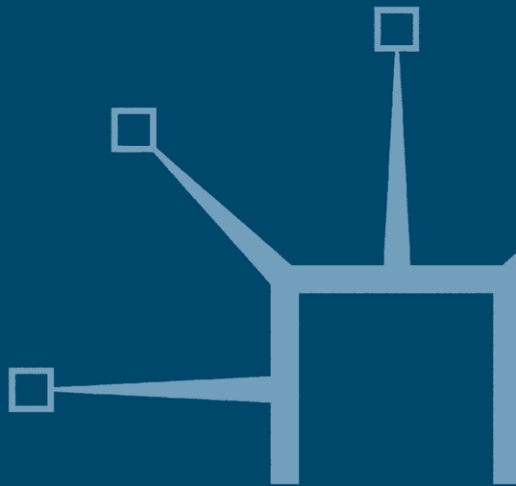


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Imagining Mass Dictatorships

The Individual and the Masses in
Literature and Cinema

Edited by
Michael Schoenhals and Karin Sarsenov



Imagining Mass Dictatorships

Mass Dictatorship in the 20th Century

Series Editor: **Jie-Hyun Lim**, *Professor of History and Director of the Research Institute of Comparative History and Culture, Hanyang University, Seoul.*

'Mass dictatorship' addresses the (self-) mobilization of 'the masses' in and for twentieth-century dictatorships. In contrast to pre-modern despotism, mass dictatorship depends upon its ability to entice and employ multiple forms of active participation of the many. By appropriating modern statecraft, a 'dictatorship from above' transforms itself into a 'dictatorship from below' – a practice of rule that builds upon people's sustained cooperation. This series contributes to the understanding of popular dictatorships in the twentieth century by interrogating their conjunctures from a transnational perspective.

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IMAGINING MASS DICTATORSHIPS
The Individual and the Masses in Literature and Cinema

Mass Dictatorship in the 20th Century

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Imagining Mass Dictatorships

**The Individual and the Masses in
Literature and Cinema**

Edited by

Michael Schoenhals

Professor of Chinese Studies, Lund University

and

Karin Sarsenov

Associate Professor of Russian Studies, Malmö University

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Editorial matter, selection, introduction, Chapters 1 and 10

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Jimmy Vulovic has a Ph.D. in Literary Studies from Lund University and is currently completing a book, due to be published in 2013, about how Social Democrats, Communists and National Socialists employed literature for propaganda purposes during the interwar period in Sweden. In addition, he has recently published a textbook on narrative analysis.

Introduction

Michael Schoenhals and Karin Sarsenov

Imagining Mass Dictatorships: The Individual and the Masses in Literature and Cinema sees twelve theorists and historians of fiction and non-fiction probe the literary subject of life in twentieth-century mass dictatorships. Generously defined, the 'literary' in this context covers a wide spectrum of narrative forms, ranging from the commercial television documentary to popular crime fiction, and from digitally restored amateur film on DVD to a Nobel Prize winning novel.

As Jie-Hyun Lim argued in his introduction to the series to which this volume belongs, mass dictatorship is a term capable of shedding new light on twentieth-century modernization processes. It proceeds from the assumption that these processes constituted transnational and global phenomena that affected different parts of the world in very different ways and that new insights may be gained by not necessarily employing Western democracies as the yardstick, against which all other polities are to be measured. The term also directs our attention to the initially often starkly successful mobilization of the masses by dictatorships that, to the mobilized self, appeared to provide both incentive and opportunity for self-empowerment from below.¹

No connotation of the term mass dictatorship is perhaps more unsettling than this one: far from affirming the presence of a clear divide between dictatorships (here understood as the corrupt rule of a few evil men over a subjugated popular majority in faraway places) and democracies (what the rest of us enjoy), the term actually calls into question the real-world existence of such neat and comforting distinctions. In the twentieth century, dictatorships otherwise as different as Italian Benito Mussolini's from South Korean Park Chung-hee's did not set themselves apart from contemporaneous democracies by making self-empowerment from below an impossibility: they merely differed by opening up avenues

for alternative versions of self-empowerment. Only a failure of the imagination on the part of those who keep the conceptual universe of mainstream political science in working order helps obscure convergences like this one, between the supposedly bad and the supposedly good.

The existence of convergences does not, however, justify moral relativism or undercut the power of normative statements about whom or what is indeed good or evil. Only too convincingly have students of the bloodstained history of mass dictatorships demonstrated the suffering and destruction that this form of political organization brought about and the degree to which it failed in each and every instance to live up to the aspirations on which it was founded. The core idea behind mass dictatorships – giving up all claims to individual political, economic, religious and private freedom and uniting with others in a collective (mass) effort in the name of a higher cause and in return benefit from economic stability, possibilities of self-empowerment and a meaningful life – had by the end of the twentieth century lost its attraction in most parts of the world. However, this must not blind us to the fact that in the new century, such a bargain with freedom may well again be struck in democracies, albeit without the aspirations of totality and with higher demands on accountability from the persons entrusted with power.

The driving force behind the research presented in this volume is the urge to neutralize the psychological mechanism that renders the familiar (democracy) taken for granted, normal and *a priori* more highly valued than what appears as an alien or potentially hostile, even, form of political organization. The struggle to create national and cultural identities outside the Soviet bloc after World War II often took mass dictatorships as the point of reference, the ‘evil other’ in relation to which a positive identity was constructed. Pragmatically, this identity formation process had many advantages, but it also served the purpose of veiling or disguising obvious instances of similarity between mass democracy and mass dictatorship.

So far the effort of scholarship to come to terms with this cluster of traps and challenges has largely involved a debate between proponents of the totalitarian theory, the revisionist theory and the paradigm of participatory totalitarianism.² While the first views twentieth-century dictatorships primarily as products of an elite’s subjugation of a victimized population, the second theory focuses on popular resistance in everyday practices and on similarities between two parallel projects of modernization: one democratic and one totalitarian/authoritarian. The third paradigm, as it were, participatory totalitarianism, promoted by scholars such as Stephen Kotkin, Igal Halpin and Jochen Hellbeck, focuses on the

active, voluntary and often enthusiastic participation of large portions of the populations in practices and projects orchestrated by the ruling elite, such as genocide, forced industrialization and collectivization, unpaid work on holidays, purges, show trials, informing and parades. This paradigm's answer to the question 'why?' is not 'they were forced to', nor 'it was their rational choice in a system of coercion and awards', but 'they were part of a discursive paradigm which made these practices meaningful and desirable, and few had access to competing discourses'.

A similar concern with 'participation' has spurred the investigations of mass dictatorship in this volume, investigations that share an interest in the participatory individual: how did he express himself, what linguistic and ideological repertoires did she have access to, how were these expressions put to use, what interpretations were made? In visual and textual art, traces of individual responses to mass dictatorship appear particularly pronounced: here the inquisitive mind of the artist draws on subjective experience to probe a deeper understanding of situations and circumstances where 'objective' scholarship appears to falter or simply leaves too many questions unanswered. This pertains particularly to the question of trauma: how can we possibly understand and communicate knowledge of atrocities so adverse to human mind that it causes memory failure? This epistemological question is one that has haunted writers of fiction and scholarship alike and one that the contributors to this volume elaborate upon by analysing a number of fictional and autobiographical texts. Employing a broad range of methodologies, they include in-depth readings of single works (in the contributions by Anders Ohlsson, Karin Sarsenov, Mats Jönsson, Seonjoo Park, Bibi Jonsson, Shin Hyung-Ki and Michael Schoenhals), as well as literary surveys based on topic (Karin Nykvist and Kerstin Bergman), reception studies (Anamaria Dutceac Segesten and Björn Larsson) and journalism studies (Jimmy Vulovic).

In the first section of the volume, the contributors explore contrasting examples of how testimonies of dissent against twentieth-century mass dictatorships are constructed, received and mediated by public agents in the twenty-first century. Karin Sarsenov analyses a contemporary Russian television documentary featuring Lilianna Lungina, member of the dissenting cultural intelligentsia, whose narrative about life under Stalin's mass dictatorship is ruthlessly explicit about the moral breakdown and physical suffering she herself witnessed and endured. Somewhat paradoxically, however, Lungina modulates her narrative to speak for reconciliation. Hers is a tale of a life in happiness, making the message 'life has become better, life has become merrier', eerily familiar from Stalinist

discourse, resound in her narrative. Then there is the Nobel Prize winner Hertha Müller, an uncompromising critic of Romanian state-sponsored terror, who never misses an opportunity to remind the Romanian public of its complicity in the outrages of the Ceausescu regime. Not surprisingly, the result of Anamaria Dutceac Segesten's press survey shows that the reception of Hertha Müller's work in Romania has been highly ambiguous, while Lilianna Lungina's works endeared her both to a wide Russian audience and to the media and government establishment. These two cases, one from Russia and one from Romania, illustrate how two actors on the wider cultural stage, sharing the social disadvantage of being women and representatives of minority ethnic groups (Jewish and German, respectively), evoke radically different responses in their respective native audiences, ranging from all embracing love and admiration to barely concealed suspicion. A comparison between two media events indicates that the social position and discursive strategies employed by a social agent seeking to communicate an experience of mass dictatorship are as important as the experience itself.

In the volume's second section, the contributions investigate how literary texts have employed the child as a mediator of mass dictatorship experiences. As Karin Nykvist shows, in fiction seeking to comprehend atrocities in early twentieth-century Europe, childhood is a recurrent theme. It becomes a potent symbol connoting the innocence and purity that was in such a short supply at the time, as well as widespread perceptions of vulnerability and weakness. The contributors to this section explore the manifold ways in which the child narrator aids the author in the mission to achieve *authenticity* when describing a subject that is widely presumed to transcend any possibility of representation. While the authors of most of the literary works investigated put their child narrator in the position of victimhood, the novel *Ulrike and the War*, examined by Bibi Jonsson, makes a notable exception: in it, the narrator is an ardent Nazi supporter, whose coming of age coincides with the rise and fall of German mass dictatorship. The contributions to this section all prompt reflection on the explosion of desire generated by mass mobilization as well as on the countless 'small steps' of complicity that were taken (be it inadvertently or unintentionally) motivated by unconscious petty feelings of fear or a will to adjust, as highlighted in Anders Ohlsson's innovative reading of Imre Kertész *Fatelessness*.

In the third section, the question of authenticity is dealt with in greater detail: what does the category of *truth* mean in relation to mass dictatorships? Who has the right to claim to be speaking truthfully, and how is such a right acquired? The element of inventedness, present in all

modern fiction, presents a problem when dealing with the experience of mass dictatorship atrocities. The very idea of applying such a frivolous activity as fantasizing to the subject of gas chambers and concentration camps provokes widespread resistance, as manifest in the great scandals provoked by fraudulent autobiographies, for instance the one authored by Binjamin Wilkomirski. Björn Larsson engages with the debacle over literature and the Holocaust as incompatible notions by questioning the possibility of posing limits for the artistic mind, arguing instead for the key concept of freedom. The same idea is developed in more detail, with respect to post-mass dictatorship and globalization literature, in Seonjoo Park's contribution. It explores 'a way out' made up of spaces not inhabited by disciplinary powers or confinement, and articulates it as 'imagination'. It understands imagination not in the romantic sense of the word but as a profoundly mediated faculty, and seeks to shift the reader's focus from imagination per se to the different ways in which it is negotiated and translated.

The notion of mediation is also central to the next two contributions to this section, albeit mediation as a threat to authenticity rather than as an inevitable feature of creative activity. Mats Jönsson explores how digitized audio-visual representations of twentieth-century mass dictatorships are posed to (re)shape our 'memory' and 'knowledge' of history. Analysing a German DVD compilation of originally silent amateur footage that portrays the 'private sphere' of World War II Germany, Jönsson directs our attention to the added soundtrack providing viewers with an aestheticized reconstruction that allows us to 'feel' curiously at home in a mass dictatorship otherwise 'known' to be decidedly alien. The question of authenticity (or its absence) is also, perhaps unexpectedly, a focus of contemporary Swedish crime fiction, as Kerstin Bergman argues. The tradition of social criticism within the genre has prompted several high-profile Swedish writers of crime novels to turn to the subject of Sweden's participation in the Nazi atrocities. Bergman is able to show how crime novels covering this subject tend to provide comfort to, rather than threaten, national self-esteem: by portraying Swedish Nazi criminals as freaks, they avoid having to invoke any structural explanations for the widespread pro-German sentiment in Sweden at the time, blaming instead the exceptional individual.

The fourth and final section marks a slight shift in the focus of analysis away from the fictional individual to the aggregate 'masses' as such. Provocatively, Shin Hyung-Ki's study of the Korean writer Yi Mun'gu's controversial 1981 short story collection *Our Neighbourhood* asks just who the presumed 'masses' are that, mobilized by fear, manage to commit the

most violent exclusion only to see in the end their own world collapse under the pressure of a modernizing mass dictatorship. In the second chapter Jimmy Vulovic probes one answer to that question – that it is the oppressed and down-trodden, ripe for a revolution – as portrayed in writings for children and by children in a Swedish communist periodical in the 1920s. In the third and final chapter in this section Michael Schoenhals shows how a rare self-documenting account in words and images by the ‘dictating masses’ from China’s Cultural Revolution manages to bring out the dark side of direct democracy and the unfettered ‘mass’ application of coercive powers devolved to ‘grass roots’ communities from and by the state.

Like the other volumes in the ‘Mass Dictatorship’ series, this volume is characterized by a wide comparative scope. It deals with mass dictatorship regimes as far apart as Nazi Germany, Park Chung-hee’s South Korea, Stalin’s Russia, post-war Hungary, Mao Zedong’s China, apartheid’s South Africa and Ceausescu’s Romania. The contributors to the volume were trained in Asia, Europe and North America. The interplay of analytical conceptions and transnational perspectives adds a new dimension to our understanding of traumatic events – ‘dark chapters’ – in twentieth-century history. By focussing the immense role of imagination within a cultural discourse otherwise dominated by irrefutable facts such as the existence of Holocaust and the Gulag, this volume explores new ways of thinking perceptively about trauma, power and self.

Notes

1. Jie-Hyun Lim, ‘Series Introduction: Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship’, in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone (eds) *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1–22.
2. Astrid Hedin, ‘Stalinism As a Civilization: New Perspectives on Communist Regimes’, *Political Studies Review* 2 (2) (2004), pp. 166–184.

1

The Constitution of a Reliable Self: *Word for Word* by Oleg Dorman and Lilianna Lungina

Karin Sarsenov

In July 2009, Oleg Dorman's eight-hour documentary *Word for Word* was broadcast in five episodes on prime-time Russian television. Lilianna Lungina (1920–1998), a translator and a witness to the purges of the Stalin period, tells her life story in front of the camera. There is no dramatization, only Lungina talking and occasional pictorial illustrations accompanying the narrative. The screening was a most unexpected success, and a book containing Lungina's narrative soon became a bestseller. This achievement is perplexing in several ways. What in this plain and unobtrusive film managed to spellbind the Russian television audience, sated as it is with glamour and sensation? How come a simple life story that contributes little new information on the period in question became a major media event? Moreover, Lungina's narrative is permeated with episodes, referred to as truthful descriptions of actual events, but to which she obviously was not an eyewitness. How come that she willingly puts her own credibility at risk, seemingly without fear of being accused of false testimony? I will argue that the question of subjectivity is crucial to understanding the cultural signification of this autobiographical narrative, as instanced in the film and the book.¹ I will show how the narrative constructs a reliable subject position, taking recourse in normative conceptions of gendered identity.

Born of educated Jewish parents in 1920, Lilianna Lungina was a member of the early Soviet cultural intelligentsia. It had its root in pre-revolutionary informal circles, in which the political, the aesthetic and the personal were rarely separated. Barbara Walker describes the formation of such circles in her seminal book *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle*. She characterizes the bonds among the participants as 'very different from the pragmatic, self-interested, and servile bonds of networking and patronage [characterizing state administration],

better reflecting the new spirit of brotherhood. These bonds in their ideal state were egalitarian rather than hierarchical, mutually supportive rather than mutually exploitative, communal in a spiritual as opposed to an economic sense'.² In her narrative, Lilianna Lungina constructs selfhood precisely by subscribing to these ideals, and by contrasting her own relationships to the 'pragmatic, self-interested, and servile bonds' of state-administered power.

In the general atmosphere of social turbulence, rapid modernization, terror, informing and famine of the 1930s, the urge for stability, completeness and trust became acute. A portion of the educated strata, identifying with the values of the nineteenth-century intelligentsia, responded to this threat of fragmentation and deprivation of agency by staking their claim as the nation's moral elite. In his introduction to a thematic issue of *Studies of East European Thought*, devoted to the post-Soviet intelligentsia, Serguei Oushakine summarizes this stance: 'Articulating a promise of morality in an immoral society became [the intelligentsia's] main function'.³ This is the cultural setting which gave meaning to the heroic lifestyle of writers such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Nadezhda Mandelstam and created close-knit, informal groups of like-minded individuals, sustained by mutual material and emotional support. Their testimonies about state-administered atrocities were circulated secretly in typed or handwritten *samizdat* publications, but reached a broader Russian audience only in the late 1980s. Now they constitute one of the main sources of knowledge about the practices of Soviet mass dictatorship.

In these narratives, the major drama is the one played out between the individual conscience and the temptations and threats posed by representatives of the state administration. This drama required a conception of the self as more or less autonomous, a master of its own instincts and impulses. Here, the authorial persona is characterized principally by his or her oppositional stance in relation to 'the system'.⁴ However, recent research has revealed that other aspects of intelligentsia culture were as crucial for the constitution of an appropriate testimonial position. In Gulag memoirs by Evgeniia Ginzburg and Varlam Shalamov, Adi Kuntsman detects expressions of intense disgust directed at homosexual practices. In Kuntsman's interpretation, these instances indicate the importance of modest heterosexuality to the intelligentsia's identity, a marker which posits a boundary not in relation to the state, but to persons with less cultural capital, mainly the criminal inmates.⁵

In the political landscape that took shape after the disbandment of the Soviet Union, the allegedly monolithic ideological 'system' was

replaced by a field of disparate actors, competing for resources, influence and visibility. In this new setting, the services of a moral elite were no longer in demand. Yet for a short period around 1990, testimonies of the intelligentsia were instrumental in denouncing political opponents, figuring as evidence in accusations of complicity in state-administered terror. But when this potential was exhausted, society paid only scant attention to texts that were now becoming the object of official reverence, parts of a state-sponsored master narrative about the suffering of the Russian people.

It was a big surprise, therefore, when Oleg Dorman's film *Word for Word* (in Russian *Podstrochnik*) received prime-time airing on the commercial TV channel Rossiia. Moreover, its popular reception is all the more astonishing given Lungina's Jewish background, a fact which is accentuated in her narrative and also by her diction. In the preface to Dorman's book, the journalist Leonid Parfenov echoes the producers' initial response to the synopsis: 'You could imagine how the broad popular masses would react to the teachings of an old Jewess', alluding to the spread of anti-Semitic sentiments.⁶

The decision to air *Word for Word* created a stir among the media. Reviews were published in print media such as *Izvestia*, *Ogonek* and *Nezavisimaja gazeta*, as well as in a large number of Internet publications, including on billboards and blogs. The radio station Echo of Moscow was especially active in promoting the film, by recommending it to listeners as well as devoting two shows to its discussion.⁷ The general reaction among viewers can be summarized as: 'I started to watch by chance, but then my eyes were glued to the screen, I couldn't leave the room'. According to information provided by Echo of Moscow, the ratings were not extraordinary in terms of the numbers viewing; but in the five specific time slots the film was broadcast, Rossiia's share of the audience outstripped all other channels.⁸

Its popularity did not stop with the airing of the film. It was pirated by file-sharing sites, being downloaded by tens of thousands of people. In late autumn 2009, a book entitled *Word for Word. The Life of Lilianna Lungina, Told by Herself in Oleg Dorman's Film* was published; it sold out immediately. The book consists of Lungina's narrative as it is recorded in the film, and provides extra material that was not included. The book was one of the main attractions at the Non/Fiction Book Fair in Moscow in December 2009, and both Moscow State University and the prestigious Polytechnic Museum arranged presentations of the book. According to the publishing house, the total number of copies printed by May 2010 reached 55,000, which accorded it bestseller status in

Russia. In March 2010, the film was granted the national film award 'Nika' for 'creative achievements in art television cinematography'. In September 2010, the director Oleg Dorman created a minor scandal by declining a 'TEFI', the Russian equivalent of an Emmy award, protesting against the hypocritical film establishment that initially refused to fund the production of the film.

The reasons for this phenomenal success are many. Lilianna Lungina was not just any translator; she had translated works by Heinrich Böll, Boris Vian, August Strindberg and Astrid Lindgren. She is perhaps most famous for her ingenious interpretation of *Karlsson-on-the-Roof*, a classic of Soviet children's literature.⁹ Moreover, she was the wife of the well-known script writer Semen Lungin and the mother of the even more renowned film director Pavel Lungin. Oleg Dorman was an apprentice of her husband.

She was not a public dissident and was not victimized during Stalin's purges. Her father was a high-ranking Soviet official, who most definitely would have been targeted in the Great Terror of 1937–1938 had he not been terminally ill at the time. This spared her from the stigma of being related to an 'enemy of the people' and from the concomitant expulsion from higher education. Instead, she was able to graduate at the elite liberal arts college MIFLI. She wrote reviews for the newspaper *Moscow Komsomolets* and was never expelled from the translator's section of the Writer's Union, although she had great difficulties in being admitted, due to her Jewish ethnicity.

However, she participated actively in writers' and artists' circles that were critical of the regime. After her death in 1998, a large portion of the contemporary cultural elite, spiritual heirs of these circles, became engaged in the promotion of the film and the book.¹⁰ The decision to broadcast Dorman's film on the TV station Rossiia was taken partly by the channel's general producer, Sergei Shumakov, who was also the general producer of Pavel Lungin's 2006 film *The Island (Ostrov)*. Nevertheless, it took twelve years before the film was released; it was shot in 1997 but a lack of funding delayed its completion.

Efficient networking and handling of the media are undoubtedly important when explaining the great impact of Oleg Dorman's film and book. However, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, I believe that intratextual features are also crucial in this respect. Indications that support this hypothesis are many: reviews and comments pay tribute to Lungina's proficiency as a storyteller, her use of the Russian language is praised, and most importantly, very few question the veracity of her story, although she often does not support her 'facts' with any evidence

at all. The object of this chapter is to illuminate the various narrative strategies used in this multi-voiced work, one that generated a massive response among hundreds of thousands of viewers and readers. It further aims at studying subjectivity, the construction of the narrative self and, specifically, how a reliable self is constituted in the narrative.

Subjectivity

In Soviet history, the period of Joseph Stalin's dictatorship exemplified an especially violent type of subjectivity formation. The ideological pressure exerted on the population has prompted a view of Soviet subjectivity as separated into a silent, private core identity on the one hand and a hypocritical exterior, a mask put on for the sake of survival, on the other. This view has been contested due to its simplistic division between two distinct spheres. The historian Oleg Kharkhordin highlights dissimulation as a central practice, not as one shielding a pre-given, private identity, but rather one constituting such an identity.¹¹ The linguist Revekka Frumkina has pointed to the importance of the level of education in this respect: a barely literate population, in the initial stages of forced industrialization, did not have access, she maintains, to any other language than the one created by Soviet propaganda to understand their rapidly changing reality. When articulating their selves, the concepts imposed by the foundational text *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course* were often the only tools available to organize their narrative.¹²

If taken to their extremes, both views are rather disconcerting. Kharkhordin proposes to see Soviet subjectivity as totally dependent on the need to conform to political power – eliminate political power, and the private identity will disappear as well. Frumkina observes a similar absence – eliminate political language, and the Soviet self can no longer be articulated. However, in a softer interpretation, subjectivity is understood as expressed in a range of historically and socially determined repertoires, the number of which at this particular point in history proved, for many people, to be unusually limited.

Lungina's narrative and Dorman's framing of it are constructed as forceful articulations of Lungina's uniqueness in this respect. The very title *Word for Word* (translation from Russian) draws attention to her capacity of code switching, that is, her mastery of a large number of repertoires. Contrary to many of her compatriots, she profited from linguistic, educational, emotional and material resources that equipped her for battle with the violent processes of Soviet subject formation. In her

narrative, she describes how she uses these resources to preserve moral coherence, and then employs the authority derived from this account to infuse fresh life into the myths and stories that glued together her own social environment.

The first shots in the film – stills from Lungina's funeral, accompanied by voiced-over eulogies in French, Swedish, German and Russian – posit Lungina's international importance as the point of departure. Lungina's embeddedness in the broader context of European culture is further enhanced by the introductory passage of her narration. Here, she enumerates the different national variants of her first name – Lilianna – during her childhood, spent variously in Berlin, Paris and Tel Aviv. Every name is attached to a specific language identity, her own experience of feeling Russian, German, French and Jewish. This experience functions as a framing device, indicating her ability to assess Soviet reality more discerningly than others, which she spells out later in the narrative: 'It was the supply of, well, free-thinking, maybe, freedom of thought that I received in my childhood abroad – that's what snapped into action'.¹³

After commenting on her name, Lungina turns to the question of subjectivity explicitly. She indicates the exact moment when she experienced herself to be a separate individual: 'I have a photograph, where I sit on my father's knees – this very moment is caught on it. I loved my father very much, he spoiled me, and before this moment I felt myself fused with him and the whole world, but now, suddenly I somehow set myself off against my father and everything around. I think that this was the moment when I became conscious of myself as an individual, as a personality'.¹⁴ Here, she reports the experience described by Jacques Lacan as the 'mirror-stage' in subjectivity formation – the symbiotic relationship between the infant and its surrounding is suddenly disrupted when an ideal image (here: the father) assists the infant in perceiving itself as a wholeness, despite the scattered perception of the body.

Next, she documents her entrance into the social, the realm of the Symbolic: 'From this minute, as soon as I became conscious of myself as in opposition to this world, it started to exert influence on me. And what was given to me by birth began to undergo changes, processing, polishing – influence from the external world, the immense life that surrounded me'.¹⁵ This experience of being part of the social also constitutes her justification for venturing into the genre of autobiography, so contested in Russian cultural history:¹⁶ 'Therefore I thought that, when I narrated my life, I wouldn't speak about myself, not so much about myself ... But about myself as an organism that has sucked in, absorbed elements of the external life, the complicated, very contradictory life of

this world around us – maybe, it would be worth trying. Because then it turns out to be the experience of that immense life, that has been passed through me, that is, something objective'.¹⁷

Thus, she starts out by documenting her successful transition into the realm of the Symbolic, assuring her audience of the non-neurotic quality of her personality. This transition grants the status of objectivity to her narrative, and divorces her from the notion of the totalitarian subject which desires a loss of selfhood.¹⁸ She constitutes the authorial persona by switching between an emphasis on her participation in her social environment and pointing out moments of sharp opposition to other persons and groups. She states her ability to do both: to 'absorb the elements of external life', that is, to function as an object of subjectivization processes and to master the varying Soviet repertoires for her own ends, emphasizing her individual agency. In doing so, she stakes a claim to a Soviet identity which is not marked by the internal absence observed by Kharkhordin and Frumkina, an identity not dependent on the relationship to Soviet power for its existence.

