produces traditional conceptions of truth. By presenting the writing of improbable survival, signified by the unquenchable thirst, as a breach with Reason, the narrator of *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra*, pre-empts survival itself as "unreasonable" and the reception of the survivor's narration as "unbelievable". The challenge of narrating and of representing the endurance and survival of massive trauma is that the utterance threatens to drift into a discourse which is outside of the language/reason construct, that is, into madness:

Et le regard part à la dérive, c'est le regard de la folie. Les autres disent: « Elle est folle, elle est devenue folle pendant la nuit », et elles font appel aux mots qui doivent réveiller la raison. (115)

And the gaze drifts off, it is the gaze of madness. The others say, "She is mad, she went mad in the night", and they appeal to words which are supposed to awaken reason.

Self-doubting memory is narrated as the I/eye-witness's testimony of madness. The representation of disbelieved testimony - uttered and read as a madness - as the listless gaze of madness ("*le regard part à la dérive*") inverts the authority of the eye-witness by placing her testimony outside of reason. In this way, the narrator's utterance of selfhood - as I-witness - constituted by the gaze of crazed thirst, once again presents the traces of memory as a banished testimony.

As an impulse to testify we could read the yearning to drink as a metaphorical life-giving need to bear witness: just as water is the fundamental physical requirement for life, so the need to transmit, to articulate testimony is a fundamental psychical requirement for life after survival. Anticipating this libidinally-charged duty of testimony, the narrator presents the imploring pleas of the women in Auschwitz block 25, destined for the gas chambers, as cries to drink water. "*On les voyait aux*

grillages des fenêtres," (They could be seen through the wire mesh of the windows) she writes, "*Elles suppliaient : << A boire, A boire. >> Il y a des specres qui parlent.*" (32) (They begged, "To drink, to drink." It is ghosts who speak). By shifting from the past imperfect tense ("*voyait*" and "*suppliaient*") of narrative time to the present tense ("*parlent*"), the historical moment of telling, the narrator conflates the representation of the past, the living women (then) and the present, the dead women (now). In this way, the trope of unfulfilled thirst comes to signify the never-to-be heard testimony as the expression of a yearning to survive in order to bear witness. The presence of the dead as ghosts which "speak" in the text becomes the story, rather, of the narrator's survival. However, as the telling of unquenchable thirst, the account simultaneously contests that survival and the success of its narration. Moreover, by presenting thirst as memory banished to the discourse of madness, the narrator anticipates her survival as an unacknowledged return and a disbelieved testimony. Thus, the narrator's mouth "[...] *n'est pas même humectée et toujours les paroles se refusent*"(115). ([...] is not even moist and still the words refuse to come.)

The trope of burning thirst metaphorically figures the desire and inability to testify coherently, "reasonably" as dislocated body parts. In this way the narrator once again frames silence as disjointed body parts. Thus, incoherence is produced through physiological breakdown, through the silencing of the body parts which articulate, which produce sound:

*Le matin au réveil, les lèvres parlent
et aucun son ne sort des lèvres.
L'angoisse s'empare de tout votre être
[...]. Est-ce cela, d'être mort? Les
lèvres essaient de parler, la bouche
est paralysée. La bouche ne forme pas
de paroles quand elle est sèche,
qu'elle n'a plus de salive.[...] Les
muscles de la bouche veulent tenter
les mouvements de l'articulation et*

n'articulent pas. (115)

On awakening in the mornings, lips speak and no sound emerges from the lips. Anguish seizes your whole being [...]. Is it this, to be dead? The lips try to speak, the mouth is paralysed. The mouth does not form words when it is dry, when it has no more saliva. [...] The mouth muscles want to attempt the articulation movements and do not articulate.

Referential speech and the logical processes of reason collapse, yet the narration of this collapse is the *simultaneous* narration of the anxiety of the unacknowledged return, symbolised by survival as another type of death. ("*Est-ce cela, d'être mort?*") Clearly, such a narration is the anticipation of a rejected testimony by a disbelieving world, the anticipation of "*le désespoir de l'impuissance à leur dire l'angoisse qui m'a étreinte, l'impression d'être morte et de le savoir.*" (115) (the despair which comes from the powerlessness of not being able to tell them about the anguish which has gripped me, the impression of being dead and of knowing it.)

REPRESENTING POWERLESSNESS: PARALYSED BODIES, SILENT TESTIMONY

A recurring recollection which is central to countless survivor accounts of the concentration camps is of the devastating experience of the biting East European winter. In Delbo's text, the narration of the cold becomes a representational device permitting the narration of the disruption enacted by deep memory's silence. At the same time, however, the glacial landscape and frozen bodies become a metaphor for the powerlessness, the voicelessness of the prisoner, who, enclosed in what survivor, David Rousset has described as the "*univers concentrationnaire*" (1946) (concentrationary universe), is subject to the will

of the Nazi system.

Immobility and paralysis-induced silence is symbolised by the frozen, numbed body and mirrored by the vastness of the frozen expanse which is the glacial landscape within and outside of the camp. "*La lumière est toujours immobile, blessante, froide. C'est la lumière d'un astre mort. Et l'immensité glacée, à l'infini éblouissante, est d'une planète morte.*" (55) (The light is always immobile, cutting, cold. It is the light of a dead star. And the frozen expanse, infinitely dazzling, is of a dead planet.) The prisoners are paralysed by the ice in which they are caught, they are statues of frost, "*inertes, insensibles, nous avons perdu tous les sens de la vie*" (55) (inert, unfeeling, we have lost all the senses of life"). Standing for hours at roll call, the narrator notes that,

[q]uinze mille femmes tapent du pied et cela ne fait aucun bruit. Le silence est solidifié en froid. La lumière est immobile. Nous sommes dans un milieu où le temps est aboli. Nous ne savons pas si nous sommes, seulement la glace, la lumière, la neige aveuglante, et nous, dans cette glace, dans cette lumière, dans ce silence. (53)

[f]ifteen thousand women stamp their feet and it makes no noise. The silence is solidified into cold. The light is immobile. We are in a place where time is abolished. We do not know if we exist, only the ice, the light, the blinding snow, and us, in this ice, in this light, in this silence.

Immured thus in the silence, the ice and the light, the prisoners are inscribed into another life, or as the narrator describes, "*soumises à la respiration d'une autre vie, à la mort vivante [...]*" (55) (subjugated by the breath of another life, a life of the living death). This living death signifies the negation of the presence of language through the presentation of the pure opposites of

the signs through which language yields meaning. These are the silence, the ice and the light.

After describing a scene in Auschwitz where the living inmates of "block 25" have to load the corpses of the block into a crematorium bound truck before getting onto the truck, having been selected for extermination themselves, the narrator metonymically represents the women as frozen statues of unmaterialised screams. We read that,

[e]lles [les femmes] crient. Elles crient et nous n'entendons rien. Cet air froid et sec devrait être conducteur si nous étions dans le milieu terrestre ordinaire. Elles crient vers nous sans qu'aucun son nous parvienne. Leurs bouches crient, leurs bras tendus vers nous crient, et tout d'elles. Chaque corps est un cri. Autant de torches qui flambent en cris de terreur, de cris qui ont pris corps de femmes. Chacune est un cri matérialisé, un hurlement - qu'on n'entend pas. (55-56)

[t]hey [the women] cry. They cry and we hear nothing. This cold and dry air would be a conductor if we were in an ordinary terrestrial environment. They cry in our direction yet no sound reaches us. Their mouths cry, their arms stretched out towards us cry, and all of them. Each body is a cry. So many torches burning with cries of terror, cries which have taken the form of women. Each one is a materialised cry, a scream - that cannot be heard.

Once again, the narrator seeks to place in doubt the very strategies she proposes for the narration of the Auschwitz experience. Thus, this extract raises the important question regarding the transmissibility of the story of the annihilated presence of the "true witnesses". Representation of the body as locus of a collective, cryptic cry highlights the limitations of its converse signification: the body's absence becoming the negative

presence of silence-as-trace within this testimony to mass murder.¹⁵ By placing the aims of this memorial/textual project in doubt, the narrator places the very possibility of the textual transmission of silence ("*un conducteur*") into question. As such, the addressee is once again reminded that the true witness cannot speak and as such remains, in the face of posterity, the absolutely disempowered, the truly effaced.

In an article significantly entitled, *Un cri ne s'imprime pas* (1993) (A Cry cannot be Printed), Anna Langfus, survivor and writer, has written that the literary transposition of memory is problematic not least because it is a writing over, a palimpsest on the memory of the true witness. Delbo's narrator demonstrates clearly in the very terms of her narration that this dilemma remains insoluble and testifies, rather, to the dilemma itself.

The unheard, collectively embodied scream also functions as an image of individual alienation in the Lager:

*Chaque visage est écrit avec un telle
precision dans la lumière de glace,
sur le bleu du ciel, qu'il s'y marque
pour l'éternité. Pour l'éternité, des
têtes rasées, pressées les unes contre
les autres, qui éclatent de cris, des
bouches tordues de cris qu'on n'entend
pas, des mains agitées dans un cri
muet. Les hurlements restent écrits
sur le bleu du ciel. (57)*

Each face is inscribed with stark
precision in the frozen light, on the
blue of the sky, that it is marked

¹⁵ The negative presence of silence-as-trace evokes Jacques Derrida's proposition that, "[s]i un lieu même s'encercle de feu (tombe en cendre finalement, tombe en tante que nom), il n'est plus. Reste la cendre. If a place is itself surrounded by fire (falls finally to ash, into a cinder tomb), it no longer is. Cinder remains [...]." (1991: 39) Derrida's statement, gestures, in turn, to Claude Lanzmann's description of the Holocaust as surrounded by a ring of fire and his subsequent suggestion that representation can only proceed through the presentation of the silence-as-trace. (Déguy, 1990)

there for eternity. For eternity, shaven heads squashed together, which burst into cries, mouths twisted by cries that are not heard, hands waving in a mute cry. The screams remain inscribed on the blue of the sky.

In this crepuscular universe which witnesses the implosion of temporal consciousness, the death-like state of paralysis and temporal suspension evoked by the frozen body serve paradoxically to heighten the alienation of the individual, of each face rendered silent in the midst of collective muteness. By alienation of the individual, I do not mean of the psychically or physically whole individual. Throughout the narrative the body is never represented as an integrated whole, only as disparate parts and organs. Clearly, then, the image of body fragmentation is a metaphor for the fragmented, dehumanized and dislocated self, that is, the self both in and after Auschwitz.

VIOLENCE TO LANGUAGE/VIOLENT LANGUAGE: ARTICULATING POWER

Thematically counterpointed to the mute immobility and frozen silence of the prisoner are the senseless, amorphous but actualised screams of the oppressor.

For Delbo, words have lost their meaning in Auschwitz and language in *l'univers concentrationnaire* becomes its own inverse: it becomes the expression of madness, of non-sense, of non-reason and of confusion. In part a response which resists the allocation of meaning to Auschwitz, the presentation of language as violent noise and non-sense underlines the violence done to language whose capacity to express the new realities of the Lager is coercively wrought through the neologising of a *Lagerjargon*: a polyglot and multi-lingual jargon. (Levi, 1988:74 -79; Friedlander, 1980:103-111)

The text characterises the representatives of the

Lager as brutal noise. This is underlined in a comment on the brutality and unpredictability of the SS guards, kapos and Anweiserins. They supervise the work details labouring in the marshes, and are referred to as "screams", that is, they possess the power of the voice, which, outside of language, becomes a vocalisation of immanent violence.

Unlike the unmaterialised, silent screams as which she continuously characterises the prisoners, the screams of the others, to whom she also refers as "the furies", are endless and overwhelming in volume. They are

Les hurlements. Les hurlements. Les hurlements qui hurlent jusqu'aux confins invisibles du marais. [...] [C]riant, criant toujours les mêmes mots, les mêmes injures répétées dans cette langue incompréhensible [...].

(77)

Screams. Screams. Screams that scream to the invisible limits of the marsh. [...] yelling, always yelling the same words, the same insults repeated in the same incomprehensible language[...]. (53)

The violence of the SS, the Anweiserins, the kapos, is represented through a language which becomes, in itself, an agent of violence. In a description of night in the Lager, the narrator describes how

[...] les cauchemars se lèvent, prennent forme dans l'ombre, de tous les étagements montent les plaintes et les gémissements des corps meurtris qui luttent contre la boue, contre les faces d'hyènes hurlantes : Weiter, weiter, car ces hyènes hurlent ces mots-là et il n'y a plus que la ressource de se blottir sur soi-même [...]. (90)

[...] the nightmares come up, take form in the shadows, from all the bunks the moans and groans rise from the bruised bodies which fight against the mud, against the faces of screaming hyenas: Weiter, weiter, for these hyenas scream those words and the only resource that remains is to retreat into oneself.

Clearly, Kofman's "délire de paroles" (Kofman, 1988:45) (delirium of words), the frenetic desire to bear witness, as a survivor, is not the linguistic excess described in the nightly dream deliria. The brutal vocality - evoked through the repetition of "weiter" - of the SS, the kapos and the Anweiserins compounds the prisoner's powerlessness.

I have previously examined the way in which the trope of immobility functions as a metaphor of an imploding or auto-consuming silence of the prisoner. In this extract, silence, a response to "*hyènes hurlent ces mots-là*" (hyenas scream those words), is produced through a recoiling inwards ("*se blottir sur soi-même*", retreat into oneself).