She is not immune to the temptations of her time, however, and she devotes considerable space to her own participation in the practices of mass dictatorships. Describing her school years in Germany, she says: 'As a matter of fact, at that moment I wanted to be like everybody, live like everybody else, to fuse with those around me',¹⁹ alluding to the metalanguage of totalitarianism. She experiences the same yearning after having moved to the Soviet Union in the beginning of the 1930s, but now merging with the others proves more difficult: 'I very much wanted to be like everybody else. Generally speaking, the desire to be like everybody else, to be together, and the realization coming very quickly that this was impossible, because I had imbibed other conceptions and ideas, made my school years difficult'.²⁰ Her urge to be integrated among the masses remained, however, and it is mentioned as the reason for her membership in the Communist youth organization.²¹ Her subsequent expulsion from this organization, due to her support for members accused of not informing on their parents, marks a turning point in her political upbringing: 'this was, in my view, the definitive and culminating moment in my total rejection of this system'.²²

Although she acknowledges the contradictory and ambiguous quality of people she knew, she perceives them as essential, predetermined selves, existing autonomously, with stable and temporary characteristics. She also applies a normative perspective to this matter: the more autonomous and essential, the better. For instance, when describing the writer Viktor Nekrasov, she focuses on the impenetrability of his personality: 'So, the

only one I knew, whose personality was not affected, who was free from these deformities – it was Vika [Viktor] Nekrasov'.²³ In her portrayal of her husband, the assumption of a prediscursive subjectivity is even more evident: 'I think that Sima really went through this difficult time unstained, without a hitch, through all this official life – to the extent he was forced to be in touch with it. Not making any compromises. Even – how should I say? – not from moral considerations rather, but due to the organics of his essence. Such was his nature, that's how I would express it'.²⁴

Impenetrability does not imply solitude or seclusion, however. Lungina repeatedly describes the intense social life in which she was enmeshed for the greater part of her life, and presents her ability to form permanent, mutually gratifying relationships as one of her most important qualities. Her networking skills were part of her intelligentsia habitus, described by Walker as the spirit of *communitas* – the moulding of egalitarian, intimate communities, using 'gossip, storytelling, and mythmaking' to fuel visions of an alternative order.²⁵ When describing her school years, she recycles the organic metaphors used in connection with her husband: 'All these boys and girls would grind against each other and sort of sprouted into each other with their personalities, their spiritual values'.²⁶

However, this 'sprouting' into each other did not threaten the autonomy of the individual: 'Here, perhaps, every person was a bright individuality, carrying something completely original'.²⁷ Her aptitude for constant exchange with her peers is also the motif of one of her confessions: her indulgence in social life during her teens made her neglect her father's need for emotional support during the last period of his life; here she speaks of her 'emotional stupidity'.²⁸ But it is also obvious from her narrative that her social talent, and that of her mother, was the main reason behind the achievements of her life – be it pure survival or access to Silver Age poetry in Maximilian Voloshin's 'House of the Poet' in Koktebel.

The dissident ethos, as expressed in Solzhenitsyn's catch phrase 'live not by lies' and represented in his oeuvre as a rather lonely, heroic pursuit, is given a new rendering in Lungina's narrative. Like Solzhenitsyn, she stresses the importance of an essential core identity – strong enough to avoid falling prey to fear or the temptation of totalitarianism. However, her narrative construction of the self is deeply intersubjective: the self is understood only in relation to others, and it follows that only the self that is nurtured in egalitarian, affective relations can escape deformities afflicted by the 'system'. She focuses on the joys of communal resistance,

the intellectual, emotional and social benefits of being united by a common enemy, the playfulness of their everyday life. As the main evidence of her own moral coherence she presents the fact that once she had befriended someone, this person often stayed close to her for the rest of her life.²⁹ This fact not only speaks for her discriminatory powers, but it also indicates that she was not inclined to sacrifice the interests of others in order to promote her own projects. Here, she implicitly contrasts herself with Solzhenitsyn, who, according to her, 'didn't see the people whom he addressed. He didn't speak – he preached'.³⁰

Paradoxically, in Lungina's narrative, subjectivization is understood in a manner similar to the one prevailing within the Party, as described by Oleg Kharkhordin. Records from the purges show that within the Party, the self was perceived as defined not by the individual but by the relevant community, as for instance the local party committee, who would discuss the wording of a member's letter of reference (*kharakteristika*) collectively. In Lungina's case, this relevant community was her intelligentsia circles, whose moral judgment was crucial for self-perception.³¹ But if the Party used ritualized, bureaucratic techniques in this procedure, Lungina describes the subjectivization process within the cultural intelligentsia as a spontaneous practice, as acts of resistance in response to the constant threat of deprivation and incarceration. Using organic metaphors, she stresses the vitality of the social formations to which she contributed, and juxtaposes them with the dead forms of official organization.

Reliability

The prevalence of 'gossip, storytelling, and mythmaking' in intelligentsia circles, noted by Barbara Walker above, is reflected in Lungina's narrative. It is permeated with episodes that are referred to as truthful descriptions of actual events, but to which she obviously was not an eyewitness. Sometimes the source of knowledge is reported, but more often it is not. From a factual point of view, such information obviously amounts to gossip, but, as Walker argues, the factual framework does not do full justice to this phenomenon.³² Pieces of gossip, or *anekdoty*, played a crucial role in intelligentsia oral culture, serving as a lubricator when forming alliances and building networks.³³

Nadezhda Mandelstam's documentary prose, circulated in *samizdat* editions during the 1960s, is a major frame of reference here. In her overall mission to have the life and views of her persecuted husband, the poet Osip Mandelstam, committed to the archives of history, she

moves freely between the positions of objective historian, teller of instructive tales and subjective party in the struggle for the preferential right of interpreting intelligentsia life in general, Mandelstam's heritage in particular.³⁴ This sliding between incompatible positions is also very much a characteristic of Lungina's narrative. Mandelstam's memoirs abound with *anektdoty*, overheard or experienced, one of which actually reappears in Lungina's narrative.³⁵

Lungina's *anektdoty* are sometimes innocent, as when she gives a detailed account of ordinary people's behaviour during one of the rare occasions Stalin appeared in front of the masses; she ends with the remark that she never attended these events.³⁶ On other occasions, however, the lack of hard evidence opens up room for charges of defamation. For instance, Lungina accuses the legendary puppeteer Sergei Obraztsov of having ruined the career of his and her mother's mentor, Ivan Efimov, evidently relying only on her mother's testimony.³⁷ She even contests other people's autobiographical accounts of events which they in fact witnessed, while she did not. The wife of dissident Lev Kopolev, Raia Orlova is accused of having informed on the historian Georgii Knabe, preventing his admission to Party membership and causing his dismissal from a highly prestigious position at the *Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries*.³⁸ She mentions that Orlova presents an alternative version of the story in her published autobiography, but does not provide any evidence that would make her version more reliable than Orlova's.

She also devotes a lot of room to events and circumstances that are already well known, for instance, the Party campaign against the poet Anna Akhmatova and satirist Mikhail Zoshchenko, initiated by Andrei Zhdanov in 1946. Here, she adds details that underscore the horror of the situation – that Zoshchenko, out of poverty, was forced to let his room to transiting railway passengers, that his face turned pale when desperately responding to the accusation during the Leningrad Writers' Union session and so on. Lungina cannot possibly have witnessed these events, as she was not a member of the Union at that time. Nevertheless, she expects to be trusted, and has deemed these events as more important to talk about than others which she herself had experienced.

Another rhetorical strategy she employs is to take recourse to fictional works in order to anchor her statements. Her description of people's infatuation with Stalin is underpinned by references to novels by Ilya Ehrenburg, Vasily Grossman and Konstantin Paustovsky.³⁹ The appearance of anti-Semitism in the Russian army during the war is reported

first as evidenced by an officer friend, and then, as a confirmation of his testimony, by referring to Grossman's novel *Life and Fate*.⁴⁰ When talking about Victory Day 1945, she notes: 'Andrei Smirnov showed this very well in [his film] "The Byelorussian Station" [1970], this explosion of popular life. I cannot add anything individual to that'.⁴¹ Her own experience of this historical event evidently counts less, in her view. Paradoxically, while engaging in the genre of autobiography with its inherent claims to factuality, Lungina posits fiction as more important than her own eyewitness observations.

The narrative contains obvious lacunae. From the end of the war until 1960 when she started translating, there is little mention of her professional activities. A part-time appointment as an instructor of French is the only reference to her having had a job. How the family with one child and a housekeeper survived, taking into account that Pavel Lungin's first well-paid scenario was written at the end of the 1950s, remains a mystery. Lungina is also conspicuously silent about her father's professional activities. She mentions his positions – head of the municipal department of people's education in Smolensk in 1919, deputy minister of education from 1921 and deputy plenipotentiary in Berlin from 1925. He obviously participated actively in building the very 'system' Lungina resisted all her life. In contrast to the liberal writer Iurii Trifonov, who had a similar parentage, Lungina did not conduct any research into her father's role in the abuses of human rights perpetrated by the Party elite.⁴²

Another blank spot is in her depiction of social classes. Lungina mentions and portrays people from the cultural elite, representatives of state power and so-called 'simple people' – the housekeeper's relatives, street cleaners and milk maids – but there are no portraits of the Soviet equivalent to the 'petty bourgeoisie': the willful, entrepreneurial class with outspoken materialist values who populated the black market and the service institutions providing comfort for the *nomenklatura*. This social stratum is the one historically most despised by the intelligentsia and one that has gained prominence in post-Soviet Russia.⁴³ Lungina mentions its existence, but does not allow herself any irony on behalf of its representatives.⁴⁴ The social tensions have only increased since the Soviet period, and the stratum of educated, idealistically oriented people to which Lungina belonged has definitively lost much of its prestige vis-à-vis the entrepreneurs. The absence of any trace of these tensions in her narrative is significant, and the circumventing strategy may very well have added to the work's popularity. The whining voice of the disinherited intelligentsia does not impress audiences today.

On other matters, too, Lungina's narrative provokes a series of attendant questions. Viktor Nekrasov figures as a major moral signpost, embodying essential freedom (cf. quotation above). Nevertheless, Lungina mentions that at one point he became an alcoholic due to his obsession with staying young and therefore adhering to adolescent binge-drinking habits.⁴⁵ Alcoholism is a state that often severely affects the individual's moral upkeep – the overwhelming craving for drink overshadows all other pursuits and obligations. These two contradictory aspects of Nekrasov's personality are never reconciled in Lungina's narrative, lending implicit support to the romantic myth of the alcoholic male artist, exemplified for instance by the poets Alexander Blok, Sergei Esenin and Vladimir Vysotsky.⁴⁶

In spite of Lungina's initial claims to objectivity, her narrative definitively leaves much to be desired from a historical, factual point of view. How come, then, that she chooses to build her story on such precarious evidence? Well, to put it simply – because she expects to be trusted anyway. The narrative is scrupulously constructed in such a manner so as to convince the audience of Lungina's trustworthiness. Her distancing from totalitarian subjectivity, the evidence of her non-neurotic entrance into the social realm, the intersubjective construction of the self, the view of the self as constituted by the relevant community and her documentation of her own resistance to Soviet subjectivization processes – all are part of this rhetorical strategy.

In her testimony, Lungina states her ambition to be completely honest, and allows herself a number of confessions, admitting to actions or passivity that she now considers shameful.⁴⁷ These incidents are, however, contrasted against an overwhelming number of episodes, in which Lungina comes out as morally irreproachable. The principal event is her interrogation by the *Narodny Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del* NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) in 1939. Despite being convinced that she would be incarcerated, she refuses the offer to become an informer at her college. Accordingly, by admitting to minor shortcomings, and tallying them with evidence of undisputable moral heroism, she both enhances her credibility and avoids accusations of self-elevation.

She also conforms to the intelligentsia's normative conception of modest heterosexuality, which is crucial for constituting a reliable testimonial position.⁴⁸ Lungina omits any explicit mention of sexuality. She points out that 'in those times, love [between teenagers] did not go any further than kisses' and that she considered herself a 'girl of strict principles'.⁴⁹ Using the word *devochka* (little girl) instead of the expected *devushka* (teenage girl, maiden) to describe herself, then a woman of

twenty-seven, she suggests that she had had no sexual experience before meeting her future husband. A playful smile when admitting to having stayed the night at Semen Lungin's apartment on their second encounter is as explicit as she ever gets when talking about intimacy.

A final addition to her credibility is her alignment with the position of that of the dutiful widow, as discussed by Helena Goscilo and Beth Holmgren.⁵⁰ They show that in Russian culture, the widow of a renowned artist constitutes a separate position in the field of the arts. The widow is expected to devote herself to preserving and promoting her late husband's memory, and certainly is not supposed to remarry. Lungina states the great influence that Maximilian Voloshin's widow, Maria Stepanovna, exerted on her and her function as a role model during her teens. Maria Stepanovna is one of Russian literature's most notable widows, who was able to revive the memory of her controversial husband after the death of Stalin.⁵¹ Lungina's autobiographical act is far from a self-effacing affirmation of her husband's genius, but she expresses regret that she failed her wifely duties in not writing down his thoughts, not preserving the scribbled notes he left behind.⁵² She speaks at length about his talent, moral impeccability, sense of humour and artistry. One of the film's most striking moments is when she talks about her marriage. She describes being surrounded by 'a cloud of inconceivable love', which saved her from the harshness of life, of taking part in a constant play that 'when added to our cruel, merciless life, created a special existential – using a scholarly word – feeling of exceptional fulfillment'.⁵³

Having in such a way cast herself as a trustworthy witness, she obviates the need for any archival evidence or critical relationship to her sources. She selects events and persons on the basis of how they contribute to the overarching intentions of her narrative, not on what she actually witnessed or could prove in court. The communicative situation also contributes to a relaxed attitude: Oleg Dorman, the director, who was also a close, trusted friend of Lungina, was seated directly in front of her, out of view of the camera, during the shooting of the film; he therefore figured as her primary addressee. Their relationship – one of mutual confidence and respect – is expanded to include the audience as well, adding to the special sense of magnetism, as was noted in viewers' reception of the film.⁵⁴

What then are her overarching intentions? Conveniently enough, she spells out one of them in the first chapter: 'Most of all I would like to communicate that you have to hope and believe that even very bad situations can be turned around and lead to good. I will show that in

my life, and in my life with Sima [Semen], many misfortunes turned into incredible, amazing happiness, resplendence'.⁵⁵ This rather simple morale is a recurrent theme in her narrative, reminding us of this message in connection to every illustrative episode.

Another more or less explicit intention is the project, characteristic of the autobiographical genre as a whole, of bearing witness, immortalizing and committing to memory, all for the benefit of future generations. She recurrently addresses the contemporary youth: 'And if the contemporary youth will hear me some day, I consider it useful to remind you of the absurdity of that life' (talking about how pupils were expelled from Kosmomol for not having informed on their parents); 'I would like to communicate this to the young ... The feeling of fear' (talking about witnessing the arrest of a neighbour); 'I want to speak about this, so that people who forgot will remember, and those who don't know, the young, find out: there was a plan on the number of people to arrest' (upon finding out the extent of Stalinist terror when evacuated to Tatarstan during the war).⁵⁶

This preference for explicitness in metaliterary matters also applies to other textual devices. Her professed intention to convey the 'marvellous happiness' of her and Semen Lungin's life provides a strong indication of her own literary method: when writing about a traumatic, poor and destructive period of Russian history, she concentrates on the joys that she was able to extract from her Soviet experience. This method is also described and attributed to Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*: 'I think that the pledge of the great artistic merit of "Ivan Denisovich" is that Solzhenitsyn picked a lucky day'.⁵⁷ This way of writing is undoubtedly effective and is often referred to by reviewers as the main reason for the work's attractiveness.

One of the most remarkable and perhaps ambiguous applications of this method could be found in her description of pre-war Moscow. She tells of waking up to the sound of street cleaners chopping ice: 'And this sound of scraping, chopping off ice accompanied the beginning of the day. It was very poetic. I would define it as the sound of patriarchal Moscow that would then disappear completely. During the day, when we returned from school, the street cleaners would shovel up this ice in heaps and take it on sledges into the backyards, where they would melt the ice in cauldrons, and the streets were always clean'.⁵⁸ The idyll of this pastoral scenery is augmented by her use of the diminutive: 'little heaps', 'little sledges'. Instead of focusing on the hardships of the people having to perform such monotonous and strenuous work, she emphasizes the result – clean streets – and the beauty of the sound it created.

Here, the text approaches the 'literary method' of Stalinism itself, with its emphasis on the joyful, as was expressed in the 1935 catchphrase 'life has become better, life has become merrier'. Even though Lungina's primary objective is to denounce the atrocities of Stalinism, and while she explicitly comments on this very campaign of joyfulness, her own focus on the joys of life in the Soviet Union definitively makes her narrative politically less controversial to the contemporary establishment.⁵⁹

When depicting her years in an experimental secondary school, she makes a sudden leap in time, recalling how she recently brought together some of her former schoolmates.⁶⁰ In order to 'get the most out of the event', she encouraged them to identify their most worthy and unworthy deed. This episode, which at first glance only serves to underscore the close and trusting relationships formed in her class, also functions as a key to the structuring principle of her narrative. It is the deeds, and their ethical value, that often constitute the knots of the narrative thread. For instance, in her description of Victory Day, she picks out the moment when the German POWs marched through Moscow, where she observed elderly women stepping forward, offering the German soldiers bread – this during a period of severe food shortages.⁶¹ This and similar worthy deeds, performed by herself and others, are interpolated with less worthy deeds, such as informing, writing bad reviews, failing to sign a protest appeal for fear of not being granted a passport and so on. Structuring her narrative in this way, she constructs a consistent ethical position, simultaneously reporting her own failure to correspond to it.

Lungina is deeply sensitive to the power of literary devices to structure our impressions and convey abundance of meaning. She saturates her images with a maximum of signification. While an evacuee in Tatarstan, for instance, she lived close to a city prison.⁶² By adding historical detail – the prison was a stopover on the old route that shackled prisoners under imperial Russia followed to Siberia – she connects the sight of contemporary prisoners, on the same road to Siberia, to the history of state-administered abuse in Russia. Another example of literary inventiveness is when she illustrates the overwhelming, ubiquitous fear during the purges with a practical joke. In this incidence, a friend of hers fakes her own arrest in order to test if Lungina would take care of her sister. Lungina passes this test, but is not able to talk to her friend for a while.⁶³ Instead of simply stating that everybody was afraid, Lungina stages a dramatic episode that demands the reader's active interpretation, and in so doing, she conveys the depth of her feeling more profoundly.

Conclusion

In Russia today, to speak about a life of resistance to Soviet power is a perilous undertaking. The ascetic lifestyle of a highly educated elite, obsessed with ethical questions, arouses little interest in contemporary culture, marked as it is by consumerism and entertainment. The provincial, closed space of *samizdat* culture does not attract today's wired audience, for whom the political allusions are no longer intelligible. Some of those who challenged the Soviet restrictions on public expression have meanwhile been thoroughly discredited upon discovery that their views – which they were not allowed to voice during the Soviet period – were highly contestable, sometimes deeply chauvinist (cf. Valentin Rasputin, Eduard Limonov).

What then have Dorman and Lungina done to overcome these obstacles? First, the film construes Lungina as both essentially peripheral – accentuating her Jewishness, her childhood spent abroad – and simultaneously belonging to the centre: as the translator of *Karlsson-on-the-Roof* she epitomizes Soviet children's culture at its best; she adheres diligently to the convention of the intelligentsia memoir and to normative conceptions of femininity, identifying herself primarily as a wife and a mother. This clash between the alien and the well known proves dramatically efficient.

Second, the fact that Lungina makes only minor claims to the position of heroic victim of Stalinism is equally important: she suffered the same deprivations as everybody else, and readily admits that she was unusually lucky in many ways. In comparison with other more high-profile antagonists of Stalinism, such as Solzhenitsyn and Mandelstam, whose extreme resilience marks them out as exceptional, Lungina is an easier object of identification for a contemporary Russian audience.

Third, Lungina's insistence on the existence of an essential core identity, and her demonstration of the many repertoires that can be used for its manifestation, provide solace to an audience having experienced the loss of its Soviet repertoire, and struggled to replace it with something else.

Fourth, the film medium has recreated that special feeling of the close, intelligentsia circle, where money meant less while relationships and moral stamina meant everything. In contemporary Russia, everyday corruption is as overwhelming as during the late Soviet period, but now there is no uncontested moral elite to act as a counter. The audience's identification with the 'cosy' atmosphere in Lungina's study might indicate the need for this lacuna to be filled.

Fifth, Lungina devotes her narrative primarily to gossip, stories and myth, rather than hard facts, while simultaneously constructing

a position of undisputable moral authority, a mixture with strong affective potentials. To this is added Lungina's predilection for baring her devices, something that proves didactically efficient: it helps the viewer to keep track of structural elements during five television episodes, and for the book reader to create coherence.

Lungina describes a life spent reading and talking. Her narrative functions as an indexical sign of a literary culture, in which the reading was processed primarily in oral genres: texts were memorized by heart, read aloud and discussed among friends or with fellow inmates in prisons and camps, providing emotional and intellectual support. Lungina has produced a sophisticated and complex piece of oral literature that is at the same time ad hoc and improvisational. This speaks about a life devoted to gossip, stories and myth, which has polished her discourse into a string of literary gems, each anecdote contributing original facets to her story. The narrative may tell us little about what actually happened, but it functions as a strong indication of the desire for a sense of individual and social coherence among a contemporary Russian audience.

Notes

1. In this article, I use the term 'autobiography' in its most liberal sense, encompassing a wide range of documentary and fictional accounts that in one way or another have their author as their topic. In many ways, Lungina's narrative conforms to the subgenre of the memoir, in Russian *vospominanii*.
2. Barbara Walker, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle: Culture and Survival in Revolutionary Times* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 8f. I am indebted to Barbara Walker for her comments on a draft version of this chapter.
3. Serguei Oushakine, 'Introduction: Wither the Intelligentsia: The End of the Moral Elite in Eastern Europe', *Studies of East European Thought* 61 (4) (2009), p. 245.
4. Leona Toker, *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
5. Adi Kuntsman, "'With a Shade of Disgust": Affective Politics of Sexuality and Class in Memoirs of the Stalinist Gulag', *Slavic Review*, 2 (2009), pp. 308–328.
6. Oleg Dorman, *Podstrochnik: zhizn' Lilianny Lunginoi, rasskazannaia eiu v fil'me Olega Dormana* (*Word for Word: The Life of Lilianna Lungina*, as told by herself in the Film of Oleg Dorman) (Moskva: Astrel' Corpus, 2010), p. 6. All translations from the Russian by the author, K.S. Russian original: Мол, вы ж понимаете, как отнесутся ширнармасы к поучениям старой еврейки.
7. For more details about the reception, see Andrei Rogatchevski, 'Oleg Dorman: *Word for Word Translation* (Podstrochnik 2009)' (review), *Kinokultura* 30 (2010), at <http://www.kinokultura.com/2010/30r-podstrochnik.shtml> (accessed 16 December 2010).

8. 'Sut' sobytii' ('The meaning of Events'), Echo of Moscow, 10 July 2009. Radio programme, transcription available at <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/sut/604477-echo/> (accessed 11 May 2010).
9. In a recent article, the literary translator Natal'ia Mavlevich describes the stubbornness with which the Russian audience adheres to Lungina's translation of *Karlsson-on-the Roof* and the outrage evoked by other, more recent translations. Mavlevich considers Lungina's translation 'a fact of Russian culture'. See Natalia Mavlevich, 'Kotoryi zhe Karlson zhivet na kryshe?' ('Which Karlsson Lives on the Roof?'), *Inostrannaia literatura* 7 (2009), at <http://magazines.russ.ru/inostran/2009/7/ma18.html> (accessed 29 September 2010).
10. Notable names are the crime novelist Boris Akunin, the former Soviet dissident writer Vladimir Voinovich and the former chess champion, now oppositional political activist Garri Kasparov.
11. Oleg Kharkhordin, 'Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia', in Jeff A. Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (eds), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 349f.
12. Revekka Frumkina, 'Mysli "prostykh" liudei' ('The Thoughts of "Simple" People'), *NLO* 79 (2006), at <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2006/79/fr48-pr.html> (accessed 29 September 2010). See also TsK KPSS, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short course* (New York: International Publishers, 1939).
13. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 97f. Просто заряд, ну, вольномыслия, что ли, свободы мнений, полученный в моем заграничном детстве – вот что сработало.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 16. У меня есть фотография, где сижу у папы на коленях – вот на ней как раз и запечатлен этот момент. Я очень любила папу, он меня очень баловал, и до этой минуты я ощущала слитность с ним и со всем миром, а тут вдруг как бы противопоставила себя и папе, и всему, что было вокруг. Думаю, это было осознание себя как индивидуальности, как личности.
15. *Ibid.* А вот с этой минуты, как только я осознала себя противостоящей этому миру, он стал воздействовать на меня. И то, что во мне было заложено, постепенно начало подвергаться изменениям, обработке, шлифовке – воздействиям внешнего мира, той большой жизни, которая была вокруг меня.
16. On the particularities of Russian self-writing, see Beth Holmgren, *The Russian Memoir: History and Literature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003).
17. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 17. Поэтому я подумала, что, рассказывая свою жизнь, рассказываю не о себе, не столько о себе [...] Но вот о себе как о некоем организме, который вобрал в себя, абсорбировал элементы внешней жизни, сложной, очень противоречивой жизни этого мира вокруг – может быть, стоит попытаться. Ведь тогда получается опыт той, большой жизни, пропущенной через себя, то есть что-то объективное.
18. A most influential way of describing processes of subject formation in the early Soviet period is the one launched by Hannah Arendt, reflected in the term 'the totalitarian subject'. Interpreting Arendt, Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone emphasize the collaboration between the masses and the elites and their common celebration of loss of selfhood. They describe totalitarian selfhood as 'a combination of a transcendental desire of the

- masses and the elites to lose themselves in a higher cause and the product of a modern system that uses ideology, propaganda, and modern techniques of violence to achieve that particular form of subjectivity'. See Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone, 'Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective', *Slavic Review* 67 (4) (Winter 2008), p. 971f.
19. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 34f. Вообще, в тот момент мне хотелось быть как все, жить как все, сливаться.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 70. И мне очень хотелось быть как все. Вообще, желание быть как все, быть со всеми вместе и очень быстро пришедшее понимание, что это невозможно в силу того, что у меня есть какие-то другие, впитавшиеся в меня понятия и представления, делало мои школьные годы трудными.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
 22. *Ibid.* это было, по моему, окончательным и последним моментом в моем полном отторжении этой системы.
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 319. Так вот, единственный из всех, кого я знала, чья личность не была затронута, кто был свободен от этих деформаций – это Вика Некрасов.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 368. Я думаю, что Сима действительно через это трудное время прошел безупречно, без сучка без задорники, через всю эту официальную жизнь – в той мере, в какой был вынужден с ней соприкасаться. Не идя ни на какие компромиссы. Даже – как бы это сказать? – не из нравственных соображений скорее, а из-за какой-то органики своего существа. Натура такая – вот так бы я выразила.
 25. Walker, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle*, p. 178. Lungina describes this spirit explicitly when talking about the 1960s: 'In this oppressed Russia, under the very intent and intensified attention of the KGB, a new kind of spiritual concord between people arose, first in the capitals, then in the provinces. I think this is important, there has been little talk about this'. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 304. В этой угнетенной России, под очень пристальным, усиленным в те годы вниманием КГБ, сначала в столицах, а потом и в провинции возникло какое-то новое судружество душ людей. Это, по-моему, важно, об этом как-то мало еще говорили.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 110. Вот все эти ребята друг об друга именно шлифовались и как бы прорастали друг в друга своими личностями, своими духовными ценностями.
 27. *Ibid.* Здесь, пожалуй, каждый человек [...] был яркой индивидуальностью, нес в себе что-то совершенно своеобразное.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
 30. *Ibid.*, p. 272. Солженицын не видел людей, к которым обращался. Он не говорил – он проповедовал.
 31. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), p. 174.
 32. Barbara Walker, 'On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the "Contemporaries" Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s', *Slavic Review* 59 (3) (2000), p. 329.
 33. Barbara Walker defines *anektdoty* as 'gossipy sketches about personalities and their interactions'. See Walker, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle*, p. 19.
 34. Beth Holmgren, *Women's Works in Stalin's Time: On Lidiia Chukovskaia and Nadezhda Mandelstam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 127.

35. In Nadezhda Mandelstam's first volume of memoirs, translated into English as *Hope against Hope*, she mentions briefly the affair of a certain E, according to her 'an authentic lover of evil'. He informed on his close friend Sh, sending him to a labour camp. During Sh's sentence, E kept caring for his friend's wife, and presented Sh with flowers upon his return. See Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Vospominaniia* (New York, Izdatel'stvo imeni Chekhova, 1970), p. 40. Lungina devotes a whole chapter to this *anekdot*, providing the full names of the participants (El'sberg and Shteinberg), and indicates the sources for her information (Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, pp. 225–8). Lungina's assessment of the events is more or less equivalent to Mandelstam's.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
38. Russian abbreviation: VOKS. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 169. *Life and Fate* was written between 1950–1960, but the manuscript was confiscated by the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB) (Committee for State Security). It was published in Germany in 1980 and in the Soviet Union in 1988.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 174. Это очень хорошо в «Белорусском вокзале» Андрей Смирнов показал, этот взрыв народной жизни. Ничего индивидуального я тут не могу добавить.
42. In 1965, Yuri Trifonov published a documentary novel, *Otblesk kostra* (*The Bonfire's Reflection*), based on materials from the family archive. His father was a Bolshevik commander during the civil war, and excerpts from his diary report in uneasy detail the disregard for human life prevailing in Bolshevik ranks.
43. Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 68.
44. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 331.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 324.
46. Teresa Polowy, 'Russian Women Writing Alcoholism: The Sixties to the Present', in Ellen E. Berry (ed.), *Post-Communism and the Body Politic* (NY: New York University Press, 1995), p. 283.
47. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 298.
48. Beth Holmgren, 'For the Good Cause: Russian Women's Autobiography in the Twentieth Century', in Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene (eds), *Women Writers in Russian Literature*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 127–148.
49. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, pp. 58 and 188.
50. See Helena Goscilo, 'Widowhood as Genre and Profession á la Russe: Nation, Shadow, Curator, and Publicity Agent', in Andrea Lanoux and Helena Goscilo (eds), *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), pp. 55–74, and Holmgren, *Women's Works in Stalin's Time*.
51. In Lungina's description, Maria Stepanovna is a saintly being, devoted only to the well-being of others. Lungina's impression differs from the one Barbara Walker has extracted from her sources. Walker notes Maria Stepanovna's 'sometimes anxious, angry, and depressive temperament'. See Walker, *Maximilian Voloshin and the Russian Literary Circle*, p. 194.
52. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 365.

53. Ibid., pp. 367 and 364. И вот игра, наложенная на жестокую, беспощадную нашу жизнь, создавала какое-то совершенно особое экзистенциальное – скажем ученое слово – ощущение исключительной заполненности.
54. In interviews, Oleg Dorman underscores the fact that Lungina did not write down her narrative in advance – her tale is oral at its inception, the audience witnesses the birth of her thoughts. There was a precursor, however, as in 1990 Lungina published the autobiographical work *Les saisons de Moscou 1933–1990: Racontées à Claude Kiejman* in France. Here, she also used the services of an intermediary, who put her oral narrative in writing. The contents of the French book are by no means identical to Dorman's book, as Lungina determined the needs of the two national audiences as being utterly different. See 'Sud'ba krupnym planom: Anna Kachkaeva i rezhisser Oleg Dorman obsuzhdaiut fil'm "Podstrochnik"' ('A Close-Up of Fate: Anna Kachkaeva and the Director Oleg Dorman Discuss the Film "Word for Word") *Radio Svoboda*, 6 July 2009. Radio programme, transcript available at <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/transcript/1770976.html> (accessed 30 September 2010).
55. Dorman, *Podstrochnik*, p. 18. Больше всего мне хотелось бы передать, что нужно надеяться и верить в то, что даже очень плохие ситуации могут неожиданно обернуться совсем другой стороной и привести к хорошему. Я покажу, как в моей, а потом в нашей с Симой жизни многие беды оборачивались невероятным, удивительным счастьем, богатством.
56. Ibid., p. 95. И если меня когда-нибудь услышит нынешняя молодежь, я считаю очень полезным напомнить, до какого абсурда доходила та жизнь.; Ibid., p. 100. Мне хотелось бы передать это молодым ... Чувство страха.; Ibid., p. 154. Мне хочется об этом сказать, чтобы люди, которые забыли, вспоминали, а кто не знает, молодые, узнали: был план на аресты.
57. Ibid., p. 271. Я думаю, залог великой художественности «Ивана Денисовича» в том, что Солженицын взял счастливый день.
58. Ibid., p. 79. И вот этот звук поскребывания, откалывания льда сопровождал начало дня. Он был очень поэтичным. Я бы так определила: это был звук еще патриархальной Москвы, которая потом совсем ушла. Днем, когда мы возвращались из школы, дворники сгребали этот лед в кучки и на саночки свозили во дворы, а там стояли котлы, где топили этот лед, и улицы были всегда убраны.
59. Ibid., p. 89.
60. Ibid., p. 74.
61. Ibid., p. 175.
62. Ibid., p. 154.
63. Ibid., p. 104.

2

The Post-Communist Afterlife of Dissident Writers: The Case of Herta Müller

Anamaria Dutceac Segesten

This chapter explores the role of the dissident intellectual in the post-dictatorship era. More specifically, it looks at the reaction in the Romanian cultural press and in the daily newspapers to the awarding of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Literature to Herta Müller, a Romanian-born German writer. Müller is known for her anti-Communist stance as well as her critique of those Romanian political and intellectual elites judged too shy in distancing themselves from the Communist past. I would suggest that the ambivalent attitude of the media towards Müller's prize reflects the hesitation of both the public and elite to critically engage with the recent past. The effectiveness of Müller's intransigent attitude is also questioned. I ask more broadly, whether former anti-Communist dissidents are still in a position to mobilize interest and reaction in the aftermath of authoritarian regimes.

Of all the former Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe, Romania arguably best approximated the definition of mass dictatorship, an authoritarian regime that does not just control but also mobilizes the population for its support.¹ At the end of the 1980s, the Party had enlisted the membership of about four million people; this from a population close to 22 million. This degree of support was unsurpassed in the region. The informant network of the secret police was wide and all-encompassing, which is one of the reasons for the Securitate's reputed efficiency. The restrictions on the basic freedoms of the individual, and especially those of expression and movement, were close to total. In totalitarian fashion, Ceausescu's ambition was to command not only the obedience of Romanian citizens but also their enthusiastic support. The absence of a fully developed resistance movement opposed to the dictatorship was another factor unique to Romania – there were no Czechoslovak Charta 77s, no Polish Workers Committees, no Bulgarian-style environmental

protests. Romanian dissident voices were unable to find a small chink in the armour of the repressive system through which they could reach out and inspire normal citizens to emulate their moral opposition.

Despite all of the above, some dissenting individuals nevertheless took the risk of speaking out against the establishment. Some of them lost their lives as a result, serving as examples to scare away anyone 'foolish' enough who might have wanted to follow suit. Others were deemed undesirable by the regime and forced into exile, where they continued to speak of life under Ceausescu's dictatorship. One of those who falls in the latter category is Herta Müller, now a well-known author and Nobel laureate, who has ceaselessly brought to life in her literary work the dread, danger and constant threat of life under Communism.

The way she describes everyday life in Ceausescu's Romania is raw and powerful. The fact that she continues to take a stance on questions related to the heritage of the Communist regime is a reflection of her unwillingness to forget or compromise. Because of her novels and political engagement, Müller provokes reactions both among intellectuals and the wider public. Thus, the debate surrounding Herta Müller's work can be considered a good indicator of the relationship of Romanian society today to its recent past. Most importantly, it highlights significant questions. How do the Romanian elite deal with this voice which is too loud to be ignored and too sharp to be silenced? Who has the right to speak about the past? And is there the possibility of reconciling the victims of the Communist regime with those who served it – especially as the demarcation line between the two categories is often found within the same family or even person?

The focus of this study is two-fold. On the one hand, it examines the intellectuals' response to the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Müller through investigating some of the major publications of the Romanian literary and intellectual elite. Among the plethora of magazines and journals that exist, I have chosen those weekly publications that are best known and the most circulated. To analyse the cultural press is important because it captures the voice of the intellectuals, seen by Müller as responsible for the democratization process, but also criticized by her for their lack of moral leadership. I have, therefore, selected the following weekly publications of the cultural press: *Art Act Magazine*, *Idei in Dialog*, *Observatorul Cultural* and *Revista 22*. In the case of each magazine, I accessed its electronic content in the week following Herta Müller's winning of the Nobel Prize. I have included in this study only those magazines that published one or more articles which explicitly discussed the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Herta Müller and have

decided not to interpret the absence or the very superficial treatment of this issue in other cultural weeklies.

On the other hand, the more general reaction to the Nobel Prize awarded to Herta Müller is analysed through the inclusion of articles from the main daily newspapers (online editions) published on and around the date when the announcement was made (8 October 2009). The newspaper review helps us sketch the general context of the discussion about the past regime and the potential of dealing with a traumatic collective memory. For this purpose, I refer to the following daily newspapers: *Adevarul*, *Cotidianul*, *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Gandul*, *Jurnalul National* and *Romania Libera*. According to the *Biroul Roman de Circulatie Transmedia* (BRAT) (Romanian Circulation Audit Bureau), most of these dailies are in the top ten of the country's most read newspapers, with *Adevarul* in third position, *Jurnalul National* in fifth, *Romania Libera* in seventh, followed by *Evenimentul Zilei* and *Gandul* in ninth and tenth place, respectively.²

All of the publications included here have a national distribution and are based in Bucharest. In terms of ownership, the Romanian (daily) newspaper market is divided among six major media conglomerates, all of which (with one exception – the Swiss Ringier) are based in Romania. Of the remaining five media concerns, a recent report has identified two of the owners as having had strong connections with the former secret police (the conglomerates owning *Jurnalul National* and *Evenimentul Zilei*), with two others having been involved in possible corruption scandals.³

The weeklies are harder to analyse in a comparative fashion, as BRAT does not include statistical information about these publications. *Revista 22* is owned by one of Romania's first NGOs, the Group for Social Dialogue (GDS), which has been one of the most active participants in the public debate about the way Communism is (or should be) remembered. According to its own description, GDS was started by 'dissidents and intellectuals uncompromised by the Communist regime'.⁴ *Ideii in dialog* was a weekly magazine published by a leading public personality, Horia Radu Patapievic, also known for his anti-Communist stance. The publication ceased to exist in 2010, because of its weak financial situation. *Observatorul Cultural*, meanwhile, is the private initiative of George Musat, and has among its editorial committee some of the liberal intellectuals who also write for *Revista 22*. *Art Act Magazine* is the newest cultural publication and is connected to the theatre company Art Act, sharing some of its contributors with *Observatorul Cultural*. This serves as proof of the small size of the Romanian cultural press and of the deep interconnectedness that exists among its contributors, who politically tend to be right of centre.

Even if the empirical time span observed is very narrow (the days surrounding the Nobel public announcement), the discussion is relevant for most of the post-Communist period. Prior to 2007, the problematization of the Communist heritage was practically non-existent in mainstream media. Only with the inauguration in 2007 of the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Regime did the public debate truly take off, opening a Pandora's box of emotional reactions and political proposals. This brought back into focus Herta Müller's novels set in Ceausescu's Romania. Because of her personal experiences in dealing with the former secret police, she also became more prominent in the media. This prominence increased after she was awarded in 2009 the Nobel Prize in Literature, a fact which was widely discussed and commented upon at the time in both daily and weekly newspapers as well as cultural journals.

The rest of this chapter proceeds firstly by briefly discussing the role of intellectuals in mass dictatorships, and especially their opposition to the system, before examining the situation in Communist Romania in more detail, in particular, that is, the dire conditions that prevented the flourishing of dissent; the study then focuses on the case of Herta Müller, a German-language author born in Romania but living in Germany since 1987. After having fleetingly looked at Müller's literary output, I touch upon the post-Communist political climate and focus on the way Herta Müller's novels and public engagement were received by intellectuals as well as by mainstream dailies in the immediate aftermath of her winning the Nobel Prize. Lastly, I consider the role of the dissident intellectual in the process of coming to terms with the past.

Role of the intellectual in dictatorships

The list of Nobel laureates in literature is replete with writers known for their engagement outside of the literary world: Nadine Gordimer, Bertrand Russell, Günter Grass, Elie Wiesel and Herta Müller are or were all public intellectuals, engaged with the societies in which they live. But what is the role of an intellectual? To cite Edward Said, an intellectual (and writer) is that individual who uses the power of mind and words for 'speaking the truth to power, being a witness to persecution and suffering, and supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority'.⁵

The public intellectual with a deep attachment to the principles of freedom and possessing a critical attitude was a thorn in the side of the Communist regimes established throughout Eastern Europe at the end of World War II. These regimes tried to curtail the freedom of expression

and to confine thought to a predetermined pattern. Certainly, one cannot treat the entire 40-year period of Communist dominance in Eastern Europe as a monolithic bloc. At the same time, it can be generally said that some intellectuals accepted compromise, some tacitly refused to acknowledge the system, while a small minority openly resisted the official dogma. The latter group became known in the West as the 'dissident' intelligentsia.

The most important contribution of the dissident intellectual was to provide an alternative to the standardized rhetoric of the system, to imagine 'cultural archetypes, normative ideas fully opposed to the uniformity and stultification required by Sovietism'.⁶ Most of the East European dissidents were not actively promoting a *political* alternative to the regime. On the contrary, they were entirely uninvolved with all forms of political engagement. Antipolitics, to use the word coined by the Hungarian dissident György Konrad, means a refusal to engage in conventional party activism, a 'destatification' where the centralized forms of power are weakened. Instead 'networks of friends', a form of civil society outside the reach of the state, develop on the basis of mutual trust and the free exchange of ideas.⁷

Even if dissident antipolitics did not directly challenge the regimes as such – it proposed quiet resistance and a gradual expansion of the spheres of freedom – the Communist governments all over the region perceived it as a threat. Mass dictatorships are based on the atomization of society, the spread of feelings of isolation and helplessness that make the acceptance of the established order the only solution to life's puzzle. The presence of an alternative discourse, even if subtle, undermined the proclaimed supremacy of the state ideology, and through its very existence encouraged the expression of personal choices.

The critical intellectual in Communist Romania

Central European dissent became increasingly organized, expanding at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s to encompass groups with a growing membership – among them the famous Polish Solidarity. But Romania did not follow this trend. On the contrary, Romanian dissidence remained weak, with the regime in Bucharest intractably despotic and quasi-Stalinist. Ceausescu surrounded himself with his close family and friends, and ruled the country with an iron fist, his leadership style deserving the attribute 'sultanist'.⁸

In this climate of fear and perpetual surveillance, voices raised against the system were few. Most Romanian writers sided with the regime, even

at the height of the cult of personality, and they preferred to conform rather than to dissent.⁹ In fact, the Romanian Communist Party devised from early on a two-pronged strategy: to use literature for its own propagandistic needs and to dispose of those authors and works deemed 'inconvenient'. While the old elite met their end in forced labour camps, a new and markedly different intellectual class arose to replace them. A combination of punishments (censorship) and rewards (promotion and publicity) led to the fact that during the 1960s 'the typical intellectual who advanced through political channels ... was the writer who praised Communist achievements in works in which the mandatory positive hero was a worker "building" socialism'.¹⁰

The above notwithstanding, the thaw of the late 1960s was also felt in Romania, where a new generation of writers attempted to take over the leadership of cultural institutions that had been created by the state (for example, the Writers' Union). This move was combined with a new discourse hinting at 'resistance through aesthetics', in which art even if apolitical was a form of opposition to the dictatorship inasmuch as it did not follow the 'indications' of the Communist leadership (who otherwise had gone so far as to try and establish and enforce the norms of what was beautiful and ugly in every domain of artistic expression). The system could not be confronted directly, but it could be circumvented. One prominent poet active during this period recalls that writers built a 'bullet-proof vest within which real literature developed. We had a mortuary here for almost half a century and in it our talents flourished as much as as they could'.¹¹ The Romanian intellectual was not a revolutionary, but nevertheless he or she preserved an area of creative liberty the regime did not encroach. The prevailing attitude was typically antipolitical: the Romanian writer 'did not give himself up to the dictatorship, but did not succeed to oppose it either: he simply withdrew from it'.¹² This attitude was to prevail among the cultural elite until the fall of the Ceausescu regime.

Not even resistance through culture, though, was permitted by the government. In a sharp move against the liberalization of the creative sector, Ceausescu issued his 'July Theses' in 1971, reinstating the ideological control of the Party over literature and the arts. The Party removed the more liberal-minded individuals from the institutional boards of all creative unions and even went on to completely forbid the study of subjects considered dangerous to the system. Thus, in the 1980s, the departments of sociology and psychology at all universities were completely dismantled. Historical and cultural research and dissemination was also placed under direct and strict control.

The personality cult of the leader reached hitherto unparalleled proportions: Ceausescu demanded he be called 'the genius of the Carpathians' and the 'leader'.¹³ The tightening of the screw was accompanied by an ever more penetrating nationalist campaign. The Party and the nation became one; the leadership mandated ideological and national uniformity which allowed no deviation.¹⁴ The Romanian intellectuals did not oppose this move but, on the contrary, were to some extent its creators.¹⁵ The secret police also intensified their actions: they continued to spy on those individuals with subversive potential; they also added to their repertoire the carrying out of unveiled threats, intimidation as well as illegal arrests and even murder.¹⁶

Two possible avenues were available for the Romanian intellectual at this point. One was to conform even more fully to the requirements of the Party. The end of the 1980s saw, thus, no diminishment in the fervent public adulation of Communism as an ideology and of Ceausescu as its most successful thinker. Censorship became stricter, and self-censorship the norm. The other option was to engage in acts of resistance. Despite regime pressure, some intellectuals gathered the courage to express publicly their mistrust of the Party and its leader – most famously the writer Paul Goma, the French professor Doina Cornea and the poet Mircea Dinescu.¹⁷ While Cornea and Dinescu remained in the country, Goma was forced into exile, joining the ranks of numerous other Romanians acting abroad as the mouthpiece of the oppressed at home.

Also among those who were eventually forced to emigrate was Herta Müller. Her position was unusually complicated even for a dissident. She belonged to the German-speaking community in the Banat region (southwestern Romania), and therefore was viewed with suspicion by the nationalist government in Bucharest. That she also had a father with a potentially compromising past (he had been conscripted to serve in the Waffen SS during WWII) did not improve her situation. Moreover, she joined Aktiongruppe Banat, an organization of German-speaking writers supporting the cultural rights of minorities, an act that placed her on the regime's 'undesirables' list.

From her very first novel, *Niederungen* (*Low Lands*), which was published in 1982, to her most recent, *Atemschaukel* (*Everything I Own I Carry with Me*, 2009), Müller reflects on the tortuous relationship between the individual and an oppressive regime. The conspicuous presence of the secret police – the unveiled threats, the persecution, the perpetual surveillance – appears prominently in her prose. The theme of dictatorship permeates her entire work. Commenting on this she says: 'I lived in a dictatorship. It is a theme I did not choose, but which forms a part

of my biography. I suspect that, had I not grown up under Ceausescu's dictatorship, I would have written on other subjects. But one writes about one's personal experience ... There are extreme experiences that force you to write about them'.¹⁸

Herta Müller is indisputably a writer who does not shy away from politics. In a recent interview, when asked if she combines literature and politics, she responded 'without a doubt', making reference to her membership in Aktiongruppe Banat and deploring the scarcity of dissident acts during the Ceausescu era.¹⁹ It is an illusion to see literature as something apolitical, since the literary and the political are often intertwined.²⁰ Müller remains a very engaged writer, taking an active part in the contemporary debates about dealing with the Communist heritage in Europe and in her native Romania. But, as we shall see in the following section, the dissident intellectual has had a difficult afterlife in post-Communist Romania.

Romanian post-Communism and the dissident intellectual

Foreign observers of the anti-Communist revolutions of 1989 considered them to be partly the result of the work of critical intellectuals, who undermined the credibility of the system by pointing out its faults and showing that another way of looking at the world was possible. Some compared implicitly the watershed of 1989 with the other 'revolution of the intellectuals', that of 1848.²¹ It was expected that these dissidents would now take on a more active position of power in the new society. This, however, proved almost nowhere to be the case. With the possible exception of Czechoslovakia (later Czech Republic), where Vaclav Havel was elected president, no other leading figure of the anti-Communist intellectual opposition successfully managed to engage in politics. This can be attributed to the fact that there was an unwillingness to examine the recent history: it was still too fresh, and doing so would have opened up deep social wounds. People were interested in looking forward, and swept the past under the carpet. At the time it could be noted that 'the price of normalcy seems to be the institutionalization of oblivion'.²²

In Romania, the situation appeared to be somewhat different. Since there was no real organized opposition to Ceausescu's rule, there were few who could claim the moral legitimacy brought by standing up to the system; that is, there were too few to matter, and even fewer who were not in exile. Thus, it is no surprise that in the aftermath of the controversial and violent regime change of December 1989, it was the

former Communist elite, represented by its second or third tier, that took power and even won the first free elections. This was to mark the post-Communist trajectory of the country for the next decade.

Those few dissident intellectuals *not* in exile in 1989 were approached but refused to be co-opted by the Iliescu government; they withdrew from official party politics, preferring to actively focus on the development of civil society. Probably the most famous of these intellectual formations is the Group for Social Dialogue. Through their weekly journal, *Revista 22*, they proposed a different set of solutions for the economic, social and political problems faced by Romania in the early 1990s. However, their ambition to really engage in a dialogue with the wider public did not materialize and Romanian civil society remained weak.²³ Other organizations were founded around the country, including in Timisoara, the city where the anti-Communist revolution started and where a proclamation for removing the former power holders from public positions was announced just before the elections of May 1990.

In general, the 1990s and a good part of the 2000s have seen intellectuals and the larger public tread opposite paths. The former sought to raise awareness about the Communist period and to bring to light the wrongdoings of the regime against its own people. To different extents and in various ways, the intellectuals have favoured a deep critique of the dictatorship and even the de-communization of public life. Their discourse has been inspired by Western liberalism, and in pursuing such a course, was meant to mark the clearest departure from the Communist ideology.²⁴ This liberal anti-Communist stance was at odds with the mindset of the bulk of the population, however, who showed a clear electoral preference for left-leaning policies that still accorded a prominent role to the state in providing social protection and welfare services. Moreover, besides this ideological distance, the general public and the intellectuals stood on different sides of the fence in terms of how the Communist era should be treated. Most people, and certainly most of the political class, preferred not to deal with the matter at all. This disengagement with an issue considered a priority elsewhere (see for example the lustration law proposals in Poland, and the way the files from the secret police have been made public in former East Germany) could be explained by the preservation of power by the renamed Communist nomenklatura, and by the apathy of a people concerned almost exclusively with the hardships of everyday life during the transition period.²⁵

It was not until 2007 – the same year Romania joined the European Union – that a serious public discussion of the Communist past was

initiated. Romanian President Traian Basescu formed a commission to investigate the Communist dictatorship, the aim of which was to bring to light the many ways in which the rights and liberties of Romanian citizens had been infringed. The purpose was not lustration, but a certain moral clean-up, which had already been proposed by Tismaneanu, the leader of the investigation, 11 years earlier: 'The salvation of memory is not an invitation to retroactive justice. Former Communists should enjoy the same rights as any other citizen, and their abuses should always be treated individually'.²⁶

The results of the commission were released in a report in 2007, generally known as the Tismaneanu Report. Among the topics covered, a special chapter is dedicated to the various forms of opposition to the regime, including the activities of dissident intellectuals active in the period 1977–89. Several cases of intellectual dissent are described in detail, but Herta Müller is not among them. However, her name does appear on the list of those who stood up to the regime.²⁷

The immediate reactions to the report in general have been both laudatory and extremely critical, depending on which side of the political divide one is on, serving as an illustration of the ideological cleavages in Romanian political life. The political parties friendlier towards the Communist regime were fast to criticize the report as being biased. The weaknesses of the methodological and conceptual apparatus have also been subject to critique from academics.²⁸ Regarding the evaluation of the attempts to oppose the Communist regime, the reactions were very negative: 'many felt excluded from the report's new historical narrative and that their own sacrifices were not properly acknowledged'.²⁹

The most important consequence of the report was the initiation of a debate on the collective memory of Communism. The climate was ripe for a wider debate to which Herta Müller also contributed through her declarations concerning the best way to deal with the past. In an article published in 2007, just before Romania's accession to the EU, in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Müller made an explicit reference to the lack of interest on the part of the Romanian government (but also of the EU) to tackle the issue of the Communist period. She argues that 'in one area that affects all others, the EU has unfortunately demanded nothing and Romania has basically done nothing: the **working through of the dictatorship**. In Romania, they're pretending that it disappeared into thin air, the whole country is afflicted by **collective amnesia** [emphasis in the original]'.³⁰

Müller perceives it as her duty, in the name of preserving her moral integrity and in order to respect and keep alive the memory of all the

regime's victims, to act as a constant reminder of the faults of the past. This call can see no abating until some form of justice is restored. When promoting her books or making statements as a guest speaker, she has consistently stood her moral ground. What is more, her call for removing the ex-Communist elements from the structures of the state has only been made clearer and louder since she was awarded the Nobel Prize, with the latter serving to increase her visibility and allowing her voice to reach further. In April 2010, during a visit to Brussels, Müller again took up the question of the laxity of EU demands on new member states in dealing with their Communist legacy, calling the Union 'naïve'.³¹

In particular, Müller was and still remains concerned with the influence of the former secret police on present-day Romanian politics and economics. In her literary texts, the Securitate is almost always omnipresent as a threatening shadow or active participant in the lives of her characters: it is the harbinger of fear, terror and death, and when its representatives make an appearance, it is sure that trouble is not far off. A telling example appears in *Herztier (The Land of Green Plums)*, where Securitate officer Piele brings the main protagonists to the interrogation room in order to humiliate and frighten them: Kurt is forced to eat the paper upon which a supposedly compromising poem is written; Edgar is made to lie completely still under the supervision of a police dog; and Georg is ordered to lie down on the floor with his arms twisted behind his back. Piele interrogates the anonymous narrator as well, branding her a 'bad seed' who should, and perhaps will, be drowned. On another occasion, the narrator is made to undress in front of the Securitate man, who is always depicted together with his homonymous dog, Piele.

The dark picture portrayed in her novels is also to be found in Müller's public statements. Two of her most pressing causes are related to access, or the lack thereof, to the Securitate files and, most importantly, the survival of the former structures and personnel of the Ceausescu era well into the post-Communist one. The threat of drowning made against the narrator in *Herztier* reappears in autobiographical format in Müller's Nobel lecture: 'With his [Securitate officer] briefcase under his arm he said quietly: *You'll be sorry, we'll drown you in the river.* I said as if to myself: *If I sign that, I won't be able to live with myself anymore, and I'll have to do it on my own. So it's better if you do it'* [italics in the original].³²

In an extensive article published in a German newspaper, Müller gives a thorough account of her attempts to access her own Securitate file. The long and winding road to obtain it, however, only led to disappointment, as the records had been tampered with and the most abusive type of behaviour, the persecutions and the interrogatories, deleted. Here we

find, for example, an account of the incident with the fox, which later made its way into Müller's literary work. Just as Adina in the novel *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (*Even Back Then, the Fox Was the Hunter*), Herta Müller in real life had her apartment broken into:

The secret police came and went as they pleased when we weren't at home. Often they would deliberately leave signs: cigarette butts, pictures removed from the wall and left on the bed, chairs moved. The most uncanny incident of this kind lasted weeks. First the tail, then the paws, and finally the head was cut off a fox skin lying on the floor, and laid on the fox's belly. **You couldn't see the cuts.** I first noticed the tail lying there while cleaning the apartment. I still thought it was accidental. It was only weeks later, when the hind paw had been cut off, that I began to get the creeps. Until the point when the head was also cut off, the first thing I would do on coming home was to check the fox skin. Anything could happen, the flat was no longer private [emphasis in the original].³³

This and other events are not mentioned in the official Müller file.

The survival of the Securitate is the most painful aspect of Müller's contemporary public declarations. She returns often to the description of the current situation in Romania: 'These people have gained so much influence that they have managed to almost re-create their old network of power, where they all know and serve each other. It is the second life of the dictatorship'.³⁴ When the Romanian Cultural Institute in Berlin invited for a Summer School in 2008 two historians known to have collaborated with the former secret police, Müller co-authored a protest letter to the director of the Institute.³⁵

The worst of it all appears to be not the terror itself, but the fact that one was lonely, isolated – then and now. Müller says 'Romanian intellectuals were [in 2004] as uninterested in seeing the secret files opened as they were in all the crushed lives around them, or in the new arrangements of the party's top brass and secret service officers'.³⁶

This unequivocal condemnation of the entire intellectual class places Herta Müller in a difficult position vis-à-vis opinion leaders in the Romanian cultural press. If they were to agree with her and her ideas, they would necessarily have to accept her critique of the way they behaved towards the Securitate in the past. If, on the contrary, they oppose her statement about their own passivity, they must also disagree with Müller's general attitude towards the treatment of the Communist past in contemporary public debates. It is to this dilemma that I turn to next.

Printed media reactions to Herta Müller's Nobel award

It would seemingly be the case that Herta Müller's declarations have not likely endeared her to the general Romanian public, as her unflinching criticism of the current state of affairs undermines the positive image the country tries to establish abroad. Moreover, she is in favour of a political class committed to the condemnation of past crimes – a condemnation that she sees to be non-existent. The issue of overcoming the collective trauma of dictatorship is a divisive one that separates those who want to forget about the recent past and those who cannot conceive of a better future unless this past is dealt with publicly and forthwith. Another sensitive matter is the extent to which Müller's award is a cause for national pride: while she was born in Romania, she has also been a prominent critic of the country.