NUMERATION: TRANSACTING POWER

As we have seen, the narration of time in Auschwitz manifests a circularity, a simultaneously compressed and expanded temporality which reflects the experience of the camp as a suspended timelessness predicated on the hermetic logic of the concentrationary space, where "*[l]e silence est solidifié en froid. La lumière est immobile. Nous sommes dans un milieu où le temps est aboli.*" (53) (the silence is solidified into cold. The light is immobile. We are in a space where time is abolished.) Delbo's text confronts the narration of space, its surfaces, its contents and its objects in renegotiated terms of representation. I would suggest that one of the ways that the narration of space operates is not as a semiotics of the topography of the *milieu* of the concentration camp but as the narration of the material commodification of the human presence in the Lager whereby the individual is transformed into an anonymous, faceless collective whose value is measurable and quantifiable. Common memory as communication, represented by referential language, is disrupted in the camp, but the narration of the relationship between people and one another and between

people and space sets up the simultaneous transformation and transvaluation of prisoners from individuals to a faceless collectivity based on the exchange of language as communication for numeration as communication. Moreover, this transformation is sustained by a system of logic: a bureaucracy whose numerate language transacts its power over the effaced agent of the prisoner's body. Social historian, Michel Foucault's theorisation of the politics of the body is useful in this regard¹⁶:

*On y traiterait du «corps politique»
comme ensemble des éléments matériels
et des techniques que servent d'armes,
de relais, de voies de communication
de points d'appui aux relations de
pouvoir et de savoir qui investissent
les corps humains et les assujettissent
en en faisant des objets de savoir.
(1975:33)*

One would be concerned with the 'body politic', as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge. (1979:28)

In the Lager the body's agency is transformed by the very numbers inscribed onto it. In Chapter One the significance of presenting memory as an em-bodied recollection is examined with reference to the negation of the body's presence in the Lager. Levi's contention regarding the body's effacement is that the "coercion of nudity" is part of an intentional and systematic dehumanisation process, stripping the individual and her/his body of all signs of humanness, reinforcing, thus, the biological superiority of the oppressor. (Levi, 1989:90) For Levi, the prisoner's body becomes the locus on which power is practised. Here, however, the text continues on this trajectory by exploring the dehumanisation process as part of a system which

¹⁶ See also Feldman, 1991 and Deleuze & Guattari, 1972

replaces the terms which signify negative (or non-) human presence with the positive referents of capital: not only is the prisoner invalidated as human being in life prior to inevitable death, s/he is commodified, reinvented as "stuff". This transformation occurs as a transaction on the body the moment that the prisoner's arm is indelibly tattooed with her/his new identity: the number. Thus, "*[t]ous étaient marqués au bras d'un numéro / indélébile / Tous devaient mourir nus / Le tatouage identifiait les morts et les mortes.*" (24) ([e]veryone was inscribed on the arm with a number / indelible / Everyone had to die naked / Tattooing identified the dead men and the dead women.) When naming collapses, numeration - the tattooed inscription on the body - emerges as a means to identify which is, in turn, the body's testimony to its own subjugation. As such, numeration articulates a politics of identification which is central to the power practices governing and regulating the camp hierarchy. As a system of identification, tattooed numbers become a parody of naming, replacing conventional terms of identification. In this way numbers, as the bureaucratic or institutional language of power, become central to the way that meaning is produced in the Lager.

Fundamental to the practice of power in the camp is the ritualisation of the transformative enactment of this language which is played out in the Lager in the infamous roll-call, repeated twice daily. It is therefore the roll-call that becomes, "[...] in our dreams of 'afterwards' [...] the very emblem of the Lager, summing up in itself the fatigue, cold, hunger and frustration." (Levi, 1988:92) Primo Levi describes the roll-call thus:

It certainly was not a nominal roll-call which with thousands or tens of thousands of prisoners would have been impossible: all the more so because they were never referred to by name but only by the five or six digits on the registration number. It was Zählappell, a complicated and

laborious counting-call which had to take into consideration prisoners transferred to other camps or to the infirmary the evening before and those who had died during the night because the present number must square exactly with the figures of the preceding day. (Levi, 1988:91)

According to the logic of numeration as communication the euphemistic language produced through the will to power of the Nazi vision, the dead are identified and identifiable all the more so that they are dead. In the inverted logic of the Lager represented by this language system of numbers, the dead count. Thus, human presence is negated through the articulation of an accounting in the language of the bureaucrat. Moreover, the presence is transformed into commodity in the process of naming by numbering. Demonstrating the dynamics of this transformation, we examine Delbo's narrator's description of roll-call:

Alors les colonnes se forment en carrés. Dix par dix, sur dix rangs. Un carré après l'autre. Un damier gris sur la neige étincelante. La dernière colonne. Le dernier carré s'immobilise. Des cris pour que la bordure du damier soit bien nette sur la neige. Les SS gardent les coins. Que veulent-ils faire? Un officier à cheval passe. Il regarde les carrés parfaits que dessinent quinze mille femmes sur la neige. Il tourne bride, satisfait. Les cris cessent. Les sentinelles commencent à faire les cent pas autour des carrés. (52)

Then the columns form themselves into squares. Ten by ten, in rows of ten. One square after the next. A grey draughtboard on the sparkling snow. The last column. The last square comes to a stop. Shouts so that the border of the draughtboard should be sharp against the snow. The SS look after the corners. What do they want to do? An officer on horse-back passes. He observes the perfect squares which fifteen thousand women form on the snow. He turns his horse,

satisfied. The shouts end. The guards begin to patrol around the squares.

Dehumanisation, transaction of power in which the body's agency is revealed in this extract, is narrated as the parody of the very language which negates that presence. The narration presents the prisoner's body as an extended subjectivity of the Nazi oppressor. In this way the prisoner's body becomes directly implicated in the cosmology of the Nazi vision. As such, the prisoner's body is transformed into an agent of that organisational vision, and then, into the signified structuration of that vision: the bodies become geometrical squares.

Clearly, every criterion which can measure, account, quantify and therefore impact, according to the logic of numeration, on the outcome of the situation can be plotted along the quantifying axes of a mathematical graph. In another vignette, entitled "*L'appel*" (the roll-call), the narrator knows that a counting error, signified by a prolonged roll-call, means imminent danger. Clearly then counting and accounting produces meanings which language cannot not. Thus, "*[q]uand il se prolonge,*" she writes, "*c'est qu'il y a quelque chose. Erreur de compte ou danger. Quelle sorte de danger? On ne le sait jamais. Un danger.*" (86) The SS passes in front of the rows of women and stops in front of a row of Greek women. Here he asks which women are between the ages of twenty and thirty who have bore a live infant. From the signifying system of the procedures of the roll-call, the narrator can infer that "*[I]l faut renouveler les cobayes du block d'expériences. Les Grecques viennent d'arriver. Nous, nous sommes là depuis trop longtemps. Quelques semaines. Trop maigres ou trop affaiblies pour qu'on nous ouvre le ventre.*" (86) (It is necessary to renew the guinea-pigs in the experimentation block. The Greeks have just arrived. We, we have been here for too long. A few weeks. Too thin or too weak to

have our stomachs opened.) The presence of the prisoners at roll-call are the collective agency enacting the transformation of the way that the body signifies. In the space/place of the roll-call, the Greek women are transformed by these statistical signifiers into laboratory guinea-pigs.

Reduced to noise and mutually incomprehensible babble, language collapses in the camps. It is numeration - now transformed into a system of commodifying transactions - which permits communication. Following the trajectory of this logic, the only time in the text where dialogue is explicitly presented as verbal interchange (the word, "dialogue", appears as title to the vignette) communication is replaced by the promise of material transaction. As a new signifying system, this commodifying language of numbering in the Lager permits "communication" or verbal exchange. Thus, under the title "DIALOGUE", the narrator writes

<< Oh! Sally, tu as pensé à ce que je t'ai demandé? >> Sally court sur la Lagerstrasse. A sa mise, on voit qu'elle travaille aux Effekts. C'est le commando qui trie, inventorie, range tout ce que contiennent les bagages des juifs, les bagages que les arrivants laissent sur le quai. Celles qui travaillent aux Effekts ont de tout.

<<Oui, ma chérie, j'y ai pensé, mais il n'y en a pas en ce moment. Il n'est pas arrivé de convoi depuis huit jours. On en attend un cette nuit. De Hongrie. Il était temps, nous n'avions plus rien. Au revoir. A demain. J'aurai ton savon.>>

On vient d'installer l'eau dans le camp. (154)

"Oh! Sally, have you thought about what I have asked you?" Sally was running along Lagerstrasse. From her appearance, one can see that she works in Effekts. That is the commando that sorts, stocklists and arranges all the contents of the luggage of the Jews, the luggage which the arrivals leave on the platform. Those who work in

Effekts have everything.
 "Yes, dear, I thought about it, but
 their isn't any at the moment.
 There's been no convoys for eight
 days. We are expecting one tonight.
 From Hungary. It's about time, we
 haven't anything left any more. Bye.
 Till tomorrow. I'll have your soap."
 Water has just been installed in the
 camp.

The terms which enable the dialogue to proceed, are the promise of exchange of commodities, the logic of material gain taken to the limit. In this way, numeration, the Lager's technology of communication elides the identity, source and origin of the luggage of the "convoys" and implicates these convoys in their future profit as commodity. Language, as "communication", only succeeds when the logic of numerative language, symbol of the industrialisation and commodification of death, underpins its agency.

Aucun de nous ne Reviendra comes to be shown as a significant text precisely because it sets out a programme for giving testimony within the literary text by articulating survival and the conditions which precede it as a crisis of both language and of identity. Through the structural and thematic representation of fragmentation, it is precisely the making "present the existence of the unrepresentable" (Hartman, 1992:321) that Charlotte Delbo's narrative achieves.

CHAPTER III

UNE CONNAISSANCE INUTILE

<< Il n'est d'explosion qu'un livre. >> Un livre : un livre parmi d'autres, ou un livre renvoyant au Liber unique, dernier et essentiel, ou plus justement le Livre majuscule qui est toujours n'importe quel livre, déjà sans importance ou au-delà de l'important. << Explosion >>, un livre; ce qui veut dire que le livre n'est pas le rassemblement laborieux d'une totalité enfin obtenue, mais a pour être l'éclatement bruyant, silencieux, qui sans lui ne se produirait (ne s'affirmerait pas), tandis qu'appartenant lui-même à l'être éclaté, violemment débordé, mis hors être, il s'indique comme sa propre violence d'exclusion, le refus fulgurant du plausible : le dehors en son devenir d'éclat. [...] Peut-être faudrait-il citer, avertissement toujours inédit, le mots vivifiants d'un poète très proche : << Ecoutez, prêtez l'oreille : même très à l'écart, des livres aimés, des livres essentiels ont commencé de râler. >> (Rene Char.) (Maurice Blanchot L'Écriture du Désastre, p.190)

THE BOOK BECOMES WITNESS

The second volume of the *Auschwitz et Après* trilogy, presents the survivor/narrator's experience of living through and surviving Auschwitz and then Ravensbruck as an exploration of narration of the Holocaust as an intertextual dialogue. In this way, the text approaches questions of historicisation and canonisation through the optic of intertextuality, where the text becomes the corpus on which memory is inscribed. Moreover citation is also examined as a strategy of resistance in Auschwitz which explores the role of memory in relation to literature both in Auschwitz and in the wake of the Holocaust.

Beginning this volume with a quote by poet and writer, Paul Claudel, followed by numerous instances of references to and rewriting and citation of other French writers, playwrights and poets, the narrative is, therefore, constituted as a dialogue with other literary texts.

I would say that by gesturing to other literary texts, this narrative, raises the question as to its own status as Auschwitz narrative within the canon of French literature and, by extension the canonic impulse of the testimonial text as well as to its own citeability as a circulating text. Ultimately, the historicisation of the testimonial text occurs through the canonisation of the text and/or through intertextual dialogue, that is, through its inclusion in the structures and modes, critiqued and

contested, of transmitted knowledge.¹⁷ Historian, Dominick LaCapra reminds us however, in a psychoanalytically framed proposition, that the canonic impulse in Holocaust narratives should be examined in relation to the repressions or elisions produced as an avoidance or marginalisation mechanism set up by such an impulse (LaCapra, 1994:23). LaCapra notes that

In the case of traumatic events, canonization involves the mitigation or covering over of wounds and creating the impression that nothing really disruptive has occurred. Thus one forecloses that possibility of mourning, renders impossible a critical engagement with the past, and impedes the recognition of problems (including the return of the repressed). (1994:23)

Clearly, the urge to canonic status as a normalisation strategy of narratives of Holocaust memory covers over aspects of that memory which are both threatening and painful as well as resistant to foreclosure. At the same time, however, readings of Holocaust narratives in relation to canons and counter-canons bring new understandings to perennially cited texts. The self-reflectivity of Delbo's narratives has the contrapuntal effect of defamiliarising the works which are cited and engaged with. In this way her texts highlight the disruption which the canonic inclusion of Holocaust narrative entails. It can be assumed then, that by raising the issue of canonicity and by evoking the texts of the "great poets" of the French literary pantheon, Delbo's text presents an argument both for incorporation in the canons (or in the discussions that surround them) as well as for the destabilisation of these

¹⁷ The debates around the politics of canonicity and canonisation are outside of the scope of this study and therefore will not be explored. In this regard see LaCapra, 1994.

canons. Thus, in the same way that the description of thirst experienced in Auschwitz in *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra* proceeds through the initial subversion of traditional genres which narrate stories of thirst and survival, so too the gesture to canonic inclusion brings into question the very authority and epistemological grounds on which canons are constituted.

Perhaps Delbo's text seeks to insert itself in a literary tradition precisely because Shoah literature as literary "paragene" is a removal of the Shoah from history and an obliteration of the survivor's voice - a double death of the victim.

Published by *Les Editions de Minuit* under the rubric of their series, "Documents", a category which supports the truth-claim of the writer as a witness to the historical event, the format and categorisation of *Auschwitz et Après* become mechanisms of another displacement. The publisher's categorisation, then, can be seen as a decision not to engage in the problematising and fracturing issues raised by the choice of writing poetry, fictional and documentary vignettes. The classification of the text as historical document becomes an act which refuses the text entry into the category of "Literature" and thus, into the canons of the literary text itself. In this way, the title of this volume *Une Connaissance Inutile* (A Useless/Futile Knowledge), points to its own exclusion from a canonicity which it is trying to achieve. I would argue that it is precisely by constructing an intertext of canonised literary references and quotations, as a way of endorsing the transmission of Holocaust memory, that the text tries to achieve canonicity.

In an interview with a journalist from *L'Express* newspaper (1966), Delbo refers specifically to this text when she states that, "*On a acquis des connaissances, c'est vrai, mais des connaissances qui ne peuvent pas servir, parce que c'est une expérience hors de la vie.*" (Different knowledge was acquired, it is true, but such a knowledge

cannot serve, because it is an experience which is outside of life.) As Lawrence Langer observes, the title of this second volume, alluded to in Delbo's interview with *L'Express*, is lifted off a phrase that Albert Camus entered into his notebook, significantly in response to a novel that he was reading: "Only death is true knowledge. But at the same time it is what makes knowledge useless: it's progress is sterile." (Langer, 1978:202). As such, Camus' own contributions to the literary representation of the trauma of war and of the alienation of survivors and witnesses to atrocity is evoked. After Auschwitz, this representation resonates with an historical accumulation of very different meanings or contestations of meaning. Moreover, by naming her text as a citation of a celebrated, canonised author and public intellectual (with the appropriate literary credentials) Delbo demonstrates how citation could function as a paternalistic introduction (or exclusion) of a problematic text into the canonised corpus.¹⁸ In this way the citeability of this text, that is, its circulation as text, named after Camus' phrase, is ensured.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DOUBLE-BIND: CITATION

Delbo engages directly in the challenge to language in representing Auschwitz as well as to Shoah narrative's canonic exclusion by once again structuring the text around a *double-impasse*, a double-bind, site of fracture and displacement par excellence. On the first unnumbered page of text, that is, as a paratextual warning we read:

¹⁸ One could speculate as to whether Francois Mauriac's preface to Elie Wiesel's *La Nuit* (1958) functioned as a paternalistic gesture of literary endorsement which pre-empted the canonic status, in turn, of Wiesel's text. Ironically, however, Wiesel received the Nobel Peace Prize and not the Literature Prize, an acknowledgement which invalidates his testimony as literary.

"*Nous arrivions de trop loin pour mériter votre croyance*"
 Paul CLAUDEL.¹⁹ (We were arriving from too far away to
 deserve your belief) Placed within the rupture which is
 the double-bind, the structural dislocation of the text
 comes to represent the post-Auschwitz testimonial impulse
 to contradictory injunctions. As in the first volume,
Aucun de nous ne Reviendra, the double-bind highlights the
 dangers of presuming meaning by situating the shifting
 sands of signification within the fracture set up by the
 interplay of *vérité* and *véridique*. It is important to
 note, with reference to intertextuality as a strategy to
 both stabilise and destabilise meaning as a mode of
 demonstrating the problematics of representation, that the
 epigraph²⁰ which introduced *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra* is
 discovered by historian, Annette Wieviorka (1992), to be a
 citation of poet Paul Eluard's *Armes de la douleur*:

Je dis ce que je vois,
 Ce que je sais
 Ce qui est vrai
 (186)

I say what I see
 What I know
 what is true²¹

Once again eye-witness truth-claims which underpin the
 seamlessness of traditional or legalistic testimonial
 narratives are problematised. Truth, veracity and
 credibility are not given primacy over memory of Auschwitz
 in representations of those memories but are contested by
 a narrative that seeks to explore the epistemological
 implications of narrating memory. The grounds of knowledge

¹⁹ All quotations from *Une Connaissance Inutile*, in this
 chapter, will be referenced by page number only.

²⁰ *Aujourd'hui, je ne suis pas sûre que ce que j'ai écrit
 soit vrai. Je suis sûre que c'est véridique.*

²¹ My translation of Eluard's poem

whose scrutiny is pointed towards in the titles of both the trilogy and this volume itself are directly challenged by this specular *mise en abîme* of "croyance", (belief) in the Claudel citation. The text emerges from the publishing house bearing all the signs of a self-proclaiming "historical document", a documentary narrative and eye-witness testimony, yet the very first words constitute a literary quotation, that is, they are ascribed to another, their utterance preceding - historically and literarily - the text that follows.

The final page of written text is also unnumbered and corresponds structurally to the initial Claudel citation. This page, outside of the narrative proper, functions as a paratextual "last word" which places the authority of the text which precedes it into question:

*Je reviens
d'au-delà de la connaissance
il faut maintenant désapprendre
j e v o i s b i e n
qu'autrement
je ne pourrais plus vivre*

*Et puis
mieux vaut ne pas y croire
à ces histoires de revenants
plus jamais vous ne dormirez
si jamais vous le croyez
ces spectres revenants
qui reviennent
sans pouvoir même
expliquer comment.*

*I am returning
from beyond knowledge
Now it is necessary to unlearn
I see that well/clearly otherwise
I would no longer be able to live*

*And besides
It is better rather to not believe
these stories of ghosts
you will never sleep again
if you ever believe
these returning spectres
who return*

without even being able
to explain how.

Each stanza takes up one side of Claudel's classically symmetrical statement which introduces the text. Thus, "*Je reviens d'au delà*" takes up the introductory statement "*nous arrivions de trop loin*" and rewrites it in the light of the survivor's chance return. The survivor, after Auschwitz, returns alone ("Je", I), fragmented, dislocated, as opposed to the returning community ("nous", we) of Claudel which implies a shared/shareable experience. The return is present and continuous ("*reviens*" / returning) for the traces of Auschwitz are inscribed on the returning survivor as an event with no end, an event without limits, an event which is "*au delà*" (beyond), and therefore not bound by the distant yet finite borders implied by the descriptive "*trop loin*" (too far). Beyond the transcription and transmission of the memory, that is, beyond the act of return uttered by the narrator within the temporal immediacy contained by the present tense of the narrative ("*reviens*" and "*reviennent*") the written word itself continues to return in post-Auschwitz narrative branded by its submission to the death-camp. The very narration of memory enacts a return which, in turn, marks the process of "*désapprendre*" (unlearning). In the inverted logic of the Shoah universe to "learn" the teachings of the death-camp are to learn silence, paralysis, dissimulation and death. Thus, the process of bearing witness, fragmentary, dislocated as it is, becomes the enterprise to "*désapprendre*" (unlearn), whereby the survivor facilitates, by writing the fissure of the eternally returning self and the dead, the reinsertion of herself in language and in the world of the living, ("*qu'autrement / je ne pourrais plus vivre*") (otherwise / I would no longer be able to live) The second part of Claudel's statement, ("*pour mériter votre croyance*", to merit your belief) is taken up in the second stanza and casts the survivor's story as a narration

of "fantasy", as ghost stories ("*histoires de revenants*") anticipating return from the Lager as the tale of the incredible story told to a disbelieving world. As a rewriting/reciting, of the Claudel quotation at the beginning, the returning survivors words become the final palimpsest inscribing the traces of their own impossible transmission on the utterance of a signifying representative of the received literary canon. The self-reflexive doubt expressed in these lines therefore destabilises both the fictionality and the historicity of the preceding text.

APOLLINAIRE, POETRY, COMMON MEMORY: AN INTERTEXTUAL DIALOGUE

As a narrative which contests the possibility of beautiful language after the Shoah, the text submits poetic discourse to the traces of the Shoah through an intertextual dialogue with representatives of the poetic canons.

It is clear that as a consecrated document, that is, a printed text which has been submitted to the writer, editor and publisher's demands, the text's ordering of the narrator's memory as dislocated linkages, connections and relationships serves to highlight the epistemological problematic presented by the Shoah from the optic of the written text specifically. It would seem then, that the sustained dialogue with literary texts points specifically to the citeability of the earlier texts and, by extension, to citation as a means to suggest, to gesture towards the unknowable. Citation, thus creates an intertext which once again places signification into question. Yet, it is through citation that the text comes to be consecrated.

According to a book review of Delbo's recently translated texts, Delbo wrote the three volumes of her *Aucun de Nous ne Reviendra* immediately following her

liberation from Ravensbruck. (Houlding, 1995) The manuscript was then put away and finally, published almost twenty years later because, according to its author's desire, "it had to withstand the test of time. It had to travel far into the future." (Houlding, 1995:3) Now, the historical moment in which the text is edified offers no literary or written precedent for the framing of Holocaust survivor memory. It is a moment marked by a public discomfort and resistance to listening to or reading the transcribed memories of the survivor. The autobiographical memoirs which proliferate in the late forties, the fifties and sixties have not yet been published. I would argue then that it is precisely due to this lack of written or published survivor narratives that Charlotte Delbo turns to the literary paradigm in order to provide a narrative model which could frame the matrix of memory and which could, in turn, be subverted and critiqued. Citation and intertextual reference create a multilayered narrative which turns on itself, on its own means of construction and challenges the modes of representation which the literary paradigm provides. Thus, the intertext becomes the cognitive abyss, space of rupture, displacement and non-closure par excellence. In this way Delbo creates an "anti-aesthetic" - the representational resource of common memory - of the Shoah in a similar way to poet Paul Celan's poetics.

Writing herself, through her memory, into the survivor's twilight world which is living and writing on a threshold, the narrator inscribes the survivor's voice onto the literary tradition. To speak of a literary tradition after Auschwitz is legitimised, thus, when spoken in relation to Auschwitz. And so the narrator/Delbo writes:

*Moi aussi j'avais rêvé
de désespoirs
et d'alcools
autrefois
avant
Je suis remontée du désespoir*

*La mémoire m'est revenue
et avec elle une souffrance
qui m'a fait m'en retourner
à la patrie de l'inconnu*

I too had dreamed
of sorrows
and of alcohols
then
before
I have come back from despair
My memory has returned
and with it a suffering
which has made me go back
to the homeland of the unknown

The allusion to Apollinaire's collection of poems, "Alcohols" establishes a dialogue with the poetic texts within the collection, strands of which run through this entire volume. However, it is the anteriorisation of this relationship marked by "autrefois" and "avant" which resonates and impacts upon its utterance in the present. "I too" aligns the narrator/Delbo with the pre-Auschwitz infatuation with Maurice Blanchot's "idyllic" or beautiful language. The use of the past perfect tense delineates the trajectory of poetic language tropes through rupture from a poetics of despair "then", "before" the Shoah to a self-referential witnessing of its own demise. Thus, the demise of beautiful language rests in its inability to name the returning survivor's suffering or to frame her returning memories and whose metaphorical "patrie" (home/homeland) is unknown and eternally unknowable.

As a gesture of subversive and subverting irony, intertextual reference, constructed at the beginning of the text as the first pivot of the double-bind, is constructed here as a eulogy to a compatriot who dies in Auschwitz. What it becomes, however, is a eulogy to the narrator's venerated poets and, by extension, to the tropes of figurative language which constitute both the reference and the eulogy:

A YVONNE BLECH
 Nous étions ivres d'Apollinaire
 et de Claudel
 vous souvient-il?

C'est le debut d'un poème
 dont je voulais me souvenir
 pour vous le dire

J'ai oublié tous les mots
 ma mémoire s'est égarée
 dans les délabres des jours passés

ma mémoire s'en est allée

et nos ivresses anciennes
 Apollinaire et Claudel
 meurent ici avec nous

FOR YVONNE BLECH
 We were intoxicated by Apollinaire
 and by Claudel
 Do you remember him?
 It's the beginning of a poem
 which I wanted to recall
 so that I could tell it to you
 I have forgotten all the words
 My memory has gone astray
 in the midst the ruins of past days
 my memory has gone away
 and our former passions
 Apollinaire and Claudel
 die here with us

We know that Yvonne Blech was transported along with Delbo to Auschwitz (Delbo, 1965:43) so the memorial function of this dedication gestures towards its own non-fictionality, to its historicity. As a historical referent it also blurs the distinctions between narrative categories, between fiction and reality. As a commemoration of one who died in Auschwitz which is articulated in an intertextual zone of citation, this poem disrupts through its operation of blurring and conflating narrative genres.

This poem, dedicated to Yvonne Blech, evokes Apollinaire's cycle of poems entitled "Poèmes à Yvonne" (541) (Poems for Yvonne) in his collection, "Le Guetteur

Mélancolique" (537) (The Melancholic Look-out).²² In publisher, Gallimard's *Pléiade* edition, the title of this collection, "*Le Guetteur Mélancolique*" precedes the following lines on a separate page which, in turn, precede the first poem of the cycle dedicated to the "Yvonne" of Apollinaire:

Et toi mon coeur pourquoi bats-tu

*Comme un guetteur mélancolique
J'observe la nuit et la mort
(539)*

And you my heart why do you beat

Like a melancholic watch
I observe night and death²³

By evoking this collection, the narrative highlights the incredible, yet accidental irony created by poetic language, that is, an irony despite itself. Ironic because the intertextual reference gestures to a poetic statement which after Auschwitz becomes a eulogy its own demise as "pure" poetry. However, by engaging Apollinaire's text in dialogue, Delbo's text raises the narrative dilemma of who the text is addressed to if survivors' language points insistently to its own "*patrie de l'inconnu*", to its own unnameable landscape which implicates its addressee/s in that problematic of naming.

The question of addressee to the poetic text-as-memory is raised by Shoshana Felman in her citation of Paul Celan's Meridian Speech where he compares the poetic project to sending "a message in a bottle" (Felman & Laub, 1992:37). Delbo's text's self-conscious address is to her dead friend, "*à Yvonne Blech*", who is directly addressed as a "*vous*", a you-object of speech. In the same

²² All references to Apollinaire's poetry are from his *Oeuvres Poétiques* (1956)

²³ My translation

way as Apollinaire's prescient utterance operates, it is through an accidental irony brought about by the narrator/Delbo's survival that the dead friend comes to be addressed, to be named, and so, to be inscribed onto this unnameable/unnaming landscape. Apollinaire's utterance, as utterance of the Auschwitz survivor, in turn, accumulates an irony which highlights the absolute arbitrariness of survival. The survivor could indeed ponder the chance which causes the heart to continue beating as it waits for its own inevitable night.