Reactions in the cultural press

The most important theme that characterizes the reaction to Herta Müller's Nobel success, therefore, deals with the complexities of national belonging. Can Romanian culture stake a claim to glory through the award of a German-speaking writer who has written most of her work abroad and who is very critical of the country of her birth?

A majority of the reactions in the cultural press are sensitive to the fruitlessness of the desire to appropriate a creative work in the name of a national culture. The cultural press criticizes anyone raising the question of Müller's belonging to the Romanian culture for their hidden desire to annex her in the hope of 'bathing in the limelight' even if vicariously.³⁷ The general tone is one of critique towards what is sometimes called 'geocultural bovarism': a certain desire for Romanians to appear culturally central despite their peripheral position on the European cultural map.³⁸ Herta Müller's literary edifice has been built with the help of the German language, and her sensibility and acumen are close to the German cultural universe. At the same time, her life is closely entwined with the Romanian experience, and in particular with the region of Banat, a meeting point for several historical traditions, ethnicities, languages and religions. It is perhaps not Romania as a whole, but this particular part of it that can be said to have shaped Müller's style.³⁹ Paul Goma, one of the few writers who openly criticized the Ceausescu regime, and who was thus forced into exile, has also commented that Herta Müller's inspiration is not Romania but the Banat region, and that to argue for the Romanianness of a writer like Müller is to stretch the national definition beyond reason.⁴⁰

Another weekly, *Revista 22*, is blunter, and more categorical when asking ironically 'Should we thank the omnipresent Securitate because it made her life a nightmare and thus virtually offered material for a Nobel?'⁴¹ The magazine argues that the simple fact that Herta Müller is obsessed or terrified by her Romanian experience does not simply make her a representative of Romanian literature, especially since in her native country no more than five out of her 20 works published in Germany have been translated into Romanian. This Nobel Prize is thus nothing that Romanians can be proud of: it is a 'slap in the face', and a reminder of their cowardice which stands in contrast to Müller's own righteousness. *Revista 22* argues further that the Nobel cannot be kidnapped even by the anti-Communist factions active today in Romanian politics, as the writer's critique against the system is beyond opportunism, in opposition to the 'doubtful' nationalist anti-Communism and to the unjustified pretensions of bravery that some contemporary writers or politicians display today.

The same self-critical attitude towards the attempts to appropriate the Prize appears also in the pages of *Art Act Magazine*, where Müller's exceptionalism in both the pre- and the post-Communist landscapes is highlighted once more. As opposed to other public personalities resigned to accepting the status quo of the collective amnesia typical of the 1990s and early 2000s, she chose to speak out, to act according to her ethical principles. The magazine goes on to argue that the prize is *not* a common good. It belongs to her alone, as a writer whose creativity is not bound by nationality, neither Romanian nor German.⁴²

Ideii in dialog states that if Romania should be acknowledged somehow by Müller's Nobel, it is through the Swedish Academy's bowing to the tragic experience of life under authoritarian regimes. Romania's tragedy has in her one of the most eloquent voices: 'with Herta Müller, the memory of the suffering under Romanian Communism is brought to the surface: the evoked tragedy of a community and literature's power to comprise the hope of salvation for a humanity assaulted by barbarity are part of the argumentative architecture behind the Nobel award'.⁴³ At the same time, the idiosyncrasies of Romanian Communism may be obliterated by the general reach of Müller's work. It is not the national suffering per se that is revealed in her pages; it is the human pain, the human tragedy that we get to read about.

Another theme that imposes itself in the intellectuals' discussion about Herta Müller is the subject of dealing with the recent and problematic past. Müller's 'stubbornness in remembering' puts her in the same tradition as Holocaust writer Elie Wiesel, another Romanian-born author

who wrote in exile, or Alexander Solzhenitsyn.⁴⁴ Just like them, she 'celebrates a memory that defeats death itself'.⁴⁵ *Revista 22* argues that the best effect, if any, which Müller's award can have on the Romanian public debate is not to flatter the national ego, but, on the contrary, to keep Romanian intellectuals on their toes, attentive to lapses into uncritical or ideological thinking, a constant reminder of the moral standards one should observe.⁴⁶

If not immediately after the Nobel announcement, the Romanian cultural press has, in subsequent articles, underlined the significance of Herta Müller's international recognition for bringing to the forefront the debate on national collective memory. She has remained an active player, for example by criticizing in an open letter from early 2010 the decision of Prime Minister Boc to sack the historian Marius Oprea from the leadership of the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (IICC). The Institute was founded at the recommendation of the Tismaneanu Report of 2007, a report which, as mentioned earlier, constituted the first real attempt to scrutinize the Communist heritage. The fact that Oprea was actively searching for mass graves where enemies of the Communist regime had been buried, and the fact that he took the investigation very seriously, was perceived by former Securitate personnel as a threat. His subsequent removal from the IICC was indicative to Müller, and others like her, of the Securitate's continuing hold over power structures in Romania.⁴⁷ Müller's uncompromising stance is at odds with the attitude observed in left-leaning Romanian politics, as embodied in a famous quote from the former leader of the Social Democrats (new party with a former Communist ascendance): 'let's leave aside the past, and focus on the future instead.'⁴⁸ The majority of those "prosecuting" the Communist regime have the attitude "we have condemned Communism, now let's forget about it!" This prevarication is not approved of by Müller or by a great majority of the cultural press, for whom only a continuous and thorough engagement with the past 50 years can restore the recent past to the nation.

A wish to engage with the collective memory of the Communist period and a general support and enthusiasm for Müller's international recognition dominate the cultural press. Writers for the abovementioned publications would like to see more of Müller's ideas implemented in political life and in the society in which they live (which she observes from a distance). This notwithstanding, the daily newspapers display a much more divided reaction to Müller's award, as is briefly explored below.

Reactions in the daily news media

A quick glance at the front pages of the major dailies published on 9 October 2009 reveals that news of Müller's Nobel Prize award made it on to the front page of six out of 15 papers. A majority of the non-tabloid papers included the news as their front piece (six out of ten), pointing to the fact that this was significant news. The thematic make-up of the reactions to Herta Müller's prize is similar in both the cultural press and in the dailies. The most important issue is that of Müller's national belonging: does her award shine a light also on her country of birth? However, the treatment received by this question in the pages of the daily newspapers is more diverse than that found in the cultural magazines.

Adevarul had probably the most dramatic opening line: 'They gave us a king, we gave them a queen' – a reference to the 'import' in the mid-1800s of the German-speaking Prince Charles I of Hohenzollern on the Romanian throne. Reciprocally, Romania had also offered something to the Germans, namely a Nobel prizewinner. This places Herta Müller firmly on Romanian soil, and interprets her forced exile in 1987 as a form of gift to the German state. The exact terms of the deal are better described in the body of the article, where the author mentions the onerous deal Ceausescu made with the West German state, according to which ethnic Germans were more or less bought by the Bundesrepublik to where they were allowed to emigrate against a sum of money.⁴⁹

Most newspapers count Müller among other Romanian Nobel winners, in the manner of *Evenimentul Zilei*, which writes 'This is the third Nobel awarded to a Romanian after George Palade in 1974 and Elie Wiesel in 1986'.⁵⁰ The newspaper is eager to chase some glory for Romania even if, notably, all three winners produced their works outside of the country, and all of them became citizens of other states.

The identity issue is also debated by the daily *Gandul*, where the editor prefers to pass the question 'Is Herta Müller's Nobel also one for Romania?' to the experts. A majority of the interviewed authors and literary critics hesitate to make a clear pronouncement. Beyond the polite congratulations sent to the winner, the hesitations are explicit. Mircea Cartarescu, for instance, claimed that 'this supreme prize belongs *a little* to Romanian literature [my italics]'. Eugen Negrici, a literary critic, is surprised by the choice of the Swedish Academy but considers it 'an honor to Romanian literature that counted Herta Müller among its ranks *for a little while* [my italics]'. Other important personalities on the Romanian cultural scene (Horia Patapievi, Nicolae Manolescu, Andrei Plesu) think that the award also reflects on the quality of Romanian literature.

Other interviewees, Nicolae Breban or Cristian Tudor Popescu, are certain that Müller belongs much more in the realm of German literature. The latter adds, in the most open critique of Müller's Nobel, that a long list of Romanian writers, even though talented and very qualified, did not receive the Nobel. A trace of bitterness can be perceived between the lines: 'It could be said that the main contributor to the award of Herta Müller is Nicolae Ceausescu ... She spoke a lot about dictatorship not about literature. As if she was Nelson Mandela. Maybe the Peace Prize would have been more opportune'.⁵¹

Another theme that appears is Müller's relationship with the former regime. The titles are telling: 'Herta Müller A Nobel against the Securitate' (*Romania Libera*); 'Herta Müller: Securitate made my life bitter for a long time' (*Adevarul*); 'Herta Müller in dialogue with Securitate' (*Evenimentul Zilei*); 'Anticommunism has a resounding name this Thursday: Herta Müller. A Nobel for past suffering' (*Cotidianul*). One commentator draws attention to the ambiguity that Müller's victory is both a defeat for the Securitate as well as an indirect consequence of the latter's skill in the evil arts of persecution and torture.⁵²

The connection with the past regime explains in part also the Romanian claim to fame via Müller's authorship. A literary critic echoed general opinion and declared that 'the Romanian roots cannot be severed because they are the milk of bitterness, of unfairness and of lies that the writer has supped in Banat and in Romania. No matter how much she condemns them, these places follow with her and give her the vigour of a writer and of a human being'.⁵³

The main theme of the articles is one of recognition: of Müller's literary merits, of her achievements prior to winning the Nobel, of her morality and engagement. Noticeable is also the lack of commentary on the actual event itself: most of the contributions are written in an objective tone, with reference to biographical elements or to interviews given by Müller. Public personalities are consulted for their reaction to the news, but without comments or opinions on the part of the journalists.

Commentaries and analysis increased, however, in the aftermath of Müller's winning the award. Most interesting was the reaction from former Securitate employees, who had initially been criticized in the press, with the Nobel seen as a sign of recognition and respect for the anti-Communist dissidence. However, only a couple of days after the announcement in Stockholm, the pages of the newspapers were open to another scoop: an interview with a former agent who had been in charge of spying on Herta Müller.

Radu Tinu, former vice-leader for a regional Securitate office, vented his views in an interview published in one of the most popular dailies, *Adevarul*. Responsible for Müller's surveillance and interrogation, Tinu revealed some details, including, for example, how he had planted a microphone in Müller's apartment. The self-assured 60-year-old went on to joke 'I don't remember where exactly I put it. This is 25 years ago ... You realize how many microphones I planted ... If I'd charged only a hundred euros per piece I'd be a millionaire by now'.⁵⁴

In the interview, Colonel Tinu denied any abuses and the conducting of apartment searches. Instead, he openly denigrated the writer, calling her 'ugly', 'smoking like a chimney' and accusing her of suffering from 'psychosis' and of 'fabulating' when she describes her experiences with the secret police. He goes further to claim that she was not ill-treated, was not undressed by a secret police officer and that her first book was never censored.⁵⁵ In another interview with Deutsche Welle, Tinu continued this line of accusation by arguing that Müller's psychological condition is serious and due to her unfortunate childhood. Finally, he accuses her of collaborating with a known German spy at the same time as denying that the Securitate had ever been a 'political police'.⁵⁶ Müller's reaction, in an interview at the beginning of 2010, was to express outrage at the fact that Tinu holds a respectable and financially rewarding position with an insurance company.⁵⁷ The very fact that Tinu could so confidently make such statements supports Müller's fears about the revival of the old secret police in today's Romania.

At the same time, a survey of the articles published in the major dailies around the time of the Nobel announcement gives a more nuanced view than one would expect after having read the international media's interpretation of the events. *The Guardian*, for example, called the Romanian reaction 'hostile' and 'mixed'.⁵⁸ However, an overwhelming proportion of the articles surveyed in this study point to a positive reaction in her native country. The only two clear-cut exceptions are the comment by Cristian Tudor Popescu and the interview with former Securitate Colonel Tinu. The former is bitter in tone, and may indicate national envy, but it represents the opinion of only one author, even though he is a well-known journalist. And even if that 'envy' is hinted at in some otherwise positive articles, the overall tone is moderate.

The much more serious case is that of Radu Tinu. Beyond the content of the accusations, which many readers identified as biased and self-serving (as is apparent from online comments left under the article and on web forums), the fact that a person previously in the employ of the secret police has such a comfortable position in today's society is

worrisome for the process of clearing up the past errors of the regime. Moreover, Tinu appears to enjoy the ear of the media, and, therefore, his voice would appear to carry a certain degree of legitimacy. His past deeds, which he admits to (with modifications), do not compromise his public standing, thus giving credence to Herta Müller's declarations about the spread of the Securitate's tentacles.

Conclusion

In both the cultural media and the daily newspapers surveyed, the theme of belonging is of primary importance. This should be seen not only in the obvious context of the exile: Müller is not the only author to have been born in Romania, but who has gone on to achieve world fame in their adopted country. Famous examples include the playwright Eugene Ionesco and the historian of religions Mircea Eliade. Another reading is rendered by the minority context, and the difficulties of placing a German-speaking and -writing author into a Romanian frame. But the most difficult contradiction to overcome is Müller as an anti-Communist dissident. The problem of appropriating her as a Romanian (as the headlines wrote 'The Romanian Herta Müller wins Nobel') lies primarily in the fact that she was and remains critical of the Romanian political class. Certainly the fact that she is German and lives in Germany stands in the way of claiming the Nobel Prize for the land of her birth; but this could be done – as long as the author herself would accept it, or at least not object to it. In fact, the current regime is desirous of co-opting former dissidents such as Müller. She and others could receive honorary medals and have public places named after them; thus their appropriation would surely be subtle but complete.

Herta Müller, however, is probably the least likely individual to bow in front of a Romanian president or premier in order to receive a medal of honour. Most likely she would see no honour involved, as long as Romania's problematic past would remain just that – a problem. Her literary work and public declarations have consistently criticized Romania for its collective amnesia and have functioned as a clarion call for action. The cultural media recognize the value of this call, and they have thus praised Müller's involvement beyond her 'association' with the particular dictatorship of Ceausescu. To some extent, the intellectual class has admitted its own shortcomings, seeing Müller as a prompter and a supporter of its own coming to terms with the past. The daily newspapers, on the other hand, have for the most part lacked any desire to embrace this critique. Basking in the glow of the prizewinner was enough; her

sharp words did not lead to the desire to grapple with uncomfortable questions. The example of Radu Tinu demonstrates quite the opposite: some newspapers felt the need to balance the Müller account about the Securitate and persecution with another person's perspective that tells a completely different story.

This leads back to the initial theoretical discussion about the role of the dissident intellectual following a dictatorship. The fact that Müller was largely unknown in Romania, that only few of her works are translated, that she does not figure in Romanian literature dictionaries, underlies the same phenomenon that has been discussed in other cases: no one loves the dissident after the regime has fallen, especially not if they continue to be a constant reminder of the errors of the past – and the present. At the same time, public intellectuals are important for democracy because they can 'enrich the political elite's ability to define and articulate innovative programs and creative alternatives'.⁵⁹ Even more importantly, they can disseminate a culture of tolerance and respect necessary for public debates.

Herta Müller's merciless eye and her tough attitude criticizing en masse the Romanian intellectuals and political class are consistent with her previous moral intransigence. She is a living example of the critical intellectual emerging from the French tradition of the nineteenth century, and further articulated by Gramsci and the New Left. However, one can but wonder whether a public intellectual must, by necessity, always be this constantly critical voice. Perhaps there is room for a type of public intellectual for whom critique and affirmation balance each other. An exclusive emphasis on the lack of progress and on the negative trends in the contemporary society may be perceived by the greater public and by certain elites as too harsh and therefore dismissed. Speaking also in the affirmative and introducing constructive suggestions may allow for the voice of the public intellectual to gather public support and thus to be heard in circles otherwise more hostile to change.

This may be especially relevant if this should be seen as the key to the sought-after process of coming to terms with the past. The *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* may take different paths, each with different political consequences. The Müller strategy may be too uncompromising if the ultimate goal of this process is to find some 'grammars of reconciliation'.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the very process must be kick-started somehow. Perhaps in this initial phase her voice is more than necessary.

When asked in an interview what could form the basis of progressive politics after the fall of Communism, the late historian Tony Judt

replied: 'We need to rediscover a language of dissent'.⁶¹ The old Marxist believers as well as the anti-Communists must learn another way of phrasing their political message that is honest and creative whilst harbouring a vision of the future that takes into account the consequences of the past.

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3

Challenging the 'Holocaust-Reflex': Imre Kertész's *Fatelessness*: A Novel

Anders Ohlsson

Introduction

Ever since it first appeared in 1975, confusion and anger have been recurring features in the reaction to *Fatelessness*, written by Hungarian author and Holocaust survivor Imre Kertész. This is the case, even if Kertész's novel, as Kornélia Koltai has stated, 'abides by the "obligatory" contents of a book on Holocaust, on surviving Auschwitz. ... Living in the ghetto, travelling in the cattle cars, arriving at Auschwitz, becoming a prisoner, the alternative, the coincidence, the survival of survival. The plot begins with leaving home and ends with arriving home'.¹

Confusion and anger are important aspects in the reception of *Fatelessness* among high-school readers in Sweden, too.² In December 2002, every Swedish high school senior was presented with a copy of *Fatelessness*. This initiative was taken by the author's Swedish publisher. The reason was, of course, that the very same year Kertész had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature 'for writing that upholds the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history'.³

In a cover letter, publisher Svante Weyler introduced the story of the novel, as well as its author. To underscore the importance of increasing knowledge about the Holocaust, he also quoted a paragraph from the fifth chapter of *Fatelessness*. In this paragraph, the main character, fourteen-year-old Gyuri Köves, who is of Jewish descent, is about to realise where he is being deported – to Auschwitz. Remembering a scene from his own time at high school, Gyuri accuses his teachers of not having taught him about this place. At an opening ceremony, the principal had

made reference, I recollected, to an ancient Roman philosopher, quoting the tag '*non scholae sed vitae discimus*' – 'we learn for life, not

school'. But then in light of that, really, I ought to have been learning all along exclusively about Auschwitz. Everything would have been explained, openly, honestly, reasonably. The thing was, though, that over the four years at school I had heard not a single word about it. Of course, that would have been embarrassing, I conceded, nor indeed did it belong to education, I realized. The drawback, however, was that now I have to be edified here – to learn, for example, that we are in a '*Konzentrationslager*', a 'concentration camp'. Not that these were all the same, it was explained. This one, for example, is a '*Vernichtungslager*', that is to say an 'extermination camp', I was informed.⁴

Weyler obviously believed that insights into the Holocaust ought to be part of high school curricula and education in general. This was in line with the principal objective of the Living History Forum, a national project launched in 1997 by the then Prime Minister of Sweden, Göran Persson, in response to surveys showing that many high school students doubted that the Holocaust had occurred.⁵ This information project cum public authority included a book that could be ordered free of charge: *Tell Ye Your Children. A Book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945* (1998) by historians Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine. Combining traditional historiography, extracts from testimonies, memoirs by Holocaust survivors in the shape of drawings, photos and poems, this book, which was translated into a great number of languages, provides its readers with a horrifying introduction to the subject. The roles of and dividing line between 'victims' and 'perpetrators' – two of the categories commonly used in Holocaust studies, the third being 'bystanders'⁶ – are clear-cut. In Kertész's *Fatelessness*, however, this is not the case. Upon his arrival in Auschwitz, the main character is shocked not by what lies ahead, but at the sight of the Jewish prisoners:

On the chest of each one, apart from the customary convict's number, I also saw a yellow triangle, and although it was naturally not too hard to work out what that color denoted, it still somehow caught my eye; during the journey I had, in a way, all but forgotten about that entire business. Their faces did not exactly inspire confidence either: jug ears, prominent noses, sunken, beady eyes with a crafty gleam. Quite like Jews in every respect. I found them suspect and altogether foreign-looking (p. 78).

It may seem odd that someone can forget about the entire 'business' – that is, the persecution and killing of Jews – whilst being deported to

Auschwitz. Furthermore, after the 'unpleasant' sight of his fellow Jewish prisoners, by contrast the wealthy German soldiers in clean uniforms observing the arrival of the train from some distance are said by the author to provide the young Köves with a sense of relief. The main character's way of describing his fellow Jewish victims, for instance by using anti-Semitic stereotypes such as 'prominent noses', may be construed as an example of how Kertész depicts the Holocaust in a way that, according to Bettina von Jagow, 'can almost be called scandalous'.⁷

Even though *Fatelessness* relies on a well-established plot in Holocaust fiction, it also diverges from conventions within this type of literature in a number of ways. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight a number of such deviations against the backdrop of the position of the Holocaust in the post-war Communist Hungarian public sphere. In thus doing, the chapter seeks to explain why *Fatelessness* poses difficulties – to the point of provoking objections – for readers in Western democracies, such as in Sweden for example, where the Holocaust is considered to form an important part of history. Kertész challenges the 'Holocaust-reflex', that is, readers' genre expectations, in a number of ways.

***Fatelessness* and its historical background**

After the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867, the Jewish minority experienced what Randolph L. Braham in his *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary* (2000) terms a 'Golden Era', including legal equality as well as good opportunities for business and industrial engagement.⁸ Already during World War I, however, things started to change: non-assimilated Jews were treated with intolerance and anti-Semitic tendencies abounded. As an ally of Nazi Germany, starting in 1938, Hungary passed three anti-Jewish laws that had a 'devastating effect on the economic well-being of the Jews'.⁹ Although the Nazi regime pressured its Hungarian ally to assist in bringing about the Final Solution, the country served as a place of refuge for foreign Jews. After the German occupation in the spring of 1944, close to 440,000 Hungarian Jews were deported between May 15 and July 8. Together with other casualties (through hard labour for example), more than 550,000 Hungarian Jews were murdered during World War II, which constituted about 78 per cent of the Jewish community.¹⁰

Born in 1929 in Budapest, Kertész was deported to Auschwitz in 1944. After just a few days, he was transferred to Buchenwald and then to another concentration camp, Zeitz. After the end of the war, he returned to Budapest, where he worked as a newspaper journalist from

1948 to 1951. In connection with the strengthening of the Communist dictatorship, he was dismissed from his job, and during a short period after his military service he made his living as a factory worker. Soon he started to translate from German while also writing comedies and radio plays. According to the diary Kertész published in 1992, he began writing *Fatelessness* already in 1960 but didn't finish it until 1973.¹¹

Kertész's *Fatelessness* is set during the last two years of World War II. In this novel, the main character – a fourteen-year-old Jewish boy named Gyuri Köves – is also the narrator, telling the story of his deportation to Auschwitz, the slave labour endured in different camps and finally his liberation and return to Budapest. Although narrated in the first person, the 'I' in *Fatelessness* does not refer to the real author, but to the fictitious Gyuri. From a more traditional perspective, Kertész's novel is not an autobiography proper, since there is no common identity between narrator, main character and the actual author. It is formally a *novel*, as stated on its title page. Notwithstanding, it might be considered what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in their *Reading Autobiography. A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001) call a 'life narrative', which 'includes many kinds of self-referential writing'. One reason for this classification is that the rather narrow definition of autobiography referenced above has been challenged in a number of ways.¹² Furthermore, many writers have themselves challenged the boundary between autobiography and novel 'in order to mine their own struggles with the past and with the complexities of identities forged in the present'.¹³ Formally designated a novel, *Fatelessness* exhibits traits of self-referential writing.

Readers of *Fatelessness* are most likely surprised by the relative absence of strong emotions in such a cruel story. As has been noticed by many a critic, the narrator himself does not offer any 'interpretations or evaluations' but 'always tries to understand, to find explanations for the general hatred of Jews he encounters'.¹⁴

A journey towards new insights

The ninth and concluding chapter of *Fatelessness* is set in the weeks following the end of World War II. Here Gyuri, the teenage narrator, describes his journey from the German concentration camp Buchenwald back home to Budapest. He meets and engages in conversations with a number of individuals who have remained in the Hungarian capital during the last year of war. Initially somewhat naïve, Gyuri is now a mature young man. Confronted with suspicion and disbelief on the one hand, and with sheer kindness on the other, he is able to argue about

and reflect upon his experiences in a profoundly philosophical way. Bearing in mind what Gyuri has been through during his imprisonment, this might, of course, be realistically explained: upon his release he is much more mature than a year ago. Looking at himself in the mirror, Gyuri is startled by the transformation of his face, and this reminds him of something he once read: that people who spend a lot of time on 'sensual pleasures and delights' age 'prematurely'.¹⁵ This ironic comparison, however, brings another metaphorical way of interpreting Gyuri's rapid philosophical and existential development to the fore. During his imprisonment, he has gained new insights. Furthermore, in a note dated 1975 in his diary *Galley Boat-Log*, the same year as *Fatelessness* was first issued, Kertész maintains that since they are mere linguistic constructions, words on paper, or 'puppets', literary characters should not be treated as human beings.¹⁶

With this in mind, transgressing any realist interpretation of Gyuri's development seems to be a more rewarding interpretative strategy, albeit this option is easily overseen in a first reading of the novel. It is obvious that in the last chapter of *Fatelessness*, Kertész comments on and explains certain devices and narrative strategies employed in the very novel the reader is just about to finish. Furthermore, he clarifies the prerequisites for the laborious work (the writing of *Fatelessness*) that has occupied his time for more than a decade. To sum up, the *metafictional* dimensions of the last chapter of Kertész's novel deserve our attention. Here, the author himself offers comments on his fictional work, and in so doing, asks the reader to take on his or her own responsibility for it.

At the end of the eighth chapter, Gyuri is liberated from the concentration camp Buchenwald. Soon afterwards, he sets out for Budapest together with an unspecified number of fellow prisoners, crossing a continent full of places that had 'once been a city but [were] now no more than piles of stone with the occasional bare, blackened wall poking up here and there'.¹⁷ He is dressed in the garb from different, opposing armies: green US army twills, a grey pullover from an SS-storehouse and an 'odd-looking' kepi that had belonged to a Polish officer. This mixture of army clothing from different origins symbolically portrays Gyuri as a victim of war. In a neutral tone, typical for the novel, and apparently without any hesitation, the narrator even puts on a pullover that used to belong to his perpetrators. Furthermore, instead of some 'decent jacket', he decides to wear 'the trusty old striped garment, unchanged except for lacking the number and triangle, that had done me good service up till then; indeed, I specifically opted for it, one could say insisted on it, for this way at least there would be no misunderstandings,

I reckoned, apart from which I found it very comfortable, practical, and cool to wear, at least right then, during the summer'.¹⁸ The jacket that he had previously worn as a prisoner thus serves to underscore Gyuri's victimhood.

After arriving in Budapest, Gyuri meets with three different individuals, all of whom at first seem curious to learn more about his experiences. Still dressed in his wartime garb, this particular Holocaust survivor apparently arouses their curiosity. A symbol of the Holocaust on account of his clothing, the conversations he engages in resonate with the debates and issues concerning the Nazi genocide gripping the post-war public sphere of Hungary.

Gyuri's encounters with three different individuals in the spring of 1945 might be considered a condensed version of some of the difficulties that Kertész himself faced when he, still living in post-war Communist Hungary, decided to tell the world about his Holocaust experiences, as well as an explanation of the narrative strategies he used.

Doubts about the Holocaust experience

Gyuri's first encounter is with a somewhat self-confident man, apparently enjoying the nice warm weather, dressed in his 'very summery clothing of just shirt and trousers'.¹⁹ Thus contrasting Gyuri and his miserable outfit and with a laidback attitude, the man curiously asks Gyuri if he saw any gas chambers during his deportation. Gyuri's straightforward and logical answer – if he had, he wouldn't be able to engage in this very conversation! – is, however, met with suspicion by his interlocutor. While Gyuri still maintains that gas chambers were actually used in some camps – in an extermination camp like Auschwitz for instance – but not in Buchenwald, where he himself was incarcerated, the man confronts him with what he considers an obvious contradiction: how could one possibly argue for the existence of gas chambers, without having seen them oneself? Gyuri finds himself at a loss for an answer, and the man in summery clothes 'strode away, stiffly, erectly, and as far as I could see, unless I was very mistaken, satisfied in some manner'.²⁰ For him, apparently, life in Budapest has continued as if the Nazi genocide never happened. The Nazi programme of genocide and atrocities strains his belief.

The profound distrust that Gyuri is confronted with upon his arrival home might not be unique to a Holocaust survivor from Hungary. Still, it reflects the perception of the Holocaust in post-war Hungarian 'historical culture'.²¹ In a 1998 article on Italian director Roberto Benigni's

La vita è bella (1997), Kertész himself comments on the position of the Holocaust in the Hungarian public sphere. At the time of its writing, the film had not been shown yet, and Kertész thus concludes: 'hier [in Hungary] wird anders über den Holocaust geschwiegen, anders über ihn gesprochen (wenn sich denn über ihn zu sprechen nicht vermeiden lässt), als in Westeuropa. Hier gilt der Holocaust seit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges durchgängig, bis zum heutigen Tag, als ein sozusagen "heikles", durch Schutzwälle aus Tabus und Euphemismen vor dem "brutalen" Wahrheitsfindungsprozess geschütztes Thema'.²²

Immediately after World War II and throughout the Communist era, Jewish history, for various reasons, played an insignificant role in Hungarian historical research as well as education. One reason was that the Jewish minority population, which in some instances had played a prominent role in the inter-war period, had been significantly reduced as a result of both the Holocaust and post-war emigration.²³ Moreover, although the country's new post-war Communist government included persons of Jewish origin – Kertész himself joined the party in 1946, but left two years later²⁴ – the Communist leadership did not acknowledge their cultural heritage, nor did they feel any obligation to embrace Jewish history as a part of Hungarian history. Somewhat ironically, though, Swedish historian Kristian Gerner maintains that the 'average' Hungarian 'experienced the Communist oppressors as "Jews", and then the Stalinist anti-Zionism campaign ... had an obvious anti-Semitic tinge'.²⁵ For Kertész, the regime's hesitation to include the Holocaust as a part of the historical agenda is obvious:

*Damit stossen wir auf die Erklärung, warum die Diktatur sich die Tatsache des Holocaust vom Leibe hielt, warum sie diesen Tatsachen nie ins Auge blicken wollte: weil diese Gegenüberstellung gewissermassen auch eine Selbstprüfung, die Selbstprüfung Läuterung, die Läuterung wiederum Erhebung und wahre Anbindung and das geistige Europa bedeutet. Die Diktatur aber wollte die Entzweiung und die Festigung dieser Entzweiung, weil sie ihren Zwecken dienlich war.*²⁶

To a certain extent, the coldness prevalent in Gyuri's aforementioned conversation with the man in summer clothing corresponds to the lack of response that Kertész's novel received in Hungary, until the demise of the Communist regime. When Kertész presented the manuscript for *Fatelessness* to his publisher in 1973, it was rejected on political grounds. Absence of strong and clear-cut emotions within the main character, which in turn was supposed to make reader identification

possible, as well as the insignificant role played by the Soviet army as Gyuri's liberator, might explain why the manuscript was rejected. Kertész's standpoint on World War II in general, and on Nazism and the Holocaust in particular, was not in line with that of the János Kádár regime. For Holocaust literature to be published, it was necessary that it reinforced the regime by displaying a politically correct interpretation of the Nazi genocide.²⁷

In his 1988 autobiographical novel *Fiasko*, Kertész quotes from what is presented as an authentic letter from his publisher rejecting the manuscript in 1973:

*Wir meinen, daß die künstlerische Gestaltung Ihres Erlebnismaterials nicht gelungen, das Thema aber grauenhaft und erschütternd ist. Daß der Roman für den Leser dennoch nicht zu einem erschütternden Erlebnis wird, liegt in erster Linie an den, milde ausgedrückt, merkwürdigen Reaktion Ihres Helden. [...] Sein Verhalten, seine perversen Bemerkungen stoßen den Leser ab und beleidigen ihn, und ärgerlich wird er auch den Schluß des Romans lesen, denn das bisherige Verhalten des Helden, seine Teilnahmslosigkeit berechtigen ihn in keiner Weise dazu, moralische Werturteile zu fällen oder jemanden zur Verantwortung zu ziehen (vgl. die Vorwürfe an die in seinem Haus wohnende jüdische Familie). Auch über den Stil ist zu reden. Ihre Sätze sind zum großen Teil ungeschickt, umständlich formuliert.*²⁸

Two years later, in 1975, a censored version of *Fatelessness* was issued by another Hungarian publishing house.²⁹ In the following years, the novel was met with silence, and Kertész himself was marginalized in Hungarian literary historiography. It was not until 1989 that he started to become recognized, with translations of his writings appearing predominantly in German.³⁰ The grand opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum Centre and Museum in Budapest in 2004 manifests a change in the position of the Nazi genocide in Hungarian historical culture: from that of insignificance to acknowledgement.³¹

Genre trouble

Gyuri's second meeting in the last chapter of *Fatelessness* highlights Kertész's genre considerations, given the peculiar experience of *time* that he aims at doing justice. This meeting is of a totally different character: he meets a journalist writing for a pro-democracy paper, who is very sympathetic to him, almost too favourable. They start talking to each other as Gyuri cannot pay for his streetcar ticket. The journalist shouts

at the conductor, ordering him to give Gyuri a ticket while paying for it himself. Instead of cold ironic doubt, Gyuri is met with an outpouring of sympathy when he mentions the name 'Buchenwald'. In contrast to the first meeting, there is no trace of suspicion or disbelief. The journalist already knows that this place has been "one of the pits of the Nazi hell".³² Furthermore, he seems to be genuinely interested in Gyuri's experiences, especially his feelings upon returning after his release. Since Gyuri is laconic, the well-meaning journalist helps him out and puts his own words into Gyuri's mouth: "Did you have to endure many horrors?" to which I replied that it all depended what he considered to be a horror. No doubt, he declared, his expression now somewhat uneasy, I had undergone a lot of deprivation, hunger, and more than likely they had beaten me, to which I said: naturally'.³³

As the journalist keeps asking Gyuri why he insists on considering 'natural' what from his own perspective seems so obviously 'unnatural', Gyuri slowly realises 'that it seems there are some things you just can't argue about with strangers, the ignorant, with those who, in a certain sense, are mere children so to say'.³⁴ Here Kertész displays a semiotic problem that many survivors of the Holocaust have testified to, that is, the difficulty or even impossibility to bear witness to their experiences. According to Ernst van Alphen in his *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory* (1997), this can be explained neither by any intrinsic limitation of language, nor by the impossibility of representation per se. Instead, van Alphen locates the problem 'in the process and mechanisms of representation itself', and in so doing he maintains that the unrepresentability of the Holocaust – or any other traumatizing event – originates from the lack of 'narrative frames' already in place while *experiencing* the lived events. The difficulties readers encounter while following the storyline in Kertész's novel point to the difficulties of the author himself in representing his Holocaust experience.

Van Alphen's starting point is the difference between the experience and the event itself, the former being dependent on language:

I contend that the problem Holocaust survivors encounter is precisely that the lived events could not be experienced because language did not provide the terms with which to experience them. This unrepresentability defines those events as *traumatic*. The Holocaust has had a traumatic impact for many because it could not be experienced, because a distance from it in language or representation was not possible. ...

I would argue, in fact, that the problem of the unrepresentability of the Holocaust arose *during* the Holocaust itself, and not afterward when survivors tried to provide testimonies of it.³⁵

According to this perspective, the unrepresentability of survivors' experiences that is somewhat of a topos in Holocaust writing might be explained by the unavailability of adequate 'narrative frameworks' while living through the events.³⁶ Putting his own words into Gyuri's mouth, the journalist offers him such a framework, implying an unambiguous moral evaluation and assigning him the deplorable role as a victim of atrocities.

In his 1998 article 'Wem gehört Auschwitz?' Kertész maintains that survivors of the Holocaust 'wird belehrt, wie er über das denken muss, was er erlebt hat, völlig unabhängig davon, ob und wie sehr dieses Denken mit seinen wirklichen Erlebnissen übereinstimmt; der authentischen Zeugene ist schon bald nur im Weg, man muss ihn beiseite schieben wie ein Hindernis'.³⁷ This has, according to Michael Bachmann, some fatal consequences. Firstly, surviving victims will lose 'the rights to their memory'. Secondly, by insisting 'on their sole claim' to representation, as Kertész puts it in his *Dossier K.*, surviving victims limit the importance of the Holocaust to one that will die with them.³⁸

Apparently genuinely interested in the 'horrors' that slowly start coming to light, the journalist asks Gyuri to give him an 'account' of his experiences so that he will be able to tell 'the whole world' about 'the hell' of the camps. Offering him 'some money' – that is, giving in to the literary market – the journalist sees an opportunity to write a number of articles about Gyuri's experiences at the 'threshold of my "new life"'. In this way, he wants to enlighten and mobilise public opinion in order to come to terms with "apathy, indifference, and even doubts". Admitting that this journalistic enterprise might be considered slightly 'tactless', he hands over a note with his name and address to Gyuri, who, however, immediately throws it away.³⁹

As has already been indicated, Gyuri's reason for turning down this offer is that the narrative framework offered by the journalist in no way corresponds to the way he has experienced his detention in Buchenwald and other concentration camps. If he had agreed to cooperate, the outcome, presumably, would have been a tearful testimony using 'hell' as its main overarching symbol. Most likely, the starting point would have been 'the normal life of the survivor' preceding the Holocaust, before proceeding to 'life during the war', 'the deportation', 'camp life', 'liberation' and, finally, 'a comforting closure to a horrible

crisis'. According to van Alphen, these are some of the constituent parts in a recurring narrative framework that are triggered by questions often used in interviews with survivors of the Holocaust.⁴⁰

Although he perfectly understands the intentions of the journalist, Gyuri feels neither at ease with such a framework, since he himself is 'not acquainted with the hell', nor can he imagine what 'that was like'. To Gyuri, it is obvious why 'they' – that is, people who personally have not experienced the Holocaust – feel obliged to use the hell symbol: for them it is impossible to understand.⁴¹ Such linguistic conventions, however, threaten to distort what Kertész in his 1998 article referred to as the 'authentic experiences' of survivors. Discussing the film *La vita è bella*, in which Italian director Roberto Benigni employs the comedy genre, Kertész maintains that this – even in its details – is an authentic representation of the Holocaust, but above all when it comes to the 'soul' or 'spirit' of the film.⁴²

In Gyuri's conversation with the journalist, Kertész further elaborates on a certain experience that, in his view, has to be properly rendered in any 'authentic' representation of the Holocaust. The experience of time is at stake, which in turn affects Kertész's choice of genre: novel instead of autobiography. Requested by the journalist to imagine what the 'hell' could be like, Gyuri assumes that it is a place where it is impossible to get bored. Concentration camps, however, constitute a sharp contrast.

First, it is uncertain how the period of incarceration will actually turn out. The initial experience might lull the victims into a kind of security when arriving 'in a not exactly opulent but still, on the whole, agreeable, neat, and clean station, where everything becomes clear only gradually, sequentially over time, step-by-step'. Victims are kept busy by the camp guards, and Kertész's ironic conclusion is that this enhances the possibilities to survive. Discussing some of the absurd or tragicomic scenes in Benigni's film, Kertész states that a certain amount of self-deceit helped victims to survive: *'Man roch den Gestank des verbrannten Fleisches und wollte doch nicht glauben, dass das wahr sein könnte. Lieber suchte man Überlegungen, die zum Überleben verlockten'*.⁴³

The constant activity that is forced upon the inmates, the slave labour they had to carry out and their struggle to stay alive is the second reason why, according to Gyuri, it is impossible to become bored in Auschwitz. There was no spare time: inmates were invariably occupied. A new demand was to be carried out 'at each new stage'. This resulted in a sequencing of the time, however, that helped the victims to endure the incarceration: 'Were it not for that sequencing in time, and were the entire knowledge to crash in upon a person on the spot, at one fell

swoop, it might well be that neither one's brain nor one's heart would cope with it'. According to Kertész, there was no time for reflection or consideration in a concentration camp. There were so many things happening all the time. After Gyuri's efforts and elaborated explanations to why concentration camps can thus hardly be considered boring places, the journalist admits that on his part "it's impossible to imagine it".⁴⁴

As stated above, Gyuri's experience of time in the concentration camp, which he cannot make the journalist understand, might be considered an explanation to Kertész's choice of genre in *Fatelessness*. The step-by-step experience is of crucial importance. Apparently, the author feels obliged to do literary justice to this very experience. As stated above, formally *Fatelessness* is a novel. In an often-quoted paragraph from his *Galley Boat-Log*, Kertész maintains that '*Das Konzentrationslager ist ausschliesslich als Literatur vorstellbar, als Realität nicht. (Auch nicht – und vielleicht sogar dann am wenigsten –, wenn wir es erleben.)*'.⁴⁵ Why, then, has Kertész refrained from overt autobiographical writing, that is, the single most preferred genre within Holocaust literature? Where, as Sue Vice concludes in her *Holocaust Fiction* (2000), 'critical preference for testimony over fiction has become such a truism that it is hard to find any voices dissenting from it'.⁴⁶ Kertész's decision to refrain from the genre of autobiography might, as Bachmann suggests, be considered in the light of Primo Levi's distinction between the 'true witnesses' of the Holocaust, which in Levi's view are those victims who were murdered, and those saved, the latter category speaking as deputies in their stead. Autobiography is only for the true witnesses. Additionally, fiction is a way of coming to terms with the traumatizing events of the Holocaust.⁴⁷

There are, however, additional reasons behind Kertész's decision to dismiss self-referential genres such as 'testimony' and 'autobiography'. Dwelling on some recurring features and silent assumptions of these genres makes this decision obvious. Firstly, the narrative perspective: in an autobiography, someone is looking back on his or her life. According to French theorist Philippe Lejeune, the outcome is a 'retrospective narrative in prose'.⁴⁸

Secondly, this implies a distinction between the experiencing 'I' and its narrating counterpart, between what Smith and Watson term the "'I"-then' and the "'I"-now'. It also implies a 'separable and isolatable past that is fully past',⁴⁹ which thus can be grasped, interpreted and finally transmitted to the readers. A life narrative, particularly the autobiography, relies heavily on the so called 'Enlightenment subject', that is, a firm belief in the autonomous individual – 'the sovereign self' – that is fully able to survey its existence in its totality and account for its decisive

moments and importance. This view has, of course, been challenged. As Bachmann has stated, life writing ‘presupposes a self-determined individual’. Kertész, however, describes how individuality is lost in totalitarian regimes, causing people to be *fateless*: “‘It is a characteristic trait of dictatorships to disown man from his fate ... to depersonalize him’”.⁵⁰

Referencing his essay ‘Die exilierte Sprache’ (2000), Kertész explains that his rejection of the autobiography or other modes of life narratives is partly due to his experience of having already lost his language before his deportation. This loss was an unconscious protest against, and consequence of, the anti-Semitic tendencies in Hungary prior to the Holocaust. It meant giving up the language used to stigmatize Jews as worthy of being exterminated: ‘eine Sprache, die die Sprache der anderen ist, eine Sprache, die die Bewusstseinswelt einer gleichmütig weiterfunktionierenden Gesellschaft ist, eine Sprache, in der der Ausgestossene immer Sonderfall, Stein des Anstosses, Fremder bleibt’.⁵¹ The language used to single out Kertész and his fellow Jewish victims – what he terms the ‘pre-Auschwitz-language’⁵² – is useless for the representation of his Holocaust experience. Thus, Kertész adopts a sceptical attitude towards conventions grounded ‘in pre-Auschwitz-language’ and using ‘pre-Auschwitz-concepts’.⁵³ To Kertész, this is impossible: the Holocaust cannot be properly represented in a traditional autobiography, since it is rooted in a conception of the world that came to an end in Auschwitz. Instead, he is calling for another language, a language that breaks away from all traditions and literary conventions: ‘*Was für eine Sprache ist das? Ich habe sie, zu meinen Gebrauch, mit einem Fachwort aus der Musik als atonale Sprache bezeichnet. Sehen wir nämlich die Tonalität, die einheitliche Tonart, als eine allgemein anerkannte Konvention an, dann deklariert Atonalität die Ungültigkeit von Übereinkunft, von Tradition*’.⁵⁴

To sum up, the retrospective perspective of conventional autobiography cannot do justice to Kertész’s fundamental step-by-step experience in the camps: ‘By the time one has passed a given step, put it behind the next one is already there. By the time one knows everything, one has already understood it all. And while one is coming to understand everything, a person does not remain idle: he is already attending to his new business, living, acting, moving carrying out each new demand’.⁵⁵ There was no time for reflection, introspection or explanation, that is, some of the defining mental activities within autobiographical writing, hence the decision to refrain from writing modes permeated by such activities. For Kertész, his choice of genre is a question of being faithful ‘in language and form, to the subject at hand’.⁵⁶ Once the Holocaust enters the public sphere, its institutionalization and ritualization

threaten to estrange people from the event. What Kertész is aiming at is a type of 'defamiliarization', thus allowing readers to be freed from 'the Holocaust-reflex'. He complains about survivors being educated on how to represent and think about their experiences, regardless of whether this way of thinking corresponds to their own experiences or not.⁵⁷

When commenting on *Fatelessness* after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kertész reiterated that living in Communist post-war Hungary was a prerequisite for it to be written. That comment bears a typical and unmistakable Kertészian bitterness and irony, a recurring device in the author's whole oeuvre.⁵⁸ First of all, Kertész states that what made him refrain from committing suicide (as Holocaust survivors such as Paul Celan and Primo Levi did) was the fact that he returned to his native country. Here, Stalinism made it clear to him that there was no room for freedom, emancipation and 'great catharsis'. As a survivor of the Holocaust in Hungary, Kertész did not experience the dilemma of Holocaust survivors living in the West, where such freedoms were considered every citizen's right, for survivors, however, often a 'duty' that they could not fulfill. Kertész was not hit by the waves of disappointment that swept over survivors in Western democracies. According to Kertész, life in Hungary meant a continuation of his incarceration in the camps of the Third Reich. Paradoxically enough, the loss of every illusionary freedom granted him a kind of 'redemption'.⁵⁹

Secondly, Kertész paradoxically maintains that living in a 'relatively limited, rather tired, even decadent dictatorship' even provided him as an author with the necessary requirements to write the book, helping him to over and over again experience the concentration-camp atmosphere: 'The nausea and depression to which I awoke each morning led me at once into the world I intended to describe. I had to discover that I had placed a man groaning under the logic of one type of totalitarianism in another totalitarian system.'⁶⁰ Placing German Nazism and the Kádár regime of the 1960s on an equal footing may, according to Louise O. Vasvári, be 'a seemingly outrageous claim', and 'one must take into account in the context that, along with a number of other Central and Eastern European writers under Communism, Kertész disguised his work about totalitarianism as an examination of Nazism'.⁶¹ Furthermore, he argues, living and writing in one totalitarian system provided him with a proper language for the representation of the Holocaust experience: '*Denn nirgendwo ist so offenkundig, dass die Sprache "nicht für dich gedacht ist und nicht für mich" wie im totalitären Staat, wo das Ich und das Du nicht existieren und das beliebteste Personalpronomen das mystische und bedrohliche "Wir" ist.*'⁶²

Kertész's choice to refrain from traditional autobiographical writing in order to do justice to his step-by-step experience – the fact that the perpetrators kept him and his inmates busy, thus making any reflection possible – also means that there are almost no clear-cut, moral condemnations of the perpetrators in *Fatelessness*. This, of course, was scandalous in post-war Communist Hungary, but it also poses difficulties for young adult readers today, for instance in Sweden. Making a young teenager a narrator and focalizer is an appropriate device, but which at the same time entails that the relation of the story might be considered 'naïve' in style.

The victims' role – resistance and/or cooperation

After having said goodbye to the journalist, Gyuri makes his way to the apartment block where he used to live before he was deported. Everything looks just as it did in the old days, except for the fact that an unknown family has moved into the Köves family's apartment. These strangers try to convince him that he is mistaken and that they themselves and nobody else are living here. On his way out, Gyuri stops by some of his former non-Jewish neighbours. In spite of his appearance, they recognize Gyuri at first sight and ask him to join them. Now he learns of the death of his father in the concentration camp Mauthausen and of his mother's marriage to the man who had taken care of the family business during the last year of the war.

At the sight of Gyuri, the neighbours start complaining about the conditions under which they themselves have been living since he was deported. Listening to this somewhat confused recounting of their own experiences makes Gyuri frustrated, in particular their recurrent use of the expression 'came about'. For instance, 'the yellow-star houses "came about"', October the fifteenth "came about", the ghetto "came about", the Danube-bank shootings "came about", liberation "came about".⁶³ To Gyuri it seems as if a great number of significant events, taking place over a long period of time, are condensed into one single, unimaginable episode that just 'came about'. Strongly opposed to such a description which he feels reduces individuals to passive objects, Gyuri tries to convince the neighbours of their more or less active role in these events. Finally, they admit that they 'too had taken one step at a time'.

Even in Auschwitz, Gyuri maintains, the victims had been 'taking steps'. He concludes that 'it was just not quite true that the thing "came about"; we had gone along with it too. Only now, and thus after the event, looking back, in hindsight, does the way it "came about" seem

over, finished, unalterable, finite, so tremendously fast, and so terribly opaque'.⁶⁴ The neighbours do not feel at ease. To acknowledge that they themselves have been taking steps means admitting that other possibilities of action theoretically were available. To Gyuri it is obvious that he himself has lived through his 'fate', that is, the deportation and incarceration in the different camps, even if it was not *his* fate, as it was not his choice to leave Budapest: 'I took the steps, no one else'.⁶⁵

The above questions brought up by Gyuri concerning the experience of time and the role of the individual in a course of events brings to the forefront the responsibility of victims as well as the relationship between victims and perpetrators. All of a sudden, the implications of Gyuri's view are clear to his former neighbours. They feel obliged to defend themselves: 'What he bawled, his face red as a beetroot and beating his chest with his fist: "So it's us who're the guilty ones, is it? Us, the victims?"'⁶⁶ Gyuri, however, persists with his argument of them 'merely' not being 'innocent'.⁶⁷ Once again he says goodbye, leaving the neighbours in profound mistrust.

As stated above, here Kertész distorts the usually distinct boundary between the victims of the Holocaust and their perpetrators. His recurrent expression 'I took the steps' refers to a certain experience brought about by dictatorial regimes. To some extent, the individual is indoctrinated by the prevalent political ideology, and this holds true even for those individuals intended as targets or victims of the ruling party. In his article on the language in exile, Kertész recites a childhood memory. Already as a young boy, he was tormented by a feeling of being part of a universal lie that, in fact, was actually true. He himself was to blame for experiencing it as a lie. Many years afterwards, he came to realize that this dual experience was an 'unconscious protest' against the ruling ideology. In the pre-Fascist Hungarian society of the 1930s, Gyuri and many other Hungarians found themselves, to their surprise, defined as Jews. According to *Fatelessness*, 'Jewish' as well as other identities are cultural constructs.⁶⁸ Gyuri consequently states that being Jewish means 'nothing to me at least, at the beginning, until those steps start to be taken. None of this is true, there is no different blood'.⁶⁹ Being defined as a Jew against his will, he started to deny himself, a self-denial that was even rewarded in school. In the end, the young boy, paradoxically enough, is part of a conspiracy against his own life. In this context, Kertész quotes a paragraph from his own autobiographical and metafictional novel *Fiasko* from 1988:

Mal mit liebevollen Worten, mal mit strenger Ermahnung brachte man mich zur Reife, um mich auszurotten. Ich protestierte nie, ich war

*bestrebt, alles zu tun, wozu ich imstande war: Mit schlaffer Gutwilligkeit versank ich ohnmächtig in der Neurose meiner Wohlerzogenheit. Ich war ein bescheiden strebsames, sich nicht immer untadelig verhaltendes Glied in der sich schweigend gegen mein Leben zusammenbrauenden Verschwörung.*⁷⁰

Many years later, in the opening paragraph of his 2002 Nobel lecture, Kertész attests to the lasting effect of dictatorial regimes penetrating the minds of their citizens.

From the moment I stepped on the airplane to make the journey here and accept this year's Nobel Prize in Literature, I have been feeling the steady, searching gaze of a dispassionate observer on my back. Even at this special moment, when I find myself being the center of attention, I feel I am closer to this cool and detached observer than to the writer whose work, of a sudden, is read around the world. I can only hope that the speech I have the honor to deliver on this occasion will help me dissolve the duality and fuse the two selves within me.⁷¹

For individuals being targeted as 'Jews' against their will or to their surprise, protests against the round-ups when Jews were brought together in preparation for final deportation may seem unnecessary or even improper. In *Fatelessness*, such operations work very smoothly. After having checked their identity and referring to an absence of further orders, one single police officer is able to lock up a great number of Jewish boys without any protests or resistance: 'Even if this was not entirely clear, in essence it all sounded, as the boys and I thought, quite reasonable. In any case, we were obliged to defer to the policeman, after all'.⁷² Gyuri is more confused than upset or scared, as the large-scale dimension of preparations for the deportation is obvious to everybody: 'I felt a bit like laughing, in part out of astonishment and confusion, a sense of having been dropped slap in the middle of some crazy play in which I was not entirely acquainted with my role'.⁷³

Kertész's depiction in *Fatelessness* of the smoothly orchestrated deportation process, with almost no resistance from the Jewish victims – Gyuri himself taking the steps – is confirmed by historian Randolph L. Braham. Like in other countries occupied by Nazi Germany, Jewish Councils played a decisive role in the implementation of the so-called Final Solution in Hungary. Although Jewish leaders were very well informed about what was going on, they, according to Braham, 'lulled

the masses into a false sense of security; distributed internment summons that cost the lives of hundreds of professionals; effectuated the sequestration of the Budapest Jews in special star-marked buildings; requisitioned apartments; and surrendered large amount of money and valuables'.⁷⁴ Through these means, the Jewish leadership hoped to win time, convinced as they were that the Nazis soon would be defeated. Consequently, Braham writes, the 'Jews of Hungary were essentially helpless and defenceless'.⁷⁵ In post-war Communist Hungary, however, authorities maintained that the Nazi perpetrators were confronted by strong resistance. This touched-up history might in turn explain the difficulties and ignorance Kertész had to face when trying to be honest to his own Holocaust experience.

Conclusion

Imre Kertész's novel *Fatelessness* both resembles and deviates from most mainstream Holocaust literature. On the one hand, the plot is made up by many of the genre's mandatory events. On the other, Kertész's main character and narrator might upset readers for the reason that he does not reflect on and react to the Nazi atrocities the way readers, accustomed as they are to explicit condemnations of the perpetrators in mainstream Holocaust film and literature, expect him to. Drawing on Kathleen McCormick in her *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English* (1994), one can conclude that the 'repertoire of the text' does not always match the 'repertoire of readers'.⁷⁶ This holds true for many of the Swedish young adult readers who received the novel for free.⁷⁷ One reason is that *Fatelessness* was written during a dictatorial regime by an author who sought to challenge that regime.

The narrator of *Fatelessness* might be considered a rhetorical device for challenging readers' expectations. In an online interview a couple of years before he was awarded the Nobel Prize, Kertész stated, 'I wished to traumatize the reader. The conception of my work is based on the premise that the fear, the loss of footing, which is cited as a lacking in the narrator ... should be found in the reader'.⁷⁸ The outcome is a challenge to established and popular representations of the Holocaust.

Notes

1. Kornélia Koltai, 'Imre Kertész's *Fatelessness* and the Myth about Auschwitz in Hungary', in Louises O. Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (eds), *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), p. 128.

2. Susanne Schneider, *Läsaren och Förntelsen. Gymnasieelevers reception av Imre Kertész Mannen utan öde* (The Reader and Holocaust. High School Students' Reception of Imre Kertész's Fatelessness) (Växjö: Växjö universitet, 2008), pp. 49–55.
3. See http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2002/index.html (accessed 1 December 2010).
4. Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness: A Novel* (1975), transl. Tim Wilkinson (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 113.
5. Klas-Göran Karlsson, 'The Holocaust As a Problem of Historical Culture', in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds), *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003), p. 15.
6. Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992), pp. 256–259.
7. Bettina von Jagow, 'Representing the Holocaust: Kertész's Fatelessness and Benigni's *La vita è bella*', in Vasvári and de Zepetnek (eds), *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, p. 76.
8. Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, condensed ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), p. 19.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–253.
11. Enikő Molnár Basa, *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, in Vasvári and de Zepetnek (eds), *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, p. 12. See also Sara D. Cohen, 'Imre Kertész, Jewishness and the Choice of Identity', p. 25 in the same volume.
12. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography. A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 3.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.
14. See, for example, von Jagow, 'Representing the Holocaust', p. 76.
15. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 238.
16. See Imre Kertész, *Galeerentagebuch* (1992), German transl. (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1993), p. 48: '*Eine vom Schriftsteller geschaffene Figur ist kein lebendiges Wesen, sondern nur eine Puppe: Schwachsinn also, sie wie ein lebendiges Wesen zu behandeln*'.
17. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 240.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
21. I use the concept 'historical culture' to designate 'instances of public attention to, or commemoration of, historical events and personalities in a certain country in a certain period'. See Kristian Gerner, 'Hungary, Romania, the Holocaust and Historical Culture', in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds), *The Holocaust on Post-War Battlefields. Genocide and Historical Culture* (Lund: Sekel, 2006), p. 225.
22. Imre Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache. Essays und Reden. Mit einem Vorwort von Péter Nádas*, German transl. Kristin Schwamm et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), p. 152.
23. Gerner, 'Hungary, Romania, the Holocaust', pp. 227–228.
24. Cohen, 'Imre Kertész', p. 25.
25. Gerner, 'Hungary, Romania, the Holocaust', p. 230.

26. Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache*, p. 57.
27. Koltai, 'Imre Kertész's Fatelessness', p. 125.
28. Imre Kertész, *Fiasko* (1988), German transl. (Berlin: Rowohlt), pp 70–71.
29. Koltai, 'Imre Kertész's Fatelessness', p. 127.
30. Vasvári, *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, pp. 259–260.
31. Gerner, 'Hungary, Romania, the Holocaust', p. 250.
32. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 247
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., pp. 247f.
35. Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 44. Italics as in the original.
36. Ibid., p. 53. See also p. 54.
37. Imre Kertész, 'Wem gehört Auschwitz?', Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache*, p. 149.
38. Michael Bachmann, 'Life, Writing, and Problems of Genre in Elie Wiesel and Imre Kertész', *Rocky Mountain Review* 63 (1) (Spring 2009), p. 86.
39. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, pp. 251f.
40. van Alphen, *Caught by History*, pp. 53–54.
41. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 250.
42. Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache*, p. 153: 'Die Authentizität [in Benigni's Film *La vita è bella*] steckt zwar in den Details, aber nicht unbedingt den gegenständlichen. [- - -] Hier geht es um etwas anderes: Der Geist, die Seele dieses Films sind authentisch'.
43. Ibid., p. 154.
44. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, pp. 249f.
45. Kertész, *Galeerentagebuch*, p. 253.
46. Sue Vice, *Holocaust Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 5.
47. Bachmann, 'Life, Writing, and Problems of Genre', p. 80.
48. Philippe Lejeune quoted in Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 2.
49. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 58.
50. Bachmann, 'Life, Writing, and Problems of Genre', p. 86.
51. Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache*, p. 210.
52. Ibid., p. 212.
53. Ibid., p. 211.
54. Ibid., p. 212.
55. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 249.
56. 'Imre Kertész: Heureka!' (Nobel Lecture, 7 December 2002), <http://www.svenskaakademien.se/web/543e8363-157e-454e-82bf-f5eb65461231.aspx?UsePrintableVersion=true> (accessed 6 August 2010).
57. Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache*, p. 149.
58. Sára Molnár, 'Imre Kertész's Aesthetics of the Holocaust', in Vasvári and de Zeptenek, *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, p. 163.
59. Kertész, *Galeerentagebuch*, pp. 310–311.
60. 'Imre Kertész: Heureka!'
61. Vasvári, *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, p. 260.
62. Kertész, *Die exilierte Sprache*, p. 214.
63. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 255.
64. Ibid., p. 257.
65. Ibid., p. 259.
66. Ibid.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 36–38.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 258f. See also Kertész, *Galleerentagebuch*, p 54: 'Ich habe nie daran gedacht, dass ich Jude bin, ausgenommen die Momente der Bedrohung. Doch trat mein Judentum dann nicht als etwas "Inneres" in Erscheinung, sondern immer nur als etwas Negatives, als eine Beschränkung, eine äußere Determinante – etwa so, wie sich der Mensch zwangsläufig einem Hai im Meer, einem Tiger im Dschungel gegenüber als lebendige Nahrung betrachtet'.
70. Imre Kertész, *A kudarc* (1988), quoted in *Die exilierte Sprache*, p. 209.
71. 'Imre Kertész: Heureka!'
72. Kertész, *Fatelessness*, pp. 43f.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
74. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, p. 86.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
76. Kathleen McCormick, *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 84–89.
77. Schneider, *Läsaren och Förintelsen*, pp. 73–77.
78. Kertész, Interview in *Magyar Narances*, quoted in Molnár Basa, 'Imre Kertész and Hungarian Literature', p. 13.

4

Ulrike and the War: World War II, Mass Dictatorship and Nazism in the Eyes of a German Girl

Bibi Jonsson

This chapter focuses on the 1975 novel *Ulrike och kriget* (*Ulrike and the war*) by the Swedish author Vibeke Olsson.¹ The main character – and narrator – Ulrike Beckenbauer, is a German girl living in Nazi Germany during the war. Consequently, the chapter deals with a fictive individual's experiences of daily life under a mass dictatorship during World War II. Ulrike is a convinced National Socialist, a Nazi, seemingly in love with the Führer, Adolf Hitler. She is also confident of a German victory. For a novel from the 1970s this is exceptional, as Swedish people at that time tended to look at the war almost exclusively from the Anglo-American point of view: post-war Sweden turned towards the United Kingdom and the United States while National Socialism (Nazism) was banned and Hitler rejected.

The main aim of this chapter is to analyse how everyday life in a dictatorial regime is depicted in a fictional story and how that representation forms the reader's notions of mass dictatorship and Nazism. The following questions arise: what does the author do to show the Nazis from the 'inside'? How is Ulrike's daily life depicted? What are her reactions to the Nazi regime – and to the Führer? How does she cope with the war? Is Ulrike a well-chosen representative of her gender, her class and her generation in so far as what we know today about conditions in Germany during the war?

The novel is fairly well known in Sweden. Since 1975, six editions of the book – often in series intended for young people such as 'Young Today' (1979) or in best-seller series such as 'Best Book Choice' (2002) – have been published by Bonniers, the most prestigious publishing house in Sweden. The book also came to be published in 1996 under the auspices of a state-financed project called 'En bok för alla' (A book for all), which promoted quality books at a low price.² Nevertheless, the

novel has never been translated into other languages. To illustrate what the narrator's voice sounds like, to the extent that this is possible in translation, I quote significant passages, which I have translated from the Swedish.

The publication of the novel in 1975 was a minor sensation as the author, born in 1958, was just 17 years old at the time. The novel was greeted with great enthusiasm, and young Vibeke Olsson was voted 'the debutante of the year'.³ Her father, the well-known journalist Jan Olof Olsson, better known in Sweden as 'Jolo', had just a year previously written a novel about the so-called period of preparedness in Sweden during World War II. It is possible that he assisted his daughter with the historical facts. It should be mentioned, however, that Vibeke Olsson's novel is not a historical account of the war as such, but rather an account of an individual's experiences of daily life during the war.⁴

Swedish authors of the 1970s favoured social realism, and children's books often dealt with experiences of daily life. In this respect, *Ulrike and the war* was quite typical, and the book was aimed primarily at a teenage readership; after all when the story begins, Ulrike is just 12 years old. It is also typical in that it is set during the wartime years. Swedish historians such as Hans Villius focused on Sweden's role in the war, documenting it to a certain extent in writing and in TV-productions. Jolo's 1974 novel mentioned above, *Någonstans i Sverige* (Somewhere in Sweden), was turned into a popular TV-series in the mid-1970s. But the war was also dealt with from an international perspective. In 1978, the TV-series *Holocaust* revisited Nazi politics, especially by bringing to the screen the horrors of 'the final solution' to Swedish viewers. The Germans, especially the Nazis, were always depicted as 'the bad losers'. Although Sweden remained neutral during the war, Swedish people in general considered, and still consider, that they belonged to 'the winning side', the Allies.

When I myself read the novel at the age of 15, just after it was published for the first time, I had only 'experienced' the war from this angle. Reading the novel was my first introduction to a depiction of everyday life in Germany during the war. I had never before thought of the Nazis as real people, who went to school, to work and who were involuntarily sent to war. That also seems to have been the case with Vibeke Olsson. When interviewed about her novel, she stressed that she particularly wanted to describe the war from a German's point of view: 'There has been a lot of writing about World War II, but almost nothing about how the Nazis themselves experienced it.'⁵

That the Germans in the 1970s, three decades after the war, were treated with suspicion by Swedish people is evident in the opinion of

one of the novel's reviewers, who was surprised to find that a Swedish teenager 'pleads for the cause of the horrible losers'.⁶ Another reviewer affirmed that she and her friends, from the same generation, were formed by the war experience, even if Sweden had not taken part in it: 'Even the word Nazi is hard for us to cope with. We cannot even imagine the people behind Nazism, like Ulrike.'⁷

As the young Ulrike is the narrator, the narrative style appears 'childish' or naïve to a grown-up reader. To a teenager, however, this perspective seems to make it more trustworthy and convincing. Yet this may also be seen as a problem. Anders Sjöbohm stated in his review when the book was published that he was afraid teenagers would not be able to understand what was wrong with Ulrike's opinions. He feared that young people of future generations would have too little knowledge of the war, and of the Nazis, to be able to see through her opinions: while we know that Ulrike has been fooled and indoctrinated, he argues, *Ulrike* does not. 'How much knowledge about the Nazis can you presume, especially of young people', he asks, suggesting that the illusion in certain places should be broken and real historical conditions be included.⁸ Sjöbohm does not mention the irony, which may also be difficult for young people to understand. Other reviewers compare Olsson's use of irony with that of the German author Heinrich Böll.⁹

A secondary aim of this chapter is to consider how today, 35 years later, *Ulrike and the War* is being read by teenage pupils. By referring to recently published reviews on Internet sites, I will reflect upon the question if Sjöbohm was right or wrong. One of these sites is called skolarbete.nu (schoolwork.now). Sometimes reviews are also to be found on personal reading lists such as *Annas bokhylla* (Anna's bookshelf). All quoted reviews by teenagers come from the latter part of the 2000s. Judging from these reviews, the narrator of the novel has been so convincing that many readers forget that Ulrike is a fictional person. They reflect upon her behaviour and her actions as if she were real. They also seem to think that the novel describes reality 'as it was'. One reviewer concludes: 'I thought the book was quite good, as you get to know what things were really like during the war.'¹⁰

How, then, are 'things' described? It is necessary to begin by examining who Ulrike, the protagonist, 'is'. Born in 1927, she had by the time the war ended lived through six years of war and 12 of mass dictatorship – all this during the formative years of her life. At the end of the war, Ulrike realizes that she can hardly remember peace, and as a consequence, she is much more afraid of peace than war. For her there is no peace, 'only the end'.¹¹ She was still a child when the war began,

she argues, and now she is 18: 'Between 12 and 18 is an unaccountably long time, longer than any other six-year-period in life.'¹² We can conclude that this fictional young woman has been deprived of probably the most important years of her life, let alone almost her whole family, her home and her beliefs – at least her faith in God. However, she never repudiates her earthly God – the Nazi leader, the Führer. Even after she has experienced hell – and finally she does realize that war really *is* hell – her belief in Adolf Hitler prevails.¹³ Obviously Vibeke Olsson mirrors the general opinion in Sweden at the time her novel was written: Germans were still considered to be Nazis. While the Allies forced the German people to renounce Nazism after the war, de-Nazification was not as easily achieved.

I will go on by examining how Vibeke Olsson describes Germany at war. The novel makes frequent use of historical and geographical details, which add to its realism. One of the reviewers at the time the novel was first published praised 'the feeling of authenticity and feeling of an eye-witness'.¹⁴ Local colour is provided from the start by a reference to the *Föhn*, the wind that blows through Munich, where the novel is set. Monuments and places like the statue of Bavaria, the *Theatinerkirche*, the *Residenz*, *Königsplatz* and the *Englischer Garten* further represent the city. Ulrike goes to *Marienplatz* on New Year's Eve, and reads the *Völkischer Beobachter*; originally a local Munich newspaper, it later became the main organ of the Nazi Party. Ulrike's father drinks *Sekt* and *Weinbrand* at the local *Bierstube*. Ulrike herself listens to a neighbour reading *Mein Kampf* aloud. Well-known German songs like 'Ach, Du lieber Augustin' and 'Das gibt's nur einmal' are played in the background and add to the atmosphere of time and place.

The fact that the novel is set in Munich has symbolic meaning, as the city was the birthplace of the Nazi Party. It was here that Hitler attempted to seize power for the first time and where he was arrested after the putsch in 1923; where he reorganized the Nazi Party and consolidated the movement; and it was also here where he met his fiancée, Eva Braun. In Ulrike's mind at least, Munich has the status of 'the capital of the Nazi movement'. The Nazi movement also plays an important part in the novel for Ulrike is portrayed as a convinced Nazi. How representative of the German population at the time does that make her? The support for the Nazis among the general population has been much debated. It would seem that modern dictatorship presupposes mass support; that is, voluntary mobilization and participation of the masses are a prerequisite. Thereby, dictatorship from above transforms itself into a dictatorship from below. Furthermore, even if the dictatorship as

a political regime has long since been dismantled, its habitus still reigns in everyday practices. People maintain the same habits they had gotten used to under a dictatorial regime.¹⁵

In his chapter to this volume, Björn Larsson rhetorically asks how one can measure the degree of consent in dictatorships where inquiries of public opinion are banned.¹⁶ In reality, it is impossible to estimate the amount of support for a regime in a mass dictatorship. Ulrike's mother regrets having voted for the Nazis (as I suppose many Germans did), but by then it was too late. Almost immediately after having come to power, Adolf Hitler annihilated the democratic system – or what was left of it. An often-repeated argument is that the masses accept dictatorship out of fear. The Nazi regime undeniably used oppression and violence to terrorize Communists, Social Democrats, activists in the free trade unions, pacifists, as well as Jews, Gypsies, disabled people, male homosexuals, prostitutes, women who had sexual relations with 'racially inferior' men and so on.¹⁷ But on the other hand, it made life 'safe' for a lot of people who, in return, did support the Nazis: 'the regime was welcomed by many'.¹⁸ Admiration for the leader was widespread and 'the support for Hitler was genuine enough, and massive in extent'.¹⁹ In a mass dictatorship, power is often concentrated in a single person, and this was definitely so in the case of the Nazi regime. After all, it was not until Hitler had committed suicide that the war could finally be ended and the dictatorial regime overthrown. It would seem, therefore, that the masses did not support Nazism so much as Hitler himself. If and when there was discontent within German society, Hitler was excused for not knowing about it: 'if only the Führer had known' was a common remark. The negative features of daily life 'were not of the Führer's making. They were the fault of his underlings, who frequently kept him in the dark about what was happening'.²⁰ On the other hand, the Nazis' atrocities cannot be blamed solely on one person. The Nazi regime really did consist of evil perpetrators, but that does not mean that their subordinates were innocent.

Ulrike is portrayed as being indoctrinated by Nazi propaganda. As the Nazis specifically recruited youths, she could be considered a typical representative of the young generation in Germany at that time. Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that it was the male gender that dominated Nazi ideology and the Nazi movement. Women were also underrepresented in the Nazi vote until 1933.²¹

The female, thus, represents the exception in Nazi ideology, as the Nazis favoured men and supported patriarchal structures. In an introduction to *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship*, American historian

Karen Petrone and Korean historian Jie-Hyun Lim remark that mass dictatorship employs gender difference as a central mobilizing strategy.²² This also applies to the Nazi leaders, who emphasized gender differences and pronounced slogans such as: 'Men and women have been two separate beings since time immemorial, each with separate functions.' Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels proclaimed that they kept women 'out of the web of intrigue of parliamentary democracy' out of respect for them.²³ Women and men were supposed not to replace or substitute each other but to complement each other, not only biologically but also socially. This division into different spheres had to be later re-emphasized as war tends to destabilize gender norms, and the Nazi regime was obliged to encourage women to enter paid employment.

In recent years, however, the role of women in creating the Third Reich has come increasingly into focus. The American historian Claudia Koonz, one of the pioneers of studies on women and the Nazi regime, brings to light the controversies about women being perpetrators rather than victims.²⁴ This is also made clear in the novel, where the young girls do not at all act as passive spectators: Ulrike and her female school friends are just as engaged in Nazi activities as her male schoolmates would have been. As a young girl (we are told as if this fictional character had a life before the narrative begins), she joined the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM), a Nazi organization for girls. The organization, which had a counterpart in the *Hitler Jugend*, could be compared to the scout movement, though, of course, there are many differences; one is that the scout movement is international and the Nazi organizations were exclusively national: to join you had to be German – and Aryan. Membership was more or less compulsory, but Ulrike joins with enthusiasm.

In *Mothers in the Fatherland* (1987), Claudia Koonz asserts that space, although small, was given to a female public sphere in Nazism.²⁵ She has examined consumption practices and their relation to social support for the Nazi government.²⁶ It is certainly true that living conditions improved for many Germans under Nazi rule. But 'the good times were built on sand'. 'In reality, the Third Reich was incapable of settling into "normality".'²⁷ During the first years of dictatorship, people did not realize this. To gain the support of the masses, the Nazis immediately paid particular attention to welfare reforms. Pension benefits were raised, rent control was imposed and child allowances as well as health insurance were introduced.²⁸ Many people gave Hitler credit for improving living standards and for making more consumer goods available after the economic crises of the 1920s. When the Catholic priest who baptized Ulrike and presided over her first communion comes to her

mother to offer his condolences on her husband's death, he emphasizes that she was much poorer under the Weimar Republic. During the Nazi regime, she at least had bread for her children. The Nazis had thereby influenced her family's daily life. Mass dictatorship is not only 'hard power', but also 'soft', infiltrating the practices of everyday life.²⁹ Mass dictatorship encompasses everything from the official level to the private sphere. Nazi ideology definitely transcended the domestic sphere. Hitler loomed over his people from portraits hanging on living room walls as the omnipresent father of the *Vaterland*. 'Everyday life became politicized in Nazi Germany'.³⁰

Women must be included in any assessment of Nazism, because it has since become evident that women in particular were enamoured of Hitler. His power relied on what was considered to be his great authority, charm and charisma.³¹ Indeed, the power of a magnetic individual is at the heart of a dictatorial regime. Further, emotional support from the masses is what forms mass dictatorship. To mobilize the masses you need to make them love their Nation and their leader/s.³² Similar to women who are said to have even fallen in love with Hitler, Ulrike seems definitely to be in love with her leader. When Hitler speaks on the radio, she feels he speaks solely and directly to her, 'only to *me*'. His voice leaves the masses, as well as her, spellbound. It 'forces itself into me. And then stays in there', she explains.³³ In the same exclusive way, he watches her from his portrait in the shelter during an air raid: 'The eyes of the Führer are very blue, and I think that he looks straight at me down here.'³⁴ Later on, when a bomb hits the shelter, everything turns black: 'Black, black and completely soft. And in the midst of the black softness stands the Führer and his eyes shine blue in the blackness.'³⁵ As in these two quotes, descriptions of Hitler often focused on his eyes; his gaze was steady and his irises were very blue. Blue eyes were the ultimate sign of Aryan heritage and were highly esteemed by the Nazis.

The great male leader standing 'erect' alone, without female company, might be a standard trope, forming one of the many myths of Adolf Hitler.³⁶ He abstained from marrying, as he did not want to risk weakening his intimate relationship with the German people, in particular women; he did not want to choose one of them, thereby making the others disappointed. Therefore Eva Braun, whom he finally married in the bunker before their mutual suicide, was never allowed to appear in public: 'Like a Catholic priest who lives in celibacy and gives his life to God, Hitler gave his life to serve the German people.'³⁷ It is interesting in retrospect to note that the biographer uses religious metaphors in his description, exactly the way the Nazis did. The cult built up around

Hitler – in an era when popular piety was still strong – had pseudo-religious strains.³⁸

With the passage of time, the Führer came to be considered as almighty as God among the masses, and many supporters even replaced God with Hitler himself. In schools, there was a morning prayer addressed to him starting with the line: ‘I love you as I love mother and father.’³⁹ On the evening when Ulrike’s mother has her last miscarriage, her father, on leave, brings three friends, three soldiers, one of them Paul, the owner of the local *Bierstube*, to their small apartment. Ulrike is furious as her drunken father proposes a toast for the ‘whole rotten hell of war’. She feels ill: ‘My father has obviously been contaminated by Paul’s godlessness.’⁴⁰ Paul’s rebellion against the Nazi regime is in Ulrike’s opinion a betrayal of God: Nazi politics for Ulrike is God’s plan. To rebel against the Führer is to rebel against God, she thinks.

At the beginning of the novel, Ulrike does believe in God, but mostly as part of her daily life. She asks forgiveness of God for enjoying the milkshake from the local bar where the traitors, her father’s friend Paul and Dyeveke Jonsen, work. Then Ulrike turns to God when she gets her first period, but after she realizes it is not dangerous, she forgets to pray. ‘Perhaps I was too happy to pray properly in the spring of 1941’, she considers in retrospect.⁴¹ The Lord’s Prayer is recited twice, in two different versions. On the first occasion, the first night of the war, Ulrike prays with her brother Helmut: ‘I pray very slowly, having heard that praying is important during war’.⁴² She reiterates that God is on the German side, and asks him to keep his hand over Munich.⁴³ On the other occasion, after the defeat, she scolds God, who has supported the Allies and rejected the Germans. (One of the anonymous reviewers on the Internet argues that Ulrike loses her faith in God as she realizes that God has listened to the prayers of the Allies but not to hers.)⁴⁴ Ulrike enters a burnt-out church. While praying, she furiously comments on the words in the prayer, one that she had unquestioningly recited with her brother at the beginning of the war. The result resembles a so-called stream of consciousness, where Ulrike’s thoughts wander uncontrolled, forming incoherent associations:

Our Father (*Our* Father, not the father of the enemies, no sorry, it is peacetime so there are no enemies, yes, I suppose there are...) who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come (the word ‘kingdom’ only reminds me of the Third Reich), thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (was *unconditional capitulation* your will? Answer me, answer me, good God!) Give us this day our daily bread

(we have potatoes, we can even have two meals tomorrow) and forgive us our trespasses, (forgive me for raising the white flag!) as we forgive those who trespass against us (are we to *forgive* the Allies???), and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, (from the Americans!) for thine is the kingdom (what kingdom? Not the Third Reich at least), and the power, and the glory (who has the power? Where is the glory?) forever and ever. Amen.⁴⁵

After her prayer, or more correctly, after her accusations, she overhears a voice praising God for defeating the Fascists. With fury she dejects his deity – not his existence – declaring: ‘I hate God.’⁴⁶

Hitler was a new deity, but just as strong, or even stronger among young people, who, as stated, were especially attracted to Nazism. Youths are easily indoctrinated and tend to look for a strong leader. It was from the military that the Nazis borrowed the leader principle, the *Führerprinzip*, which demands total obedience towards authorities.⁴⁷ The principle is axiomatic in the Nazi ideology, as in all hierarchic systems. According to the *Führerprinzip*, teachers play an important role in the formative years of young people in a mass dictatorship. Ulrike’s teachers seem to support the Nazi regime, at least at the beginning of the war. Her physics teacher praises Ulrike’s accomplishment in denouncing three traitors, and Fräulein Bach starts her physical education class with the compulsory ‘Good morning! *Heil Hitler!*’⁴⁸ Ulrike reflects on her teachers’ abilities, and in this process dismisses Fräulein Bach as an inappropriate leader, not even fit to lead a school class. ‘A person without authoritative qualities should not become a teacher’, Ulrike argues, and compares the teacher with ‘a tin of soup’. She wonders what the world would look like if politicians behaved like her.⁴⁹ She definitely demands a strong leader, a Führer.

When people around her start to doubt Hitler’s promises, Ulrike finds herself the only one clinging onto them. She reiterates his good intentions and unreserved abilities. On the first night of the war, she thinks that war is like a local derby in football: ‘die Löwen’ versus ‘Wacker München’ – the former almost always wins and everybody knows ‘exactly as I know that we are going to win the war as the Führer has promised’.⁵⁰ As late as in the spring of 1945, she still believes in a German victory: ‘As far as can be judged the Führer will soon land the final blow against the Allied forces.’⁵¹ As a final hope she explains: ‘The Führer exhorts all German soldiers to bravely go on fighting, and I know we will be victorious.’⁵² Without question Ulrike is one of *we* – the Germans. It is a historical fact that Hitler promised them a secret

weapon, forced them to persevere and forbade them to surrender. Ulrike's brother Gerd is killed in the *Volkssturm* – the people's militia proclaimed in October 1944 – at the tender age of 15, a boy soldier in a steel helmet too big for his small head.

Ulrike cries on hearing of Gerd's death, but only because he 'will not experience the final victory'.⁵³ Nor will her mother, who has died in an air raid. Ulrike is convinced that her brother Dieterich and she will.⁵⁴ Perhaps unconsciously though, Ulrike hesitates, omitting 'of course', when trying to convince herself of the final victory. 'But of course the Führer has said that we cannot get anything without paying', is turned into 'the Führer could not let the Allies occupy "the capital of the movement?"' – ending with a question mark.⁵⁵ Later on, when the Americans have occupied Munich, Ulrike is asked if she still believes in the final victory. 'Yes', she answers earnestly: 'The Führer will not let the Americans stay in "the capital of the Movement".' Then she adds: 'I look forward to the day when the Führer will go through the liberated city and get praised by us, the people.'⁵⁶

As we know the outcome of the war, it would be easy to reject the character of Ulrike as being too naïve to be taken as representative of a real 18-year-old. This would not be fair, however, as the adults around her have taught her to rely on the Führer and never question his authority. On the contrary, people around her praise her idealism. Her physics teacher honours her by saying she is 'a true National Socialist'.⁵⁷ The Catholic priest assures her that she is mature for her age and a fine representative of her people. She is the sort of person the Third Reich needs, he argues, even if she is just a girl or a young woman.

Reports of daily routines and practices in the novel are mingled with reports of historical events. It has been proved that when people in real life experience such events, they integrate them with the experiences of their personal actions; this also seems to be true in Ulrike's fictional case. Through her, we as readers are alerted to important dates. We meet Ulrike for the first time in her home in Munich on 3 September 1939, the day England and France declare war on Germany. Ulrike is alone with her two younger brothers as her father has been sent to war, and her mother is in hospital giving birth to her third son. The boys are sleeping in their cots, and everything is quiet and peaceful. She examines the map on the kitchen wall: Warsaw, Vienna, Prague, Berlin and London seem so far away, she thinks to herself, but in these cities there are probably also children looking at maps, wondering about Munich. The map comes to represent the war as Ulrike puts pins on places the German troops invade. To begin with, the troops are successful, and

she is enthusiastic. Her mother, on the other hand (from time-references given one works out she was born in 1900), who had experienced the Great War, declares that war is horrible. Ulrike objects, saying that the war is not horrible at all: 'everything is as it always is'.⁵⁸ She is unaware of the horrors to come.

The war predominates throughout the novel, but its events are not depicted in detail. Some milestones are mentioned, though. On New Year's Eve 1940, Ulrike sums up 'successes' in Norway, Denmark and France as 'victories everywhere'. The six English bomb attacks were the only sad things that occurred during the year. 'But actually they were mostly ridiculous and no one was killed', she assures us.⁵⁹ As the war escalates, the bombings become a part of everyday life. The odd bomb attack turns into systematic mass bombing and fire storms. Anti-aircraft defence exercises become real aircraft attacks. The routines of everyday life – the blackout, the extinguishing of street lights and placement of black blinds at windows – are unsettling to Ulrike as no one explains to her why they are needed: 'The Englishmen cannot bomb here, can they?'⁶⁰ Hunger is also increasingly mentioned, with ration coupons becoming another feature of daily life.

On her birthday, 6 April 1941, the German army invades Greece and Yugoslavia. In retrospect, Ulrike declares: 'I remember so clearly that evening when I heard it on the news. I had got a new dress as a birthday present ... Still if I smell the cloth, I think of the invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia.' Twenty-second of June that same year is another day to remember, Ulrike states, as this is the day Germany invaded the Soviet Union: 'I was 14 years old then. That day I had been to *Bayerischer Hof* and asked for a summer job.' As usual, she listens to the radio reports. The Führer promises that the Germans just need to kick in the front door and 'the whole of rotten Russia' will fall apart. At first, Ulrike wonders why the Soviet Union is 'rotten', but then she realizes that that is 'because of the Communists': 'In Communist states there is absolutely no freedom.'⁶¹ Of course, she is not able to reflect that the Nazi state in which she lives is as dictatorial as a Communist one; it would not have been realistic for the author to have endowed a 14-year-old with such an insight.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union heralded the beginning of the end of Hitler's almost uninterrupted military success, but, initially, the German army achieved its goal as usual: 'On the first of July we conquered Riga. Then came Minsk, Smolensk, Poltava and Kiev in rapid succession. I usually find it difficult to remember strange foreign names, but more than ever these Russian names stick, because I understand

how important they are for History.⁶² Ulrike obviously feels she is part of History. Later on, the German army suffers tremendous losses at Stalingrad. Ulrike's father is killed, along with the father of Johanna, and Paul, the owner of the *Bierstube*, and thousands and thousands of other German men. Stalingrad is not mentioned by name in the novel – just as a vague place 'over there'.⁶³ After Stalingrad, Ulrike's reports are not as detailed as before. Passing the Rhine would be an impossible task for the Soviet troops, she assures herself, and the Führer would never permit it. She admits though that 'they' (she abstains from mentioning the Allies by name) have landed in Normandy.⁶⁴ On 8 May 1945, she announces that the Russians have murdered the Führer, refusing to accept that he had committed suicide. We know as a historical fact that Hitler did, but she does not.