Apollinaire's collection "*Guetteur Mélancolique*" is dedicated to a love-object, his "*voisine divine*" (543), his beloved neighbour. In her name, *Poèmes à Yvonne*, (542) he dedicates his cycle, and as "*Lettre-Poèmes*" (545-546) (Letter-Poems), he constructs his verse. His collection of "*poèmes inédits*" (unedited poems) contains a poem entitled "*Carte Postale à Yvonne*" (852) (Postcards to Yvonne) and the collection of "*Poèmes à la Marraine*" (Poems for the godmother) contains a poem entitled "*Pour Y.B.*" (549). Thus, the narrator's "*A Yvonne Blech*" addresses both a historical addressee as well as a corpus of poetry which, in turn, are the objects of an addressing utterance whose tropes of production are known and knowable.

Through its dialogue with poems which are expressions of unrequited emotion, the narrator's poem articulates its engagement with the personal, the relational and the emotional, important subtexts of this volume. In this way, diverse definitions and functions of poetic language and its fictional and historical addressees, are raised and engaged in within this intertextual space.

It is precisely through citation that the death of "beautiful language" is marked. By referring outside of the impenetrable and hermetic universe of the Shoah, the breakage, the rupture is signified. "*Apollinaire et Claudel / meurent ici avec nous*" (Apollinaire and Claudel / die here with us) brings all poetry and all literature to Auschwitz.

Apollinaire and Claudel represent here the corpus of classic literary creation (precisely because of their difference, their incomparability as poets, writers and intellectuals). It would seem then that the palimpsest of poetry is the gesture of the post-Auschwitz document to insert itself within this corpus of literary work, the canonic impulse which becomes the ultimate reinsertion of the self and the text into a language which, precisely because it is marked by the fragmentation of the trauma of Auschwitz, contests the very contingency of canonicity.

POLITICS OF LANGUAGE: DUPLICITY AND SURVIVAL

Poetic language has to first be submitted to Auschwitz before it can represent a new poetic language-at-the-limits. It is from this optic that language, its ruptures, breakdowns and violently forged new boundaries are represented, in this volume. In *Aucun de nous ne Reviendra* the figurative tropes which represent language (brutal, incomprehensible vocality) and silence (glacial, frozen immobility) serve to highlight the radical alienation of the individual in the face of the onslaught of the camp on the human experience and its shattering of the possibilities of poetic language. Primo Levi encapsulates this idea when he comments that "[i]t is an obvious observation that where violence is inflicted on man, it is also inflicted on language [...]" (Levi, 1988:76). In *Une Connaissance Inutile*, however, representations of language manifest the way poetics become politics of language. Thus, the narrator of *Une Connaissance Inutile* presents the politics of language in the Lager in an anecdote where the author and addressee of a love-letter which is intercepted are executed by firing squad following interrogation by the "Politische Abteilung". Lily, the prisoner and her fiancé are executed,

[...] parce que, pour la Gestapo, tout était code, et les mots d'amour traduisaient forcément des mots d'ordre politiques. [...] Dans la lettre de Lily à son fiancé, il y avait cette phrase: « Nous sommes là comme des plantes riches de vie et de sève, comme des plantes qui voudraient pousser et vivre, et je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser que ces plantes ne doivent pas vivre. » C'est un des hommes qui travaillent à la Politische qui nous l'a dit. (78)

[...] because, for the Gestapo, everything was code, and words of love necessarily translated into words of a political nature. [...] In Lily's letter to her fiancé, there was this sentence: "We are like plants which are resplendent/rich with life and sap, like plants that would like to grow and live, and I can't prevent myself from thinking that these plants should not live." It was one of the men who works at the *Politische* who told us this.

In the logic of the concentrationary universe language of love, represented by the love poem, is necessarily political because language in Auschwitz articulates power through dissimulation, euphemism and paraphrase. Representation therefore highlights the ways in which language intervenes and modulates the interactions of the prisoner in the camp. Hence, the politics of language emerges through a narration of the role of language in relation to the vertical and lateral dispositions of power in the concentration camp. Moreover, if language is represented here through descriptions of the prisoner in relationship with others, it emerges as a mode of organised resistance to the Nazi system.

In the first paragraph of narrative, entitled "*Les Hommes*" (The Men) the narrator describes her and her co-prisoners' relationships with the men interned at Auschwitz, we read "[n]ous leur [les hommes] jetions des billets par-dessus le grillage, nous déjouions la

surveillance pour échanger avec eux quelques mots." (9) (We used to throw notes to them (the men) through the fence, we used to evade the guards/surveillance in order to exchange/swop a few words with them.) Language's communicative function, that is, dialogue as gesture of communion which is the human gaze recognising itself in the other within Auschwitz is read as a necessity for survival (precisely because of the fatal consequences risked if discovered) and, as such, as a commodity of exchange. Besides the risks of discovery which modulates communication in the Lager, the mutual incomprehensibility of the inmates' mother tongues compounds the impingement on communication/communion.

As historical narrative, this volume offers details of the survivor's daily struggle to live within the death-camp. Yet it is as literary artifact, that the text bears witness to the traces of Auschwitz on language. In its submission to Auschwitz, language bears the indelible trace of its violent submission to the death-camp. The "*grillage*" (wire-fence) becomes the symbolic barrier, the imprinted trace which encloses language and through which language is "thrown" in its search for an interlocutor. I would suggest that the barbed-wire fence and electrified wire fence have become symbols of the Shoah in contemporary cultural representations precisely because they symbolise the hermetically enclosed and, therefore, impenetrable experience of the death-camp.

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, if Auschwitz becomes the locus of assault on humanity and on the language of humanity, the representation of SS guards and the Anweiserens in the text is significant. Once again language and violence are conflated to personify the SS guards, Anweiserens and Blockaltesters as brutal and brutalising vocal eruptions, that is, as shrieks and screams which are violently ejaculated. In turn, this representation personifies language itself as violent, a claim supported by the image of language as projectile

which is suggested by the gesture of the note throwing to the men. Thus, their language becomes the symbol of their brutality:

C'était une politique allemande [la chef de colonne], qui hurlait sans jamais reprendre souffle. Ce que cette femme pouvait hurler...Elle hurlait sans raison visible, elle hurlait en s'agitant, de la tête, des mains, du bâton et elle frappait à tort et à travers, puis cessait de s'agiter tout en continuant à hurler - - des ordres incompréhensibles et inexécutables --[...] (52-53)

It was a German political prisoner [the head of the column], who shrieked without ever taking a breath. What she was able to shriek...She shrieked for no clear reason, she shrieked whilst shaking her head, her hands, her truncheon and she struck out wildly and randomly, then she stopped shaking all the while continuing to shriek -- incomprehensible and inexecutable orders --[...]

Nude in a barrack at Birkenau, prior to her transfer to Raisko, the narrator and some of her compatriots have to undergo a medical examination and "[u]ne SS revient avec la chef du block, Allemande hystérique qui ne cesse de hurler [...]". (103) ([a]n SS woman returns with the head of the block, a hysterical German woman who does not stop shouting.) Language, violence and non-reason are conflated and embodied by the "hysterical" German perpetrator. In turn she is seen as possessing a language which is not enunciated but, rather, which erupts as a barrage of inarticulate blows which impact upon the very matrix of language.

Language, characterised by violence, by non-sense and non-reason is often represented as the dislocated mouth. Thus, for example, during the transfer of the narrator and certain of her compatriots from their barracks at Auschwitz

I to Birkenau (Auschwitz II) and then on to Ravensbruck they are driven by "*le SS à la sale gueule*" (102) (a foul-mouthed SS).

The mouth, jaw, tongue and lips become the site of both rupture and representation of rupture. When "*Le médecin SS nous fait tirer la langue*" (103) (The SS doctor made us pull our tongues) the polysemic play on words which emerges through the French word "*la langue*" - "the SS doctor makes us stick out our tongues" as well as "the SS doctor pulls out/extracts our tongues/language"- highlights the transformation of language and meaning in the death-camp and in its representation in the survivor's text, for the healing and curing associations of the doctor, "*le médecin*" are immediately subverted by the qualification "SS", combining to create a new historical referent. The signification of the image of the narrator who "sticks out [her] tongue", is revealed in the way language and its edification as printed word is used to defy the logic of Nazi ideology - the extraction of the tongue, the definitive preclusion of inmates bearing witness- which is to survive, return and bear witness (and hence the gesture of defiance). The narrator's tongue is symbolically restored, her language is restituted but emerges forever altered on the other side of the "*grillage*". Paul Celan evokes this idea of language emerging, after Auschwitz through the intermediary of violence when he notes, in his famous Bremen speech of 1958, that language "had to go through terrifying silence, through the thousand darknesses of murderous speech. It went through." (quoted in Colin, 1991:49)

In order to reinforce the isolation of the individual as part of the systematic assault on his/her humanity as well as to curtail the possibility of organised resistance, the circulation of language, that is, communication - verbal and written - inside the Lager is tightly controlled and necessarily restricted. While all contact with the outside world for Jews, Gypsies and the *Nacht und Nebel*

politicals is prohibited, within the Lager, it is severely restricted. Primo Levi comments that it is precisely this prohibition of communication which most strongly emphasises his profound sense of alienation in Auschwitz:

The weekly hour when our "political" companions received mail from home was for us the saddest, when we felt the whole burden of being different, estranged, cut off from our country, indeed from the human face. It was the hour when we felt the tattoo burn like a wound, and the certainty that none of us would return overwhelmed us like an avalanche of mud. In any case, even if we had been allowed to write a letter - to whom would we have addressed it? The families of the Jews of Europe were submerged or dispersed or destroyed. (Levi, 1988:81)

Censorship of communication in Auschwitz must be read in the context, then, of the dehumanising onslaught of the camp on the individual and as a reinforcement of its hermetic experience as "the kingdom of night". (Wiesel, 1958)

The narrator perpetually highlights the dissimulating nature of language in the camp. She describes how when she and some of her compatriots are transferred to Ravensbruck they are required to sign papers which state that they have not been maltreated, that they have not been ill and that they have had all their possessions returned to them. (104) No doubt, the signs and legends posted around Auschwitz underline the way that language is implicated in the deceptive and destabilising self-presentation of the Lager. Hence, the legend "*Arbeit Macht Frei*" (Work makes free), appearing above the gates of Auschwitz, greeting the labour details on their way out and back in to the camp each day demonstrates how the absurdity of language functions as mechanism of deception in the death-camp. Here, the irony of the legend emerges through its setting in a particular historical and topographical

context which, in turn, reveals a self-parodying impulse of language which has become self-referential. Language points, in its grotesque parody of bureaucratic modes of representation in civic discourse, to nothing but itself as both meaningless and contentless.

The essential unfamiliarity and strangeness of language submitted to the will of the concentrationary universe, is noted by the narrator in the first paragraph of the chapter, *Les Hommes*, "*Nous les aimions. Nous le leur disions des yeux, jamais des lèvres. Cela leur aurait semblé étrange*". (9) (We loved them. We told them this with our eyes, never with our lips. That would have seemed strange/unfamiliar/foreign to them.) Thus, to write and say love in Auschwitz is to find a new way of writing and speaking about emotion for the instruments of enunciation, "*des lèvres*" (the lips), are paralysed by both a loss of language caused by the definitive and absolute rupture with the past and with referential language.

II. MOLIERE READ THROUGH AUSCHWITZ

Language emerges from the Lager altered. As such testimonial narrative as communicative and performative impulses are recast after Auschwitz. Through the constant interplay of narrative and intertext Delbo's post-Auschwitz narrative rereads and recasts pre-Auschwitz literature in the light of the Auschwitz experience, a gesture which resonates both with Shoshana Felman's claim of crisis marking all post-Auschwitz artistic production as well as with canonic insertion of that production (Felman & Laub, 1992). It is the literary persona of French classicist playwright, Molière and his final play, *Le Malade imaginaire*, (and further in the narrative, Molière's *Le Misanthrope*) which become the structuring reference points of this volume's meditation on the nature of relationships and intertextual dialogue after Auschwitz and the

understandings of testimonial narrative that it produces.

The narrator recounts how after being transferred to Raisko (where the living conditions were more bearable) her compatriots and herself, racked by typhus, hunger and exhaustion, decide to stage a piece of theatre. In Auschwitz, inversion of the pre-Holocaust social/political/cultural order, Molière's *le Malade imaginaire* (the imaginary sick / the hypochondriac), reread and rewritten in the concentrationary space of rupture of reality with the imaginary, becomes *l'imaginaire malade*, an illness of the imaginary, that is, an illness of the imaginary mode. In this way Delbo creates an intertext which presents the covert rewriting and staging of Molière's dramatic piece as an engagement with the notion of un-imagine-ability as well as with the concept of psychological resistance in the camp.

Before narrating the event of reconstructing this play from memory and staging it, with all the danger this necessarily entailed, the narrator describes how, in Auschwitz, in the sustained assault against the individual and his/her humanity in the mud, blood and diarrhea, the imaginary mode, the intellectual mode and the modes of inner life which formerly sustained, fortified and strengthened the individual are the first resources to dissipate, to prove to be illusory.

Vous direz qu'on peut tout enlever à un être humain sauf sa faculté de penser et d'imaginer. Vous ne savez pas. On peut faire d'un être humain un squelette où gargouille la diarrhée, lui ôter le temps de penser, la force de penser. L'imaginaire est le premier luxe du corps qui reçoit assez de nourriture, jouit d'une frange de temps libre, dispose de rudiments pour façonner ses rêves. A Auschwitz on ne rêvait pas, on délirait. (90)

You will say that one can take everything from a human being except for her faculty to think and to imagine. You do not know. One can

make a human being into a skeleton where diarrhea gurgles, take away her time to think, her strength to think. The imaginary is the first luxury of the body which receives enough nourishment, enjoys a margin of free time, is furnished with the basics with which to build her dreams. In Auschwitz one did not dream, one had deliria.

It is no small irony that in 1673 at the third representation of *Le Malade imaginaire*, Molière, the playwright, had a seizure and died whilst performing in the role of the protagonist, Argan, the hypochondriac himself. This last dramatic work of Molière is a parody of the fear of illness - a metaphor for bourgeois values of the time - and the unethical and protectionist practices of medical science which exploits those fears - a metaphor for the unchallenged foundations of knowledge. The inversion of historical fact and dramatic fiction conflate the borders of real and imaginary which in turn serves to highlight the dissonance of a narration of theatre set in Auschwitz at the same time as it underlines the very real danger - certain death - of being discovered in the process of staging the play.

The narrator expresses little doubt that her transfer to the laboratory at Raisko contributes in no small way to her group's ability to stage the dramatic piece. Moreover, the staging of the piece symbolises a momentary reprieve from certain death since it is a consequence of approximately one hundred prisoners from Birkenau, Auschwitz II (the death-camp), who are chemists, biologists, botanists, agriculturalists, translators, illustrators and laboratory workers being transferred to Raisko. As such, it is an emblem of the coincidental or "unheroic" nature of resistance to the camp. In this way the narrator suggests that pre-Holocaust narrative models of heroic resistance are inappropriate if we are to understand what exactly constitutes resistance in the

Lager. Thus, she is part

[...] d'un petit groupe qui avait survécu à six mois du camp de la mort et avait été envoyé à quelque distance de là, dans ce commando privilégié. Il y avait des paillasses pour dormir, de l'eau pour se laver. Le travail était moins dur, quelquefois à l'abri, quelquefois assis.[...] [A]près quelques temps, nous reprenions apparence humaine. (88-89)

[...] of a little group who had survived six months of the death camp and had been sent some distance from there, in this privileged commando. There were straw mattresses on which to sleep, water with which to wash oneself. The work was less hard, sometimes under shelter, sometimes sitting. [...] [A]fter some time, we took on a human appearance again.

Human appearance translates into active resistance by exploiting the benefits of one free hour each evening and sometimes Sundays in order to stage a dramatic production. As literary critic, Ellen Fine, comments, "[i]n a dominion designed to annihilate all traces of the thinking mind, literature became a vehicle of human communion, a weapon of transcendence, and an act of defiance." (Fine, 1986:79) As the day of the illicitly staged spectacle approaches, the troupe make a poster, a notice for the play. The narrator asks the rhetorical question whether a poster should be necessary if those who could attend (inmates of those barracks) already knew.

C'est qu'enfin nous sommes dans l'illusion. Une affiche en couleurs où on lit : « Le Malade imaginaire, d'après Molière, par Claudette. Costumes de Cécile. Mise en scène de Charlotte. Agencement scénique et accessoires de Carmen. » Suit la distribution, avec Lulu dans le rôle d'Argan. Mais notre pièce était en quatre actes. Nous n'étions pas

arrivées à retrouver la coupe de Molière. (92-93)

It is because, finally, we are in the illusion. A poster in colours where one reads, "*Le Malade imaginaire*, according to Molière, by Claudette. Costumes by Cécile. Directed by Charlotte. Stage direction and accessories by Carmen." Followed by the cast with Lulu in the role of Argan. But our play was in four acts. We did not succeed in recalling Molière's interval.

Claudette, compatriot and French political prisoner, who as an illustrator has access to pencil and paper in this biogenetic, agricultural laboratory begins to transcribe *le Malade imaginaire* ("*d'après Molière*", according to Molière) from memory. In this way Molière is written through a double intermediary : memory and Auschwitz, a writing through which can only radically transform the text. It is precisely because "*nous sommes dans l'illusion*" (we are in the illusion) that art emerges altered, that "*[d]ans l'obscurité, une intonation juste prenait une étrange résonance.*" (92) ([i]n the darkness, a correct intonation took on a strange resonance.) Transcription of dramatic narrative, in this context, is the literal passage of Molière and his dramatic text through the "*grillage*" of Auschwitz.

Writing, rehearsing and staging Molière in Auschwitz becomes a task fraught with practical difficulties which include the inability to access any theatrical artifice with which to accentuate the illusion. As the narrator points out, being ill with typhus, being racked by hunger and rehearsing in a dark and frozen barrack after work and after supper "*[...] puisqu'on disait le souper pour deux cents grammes de pain dur et sept grammes de margarine [...]*" (92) (since one said supper for two hundred grams of hard bread and seven grams of margarine) further underlines these difficulties. In this way the shift from reality to dramatic fiction is inverted and the dramatic devices which

accentuate the boundaries between the two before Auschwitz, now cause them to blur. This is highlighted when the narrator describes the way the doctors' faces, "*bilieux à merveille*" (94) (marvellously bilious-looking), are made up in "*[u]ne poudre jaune vert, dont je ne sais pas la composition, peut-être un insecticide [...]*" (93) (a yellow green powder of which I do not know the composition, perhaps an insecticide).

Clearly the staging of Molière in Auschwitz (and later in the narrative, in Ravensbruck) comes to represent the submission of the performative gesture - here, the dramatic text - to the historical cleavage symbolised by the Auschwitz experience. As such, the theatrical gesture - symbolically grafted onto the very testimonial narrative which attests to that rupture - "performs" as its own testimony to life in the concentration camp. It is also Molière, who, although a critic of his own epoch, is the symbolic historical representative of the Classicist Mind and its cartesian conception of language and reason as a stable unchallenged syntagmatic relationship. This heritage is, in turn, subverted, reread and reperformed in Auschwitz "*[...] sans que les cheminées aient cessé de fumer leur fumée de chair humaine[...]*" (96). ([...] without the chimneys ceasing to smoke their smoke of human flesh[...]) Emphasised by the representation of the writing of the play within the Auschwitz laboratory which, as a laboratory represents the space where the paradigm of rationalist-empiricist thought reaches its apotheosis, the classicist and later rationalist conception of language, as system of fixed and stable meanings, is cast in doubt through its submission to the Lager. By narrating the production of the play against the background of crematoria burning human flesh, the tropes of figurative language and artificiality of theatrical devices refer self-consciously and perpetually back to their own illusory status as artifice.

TOMBSTONES AND TEXTS: MEMORY AS RESISTANCE, AS SURVIVAL

In the description of and response to their triumphant production of *le Malade imaginaire* the narrator states that *[c]'est magnifique parce que quelques répliques de Molière, ressurgies intactes de notre mémoire, revivent inaltérées, chargées de leur pouvoir magique et inexplicable.*" (95) ([i]t is magnificent because some of Moliere's lines, which resurged intact in our memory relive, unaltered, charged with their magical and inexplicable power.) Words, which have become inadequate signifiers and constantly point to their own demise as stable referents within literary narrative are at the same time a representation to a return to a reciting, commemorating and memorialising language. It is the ability for the literary tradition to function orally as a literal memorising and memorialising aid, that is evoked by the magical and inexplicable power of which the narrator speaks.

The first volume characterises the loss of language as a crisis of naming. This volume, however, anticipates the loss of language as an amnesia, a forgetting. As such, the narrator volume characterises the fear of memory-loss precisely as a compulsion to name, to date, to locate, to recall. Thus, according to the narrator, to remember the literary text is to remain in language. This concern with the loss of memory is an expression of the effects of trauma on the faculty of recall and a narration of the past:

Je pourrais dire la date exacte puisque c'était le soixante-septième jour de notre arrivée et que nous avons pris beaucoup de peine à compter ainsi les jours à partir de l'arrivée qui était le mercredi 27 janvier, pour essayer au moins de nous rappeler les dates. Les dates? Quelles dates et quelle importance cela avait-il que ce soit vendredi ou samedi, l'anniversaire de ceci ou de

cela? Les dates qu'il fallait se rappeler, c'était la mort d'Yvonne ou la mort de Suzanne, la mort de Rosette ou celle de Marcelle. Nous voulions toujours être en mesure de dire: « Une telle est morte le... » quand on nous le demanderait si jamais nous revenions. Aussi tenions-nous compte scrupuleux des jours. Il y avait de longues discussions entre nous quand nous n'étions pas d'accord sur le compte. Mais il me semble que notre compte était juste. Nous vérifiions constamment:

« Non, les chiens, c'était avant-hier, pas hier. » Le dimanche, les colonnes ne sortaient pas du camp. Cela donnait un repère et permettait de rétablir le compte quand nous avions perdu le fil des jours. (57)

I was able to say the exact date since it was the sixty ninth day since we arrived and because we had made a great effort to count thus the days from arrival, which was Wednesday 27 January, in order to at least try to remember the dates. The dates? Which dates and what difference would it make if the birthday of so-and-so was on a Friday or Saturday? The dates we had to remember, were Yvonne's death, Suzanne's death, Rosette's death or Marcelle's. We always wanted to be in a position to say "So-and-so died on the..." when we would be asked if we ever returned. We also kept a fastidious/meticulous count of the days. We used to have long discussions between ourselves when we disagreed on a count. But it seems to me that our count was correct. We constantly verified: "No, the dogs, that was the day before yesterday, not yesterday." On Sundays, the columns never left the camp. That provided a point of reference and allowed us to reestablish the count when we had lost the thread.

What is narrated is a concern for the very testimonial project itself. Poetry, drama, telephone numbers, dates provide the indiscriminated material of memory precisely in

order to bear witness after return. In this way, the narrator's compulsion to remember anticipates the survivor's self-imposed injunction to bear witness.

In relation to an edification of memory as the anticipation of a testimonial narrative, the literal connotations of intertextual dialogue, of citation and rewriting come to be revealed. As a narrative which implicates other texts by citation, it is the simultaneous narration of a re-citation. Intertextuality, thus, is resuscitated through its engagement with orality. The literary text is presented, then, as an aid to memory, as the projection of a framework which would somehow offer narrative continuity after Auschwitz, when that continuity is breached. The received literary tradition is invoked by the narrator as a "mnemotechnics" (Yates, 1966:11), a memorisation technique. As re-citation, intertextuality functions as an egalitarian impulse which provides a non-discriminating text-based resource for memorisation. In this way, the text functions as a challenge to the elitist power-knowledge significations of canonic organisation.

The narrator comments how the naming of places, dating of events, recreation of the topographic relations of metro maps and recitation of both poetry and drama from recall manifest a disregard for discriminating against different registers and genres which provide memory's matrix. She frames her re-citation exercises as a fear of losing her memory:

Depuis Auschwitz, j'avais peur de perdre la mémoire. Perdre la mémoire, c'est se perdre soi-même, c'est n'être plus soi. Et j'avais inventé toutes sortes d'exercices pour faire travailler ma mémoire: me rappeler tous les numéros de téléphone que j'avais sus, toutes les stations d'une ligne de métro, toutes les boutiques de la rue Caumartin, entre l'Athénée et le métro Havre-Caumartin. J'avais réussi, au prix d'efforts infinis, à me rappeler cinquante-sept poèmes. J'avais tellement peur de les voir

s'échapper que je me les récitais tous chaque jour, tous l'un après l'autre, pendant l'appel. J'avais eu tant de peine à les retrouver! Il m'avait fallu parfois des jours pour un seul vers, pour un seul mot, qui refusaient de revenir. (124)

Since Auschwitz, I am afraid of losing my memory. To lose ones's memory is to lose oneself, it is to no longer be oneself. And I invented all sorts of exercises to make my memory work: I recalled all the telephone numbers which I had known, all the stations on a metro line, all the shops on rue Caumartin between the Athénée and Havre-Caumartin metro station. I had succeeded, at the price of endless effort, to recall fifty seven poems. I was so afraid to see them flee that I recited them all every day, all one after the other, during the roll-calls. I had gone through much pain/effort to find them again. Sometimes it would take days to recover a single line, a single word which refused to come back to me.

Literary text, as a narrative aid to reconstitute the processes of "common memory" which, anticipating the consecration of a testimonial narrative, is attached value in the context of the Lager because in its defiance of the dehumanisation campaign of the Lager, it accrues to it the potential for resistance. It is in the light of the signification of resistance that the narrator recounts how she trades her ration of bread for a copy of *Le Misanthrope* (the Miser), another of Molière's plays. Charged with the responsibility of reading the text to her compatriots, she receives a portion of each woman's bread ration to make up the one that she had bartered.

The reading of the text functions as a collective and shared gesture of psychological and emotional upliftment, centred around the vocalising voice. Memorising the entire text, however, is revealed as an individual and solitary gesture which once again interrupts communion. This emphasises the isolation of the individual in the Lager,

stripped of the emotional and psychological resources of the past, while simultaneously constituting an emotional and psychological resource, however tenuous, within the Lager. This is illustrated when the narrator describes how memorisation exercises provide an emotional/psychological "shield" in order to endure roll-call:

*J'ai appris **Le Misanthrope** par coeur, un fragment chaque soir, que je me répétais à l'appel du lendemain matin. Bientôt j'ai su toute la pièce, qui durait presque tout l'appel. Et jusqu'au départ, j'ai gardé la brochure dans ma gorge. (125)*

I learnt **Le Misanthrope** by heart, one fragment each evening, which I repeated at the roll-call of the following morning. And right until leaving, I kept the booklet under my collar/in my throat.

If we recall philosopher Hannah Arendt's definition of the misanthrope as someone who "finds no one with whom he cares to share the world, that he regards nobody as worthy of rejoicing with him in the world and nature and the cosmos" (Arendt, 1973:32), the irony of the narration of the reading for her compatriots is emphasised. As a form of resistance, then, the function of the literary text is two-fold: as a sharing, a communion of inmates, it functions as a collectively asserted resistance against the logic of Arendt's misanthrope; as an internal resource for the individual it functions as an assertion of the will to remain, against all odds, human (Fine, 1986).

Framed as a meditation on the nature of relationships in the camps, interpersonal and intertextual, this volume consecrates a narration which engages with and addresses notions of what constitutes resistance in the Lager, how discourse of emotion is politicised and how canonicity is central to the transmissibility of the past as well as to the debated on historicisation.

CHAPTER FOUR
MESURE DE NOS JOURS

Douleur, elle désunit, mais non pas d'une manière visible (par une dislocation ou une disjonction qui serait spectaculaire) : d'une manière silencieuse, faisant taire le bruit derrière les paroles. La douleur perpétuelle, perdue, oubliée. Elle ne rend pas la pensée douloureuse. Elle ne se laisse pas porter secours. Sourire pensif du visage non dévisageable que le ciel la terre disparus, le jour la nuit passés l'un dans l'autre, laissent à celui qui ne regarde plus et qui, voué au retour, ne partira jamais.