As previously stated, *Ulrike and the War* is not about the historical events connected to the war; it instead deals with daily life during wartime. This concerns questions of gender, class, ethnic or racial issues, sexuality and religion. Often they are intertwined. The description of Munich is not solely a description of place but a description of class. Around the *Frauenkirche*, at the main marketplace, and on *Prinzregentenstrasse*, far away from the suburbs where the Beckenbauer family live, the rich people reside. The family of Caroline, a classmate of Ulrike's, owns a nine-room apartment on *Prinzregentenplatz*. Comparing her living circumstances with that of her classmate, she observes that the Beckenbauer apartment would fit in their foyer.⁶⁵ As her family only has one room, she understands why the Germans need *Lebensraum*.⁶⁶ To us, the word represents the Nazi intention to conquer Eastern Europe; to her, it represents a place to live one's daily life.

The most extravagant people stay at *Bayerischer Hof*. They look like they come from the pages of a film magazine, bedecked as they are with a lot of jewellery. Ulrike wonders what her mother would look like in earrings and bracelets. Her parents having both worked in factories even before the war started, Ulrike realizes that they are poorly educated. Her father's letters from the front are badly spelt, and her mother leaves the writing to her daughter. Ulrike tells her father about school, about the weather and other 'trivial' events such as the news that Dieterich has learnt to walk and say 'thank you'. She does not mention the bombings and the food shortages. In this context, it should also be mentioned that the German people must have feared censorship.

While the Nazis made it a declared aim to destroy class consciousness and behaviour associated with it, they made no real attempt to eliminate class society and class differences. Rather, the question of ethnic or

racial belonging was more important. Ulrike learns anti-Semitism both in the BDM and at school, for example, when her form teacher assures her pupils that Jews are less worthy.⁶⁷ Racial discussions though are scarce in the novel. For her part, Ulrike seems to think that race is not such an important issue. Indeed, contrary to what we might imagine, ordinary Germans seem to have been quite indifferent to the racial question, notwithstanding, the Holocaust, the enormous consequences of which, in retrospect, have clouded a more accurate picture of the actual extent of anti-Semitism at the time.⁶⁸ Therefore, the disastrous anti-Semitism seems to be a phenomenon emphasized in retrospective, when the enormous consequences were summed up.

Schools in Sweden have since the 1970s taught the Holocaust fairly thoroughly, and thereby, of course, have influenced the opinions of those young reviewers quoted in this chapter. One such reviewer explains the situation with great simplicity: 'As Ulrike does not know of any other ideology than National Socialism, she does not feel that all people have equal value. Jews are not as worthy as Germans, Ulrike considers.'⁶⁹ Her anti-Semitism is described as axiomatic, and considering race seems to be quite natural to her. Reflecting on her looks, she admits that her nose is too big, but happily enough not in a Jewish way. She is most content with her chin, which has 'the typical Germanic square shape'.⁷⁰ After the occupation of Munich, Ulrike dwells on her insight that some of the American soldiers are of 'a dubious race'.⁷¹ She has also heard that 'fear is a mark of a bad race', and therefore she tries never to be frightened.⁷² Nevertheless, she attaches no real importance to the question of race, which is trumped instead by the question of nationality.

The Nazis no doubt played on nationalist zeal. Ulrike is a true nationalist and a keen patriot; she almost cries with emotion when she sings 'Die Fahne hoch'. It is probably true that songs play an important role in mobilizing mass support. 'Horst Wessel' and 'Wir fahren gegen Engelland', referred to in the text, were political songs. The national anthem, 'Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles', forbidden for many years in post-war Germany, is the most important song to Ulrike, and she sings it on three important occasions. The first one is on the first night of the war, when she demands of her brothers that they sing the anthem together with her. The second one is after the first, more serious air raid during the school day, when the headmaster proposes singing the anthem. The third occasion is when Germany is defeated, and Ulrike sings it in protest, as she knows it has been banned.⁷³

Not all the people around Ulrike support the Nazis, but those who do not keep quiet out of fear. In private, Ulrike's parents worry about the

outcome of the war, but they never express their fears to their daughter. They have reason to be careful: Ulrike twice acts an informer. She informs on three people in her neighbourhood to the Gestapo: Dyveke Jonsen, who works in the *Bierstube* nearby, and the Gühlers, who live in the backyard; the second time, she blows the whistle on her teacher. According to Ulrike, they are traitors of the worst kind, as they have betrayed their own country. Ulrike confesses that knowing them had made it a little harder to do so, but that one must let personal feelings take second place to doing what is right.⁷⁴ Here she obviously reflects a Nazi propaganda image. Neighbours denouncing neighbours, with or without proof, is perhaps the most common dread in mass dictatorships. Denouncing was often a way of resolving personal conflicts – the denouncers usually belonged to the same milieu as the denounced. Indeed, Gestapo sources predominately involved ‘those at the lower end of the social scale’.⁷⁵ Ulrike’s actions may be viewed as typical for the circumstances, but, in fact, not many children actually denounced their parents or other adults.⁷⁶

Going to the Gestapo, one surmises, must have been a frightening experience. Why then does the author make Ulrike do it? Dyveke Jonsen, her former baby sitter, who works at the local *Bierstube*, argues that all people have equal value, and in so doing, comes into conflict with Nazi ideas about inferior people. Ulrike states that Dyveke also propagates democracy, but that is, of course, something she is not familiar with. She connects it with Communism, thereby hinting that Dyveke is a Communist. Her strange ideas, Ulrike argues, may be a result of the fact that she is of foreign origin, from Schleswig-Holstein. As she had spoken Danish as a child, she is not a true German in Ulrike’s opinion. In my opinion, a reason why Ulrike denounces her is that she is the one serving beer to her father, thus making him drunk. In her imagined mind it is Dyveke’s fault that her father is a drunkard! Meanwhile, the Gühlers seem suspicious to Ulrike, simply because they have no children. All families in her working-class district have many, or even too many, children.

Her last ‘victim’, her schoolteacher, had fallen out of favour with Ulrike a long time ago, being deemed as unfit to lead. The final blow comes when the teacher affirms that Germany is about to lose the war: ‘Our country is a totally rotten mud that ...’ she suddenly blurts out before forcing herself to be quiet. After Ulrike reports her to the Gestapo, foreign newspapers and radios as well as two Jews in hiding are discovered in the teacher’s home. Ulrike remarks: ‘The old teacher could thereby be executed immediately, without interrogation.’⁷⁷ This

laconic remark seems to come from a person lacking in empathy and filled with self-confidence. This is not true. Ulrike is described as a teenager fighting with her lack of confidence. I think this makes her a typical representative of a girl of her age – whether the 1930s, 1970s or even today. Her idolizing and falling in love with someone she has never met – in this case, Hitler – and her faint sexual fantasies make her seem a genuine enough teenager.

The novel is also about a girl coming of age as a young woman. As her body develops, she worries about her looks. Her friend Anna has blond curls and blue eyes; she apparently looks like an ideal Aryan. Ulrike herself has brown, tangled, thin curly hair; too big a mouth; too big a nose and green-brown eyes; evidently she does not look Aryan at all. Anna has had a lot of boyfriends; Ulrike has had none. Nevertheless, sexuality plays an increasingly important role in her mind. Out of lack of experience, she refers to sexual intercourse as 'doing *that*'. Ulrike reflects that the Führer has nobody to do *that* with. Then she is ashamed of herself, as she should know that no woman is worthy of doing *that* with the Führer.⁷⁸ In the *Bierstube*, she repeatedly broods over Paul, the owner of the bar, missing Dyveke, and that he may have done *that* with a traitor.⁷⁹ When Mrs Bienmann goes into labour in the shelter, Mr Bienmann is distraught. Perhaps he suddenly realizes what agonies he has put his wife through seven times after having done *that* to her,⁸⁰ Ulrike contemplates. When her history teacher is shot down by the RAF, she considers the situation that his wife 'has no one left to do *that* with, because if you do not have a man or a wife you cannot do *that* without it being immoral or damaging'.⁸¹ It follows that Ulrike has probably been influenced by the Nazis' anti-eroticism. But while the latter declared that they wanted to cleanse society of the promiscuity that had developed during the relative sexual freedom of the 1920s, this did not really influence people's private fantasies.

Ulrike herself fantasizes about a man who would caress her 'in a very special way'; while she claims to have never experienced this, she can nevertheless imagine it. Preferably, he is an SS man, because the elite soldiers do not drink. As she considers herself unattractive, she doubts whether it is ever going to happen. She can only hope that her SS man has become tired of the blond Danish girls, disappointed with the Norwegian girls from the mountains or the large-eyed Russian partisan girls from the shores of the Volga, and thus longs for a German girl, 'ugly but chaste'. 'I would always be faithful to him, I would bear him many children and obey him', she promises.⁸² Obviously, she knows exactly what a Nazi woman is supposed to be like and how she is

supposed to behave. The official ideal prescribed that a woman should be beautiful, bear children of good race and give her husband a good home.⁸³ Beauty involved a racial aspect. The ideal woman was a well-built, tall, fair Nordic blond who had a body fit for bearing children. Joseph Goebbels, himself a father of six children, noted in his diary: 'It is the duty of women to look beautiful and to give birth.'⁸⁴ The official ideals, however, confront reality. Ulrike's mother wants a big family, but suffers several miscarriages because of food shortage and exhaustion.

In interviews in 1975, the author claimed that she thought the German people suffered worst during the Nazi regime and the war and that she wanted to inform Swedish people of this suffering.⁸⁵ In the 1960s and 1970s, this topic was never raised. It would seem that Swedish people forgot that, until the war turned against the Nazis in 1943, many of them had favoured Germany. The contacts and cultural exchanges forged between the two countries had always been strong. In the 1930s, German was the first foreign language taught at Swedish schools, and Germany the most important destination for Swedish tourists.⁸⁶ Sweden was deeply associated and aligned with Germany, and with the Nazis. Kerstin Bergman confirms my opinion in her chapter to this volume, arguing that Nazism had many supporters among ordinary Swedish people, including the major newspapers and the universities. Nevertheless, she continues, 'knowledge about Swedish wartime Nazism and relations with Germany remains relatively low among the general public'. The fact has only been discussed in public during the last few decades. According to Bergman, this is treated primarily in the genre of crime fiction.⁸⁷

One reviewer on the Internet compares *Ulrike and the War* with the famous diary of Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1952). Between June 1942 and August 1944, a young teenage German Jewish girl wrote a diary chronicling her life, which was found after her death in Bergen-Belsen and published by her father in 1947. The reviewer states that the diary is better 'because it is real', but concedes that Ulrike's fictional story is interesting as well. Anne Frank must have influenced Vibeke Olsson, the reviewer concludes, although Ulrike belongs to 'the other side'.⁸⁸ According to most Swedish people today, the right side was of course the Allies.

Reviewers get very upset when Ulrike praises the Nazi regime and the leader himself. The already quoted reviewer introduces Ulrike by stating that she is 'a German girl who supports Hitler and is totally brainwashed by Nazism', and then asserts that Ulrike 'listens to everything Hitler says and keeps it in her heart'. The argument continues that, 'even if everybody said that Ulrike was such a clever girl she did not understand

what an idiot Hitler was, as she had not had a chance to see things from another point of view'. Another young reviewer, Tekla, is less tolerant: 'It is so crazily weird that she tells us all the time how much she adores the Führer (Hitler) and how proud she is of being a German.'⁸⁹ Another young reviewer on the Internet, Anna, speculates on Ulrike's mind, but objects that 'sometimes Ulrike seems a bit too naïve'. Then she reflects upon why: 'Maybe it is because we did not get fed with the propaganda with which she was fed.' Anna supposes that the Nazis' lies made Ulrike blind to the consequences of the war.⁹⁰ One could of course argue that Ulrike was not blind at all, that she saw them in full proportion – or she would have done, if she had been a real person. Nonetheless, it is apparent that young Swedish readers clearly know which is the 'right side' to belong to – the Allies.

It would seem, therefore, that Sjöbohm need not have worried, as future generations have been taught at school that the Nazi regime was undemocratic and inhuman, especially towards the Jews, and that it was responsible for starting the war. The answer to my first question (what does the author do to show the Nazis from the 'inside?'), therefore, is that Vibeke Olsson, through the character of Ulrike, portrays the Nazi as a real person – she is explained, even though perhaps not forgiven. Since the war, the German people's guilt and responsibility for the horrors has been extensively discussed. In my opinion, it is impossible to study Nazism without including moral values. We did it in the 1970s, and we still do it.

Ulrike and the War has a motto, which is a quotation from the nineteenth-century American writer Henry Longfellow: 'If we could read our enemies secret story, we would in each life find sorrows and sufferings enough to take away our hatred.' Reading Ulrike's story arguably helps us to understand this. At the end of the novel, there is a passage that illustrates this and, at the same time, shows the difficulties in doing so. The situation is as follows: the American army has invaded and occupied Munich. On a hot day, an American officer offers Ulrike's brother an ice cream cone. While tempted to take it he decides to decline the offer, saying he will eat it when the officer brings his mother back. The officer says he is sorry and hands him a dollar. Ulrike angrily returns it, claiming that they are no beggars. Offended, the soldier mutters: 'Fucking Nazis!' Dieterich asks his sister why the officer said that: 'Because he hates us', she replies. Afterwards, she regrets having said this: 'I should not have said that. It is wrong to teach a five-year-old to feel hatred.'⁹¹

A year after the publication of *Ulrike and the War*, in 1976, a sequel entitled *Ulrike och freden (Ulrike and the Peace)* appeared.⁹² This novel

deals with Ulrike trying to adjust to living in peace and democracy. Having been used to living under a mass dictatorship, it is not easy for her to adapt to a democratic system. Dictatorship lingers in her brain, in her veins and in her heart. After de-Nazification she is still a Nazi, and indirectly a supporter of a dictatorial system, of mass dictatorship. The sequel ends in Sweden, where she is accused by neighbours of being responsible for the war and for the Holocaust. The Swedish man she is marrying consoles her: 'I also thought all Germans were Nazis' and then he goes on: 'I thought that until I met you.' These are the last words of the novel. Ulrike goes silent.

Notes

1. Vibeke Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget (Ulrike and the War)* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1975).
2. Also published by Bonnier, Stockholm, 1976, Bonniers juniorförlag, Stockholm, 1979 (Ung idag), Bonniers juniorförlag, Stockholm, 1983 (Önskeboken), Bonniers juniorförlag, Stockholm, 1989 (Önskeboken), En bok för alla, Stockholm, 1996, Bonnier Carlsen, Stockholm, 2002 (Bästa bokvalet).
3. Ulla Peterson, 'Vibeke och München' (Vibeke and Munich), *Vestmanlands Läns Tidning*, 1 October 1976.
4. Twenty years later, Vibeke Olsson wrote a novel for adults about growing up in Germany during the war. The story is told in retrospect from the perspective of a woman born in the early twenties, five years older than Ulrike and aged seventeen when the war begins. The title *Molnfri bombnatt (A Cloudless Night for Bombing)*, 1995) recalls the horrors of the air raids over the German cities in the early forties. The Americans arrived during the day, the English at night – but only when the weather permitted. The same situation is described in the story of Ulrike.
5. Barbro Westman, 'Jolos dotter författardebuterar' (Jolo's Daughter Makes Her Debut As Author), *Svenska Dagbladet*, 19 January 1975.
6. Ulf Wickbom, 'Färdiga debutanter' (Prepared Debutants), *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 October 1975.
7. Britt Ågren, 'Alla i Nazi-Tyskland kunde inte varit onda' (Everybody in Nazi Germany Could Not Have Been Evil), *Dagens Nyheter*, 4 October 1975.
8. Anders Sjöbohm, 'Skakande – men problematiskt – om nazismen' (Upsetting – but Problematic – about Nazism), *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfarts Tidning*, 20 February 1975.
9. Britta Ekvall, 'Ung mognad' (Young Maturity), *Uppsala Nya Tidning*, 21 October 1975; Wickbom, 'Färdiga debutanter'.
10. 'Ulrike och kriget' (*Ulrike and the War*), unsigned review, published 30 January 2009 at <http://skolarbete.nu/skolarbeten/ulrike-och-kriget/20100510> (accessed 16 December 2010).
11. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, p. 145. All translations, except for the Lord's Prayer, are my own. In some cases I stick to the German word, as does the author herself. It would not be fair to translate words like *Leberknödel* or *Lebensraum*.

- A *Bierstube* in Germany would seem to be quite different from a local pub in England.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
 14. Ulla Rhedin-Hammar, '15-åringens märkliga debut ger nyansrik bild av nazistflicka' (The Remarkable Debut of the 15-Year-Old Creates a Nuanced Picture of a Nazi Girl), *Göteborgsposten*, 6 November 1975.
 15. Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Series Introduction: Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship', in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone (eds), *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 2, 10.
 16. See Björn Larsson, 'Is Fictional Literature Incapable of Imagining the Shoah?' in this volume.
 17. Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society. Enforcing Racial Policy 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), p. 2; Eric A. Johnson, *The Nazi Terror, the Gestapo, Jews and Ordinary Germans* (London: John Murray, 2002), p. 19.
 18. Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, p. 10.
 19. Ian Kershaw, 'Foreword', *Hitler 1936–45: Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), pp. xxxix, xl.
 20. Bengt Liljegren, *Adolf Hitler* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2008), pp. 257–258 and 350–351; Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, p. 28.
 21. Anna Maria Sigmund, *Women of the Third Reich* (1998), (Ontario, 2000), pp. 7–12; Maria Blomquist and Lisa Bjurwald, *God dag kampsystem. Kvinnorna i extremhögern* (Be Greeted Sister in Battle. Women in the Extreme Right) (Stockholm: Atlas, 2009), p. 58.
 22. Karen Petrone and Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Introduction: Meandering between Self-empowerment and Self-mobilisation', in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone (eds), *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 25–28.
 23. Sigmund, *Women of the Third Reich*, p. 11.
 24. Petrone and Lim, 'Introduction', p. 28.
 25. Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (New York: St. Marin's Press), 1987.
 26. Petrone and Lim, 'Introduction', p. 28.
 27. Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, pp. xl, xlvi.
 28. Liljegren, *Adolf Hitler*, pp. 338–339.
 29. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 10.
 30. Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, p. 147.
 31. Liljegren, *Adolf Hitler*, pp. 219–220.
 32. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 13.
 33. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, p. 34.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
 36. Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'. Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
 37. Liljegren, *Adolf Hitler*, pp. 232–234, 346; see also Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, p. 34.
 38. Kershaw, *Hitler 1936–1945*, p. xlii.

39. Lena Eilstrup, 'Den racistiske børnebog' (The Racist Children's Book), *Børn & bøger: tidsskrift for skolebiblioteker, skole- og kulturpolitik samt børne- og ungdomskultur*, 1 (1994), p. 6.
40. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, p. 57.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 77.
44. 'Ulrike och kriget', unsigned review.
45. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, pp. 150–151.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
47. Liljegren, *Adolf Hitler*, p. 136.
48. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, p. 74.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 137–138.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 84.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
68. See Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'*, and Johnson, *The Nazi Terror*, p. 13.
69. 'Ulrike och kriget', unsigned review.
70. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, p. 105.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 78, 147.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
75. Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society*, pp. 130, 144–147.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 130, 144–147.
77. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, pp. 112–113.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 44.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125.
83. Birgitta Almgren, *Drömmen om Norden. Nazistisk infiltration 1933–1945 (The Dream about the North. Nazi Infiltration 1933–1945)* (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2005), p. 26.

84. Sigmund, *Women of the Third Reich*, p. 12.
85. Ågren, 'Alla i Nazi-Tyskland'.
86. Gunnar Åselius, 'Sweden and Nazi Germany', in Stig Ekman, Klas Åmark and John Toler (eds), *Sweden's Relations with Nazism, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust: A Survey of Research* (Stockholm: Swedish Research Council, 2003), p. 44–45.
87. Kerstin Bergman, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Collaborators: Swedish World War II Guilt Redefined in Twenty-First Century Crime Fiction?', in this volume.
88. 'Ulrike at War and Anne Frank's diary', <http://skolarbete.nu/skolarbeten/anne-franks-dagbok-och-ulrike-och-kriget/20100510> (accessed 17 December 2010).
89. 'Ulrike och kriget' and <http://60mil94.blogspot.com/2010/04/ulrike-och-kriget-341meter/20100510> (accessed 9 February 2011).
90. 'Annas bokhylla', 17 August 2006, <http://www.annasbokhylla.se/2006/08/ulrike-och-kriget.html/20100510> (accessed 9 February).
91. Olsson, *Ulrike och kriget*, pp. 148–149.
92. Vibeke Olsson, *Ulrike och freden* (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1976), p. 160.

5

Through the Eyes of a Child: Childhood and Mass Dictatorship in Modern European Literature

Karin Nykvist

In 2001, Danish artist Nina Maria Kleivan dressed up her baby daughter in the attire of Hitler, Stalin and other infamous twentieth-century dictators. She photographed the infant, and the result, the photo series *Potency* went on to receive massive international attention, from within the art world as well as from the mainstream news media. What precisely was it in the unsettling image of a soft-skinned baby with huge eyes dressed up as Pinochet, among other figures, that served to provoke such a strong reaction? It could be argued that Kleivan was exploring some of the deeply rooted, almost automatized, ideas about childhood – and about totalitarian society – that determine modern society. All children are assumed to be born innocent, their tiny beings beyond guilt and culpability. As such they represent the polar opposite of the totalitarian leader. When asked about her photographs, Kleivan stated that everyone begins life the same and with the potential to do good or evil.¹ She seems to suggest that the child somehow exists outside of these moral categories.

Kleivan is by no means alone in making use of the image of childhood in her art; the international attention garnered shows that children can make compelling, eye-catching subjects. Using the imagery and symbolic potential associated with children and the family as a means of saying something about history and society is, therefore, as widespread as it is effective.

Taking the concept of mass dictatorship as its departure, this study analyses several influential novels dealing with childhood in totalitarian states, and in thus doing, aims to problematize the very ideas of childhood and totalitarianism evoked by Kleivan's work. More specifically, it shows how questions of agency, guilt, power and consent – so very important to the discussion on mass dictatorship – have been

explored and problematized in European fiction on childhood since the end of World War II. Examining novels which depict different systems of mass dictatorship, the study also makes use of different aspects of Jie-Hyun Lim's understanding of mass dictatorship as a phenomenon. Firstly, that of the transnational, transcultural character of mass dictatorship, where, because of the common ground in modernity, kinship can be found in Nazi, communist and fascist state systems, and secondly, the idea that mass dictatorship encompasses all levels of existence, with the focus here on everyday family life. Thirdly, it explores the problematic relationship between perpetrator and victim, and between coercion and consent, that lies at the heart of the ongoing discussion on mass dictatorship.

Childhood and mass dictatorship in fiction

Ever since romanticism, childhood has served to evoke powerful images and feelings. Cultural images of what being a child entails and what childhood should be like – pure, innocent, honest, true and full of playful joy and authenticity – are at work in all dealings with the early years of our lives. In contemporary society, the child is typically set apart from the rest of humankind by four important traits. For one, it is set apart temporally because of its age. Secondly, it is deemed to possess a special character determined by nature. Thirdly, it is innocent and, fourthly, because of this, it is also vulnerable and dependent.² Together, these four themes make up a powerful cluster of ideas, one in which the child becomes a strong vehicle for metaphor, symbol and allegory.

The present study looks at literary works – fictional, semiautobiographical and openly autobiographical – which in different ways all make use of modern cultural images of childhood while depicting European twentieth-century mass dictatorships. The books are Christa Wolf's *A Model Childhood* (*Kindheitsmuster*, 1976), Italo Calvino's debut novel *The Path to the Spiders' Nests* (*Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, 1947), György Dragomán's novel *The White King* (*A fehér király*, 2005), Thomas Bernhard's autobiographical *Ein Kind*, from 1982,³ Juan Goytisolo's memoir *Forbidden Territories* (*Coto Vedado*, 1985) and Herta Müller's two novels, *Nadirs* (*Niederungen*, 1984) and *The Land of Green Plums* (*Hertztier*, 1994). Written over a period of nearly fifty years, they tell the story of childhoods spent under mass dictatorships in Germany, Romania, Italy, Spain and also, to a lesser extent, Austria. In analysing these works, which depict different kinds of dictatorships – fascist, Nazi, socialist – in different countries, different language spheres and different decades,

this study seeks, in spite of the differences between them, to uncover common traits in the narrative of childhood in mass dictatorships.⁴ In fact, there is an affinity between them on several levels that is worthy of attention. On a thematic level, for instance, one can examine what brings these narratives together. This poses the question of what common traits can be found in the formation of childhood memories in mass dictatorships and, on the narratological, structural level, how this is done. To what aesthetic, ideological, ethical and even philosophical ends may children be brought into these narratives, and how are their stories told? The similarities found between the stories bear witness to the remembrance of mass dictatorship in the second half of the twentieth century. As a whole, the theme of childhood memories of mass dictatorship shows how these very concepts – mass dictatorship as well as childhood – are negotiated and problematized in contemporary literature.

Accordingly, these different narratives form a foundation on which *the grand récit* of mass dictatorship can be told. Thus, the children of these stories may be interpreted as acting as vehicles through which the greater story is unravelled. Of course they remain children, but they also serve as symbols and metaphors. They tell us about what childhood is like in a repressive state, but, as is often the case in fiction, the scope of the story transcends the specific. Innocent victims, these children signify past history, bringing to the foreground questions of innocence and guilt, questions that haunt all societies of former mass dictatorships. Since stories of childhood almost always revolve around the intimate sphere of the family – the latter is entrenched in the ideology of the state whereby the fascist habitus colours everyday life – they make for a good starting-point in analysing mass dictatorships. Furthermore, as the image of the family is also cultivated by the state for the purpose of totalitarian nation building, there are further advantages to be had in reading these narratives against the larger, more general backdrop of modern transnational history.

This study revolves around four large ideas – one could call them metanarratives – concerning childhood and mass dictatorship. It starts out by examining children and the family as symbols and metaphors in novels on mass dictatorships. It then goes on to discuss the connection between the relating of childhood with that of history. As a third point of departure, it explores the theme of the child as witness, before moving on to a discussion of childhood and agency, probing how the novels depict the child in relation to concepts such as guilt, innocence and shame, as well as power and violence.

The child as symbol, the family as metaphor

A story of childhood may be just that – a more or less autobiographical narrative of a life remembered or invented. But it also introduces a powerful set of images: childhood and family are entities laden with enormous symbolic and allegorical potential. The child may be used as an especially powerful image in contemporary narratives of history, since it embodies the notion of the past as having an important impact on the present.⁵ Ever since Wordsworth told us so, the child has been viewed as the father of the man. Used as a metaphor of history, the child tells us that past times have fathered the present. Furthermore, the image and experience of the family is one that can be shared and instantaneously understood by almost everyone. As such, it is a compelling and productive one to use in accounts of history.

In writing on the subject of mass dictatorship, childhood and family life can be laden with symbolic and metaphorical significance. Because of its subaltern position in the family, and its being more or less devoid of power and autonomy in a world ruled by grown-ups, the child may serve as a fruitful metaphor for the supposedly powerless subject living under a totalitarian system. Romantic notions of innocence and pureness are frequently put to use in texts where the metanarrative of totalitarianism is employed: innocent – childlike – victimhood contrasted by corrupted, thwarted, arbitrary rule – adulthood. The family, in fiction as well as in real life, always serves as the setting in which relationships develop, be they healthy or unhealthy, and where there are power structures and different ties of dependence. In the novels studied here, the family portraits are realistic as well as greatly symbolic. The relationships are often left wanting in one way or another, be they dysfunctional or even missing; as shall be seen, the orphan is an important image here. The fictional relationship between the child and the grown-up on the micro-level can thus be used as a powerful symbol of the relationship between people and ruler, turning many narratives on family life under mass dictatorships into allegories. In Herta Müller's *Nadirs*, for example, the repressive atmosphere of life in a poor, rural family, with an abusive and unpredictable father as the head of the family, makes for just such a subtle allegory. To be dependent and innocent in a society – or family – where the knowledge of unspoken codes and rules is of vital importance, and where power is exhibited through explicit and implicit threats of violence, is no easy matter. Here the image of the child is used to characterize everyday life under the regime portrayed in the narrative. But the family can also be used as an efficient tool to portray how

everyday life and the intimate sphere of family life are affected by mass dictatorship society.