(Maurice Blanchot *L'Écriture du Désastre*, p.220)

THE SURVIVOR'S LAST WORD

After attempting to present memory of the concentration camp experience and its conflicting encounters with transmissibility in the first and second volumes of the trilogy, the narrator returns, in the third and final volume of the trilogy, entitled, *Mesure de nos Jours* (Measure of our Days), to the survivors themselves in an attempt to examine the ways in which the survivor is implicated in narration of the silences, fragments and discontinuities of Holocaust narrative.

The vignettes of *Mesure de nos Jours* are named after the survivors whose post-Auschwitz stories constitute the ensuing narrative. This gesture of commemorative naming: *Gilberte, Mado, Marie-Louise, Ida, Loulou, Poupette, Germaine, Jacques, Gaby, Louise and Françoise*, recalls the uniquely and painfully positioned survivor, who, emerging from the Lager alive, is passed over for the commemorative dedication reserved for the "true witnesses", the dead.

Presented as (primarily) a collection of interviews in the first person, narrative voice functions in this text as the symbolic restitution of the "last word" to the survivor. Hence, this volume comes to re-embodiment Holocaust memory, disappropriated as experience from the survivor by competing narratives of collectivised and totalised versions of the past. In this way, this text emerges as a testament to trauma, to the difficult, and sometimes,

impossible task of mending a shattered life, and to the very materiality of the consequences of surviving and remembering.

Each micronarrative, each survivor's story, comes to be shown as emblematic, in its individual way, of the rupture, the discontinuities, the ruins, the scars and the phantoms which both haunt and animate the survivors who are often presented as merely "imitating" the gestures of living, expressed as "*ce moi-là qui imite la vie*"²⁴ (47) (that me there who imitates life) Written more than twenty years after the war, this text is seminal in the readings it produces which relate to the role of memory and language in the survivor's post-Auschwitz existence.

By presenting the survivor as doomed-to-survive, that is, survival as pathology, I would say that Delbo's narrator contests the narrative hegemony of Holocaust testimonies which, in their linearity, stable subjectivity and seamless recourse to a unitary Memory, construct tragic and heroic narratives of inspiration, courage, triumph. The marginalised voices represented by these micronarratives articulate moral ambivalence regarding survival, survival as terminal illness; return as amnesia, and the experience of being shunned by local communities on return. Their narratives contest the possibilities of heroic action at the same time as they challenge facile labels of passivity and victimhood. As such these self-presentations come to challenge the inspirational altruism of both heroic survivor narratives as well as Resistance narratives of courage and bravery. Without diminishing the immense importance of such narratives, or of their power *precisely* as testimony to astonishing human courage and bravery, I would say that this volume's presentations of the survivor and his/her existence, body and memory, constitute, rather, representations of rejected or historically silenced versions of survival.

²⁴ All quotations from *Mesure de nos jours*, in this chapter, will be referenced by page number only.

SURVIVOR MEMORY: THE TRAIN BACK AND THE BURIAL

Towards the end of the text an event is recounted by Charlotte, the fictional/autobiographical narrator of all three instalments of the trilogy, which is central to the representations of the survivor in this narrative. The survivors, whose names appear throughout the trilogy as co-deportees and inmates in Auschwitz, Raisko, and Ravensbruck, reunite almost two decades later in a vignette significantly entitled "*L'enterrement*" (185) (The burial). The title of this micro-narrative symbolically raises the question as to whether the past could be buried, whether memories could be laid to rest. The representations of the survivor which precede this vignette, suggest clearly that repression of the past only momentarily precedes its return.²⁵

The reunited survivors take a train journey in order to attend the funeral of Germaine, survivor/compatriot and friend who has died of a terminal illness. The conversations which are narrated during this final train journey gather together the conceptual strands presented in the preceding narratives. Train journey, death, disease, loss and mourning - signifiers whose representations have been subverted after the Shoah - are superficially restored as cultural and social referents. However, since language has emerged *through* the *grillage* of the Auschwitz experience, the irony inherent in these signifiers generates another accumulation of meanings which are constituted in relation to the preceding narratives. In this way these referents can be read as the constitution in the narrative process itself of self-referential tropes of a common memory of Auschwitz.

The central motif which unites these survivors is Germaine's terminal illness followed by her death. Perhaps

²⁵ See also Lacapra, 1994 and Friedlander, 1993 and 1994.

the representation of terminal illness can be understood as metaphoric reinsertion of the somatic presence of the survivor as the re-embodied memory of the disfigurement and breakage which precedes his/her emergence from the Lager. I would also argue that the trope of terminal illness could be understood as a representation of the memory of Auschwitz as terminal disease. Such a representation gestures to the unredemptive materiality of the pain, trauma and loneliness of the survivor. Thus, Louise narrates how her husband's aches, pains, ailments and diseases cast him, twenty years later, as the eternal deportee and their home as an infirmary. (176)

Marceline's story is the narration of survival as the repression of memory which returns each year in her body, as her "*anniversaire de typhus*" (183) (typhus anniversary). She recounts how her husband's scientific theories and explanations of the Holocaust translate into the belief that the psychological and physiological functioning of the human being is able to overcome even the most extreme trauma. "*La preuve qu'il en est ainsi, he says, c'est que tu es revenue*" (183) (The proof that is so is that you have returned) and that she should not be a "*prisonnier*" (prisoner) of "*[c]es souvenirs terribles*" (these terrible memories). (183) Yet every year, at more or less the same time,

[...] je suis prise d'une grosse fièvre qui dure des jours. Aucun médicament n'y fait rien. Les analyses de laboratoire, les radiographies ne révèlent rien. Mon médecin y perd son latin. Ma maladie n'a pas de nom. [...] C'est inexplicable. Cela commence toujours de la même façon : violent mal de tête, maux de ventre, température qui monte d'un coup. (183)

I am gripped by a great fever which lasts for days. No medication can do anything. Laboratory analyses and X-rays do not reveal anything. My doctor loses his Latin to it. My sickness does not have a name. It is

unexplainable. It always begins in the same way: a violent headache, sore stomach and a temperature which rises all of a sudden.

In a radical inversion of the reading produced in the second volume's presentation of *Le Malade imaginaire*, repressed and traumatised memories re-emerge after Auschwitz in the body, locus of deep memory. If, in that volume, the dramatic narrative serves as a mnemonic of memory performed in the Lager, it is evoked in the present text rather as an amnesia. This micronarrative is essentially the narration of the need to forget the memory of Auschwitz and to continue despite surviving Auschwitz. As a project of amnesia, of forgetting the past, it is disrupted each year by this mystery illness which resembles the typhus that the survivor has had in the camp. Here, Auschwitz as "imaginary" illness explodes the positivist epistemologies of medical science whose diagnostic labels in Latin are silenced in the face of incurable, inexplicable illness which is the return of the deep memory of Auschwitz.

Readings which invoke survival as a "condition", as a pathology, urge the addressee to contemplate the difficult and painful assumptions (social and moral) which are imposed on the survivor and the culturally reproduced representations of the survivor and of victimhood. Hence, in this final instalment, the trilogy's title, *Auschwitz et Après*, takes yet another meaning in its polysemic accumulation of signification: after Auschwitz the survivor is doomed to bear the traces of their experience in a post-Lager milieu that reinforces isolation and the stigma of a rejected otherness.

BURNT BOOKS, DEFUNCT WORDS: RETURN AS A FORGETTING

There is a section in *La Mémoire et les Jours* (Delbo,

1985) where the narration of the survivor's return and of his/her sense of possessing ruined or incoherent memories is in the form of poetic verse. The final stanza of the poem provides an important key which links the second and third volumes of *Auschwitz et Après* and which outlines an ambivalence in the narrator's experience of memory, of the recollecting impulse, subsequent to return:

*A mon retour j'ai relu les poèmes de
Blaise Cendrars
Je n'ai pas retrouvé le vers qui avait affleuré
transformé
à ma mémoire
de là-bas. (40)*

On my return I reread the poems of
Blaise Cendrars
I did not retrieve the verse which had
blossomed
transformed
by my memory
of over there

Central to this apparent repositioning of memory after Auschwitz is the dispersion of literary or poetic language as the means of "owning" or engaging one's memory, narrated in the previous volume. In that volume of the trilogy, the role of literature and of figurative language is shown to be an edification of memory, through the narration of the mechanics of memory, against the obliterating forces of the Lager. For the narrator, the loss of memory in the Lager "*c'est se perdre soi-même, c'est n'être plus soi.*" (Delbo, 1970b: 124) (is to lose oneself, is to no longer be oneself). Thus, memory in Auschwitz provides an overarching framework which provides a tenuous but important form of continuity "*pour nous garder, pour ne pas nous laisser entamer, pour ne pas nous laisser anéantir.*" (52) (to keep ourselves, to not let ourselves be worn down, to not let ourselves be wiped out) This poem, however, testifies rather to a displacement of the memory which had been evoked in the camps. Now, poetic language,

in its self-presentation of the traces of Auschwitz and deferral in perpetuity to the Lager, can be metaphorically symbolised by the French poet's name which - bearing the trace of its submission to the Lager and being forcibly wrought through the simultaneous act of rereading and translating - attests to poetic language's inability to figure that experience. Poetic language passes through the fires of the crematoria, through the "blaze" of the Holocaust and emerges, like the victims, as "cinders", as the testifying trace of remains. Hence, once the narrator passes through the camp and returns, the memory that she thought she "possessed" reveals itself, along with the poet and the language which frames him, to be illusory. Poetic language, symbolically resumed in the poet's name, is reduced, like the survivor's memory, to cinders, to ashes: a negative presence that can only signal itself by signing its perpetual absence (Derrida, 1991: 39).²⁶

It is precisely in this refashioning of the ruined morphology of memory, which emerges through the presentation of an ambiguous memory in *Mesure de nos jours*, that survivor memory is revealed, immediately after return, as an anguished and tortured forgetting. The moment of return marks a forgetting of everything that preceded Auschwitz. The narrator expresses this forgetting thus:

*Avec difficulté, par un grand effort
de ma mémoire --mais pourquoi dire:
effort de la mémoire, puisque je
n'avais plus de mémoire? -- par un
effort que je ne sais comment nommer,
j'ai essayé de me souvenir des gestes
qu'on doit faire pour reprendre la
forme d'un vivant dans la vie.
Marcher, parler, répondre aux
questions, dire où l'on veut aller, y
aller. J'avais oublié. L'avais-je*

²⁶ Significantly Derrida's text is constituted as a polylogue examination into the presence, in voice-as-body and text-as-body, of the signifying presence of cinders.

jamais su? Je ne voyais ni comment me prendre ni par où commencer. (11)

With difficulty, through a great effort of my memory -- but why say "effort of memory" if I no longer had a memory? -- through an effort which I do not know what to identify as, I tried to remember the gestures which are made in order to take on the appearance of a living person who is alive? To walk, talk, answer questions, say where I want to go and go there. I had forgotten. Had I ever known? I knew neither how to start nor where to begin.

The discontinuity of the Auschwitz experience is signalled as a breach with the anteriority of existing reference points which is, in turn, anticipated by a break with both words and gesture. As such language and action or the very way of *being in the world* is interrupted by the absolute incoherence of such an experience. Moreover, the presentation of a pre-Auschwitz memory which is wiped out contains the implicit suggestion that the concentration camp is the moment of the survivor's ontogenesis, an originating moment which radiates outwards from itself as a new beginning. Thus Gilberte responds to a repatriated deportee's question of "*D'où es-tu, toi?*" (28) ("And you, where are you from?") in order to arrange her journey home with the response "*D'Auschwitz*" (28) ("From Auschwitz"). Mado presents Auschwitz as an untransgressable spacio-temporal boundary, an originating moment with no anteriority:

Là-bas, nous avons tout notre passé [...]. Chacun a raconté sa vie mille et mille fois, a ressuscité son enfance, le temps de la liberté et du bonheur pour s'assurer qu'il l'avait vécu, qu'il avait bien été celui qui'il racontait. Notre passé nous a été sauvegardé et rassurance. Et depuis que je suis rentrée, tout ce que j'étais avant, tous mes souvenirs d'avant, tout s'est dissout, défait.

On dirait que je l'ai usée là-bas.
 D'avant, il ne me reste rien. [...] Aujourd'hui, mes souvenirs, mon passé c'est là-bas. Mes retours en arrière ne franchissent jamais cette borne. Ils y butent. (50)

Over there, we had our entire past. Each of us recounted her life time after time, resuscitated her childhood, time of freedom and happiness in order to assure herself that it had been lived, that it had indeed been herself who recounted it. Our past was our safeguard, our assurance. And since I have returned, everything that I had been before, all my memories of before, everything has dissolved, is ruined. One would say that I used it up there. From before, nothing remains. [...] Today, all my memories, my past, are from over there. My flashbacks never cross over this boundary. They stumble against it.

In a projection of the way that representation will emerge through common memory, language and its lexicon of words, like books, are "things", material artifacts that the narrator can only employ much later to describe her experience. Over against this reference to the historical consciousness implicit in common memory, the historical moment of return is narrated as conversely a moment of a "suspension d'existence" (12) (suspension of existence). Significantly this memory is represented as "l'époque ou il n'y avait pas de mots." (13) (the era when there were no words).

Importantly, it is once again the trope of the literary text which reveals the way that language is implicated in representing memory by emerging as the very site of a forgetting. Loss of memory and loss of language are articulated as an inability to discern what books represent, what activity they necessitate, what meaning

they yield, and what role they perform. During the time following her return, the narrator writes,

je regardais ces livres sans faire de relation entre des livres et la lecture. Des objets sans usage? Et puis je les oubliais et je retournais à mon absence" (14)

I used to look at these books without making a connection between books and reading. Objects without a use? And then I used to forget about them and return to my absence.

I would suggest that precisely by framing the loss of language and memory as a calling into question of the presence and function of the book, material and cultural artifact which comes through Auschwitz altered, unfamiliar, the literary text itself becomes a metonym for the explosion of epistemological frameworks through which meanings are produced.

The absolute alterity of the book object can be understood to be a contestation of the very ways we read the post-Auschwitz world whose socio-cultural protocols, underpinned by Enlightenment notions of the contractual relation of the individual with knowledge and its reality. For the returning survivor these protocols are meaningless. So the books are placed on the table near the headboard and "*restaient là sans que j'aie seulement l'idée de les prendre. Longtemps, longtemps, les livres sont restés là, à ma portée, hors de ma portée. Longtemps.*" (14). (remained there without the idea of picking them up even enter my mind). Visitors, meanwhile, come and go bearing gifts of books and flowers, objects which are clearly described as having lost any referential signification for the survivor in this "*présent sans réalité*" (14) (present stripped of reality).

I would say, Adorno's original dictum - even in the

light of its reformulated expression - that to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric resonates powerfully in the narrator's presentation of Auschwitz as the eternal and definitive replacement of the purely poetic dimensions of the imaginary mode. Thus, in a succession of interrogative statements, which preface the narration of an episode where the narrator/survivor picks up her first book after returning, she asks:

Qu'est-ce qui n'est pas à côté? N'ai-je plus rien à trouver dans les livres? Sont-ils tous répétition futile, description jolie et imagée, suite de mots sans poids? (16)
 What is not beside? Did I no longer have anything to find in books? Are they all futile repetition, pretty description full of imagery, the result of empty words?

The exercise in *reading* produces its own answer as a response to its own questions as well as to Adorno's proposition. Once again, what is at stake in representing Auschwitz and, now, the narration of survival and of return is the inability to find stable meaning. Survival, here, highlights the radical contingency of language, of the production of meaning. After Auschwitz reality has outstripped its own ability to be represented and words, having been implicated in the reality of Auschwitz, are no longer innocent. Expressing this idea thus, the narrator comments that,

[t]out était faux, visages et livres, tout me montrait sa fausseté et j'étais désespérée d'avoir perdu toute capacité d'illusion et de rêve, toute perméabilité à l'imagination, à l'explication. Voilà ce qui, de moi, est mort à Auschwitz. Voilà ce qui fait de moi un spectre. (17)
 [e]verything was false, faces and

books, everything showed me its falseness and I despaired at having lost my capacity for illusion and for dreaming, all permeability of the imagination, of explanation. This is what, in me, died in Auschwitz. This is what makes me into a spectre.

DISCONTINUITIES OF SURVIVAL

A. DEEP MEMORY AND DREAMS OF RETURN TO AUSCHWITZ

The survival of an event *in extremis*, its effects on language, identity, physical and mental health as well as on memory inform the representation of the post-Auschwitz existence which is narrated in this text.

Significantly, one of the tropes of deep memory - the memory of extreme trauma which collapses narration and projects the survivor back to the Lager - employed in this text is that of recurring nightmares. Deep memory emerges in these nightmares as the enactment of the endless return to the camp. The dream of return to a pre-Auschwitz existence, the longed for reason to survive in order to return (Frankel, 1963) which had animated the dreams of inmates in Auschwitz recurs after liberation as a dream of an inverted return. After Auschwitz, the dream-images lead back to the Lager. As we have seen in Chapter One, as tropes of the disruptions of deep memory in the reconstructed life-world of the survivor, displacing nightmares of impending return to Auschwitz are recounted time and again in survivor testimonies.

During the train journey to Germaine's funeral, a survivor recounts how "*quand j'étais là-bas, je rêvais que j'étais à la maison et, depuis que je suis rentrée, je rêve que je suis là-bas.*" (201) (when I was there, I used to

dream that I was at home, since I have returned, I dream that I am there.) Another survivor describes a recurring nightmare which presents the survivor's relationship to the past as a suspension of free will and individual choice:

Je suis en prison. On me laisse sortir sur parole et le soir, je reviens comme je l'avais promis après avoir eu la tentation de m'évader toute la journée, après avoir essayé de perdre le chemin. Je n'y réussis jamais, le chemin aboutit toujours à la prison. Toujours le même thème, dans des décors différents: tantôt la Santé, tantôt Romainville, tantôt une bâtisse que je ne connais pas, tantôt le camp. Le plus affreux, c'est le camp. Tu imagines cela, sortir d'Auschwitz et y retourner de soi-même? C'est si horrible au moment où je franchis les barbelés et où je me rends compte que l'occasion de sortir ne se représentera jamais plus, c'est si oppressant que je veux crier et je ne peux pas crier parce que la poitrine me fait mal. (200)

I am in prison. I am allowed out on parole and in the evening, I come back as I had promised to do after being tempted to run away the entire day, after having tried to lose the way. I never manage to succeed, the path always leads to/ends at the prison. Always the same theme, in different settings: sometimes la Santé, sometimes Romainville, sometimes an unfamiliar edifice, sometimes the camp. The most hideous is the camp. Can you imagine that, leaving Auschwitz and returning there by oneself? At that moment when I cross the barbed-wire, it so horrible and I realise that the opportunity to leave will never present itself, it is so oppressive that I want to shout and I cannot shout because my chest hurts me.

Implicit in this narrated sequence is the circular trajectory of the dream consciousness which anticipates freedom and imprisonment as successive and alternative modes of experience which radiate away from and back to Auschwitz. Through the suspension of free will, the dream presents the post-camp subconsciousness as automaton-like, as acting in accordance to a dictate other than individual choice. In turn, the ineradicable permanence of the camp in the survivor's existence is reinforced whilst the incommunicability of that permanence - and the paralysis which it evokes - is underscored. Clearly then, the will to return has to be reformulated in the light of having returned. In the death-camp, return functions as a projection of hope, survival, continuity. After liberation, after having returned, the self is threatened by deep memory's interjections by the same sense of disorientation and fragmentation which was experienced in the camps, projecting the survivor, thus, back to the Lager.

B. DREAMS OF RETURN AS THE UNLISTENED TO STORY

It would seem that, in the dream narratives of replacement in Auschwitz, another mechanism is operating. If Auschwitz has come to be shown as a radical challenge to the referential capacity of language, that is, to language's seamless ability to represent the realities to which it claims attachment, then the very reality of return has to be placed into question as a possible deception, as an illusory referent. Just as the logic of power in the Lager functions through the deception and dissimulation articulated through bureaucratic language, the extension of that logic impacts on the survivor's post-camp life-world as a calling into question the very possibility of an after. The dream of never-ending returns to the death-camp

therefore functions as a challenge to the very materiality, the "reality" of liberation. This would suggest that the challenge of Auschwitz to language and representation subsumes the referentiality of return, even after returning. In order to explore this phenomenon it is useful to turn to the account of the two recurring dreams which Primo Levi relates in two separate texts.

The first dream is narrated in his first text which is an account of Auschwitz and his survival. (1962:46) The second dream is narrated in his second text which is an account of his return to his hometown in Italy following liberation and finds resonance in Delbo's *Mesure de nos Jours* in its exploration of post-Auschwitz existence and representation of the survivor. The initial dream is a recurring dream which Levi dreams whilst in Auschwitz. The dream anticipates how after his return, he will sit with his sister and friends and tell them about his experience in the Lager. The dream presents his listeners as unable to understand him, his words, and his story. Instead, they begin to speak amongst themselves of other things and finally rise and leave him without saying another word (to him). Levi's narrator then recounts how, after his return, his second recurring dream occurs as a dream within a dream. After Auschwitz he dreams that his return to family, home, wholeness is, itself, a dream, a chimeric fantasy:

Now everything has changed to chaos; I am alone in the centre of a grey and turbid nothing, and now, I *know* what this thing means, and I also know that I have always known it; I am in the Lager once more, and nothing is true outside the Lager. All the rest was a brief pause, a deception of the senses, a dream; my family, nature in flower, my home. Now this inner dream, this dream of peace, is over, and in the outer dream, which

continues, gelid, a well-known voice resounds: a single word, not imperious, but brief and subdued. It is the dawn command of Auschwitz, a foreign word, feared and expected: get up, 'Wstawàch'. (Ibid.:47)

The narration of these dreams is the narration of return as displacement/re-placement. Return anticipates and projects a going back to the sealed-off and inescapable *univers concentrationnaire*. An inverted continuity is ironically recuperated in this narration in which displacement effectively enacts a perpetual Sisyphean crossing back to the Auschwitz Lager. The memory of Auschwitz, as narrated by Levi, temporally projects the narrator forward, in the first dream, and back, in the second dream, and in this way its narration creates a blurring between conscious states of waking and sleeping, dream and reality, before and after, departure and return. Narration of return is the telling of rupture (the "brief pause"), of displacement, a moving between the inner and outer dream-realities and disorientation.

The narrator of *La Mesure de nos Jours* evokes this shifting re-replacing consciousness of survivor dream narratives when she provocatively asks - in response to another survivor's statement that in Auschwitz she had dreamt of return and following return she dreams of Auschwitz - "[e]t si on passait du rêve à la réalité? La réalité, où est-ce?" (202) (and if one passed from dream to reality? Reality, where is it?) Thus, through its very narration the return is placed in doubt, it is a "deception of the senses".

I would suggest that the deception of return is not only a manifestation of a narration at the limits of representability but also a manifestation of a problematised reception, a refused reception of the survivor's story. Deep memory interrupts narratives with

its silences, its contestations and fragmentations, inserting into the progression of narrative an anti-historicising, anti-narrativising impulse which subverts that which precedes and follows it.

Historian Annette Wieviorka, suggests that following the war, historians had been unable to integrate the silences in survivor testimony into historical narratives and, she continues, therefore transposed this apparent "muteness" back onto the survivors:

En matière d'histoire, la notion d'indicible apparaît comme une notion paresseuse. Elle a exonéré l'historien de sa tâche qui est précisément de lire les témoignages des déportés, d'interroger cette source majeure de l'histoire de la déportation, jusque dans ses silences. Elle a transféré sur les déportés la responsabilité du mutisme des historiens. (1992: 165)

In the subject of history, the notion of the unsayable appears as an idea of laziness. It has exonerated the historian from his/her task which is precisely to read the testimonies of the deportees, to interrogate this major source of the history of the deportation exactly in its silences. It has transferred onto the deportees the responsibility of the historians' muteness.

Arguably, the figure of the historian could function as the metonymic representation of the post-Auschwitz world-as-unwilling interlocutor. As traditional representative of the empirical, legalistic and forensic demands which underpin the production of historical truths, the historians' silence represents a resistance to the cognitive assimilation of the survivor's testimony which reproduces, in its structure and content, the disrupting

and fragmentary silences of deep memory's trauma. As such, the dream narratives of survivor testimony anticipate return as a dismissed testimony, an unlistened to story, which, in turn, places that very return into question.

In part a function of both a dismissive and rejecting post-Auschwitz world represented by the unlistened to story and in part a function of the double-bind's speaking silence/silent speaking structure from which a fragmented speaking emerges, the survivor's return - to the possibility of life, to language - is framed in this narrative as an experience of extreme alienation and profound loneliness. Hence, Gilberte, survivor/narrator of one of the volume's micronarratives, describes the unacknowledged and unacknowledgeable return as "*cette solitude intolérable*" (24) (this intolerable loneliness) which continuously plunges the survivor back into the hermetic Auschwitz Lager.

C. RETURN DISRUPTED BY DEEP MEMORY'S TEMPORALITIES

Return from Auschwitz anticipates the experience of life after Auschwitz as an absence, as "*suspension d'existence*" (12) (suspension of existence). An unrecuperable continuity with pre-Auschwitz frames of reference, represented by a loss of memory, is reinforced in representations of the survivor's temporal consciousness. By expressing the experience of temporality as a caesura the survivor is presented as having been displaced from one hermetic space to another: from the sealed off experience of the Lager to a return to a world whose experience is described as "*un monde à part*" (13) (a world apart).

The representations of return in this volume present deep memory as an immanent present time of the Lager whose temporal dimensions of a simultaneous compression and

suspension suggest that its anti-historical dimension perpetually disrupts the survivor's experience of having returned. Thus Gilberte narrates this disruption in her inability to discern either the point of departure marked by the consciousness of a moment or the passage of time that has passed since that moment:

Depuis... Je ne sais pas. Je ne fais rien. Si on me demandait ce qui s'est passé depuis le retour, je répondrais: rien. [...] Je me répète pour m'en assurer qu'il y a vingt-cinq ans que nous sommes rentrés, sinon je ne le croirais pas. Je le sais comme on sait que la terre tourne, parce qu'on l'a appris. Il faut y penser pour le savoir. (41)

Since... I do not know. I do nothing. If one asked me what has happened since returning, I would respond: nothing [...] I repeat to myself in order to reassure myself that it is twenty five years since we came back, if not I would not believe it. I know like it is known that the earth turns, because it has been learnt. It is necessary to think about it in order to know it.

By introducing the temporal deictic "depuis" (since) and then literally disrupting its marking of an instant by following its utterance with three *points de suspension*, suspension points, the narrator emphasises the primacy of deep memory's presence in the narration of return. This is highlighted by the antagonism between deep and common memory which is invoked in the opposition between "croyance" (belief), "penser" (thought), "savoir" (knowledge) and their disruption by "depuis" (since) which tails off, reinforced by the negation of "rien" (nothing).

Mado's narration reveals the day of deportation as the moment which marks a continuity with the temporality of the Lager but not with a prior temporal mode. That day

represents "*le dernier jour de ma vie... Je n'ai pas changé d'âge, je n'ai pas vieilli. Le temps ne passe pas. Le temps s'est arrêté.* (52) (the last day of my life... I am the same age, I have not aged. Time does not pass. Time has stopped.) Once again the *points de suspension*, the suspension marks literally punctuate the narrative as an end-of-history consciousness which is revealed in so many of these narrations.

It becomes clear that in the representation of these survivors' post-Auschwitz temporal consciousness, the very notion of return begins to signify the subversion of its implicit meaning: the movement in time which marks a retrieval of continuity or the moment of a new beginning. As such, deep memory, represented in the survivor's temporal consciousness, seems to preclude both survival and return. In its radical breaching of an unproblematic historical existence, deep memory, expressed in a collapse of the consciousness of unfolding temporality, presents these versions of survival as the absence of life. It is precisely the presentation of animating a temporal rupture which informs the representation of deep memory described by Mado:

Les gens croient que les souvenirs deviennent flous, qu'ils s'effacent avec le temps, le temps auquel rien ne résiste. C'est cela, la différence; c'est que sur moi, sur nous, le temps ne passe pas. Il n'estompe rien, il n'use rien. Je suis morte à Auschwitz et personne ne le voit. (66)

People believe that memories become blurred, that they are erased with time, time against which nothing can hold out. This is exactly the difference; that over me, over us, time does not pass. It wipes nothing out, it wears nothing down. I have died at Auschwitz and nobody sees it.

The shedding skin metaphor examined in Chapter One, metonymic metaphor for the body-as-memory or the embodied memory of *la mémoire profonde* returns in this narrative to present survival as the return of death in Auschwitz. This presentation would suggest that the survivor is condemned to survive for if deep memory, as memory of the senses, is inscribed in the corporeal presence of the survivor it can never be erased nor change in form nor impact.

D. THE GHOST/WRITER RETURNS

Central to the survivor narratives in this text is the representation of return - and the narration of return - as a disorientation and displacement. Return comes to signify a threat to the very integrity of the survivor's being in her/his experience of life as rupture. Significantly, the French text repeatedly employs the term *revenant* (ghost), in self-representations of both survivor and the dead. *Revenant*, in its polyvalent resonance in French, comes to incorporate both significations of a ghost, a material apparition which resembles a dead person and as *re-venant*, a person who returns, comes back again. In its ambiguous and multiple meanings it can also be read as the presence of the Lager which perpetually returns.

The figure of the *revenant* becomes an important trope through which the survivor's problematic self-representation, as well as his/her temporal experience of present time which is predicated on a forgetting of the pre-Auschwitz past and a re-placing remembrance of the eternally present past of the concentrationary universe is revealed. The figure of the *revenant* clearly highlights the survivor's experience of alienation and a problematisation of the historical present time of narration. Indeed, the very concept of a ghost calls

attention to the narrative construction of *itself* as a representational device, a likeness. A signifier of similarity, of duplication, and of absent materiality, the ghost gestures to the same disembodying splitting operated by the Lacanian mirror. Hence, when Mado narrates that *Je suis autre* (60) (I am other), she articulates the survivor's experience of fragmented subjectivity, the returning self as disembodied from the pre-Lager past and the post-Lager liberation. (Hoppe, 1984) Return becomes a "ghosting" of another self of which there remains no trace. This is clearly highlighted in the following extract:

Comment me réhabituer à un moi qui s'était si bien détaché que je n'étais pas sûre qu'il eût jamais existé? Ma vie d'avant? Avais-je eu une vie avant? Ma vie d'après? Étais-je vivante pour avoir un après, pour savoir ce que c'est qu'après? (14)
 How do I get reaccustomed/used to a self which had detached itself so well that I was uncertain if it had ever existed? My life before? Did I have a life before? My life after? Was I alive to have an after, to know what an after is?

The characterisation of the survivor as ghostly apparition embeds into the narration an explicit expression of the sheer arbitrariness of survival, of having accidentally returned from certain death. This expression emerges in the same moment as those who did not survive are named:

[...] Il faudrait expliquer
 l'inexplicable
 expliquer
 pourquoi Viva qui était si forte
 est-elle morte
 et non pas moi
 pourquoi Mounette
 qui était ardente et fière
 est-elle morte

et non pas moi
pourquoi Yvonne
qui était résolue
et non pas Lulu [...] (78)
 It would be necessary to explain
 the inexplicable
 to explain
 why Viva who was so strong
 died
 and not me
 why Mounette
 who was so passionate and proud
 died
 and not me
 why Yvonne
 who was so resolved
 and not Lulu

This extract clearly highlights how the silencing guilt of the survivor operates in its subversion of the imputation of all meaning to survival precisely in its search for meaning ("*expliquer l'inexplicable*", explain the inexplicable). The narrator's expression of arbitrary return becomes, at the same time, a ritualised naming underlined by the incantational refrain of "*pourquoi*" (why) and "*non pas moi*" (not me). These names, in turn, assume their own signifying presence in the text as the eternal "true witnesses" whose stories are imbricated in the survivor narratives by the ghost-writer who is the witness by proxy, the survivor/narrator.

The representation of the survivor/narrator as ghost-writer which emerges here assumes particular significance in this text where the survivor is simultaneously represented as the ghost (returns from certain death) who narrates as well as the narrator who bears witness on behalf of the dead. The ambiguity which emerges in the dual signification of the image of the ghost-writer is further underlined by Delbo's theorisation of the two memories, deep and common, which animate the survivor who moves in between two spaces, two temporalities.

The metaphor of the ghost-writer is revealed in the survivor/narrator's presentation of repatriation as the progressive inability to distinguish dead compatriots from living survivors or from the crowds of people awaiting their repatriation on arrival in Paris. This presentation clearly anticipates the ambivalent representations of the survivor both as a medium through which the dead speak as well as one who occupies a world in-between. (9) Quite literally a medium, the narrator addresses her friends who died in Auschwitz in direct speech, as present addressees and, as such, presciently anticipates the ontological dilemmas of survival and return "*Viva, ou es-tu? Non, tu n'étais pas dans l'avion avec nous. Si je confonds les mortes et les vivantes, avec lesquelles suis-je, moi?*" (10-11) (Viva, where are you? No, you were not in the aeroplane with us. If I confuse the dead with the living, with whom exactly am I?). At the same time the narrator anticipates her isolation, her own unacknowledged return, from the world to which she returns by concluding that she herself has become transparent, ghostly, "[...] *j'étais aussi transparente, aussi irréelle, aussi fluide qu'elles.*" (10) (I was as transparent, as unreal, as fluid as they).

Ultimately, these representations of the survivor as spectral presences, narrate in a very immediate and literal manner the returning survivor's radical isolation from human community, from intimate contact. As the micronarrative of Ida reveals, she returns after having lost her entire family at Auschwitz. "*Il ne me restait aucun parent, tous avaient été pris[,]*" she writes, "*[t]ous étaient morts là-bas.*" (117) (I had no remaining relatives, everyone had been taken, everyone died there.) By repeating that she has no surviving family or relatives Ida emphasises that nothing remains to which she can return. Any tenuous memory of a pre-Auschwitz past is negated by the extermination of any remaining witness to that past.

III. ENDING WITH RETURN

By ending this volume with the survivor's return, the interpretative limits of texts of the Holocaust are modulated by the survivor's resonating, if fragmented, story. Eli Wiesel, articulates this idea of reappropriating survivor's memory as a way to underline the perpetual and incommunicable isolation of the survivor after Auschwitz in an essay entitled, *A Plea for the Survivors*. By presenting representation as a cognitive abyss which will always separate the survivor from the addressee, Wiesel implies that the limits of interpretative and theoretical possibilities of readings are produced through the representation of the breach:

The survivor speaks in an alien tongue. You will never break its code. His works will be of only limited use to you. They are feeble, stammering, unfinished, incoherent attempts to describe a single moment of being painfully, excruciatingly alive - the closing in of darkness for one particular individual, nothing more and perhaps much less. Between the survivor's memory and its reflection in words, his own included, there is an unbridgeable gulf. The past belongs to the dead, and their heirs do not recognize themselves in its images and its echoes. [...] A novel about Auschwitz is not a novel, or it is not about Auschwitz. One cannot imagine Treblinka, just as one cannot reinvent Ponar. (Wiesel, 1978:198)

Here the restitution of the survivor's tongue/language (a linguistic polyvalence which emerges in the use of the

French word "*la langue*") as the re-embodiment of memory coincides with the limits of representation and interpretation of survivor narrative.

By examining questions relating to healing trauma, to the re-traumatisation of the unlistened-to-story and to the return of deep memory within a narrative structured through a series of separate yet thematically interlinked conversations, interviews, anecdotes and meditations in prose and poetry, Delbo's text once again manifests a resistance to a teleological narration. In this way, the volume incorporates into its very structure a contestation of the addressee's or reader's expectations from narrative which serves, in turn, to highlight the ways that silences of the survivor are produced: as response to a disbelieving post-war world which seeks the kinds of essentialist meanings that can be anchored in foreclosed narratives of the past. Over against the representation of silence as response to the unwilling addressee, this volume presents survivor silences as an obviation of healing through "mastery", through a telling of the memory of trauma. The narration of the memory of trauma simultaneously becomes the narration of memory as trauma and re-traumatisation.

AFTERWORDS

This study has attempted to demonstrate how representations of personal memory contest disembodied and overarching historical truths while investigating these memories, often fragmented and dislocated, within the responsible limits of a reality which underpins that truth. At the same time this examination has attempted to approach the traces of Holocaust memory as a supplementary reading to the history which mediates it and which it mediates.

By setting up a theorisation of survivor memory as embodied inscription in Chapter One I have tried to construct a conceptual framework as an interpretative approach to the discontinuities of silent memory. Besides recognising the important role that the body plays in transacting violence (Feldman, 1991), presenting the body as the material locus of memory recalls us to the way that corporeality is inextricably bound to metaphysical conceptions of human existence. (Améry, 1986:28) Thus, by conflating memory with body, I have attempted to demonstrate that remembering the body's violation becomes a double remembering by gesturing both to the violation of the humanity of the individual and to the trauma of that violation which remains both hidden and immanent in the silences of memory.

In the second Chapter I have outlined the contradictory impulses represented by survivor silence and attempted to examine how these paradoxical urges to testify and to remain silent are fundamental to the narration of the memory of trauma. In turn, the ways that tropes of silence and of language are implicated in the radical alienation, powerlessness and dehumanisation of the individual in the Lager are examined.

Thematically counterpointed to the first volume, my analysis of the second volume in Chapter Three has tried to investigate the meanings of "relationship", of "dialogue",

as a narrative strategy of memory and as a way to highlight the rupture signified by Auschwitz. Telling the story of the past, of existence in the Lager and of relationships with other camp inmates proceeds through a systematic rewriting of a literary tradition as a way to insert into that tradition the absolute breach represented by the Auschwitz experience.

I have tried to demonstrate in the final chapter that the displacements of memory and silence are often enacted in the reception of testimonies. By presenting survival itself as an essentially disturbing and threatening state of being I have attempted to investigate how displacement/displacing mechanisms occur in the transmission and reception of testimony and how these mechanisms are constructed as threatening to a collective memory of the past.

Now, more than ever, as survivors pass on, and memories of the past are no longer living memories, the difficult questions of historical context and of historical relevance are inevitably raised when an examination of silenced/silent fragments of memories is undertaken. Annette Wieviorka indirectly responds to Eli Wiesel's description, at the beginning of this study, of the contemporary era's literature being, primarily, one of testimony, whose memory of the past serves a vision of the future, with her own observations on the changing forms and functions of testimony. (1992:161-166) In the period following the Second World War different perspectives and agencies collectively informed the way the past was represented: victims, survivors, perpetrators, bystanders, Resistance fighters and collaborators provided testimonies which would function as necessary historical records enabling the essential construction of an enduring body of *knowledge* about the genocide. (Wieviorka, 1992:161) Today, according to Wieviorka, testimony does not have to realise

these events, its function is "les maintenir presents. Il doit être un vecteur de la transmission pour les générations d'après". (1992:161) (to maintain them as present. It must be a vector of transmission for the generations after).

Delbo has commented that one of the reasons for writing *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* in 1945 and then placing the manuscript aside for twenty years before publishing it was to "see if it would withstand the test of time, since it had to travel far into the future." (Houlding, 1995:3) Elsewhere, in her impassioned condemnation of the atrocity and horror of the Gulag she observes:

[n]ous, victimes d'un fou sanguinaire, nous qui pensions que la fin du fou sanguinaire signifiait la fin du système concentrationnaire, il nous faut maintenant vivre avec cette vérité-là: il y a encore des camps. Vérité insupportable. (1995:137)
[w]e, victims of a bloodthirsty madness, we who thought that the end of the bloodthirsty madness meant the end of the concentrationary system, we now have to live with this truth: there are more camps. Unbearable truth.

Contained in these statements is the belief that if memory serves a vision of the future, implicit in such vision is a certain redemptive view of the past. (Benjamin, 1968)

The question is raised: how can the fragments and shards of memory of an event of unimaginable proportions contain any such vision? It would seem to me that, while we can be aware of the inappropriateness of historical comparison, the methodology of examinations of memory can inform other readings and understandings of the politics and poetics of the memory of trauma. Such understandings could be imported into other historical contexts.

Clearly, there remains a profound tension, often covered over, between personal memory, collective memory, public memory, popular memory and historical practice. Yet, at the same time, I would say that it is necessary for such investigations of memory to remain sensitive to the ways in which they key into debates of historicisation or historical relativism. As this study has progressed, the notion of investigating personal memory has taken on very different meanings in the light of a personal interest and active observation of the unfolding historical process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. (Grunebaum-Ralph, 1996, 1997) This process has seen the emergence, in public spaces, of debates on memory, history, truth and justice. The very public and visually immediate way that these questions - in the form of open and televised hearings - are raised and engaged with testifies to the ongoing tensions which emerge between personal, public and collective memory; academic and official historical practice; the establishment of forensic, juridical and historical Truth and truths. At the same time the individual testimony, the personal and devastating effects of trauma are often ellided in service of specifically nationalistic or totalising historical narratives. Holocaust memory itself, has been implicated in this process in a very peculiar way: it underpins a move in historical and certain political circles to relativise the past in South Africa. (Braude, 1996) The question which I have been asking myself is how would Delbo comment on the role of memory in collective examinations of the past, in South Africa? How would she have her testimony to the past read in such a context? What does her theory of embodied memories mean in this context? How can navigating the difficult and sometimes contradictory representations of personal memory in Delbo's texts be modulated by ethical considerations?

This examination of the representations of the memory of torture, trauma and atrocity has attempted to investigate the ways that personal memory intervenes in and facilitates its own narration. What emerges is a testimony to the ways that remembering atrocity threatens to subvert its own telling, to dissipate in its own fragmentary silences.

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