The image of the father is a powerful one: the father may on the one hand be emasculated by the regime, that is, in a narrative which portrays the power of dictatorships to shatter families, or it can be used as a mirror of the regime itself, with the dictator as the state *pater familias*. In Müller's case, both images are used, with fathers portrayed as high-handed rulers presiding over their frightened families by abusing strong ties of unhealthy love, while being simultaneously powerless in their undertakings with the state. In *Nadirs*, for example, the young narrator watches her father lose the symbolic power of language. His German loses meaning and authority when he has to communicate with the state veterinarian in the tongue of the dictatorship, Romanian, causing him to lose his potency as a father as well as the power of language (and thus, the law) in front of the state authorities. When the father is symbolically or literally emasculated, dead or absent, the story can also be a mirror of history: these narratives are, after all, written after the demise of the dictator.

It is ironic that the paternal imagery of, for example, Herta Müller can be read as an inverted mirror of just the kind of imagery that leaders of mass dictatorships – as well as mass democracies – have themselves historically tended to promote: the head of state as the father of his country.⁶ Being pictured with children has always been an especially popular device used by dictators since it serves to augment the latter's fatherly status and all that comes with it. Genesis, for example, is vital here, as well as discipline. A father fathers the country and gives life to it; without him, the state or nation cannot exist. Moreover, an errant child may behave badly, but a good father always knows what's best for his offspring. Thus, the use of pictures mirrors the metanarrative that forms the subtitles for these pictures and the mental imagery that goes with them.

Evoking the image of family in writing about the nation or structure of society is in no way new or limited to narratives of mass dictatorship – quite the contrary in fact. More novel, however, may be the ambiguous role played by the father in this metanarrative and the pervasive idea that he is simultaneously replaceable and omnipotent. In the books studied, the relationship between the protagonists and the father figures is often a complex and ambiguous one. Thematically, the loss of father figures as well as a search for new ones is in the foreground of many of the narratives. This sheds light on three different areas. For one, it realistically problematizes the family as a sovereign nucleus in the mass dictatorship, showing how it can be brutally broken apart by forces from the outside. But it also sheds light on the metaphorical use of the concept 'family', and

especially that of 'father', in the societies depicted. In György Dragomán's *The White King*, the image of the dictator as father of the nation is used ironically, while the young protagonist, made fatherless by the state, searches in vain for father figures around him. Herta Müller's Lola, in *The Land of Green Plums*, is another orphan-like figure in search of a father figure, as is Italo Calvino's boy Pin in *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*. The displacement and replacement of parents – real and metaphorical ones – is more or less apparent in the building of society. This evokes the Freudian theory of family romance, as Lynn Hunt has shown in her studies of the French Revolution.⁷ There is good reason to also use Hunt's model in promoting understanding of mass dictatorships. In post-revolutionary societies – as mass dictatorships more often than not are – history shows us that whoever the former ruler was, whether king or emperor, he could be replaced by another, much more powerful father. The metanarrative of the nation becomes one of the people, the children of the nation, replacing an inferior parent with a superior one. Thus, children of these narratives often find shortcomings in their biological parents, while the leader of the nation is idolized. The little girl Nelly in Christa Wolf's novel has strong and confused feelings for her fuehrer, finding him superior to her immediate surroundings in every way. When she hears stories about there being houses where children of the nation/fuehrer are supposedly fathered by Aryan men and women, she is thoroughly shaken; this is not something she thought her 'pure' fuehrer/father would do.

In an illuminating article American historian Peter Pozefsky has explored the metanarrative principles found in contemporary Russian films that deal with the subject of childhood under Stalin. To Pozefsky, it is quite evident that childhood narratives on the Stalinist period portrayed in contemporary Russian films more often than not depict childhood traumas and what he calls 'the physical destruction or symbolic emasculation of a father figure'.⁸ I would like to widen his scope and say that this holds true also for other narratives of mass dictatorship, like those in the novels studied here, in which all children may be regarded as having been orphaned in one way or another. For example, in Calvino's *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, there is no explicit mention of parents, but throughout the story Pin searches for a father figure. In the deeply symbolic conclusion of the novel, Pin teams up with a partisan called Cousin – a man whose very name suggests the notion of family, and Pin realizes that he doesn't want to let go of him.

He hopes Cousin won't be captured, he hopes it with all his might, not because Cousin is the Great Friend he was looking for, no he's

not that any more, he's just a man like all the others, but because he is the last person Pin has left in all the world.⁹

To the reader it is quite probable that Cousin has murdered Pin's sister. In thus doing, Cousin has eliminated every trace of Pin's old family and replaced it with himself. Accordingly, Pin walks into the future of a post-fascist Italy with all ties to his past completely ruptured, let down by the older generation, utterly orphaned and alone. But at the same time he is also utterly free, in the existential meaning of the word. The end of the novel echoes Charlie Chaplin's movie *The Kid*, as it re-enacts the famous fairytale ending of the film, thus stressing the fact that Pin is lying to himself, building his life on fantasy and fiction – for want of a real story and a history of his own to hold on to. 'And they walk on, the big man and the child, into the night, amid the fireflies, holding each other by the hand.'¹⁰

In another of the novels under study, György Dragomán's *The White King*, the father of Dsjata, the 11-year-old protagonist, is imprisoned for political reasons and sent to a labour camp on the banks of the Danube. As he listens to his father lying about the reasons for his leaving and the destination of his travels, Dsjata witnesses the metaphorical emasculation of his father by the security police. In an emotional passage at the end of the novel, Dsjata meets his father who has become completely altered and broken by his imprisonment – his identity denied and erased. Dsjata is thus effectively orphaned even though his father is still alive.

In the opening chapter of the novel, Dsjata brings his mother flowers on the anniversary of his parents' wedding day, thus unconsciously trying to take his father's place; the gesture, however, ends in disaster, as his mother believes the flowers to be a malicious joke on the part of the security police. Dsjata fails to take his father's place, and like Calvino's Pin he spends the rest of the novel trying to find a replacement father figure, only to be let down by the succession of male figures he encounters. Instead, the father figure that is the dictator looms over the novel: the political father replaces the biological one. Furthermore, the ambivalence Dsjata exposes in his dealings with the authorities shows how he would like to believe in this family romance but is not able to: to Dsjata, the political father cannot take the place of the biological one.

The orphan appears in other novels as well, albeit under different circumstances. In Juan Goytisolo's *Forbidden Territory*, the mother is killed during an air raid and the father is estranged and distant. In Christa Wolf's *Childhood Pattern*, the father is left broken from his experiences

as a soldier in the German army, and in Herta Müller's *The Land of Green Plums*, the young country girl Lola is all but orphaned in the city where she can find no true shelter.

In these narratives, the image of the orphan is put forth, either quite literally or merely suggested through imagery. Some of the children, such as Christa Wolf's Nelly, more or less openly look to the dictator as an ersatz father (as according to the logic of official propaganda), but the father cannot really be replaced. It is important to remember that these narratives are written in a world where the mass dictatorship depicted has crumbled, where the fatherhood of the dictator has proven to be false and impotent. As such, the children of these stories are orphaned twice over: by the mass dictatorship itself, literally or psychologically, and by the course of history that deposed of the father figure of mass dictatorship.¹¹ Thereby, these orphans also symbolize the rupture with the past that is an important aspect of all post-dictatorship societies.

Childhood memories, cultural memory and history

In a majority of the novels studied here, the act of remembering and the concept of memory are in the foreground. In this, the authors mirror much of the theoretical discussions of recent years on memory in fiction. Carolyn Steedman and Paul John Eakin are among those scholars who have drawn our attention to how, ever since romanticism, people have used memories, and markedly so childhood memories, as important pieces of the identity puzzle. The core of our identities have, since the arrival of psycho-analysis, been said to lie within us, in the narratives that we construct from our childhood memories. This view arguably explains the interest in writing, as well as reading, childhood narratives: they are keys that unlock ourselves and the rest of mankind. It may also explain why childhood narratives, in attempting to come to terms with a problematic past, are so important in contemporary writing, as is suggested by scholars such as Jay Winter. Most of us agree with Wordsworth in that the past – childhood – is the prelude to the present.¹²

It is vital to remember that it is the present of writing and telling the stories that is important in these books. Although significant in themselves, these childhood memories are nonetheless put forward to explain and shed light on the present day, in a cultural dialogue that could be viewed as a collective societal therapeutic session.

The novels in this study are cultural artefacts that can be regarded as the results of performative acts of cultural recall, thus taking part in the

shaping of our understanding of the past – in this case, lives lived under mass dictatorships. Engaging in what is sometimes called cultural memory would, in this case, be writing authentically – although fictionally – about the past, without bringing the ghost of objective truth that lies inherent in the term ‘History’ to the fore.¹³ Individual memory may on one level seem to be the main issue. In Wolf, for example, the act of individual remembering drives the story, while the act of dealing with individual history gives force to the narrative. It is significant, however, that Wolf’s novel also acts as a mirror, on the level of the individual, of the need on the national level to remember and come to terms with history – to partake in cultural memory. Cultural recall is not something that one carries within; it is a performative act, such as the publishing of a novel.

I suggest, then, that these narratives deal with cultural and individual memory *even though* they are, to a large extent, quite explicitly fictitious – Thomas Bernhard being the interesting exception. Nevertheless, an autobiographical pact is created in the reading of these narratives. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, the particular biographical circumstances of the authors in question make a strong case for reading these texts as autobiography – they were all children in mass dictatorships, and they are of the same sex and were born in the same time and place as their protagonists. Christa Wolf’s *Nelly Jordan*, for example, bears many resemblances to Christa Wolf herself – she was born in the same year, has the same profession and grows up in the same town. Interestingly enough, while Wolf strongly emphasizes that her novel is a work of fiction, the book’s reception and subsequent scholarship on it has never taken much notice of this claim. Apart from the biographical similarities, this might be connected to the fact that Wolf’s book can be read as belonging to the genre of witness literature: in many ways it bears witness to a childhood traumatized by war, separation and being deceived by the grown-up world. Secondly, narratives on trauma are often held to be autobiographical – if not, they may be charged with being inauthentic and fraudulent (see, for example, Larsson in this volume). Thus, questions of truth arise from the subject matter of these books. Thirdly, childhood fiction per se is often read, by literary historians, critics and common readers alike, as being autobiographical, even if the similarities between biography and fiction are vague. The fact that all writers once were children often seems to be reason enough for this pact to be formed.

In the novels that explicitly or implicitly deal with the act of remembering and recalling childhood – most notably those by Christa Wolf, Juan Goytisolo and Thomas Bernhard – the rupture between then and now is an important theme. Indeed, this sense of dealing with something

lost is often found in childhood narratives. The child is present as a distant memory within every adult, whether he or she is a writer or not. How distant the connection is depends on which stance one chooses to take on the inner life of mankind, on the shaping of our identities and on the nature of our memories. Still, the children that we once were are inescapably lost forever, impossible to recall without (re)creation. Thus, childhood fiction quite often takes on an unheimlich or at least eerie quality, the writer experiencing and expressing identity and alterity simultaneously. This ambivalent shift between recalling and recreating is also indebted to modern and postmodern, as well as philosophical, psychological and theoretical, discussions on the self and on autobiographical writing. The modern subject has been described by Zygmunt Bauman and many others as one of fluidity – the self an ever ongoing process of change and inconsistencies.

I would suggest that many of the authors writing about childhood in mass dictatorships express a particularly strong need to come to terms with the discontinuity between childhood and adulthood. In these narratives, the rift between then and now further underlines the complete discontinuity between the experience of this childhood and the act of narration that takes place outside of the frame of mass dictatorship. To these authors, childhood is often connected to a political naiveté that has later been lost. This naiveté is portrayed either as childish political unawareness or as a gullible faith in a repressive and corrupt system. The children of Bernhard, Dragomán and Müller are all portrayed as being politically unaware as to where their sympathies should lie, although the suppression of the respective regimes penetrates each of the families in question. The political naiveté to be found in Goytisoló and Wolf is of a different kind, however, as they both tell stories of believing in their leaders, Franco and Hitler. Their texts are also more openly concerned with the abyss that lies between the present and the past.

Juan Goytisoló's novel, for example, bears witness to this ambivalence and rupture in its very style of narration. He intermingles passages written in a more or less traditional memoir-style with a visible, present narrator who tells the story of his childhood in the past tense, with paragraphs in italics where a more acutely visible writer/narrator discusses the impossibility of his project and the inner forces that drives him to pursue it. And while writing about his childhood, he testifies to it being lost.

The opaque limbo of childhood: a tunnel of darkness broken momentarily by patches of light, fleeting images: fixed by chance in a tender, adaptable mind or simply a product of some later, now forgotten process?: an

irregular, slow succession of black-and-white and colour pictures painfully rescued from the mists of my dreams and then projected by a magic lantern: difficult to link them together in the right order, insert them in the place they happened and endow them with possible meaning: seminal nucleus of future memories or a passing impression captured in shadows?: avoiding, above all, tricks and traps, anachronisms that lie in wait, the temptation of a palimpsest interpretation: merely sifting the sparks of light, the voltaic arc created by the break in the electric circuit, picking them out of the shapeless, porous night caught in the bubble of their modest splendour.¹⁴

Through this dual structure Goytisolo gives the reader a feel for the dichotomy with which he experiences his childhood: the way he remembers it and the way he has come to regard it later on, as an exiled author who has denounced the Franco who inhabited the beliefs of his early years, and who has come instead to embrace Marxism and open homosexuality.

In the case of Christa Wolf, it becomes even more complicated. Wolf wrote her book in what was East Germany; several passages in it make this quite apparent. Travelling with Nelly is her 16-year-old daughter Lenka, and Nelly sees her as a contemporary point of reference for stories about when she herself was a girl. Thus, Wolf tells the story of a child (Nelly) growing up in a mass dictatorship – Nazi Germany – while making references to another child (Lenka) growing up in another, different mass dictatorship – the German Democratic Republic (GDR). This mirroring is, however, never openly expressed in the book, quite the contrary. Wolf uses Lenka as a means of contrast: the girl is not asked to understand what her mother's childhood was like, since it was so utterly different. As the similarities should be quite obvious to anyone, this blind spot is quite conspicuous. Wolf's ambiguous persona and complex personal history leaves no clue as to whether this goes to show the author's own political naiveté or if it is exactly Wolf's lack of political naiveté that hinders her from discussing it openly, while the connection is there for anyone to see. Nevertheless, there are many ruptures and discontinuities in her text, between the child that is narrated and the adult who is doing the narrating, between the girl who was then and the one who is now. This makes the act of remembering and recalling so much more difficult. To Wolf, there is also the question of guilt and shame, a question that makes the distance between the person who is and the one who was one of existential importance.

Avoid certain memories. Don't speak about them. Suppress words, sentences, whole chains of thought, that might give rise to

remembering. Don't ask your contemporaries certain questions. Because it is unbearable to think the word 'I' in connection with the word 'Auschwitz'. 'I' in the past conditional: I would have. I might have. I could have. Done it. Obeyed. Orders.¹⁵

Wolf's resistance in identifying with the protagonist of her book is an important undercurrent in the novel. She claims to write fiction, and writes in her foreword that 'all characters in this book are the inventions of the author'. However, she maintains as well as undermines that notion by her style of writing, switching between different personal pronouns in her narrative.¹⁶ She tells the story of Nelly in the third person, like a traditional narrator would. But in her narrative, this narrator also uses the second person, addressing the narrator. Doing so, she implies the first person: the 'I' of the narrator addressing 'you' – someone who may or may not be herself. This implicit 'I' is somehow the haunting spectre at the core of the story – the evasive, lost child that can never be identical to the grown-up woman who remembers and creates. In an act that bears resemblance to the self-searching inherent in therapy, the word 'I' is not used by the narrator in connection with herself until the very end of the book:

The child who was hidden in me – has she come forth? ... And the past, which can still split the first person into the second and the third – has its hegemony been broken? Will the voices be still? I don't know.¹⁷

As it turns out, Wolf's book actually revolves around three Nellies: the girl and adolescent growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, the woman who 25 years later takes her family to visit the town of her childhood years and the author who, a few years later, sits down to write a book about it. What holds these three together, if anything? The ties between them have been severed, by time as well as by personal and political history, and yet they share the same name, and they've inhabited the same body. In the very first chapter of the book, Wolf writes about her confusion and about the transient borders and complicated relations between the words I, you and her. The child that she remembers is her, but it is also someone else. Wolf goes on to describe how her memory functions: 'a crab's walk, a painful backward motion, like falling into a time shaft, at the bottom of which the child sits on a stone step, in all her innocence, saying "I" to herself for the first time of her life.'¹⁸

Wolf and Goytisolo share the same notion of the essential child somehow being lost – if it was ever there – with the rest of the authors in this study. Thomas Bernhard, for example, uses the seemingly uncomplicated first person in his novel, but his matter-of-fact style of telling the child's story displays a stance that is somewhat distant towards his protagonist, and the stance taken clearly belongs to an adult mind. In the performative act of cultural recalling, this cannot be regarded as some kind of narrative flaw, but quite the contrary. Using a child as the protagonist brings the possibility of using a double focus, that of the child and that of the implied adult author. How the narratives of this study make use of the possibilities that the child as focalizer offers is the focus of the next section.

The child as focalizer and witness

'But he hasn't got anything on!' Children can be powerful observers in our culture, as Hans Christian Andersen well knew when he wrote the tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*. His story of the child, who through his innocence and incorruptness manages to see through a lie that encompasses an entire society and, furthermore, has the pureness of heart to act upon his insight, may be read as an urtext of the child's position in a repressive state. As such, it is an important part of the intertextual web that surrounds the narratives of this study.

It is therefore worth noting that the children of these narratives are no speakers of truths in public places, and it is only Dragomán's novel that supposedly offers unproblematic insights into the inner life of the child. To Goytisolo, for example, the inner world of the child is, as the title of his book suggests, a 'forbidden territory' – even to the narrator himself. One of very few examples in which the child's view is brought to the fore in his novel is the rendering of when Galeazza Ciano, one of the founders of the Italian National Fascist Party, drives through the city in an open top car. The past tense is momentarily exchanged for the present so as to underline the child's excitement and complete presence in the moment:

One day, dressed in blue shirts and red berets, we walked down from the top of Sarría to the center of Barcelona: Count Ciano has arrived! Under the father's energetic batons we shouted until we were hoarse, waiting for him to appear in an open car: thousands of arms raised, children's mouths opened, flags, music, emblems, a theatrical apotheosis.¹⁹

This scene – a leader slowly driving through the city, and the children parading off to watch – is a recurrent one in the novels. It is, for example, repeated in Wolf and Bernhard. In Wolf and Goytisoló the ambivalence is apparent: it is an exciting event for the child, but it leaves a bitter aftertaste with the adult narrator. Bernhard hardly invites the reader into the mind of his child protagonist, and when he writes that he hated the excitement of the masses, it is obviously the adult point of view we are offered, disguised as that of the child. The other narratives can be read as inversions of Andersen's fairy tale. The child is in awe, fooled by the emperor, wholly caught up in the excitement of the moment and unable to see through the dream weaving of the corrupted adult world.

Even if he or she is not crying out truths about the emperor/dictatorship in the town square, a child and its point of view can be useful in a narrative on mass dictatorship in a variety of ways. Using a child as witness suggests qualities such as authenticity, truth and naïveté, thus enhancing the truth claims of the texts, and if not on specific details then on a general level.

The child is also a great observer since it is often overlooked. Due to its age, size, perceived and experienced otherness, the child's position in society and in the family is often found on the margin. As such, the child can be regarded as what Slavoj Žižek calls a 'free radical'.²⁰ Paradoxically, it is completely in the hands of the grown-ups around it – parents, teachers, state officials – while it is also, as Bernhard and Dragomán notably seem to suggest, free to inhabit its own, radically other space, that of childhood. Its existence on the margin makes it an outsider, for better or for worse, in a society where everyone must be inside, accounted for, body and mind. As Karen Petrone has noted, the margin is the place in a mass dictatorship where room can be found for individual thought and expression.²¹ Its thoughts can be useful for conveying powerful mirrors of the grown-up world – or create a stark contrast which makes for a defamiliarizing effect.

Furthermore, the triangle of an implied adult author, a child focalizer-narrator and that of the grown-up reader opens up for a fruitful, wordless discussion on the nature of mass dictatorship. Often, this discussion goes on between the implied author and the implied reader of the text. In Dragomán's *The White King*, this is quite apparent, for example, when both the reader and the author are aware of the father's imprisonment long before the truth dawns upon 11-year-old Dsjata, to whom it matters most. The child narrator also focuses on things different from those likely to concern an adult narrator. This brings certain

problems to the fore. We know, for instance, that Dsjata's father has been taken prisoner by the security services, but it is not until some two-hundred pages into the novel that we are told that his mother has been prohibited to work for this reason, and even then it is mentioned just in passing:

I was doing my homework and Mother was correcting papers; ever since not being allowed to teach she spent a lot more time correcting papers than before. The ladies she used to work with would give her papers in secret, papers to correct, because they knew there was no way we could make ends meet from the money Mother got for cleaning, so that's how they wanted to help her out.²²

The external world thus encroaches upon the intimacy of the family, to be recorded in the way the child experiences it. In the passage quoted above there is, however, an obvious ironic voice – that of the implied author, who tells a somewhat different story. One might, for example, wonder if the mother's colleagues really are 'helping', in a system where the offering of real help might undermine one's own means for survival. Thomas Bernhard uses much of the same device when he starts his autobiographical novel by writing about how he learns to ride a bicycle on his guardian's bike, in passing telling us in a subordinate clause that he is able to borrow the bike since his guardian is away invading Russia. The very first sentence of the novel thus reads:

At the age of eight I rode my first few yards on a bicycle in the street below our apartment in the Taubenmarkt in Traunstein. It was midday, and the streets of the self-important little provincial town were empty. The bicycle, made by the firm of Steyr-Waffen, belonged to my guardian, who was serving in the German army in Poland and would later march into Russia. At once acquiring a taste for what was to me an entirely novel discipline, I rode out of the Taubenmarkt ...²³

In relating to the outbreak of the World War II in this way, Bernhard underlines how radically different the child supposedly is in the way it experiences the world. On the one hand, the doings of the adult world concern the child directly, while on the other, the child looks on in from the outside: from the margin, with the wiggle room that it possibly affords. The double voice implicit in this passage should not be forgotten, however: no child would consider a town to be self-content.

It is simply an illusion of the child's inner life that we obtain, nothing more. And nothing more can ever be given by an adult writer.

Another way of creating this illusion – the utterly different perspective of a small child – is to relate the experience of having a small body. Calvino's Pin sleeps in a small 'cubby-hole of a room, a sort of kennel beyond a wooden partition', and he hides his stolen gun in a narrow space under a flight of stairs, 'under an arch where children go to play hide-and-seek'.²⁴ Wolf's grown-up Nelly is stunned by how small everything is in the town of her childhood. The child's small body size simply underlines its otherness, but this smallness has symbolic implications: the child goes to places where the grown-ups don't go and can't reach. Indeed, there are spaces where only the child can go – wiggle spaces where the system cannot reach. In the case of Calvino, the text symbolically suggests that the child has access to spaces of freedom. This is further underlined by the dreamy place that only Pin knows of: the land of the spiders' nests.

György Dragomán uses a child narrator, and creates an illusion of a child talking, who hardly ever stops for air, giving us the story in long, unruly sentences like this very typical one:

When I stepped out of the restaurant that used to be The Lion and was now The Hunter with the two ice-cold bottles of Czechoslovak beer in my hands, I saw the grey van right away. It was parked on the other side of the street, so I knew I didn't have a choice, I had to run right by it, and I knew the van would follow behind me as I went running back to school with the two bottles of beer in my hands, but I also knew I couldn't do anything about it, that I'd have to keep running, because Comrade Sándor, our gym teacher, said that at the end of the term he'd fail anyone who didn't get back with the two bottles of beer by the time the class bell rang, because this was more important than any timed run.²⁵

Dragomán evokes the child not only in the style of narrating but also in what the child chooses to tell and in what order he tells it. Here the threat of physical violence from a teacher outweighs the fear of the more abstract threats coming from the secret service. The words 'I knew' are repeated throughout, making the reader appreciate just how much this child knows of the ways of the world – and how little.

All in all, children focalizers turn out to be fruitful witnesses in narratives on mass dictatorship. The child may not speak the truth in the style of Hans Christian Andersen, but it is a tool for the implied author

to point in the direction of it. In *The White King*, the little boy Dsjata's perspective in giving an account of the fear, violence and constant threat of violence, mixed with his silly pranks and trivial childhood musings, endows Dragomán's portrait of a mass dictatorship with an absurd, surrealistic quality, thus conveying a meaningful – dare I say true? – portrait of everyday life in a mass dictatorship.

Not playing the game?

The children of these novels might not cry out truths in the street, but they can be bearers of authenticity and truth through the games they play. In Dragomán's text, for instance, the children's war games and bullying mirror the adult world and thus expose its absurdities. No rules apply among these children other than fear and the exercise of physical violence, and the ensuing games of power and powerlessness. In one episode, a fight over a stolen football becomes a war game that gradually turns into a life-threatening disaster when the boys, after an extended scene of torture-like interrogation, find themselves in a field of wheat that has been set on fire. In the game, the limits for what could be deemed as reasonable are pushed little by little, until the boys find themselves in an almost surreal situation – thus reflecting the society in which the game takes place.

The children's games are corrupted by the society in which they live, Dragomán seems to be saying. Playing games is an important theme in all of these texts, but it is striking that games mostly belong to the grown-up world. Children are simply authentic in a world where grown-ups are forever playing games. When Calvino's Pin steals a gun, he doesn't know how to play with it. Here the adult perspective of the narrator follows upon the free indirect speech of Pin:

Whoever owns a real pistol must be able to play wonderful games, games which no other boy has ever played. But Pin is a boy who does not know how to play games, and cannot take part in the games either of children or grown-ups.²⁶

In Calvino's novel, the word game is in the foreground in the characterization of the adult world. Pin tries to play, wants to play, but according to the narrator he doesn't know how. The grown-ups, however, have games. They play at life, they play games with each other, and war is the biggest game of all. Pin is the child, but he doesn't understand games. To play games is all about the setting of rules and defining the world, and Pin lacks the agency to do it.

Language is also a game, and in mass dictatorship the rules of that game are ever-changing and vitally important to master. Language also preoccupies the literary children in this study. Logos – the rules of the language game – belongs to the grown-ups, and the children struggle to understand the spoken, and in many cases, unspoken words. In Calvino, Pin keeps hearing mysterious words and wishes he knew them all: ‘*Sten*; another mysterious word; *Sten, Gap, Sim*, how can anyone ever remember them all?’²⁷ Christa Wolf’s Nelly talks about ‘glitter words’, words that the grown-ups use that she doesn’t fully understand. When the grown-ups say them, their eyes take on a strange shimmer. Abnormal is one such word. Indecent is another. Their language use is not authentic: a tricky game of floating meaning is being played.

But if the adults’ use of language is inexact and mysterious, the official language of the state is much more so. Names are changed, words are used in new ways and the children of the novels expend some effort in trying to say the things they are expected to. Bernhard’s boy learns that *Grüß Gott* is now *Heil Hitler*, and Dragomán’s Dsjata experiences a lot of difficulties in learning all the new names of mountains, since the names in his old geography book are now deemed wrong and shouldn’t even be said out loud. Language often takes on a newspeak quality, and the children find themselves at a loss: their ability to read between the lines and understand what is left unspoken is often found wanting. In this way, language and the art of lying are intimately related. And lying is at the centre of all of the books examined here. The children regard lying as something that grown-ups do – it is almost one of the qualities that make them adults. In *Nadirs*, Müller’s girl watches her father lie to the state veterinarian – in Romanian, the tongue of the state. In *A Model Childhood*, Nelly watches her mother lie to the police after being informed against. And in *The White King* everybody lies to Dsjata. Upon being arrested, the father tells Dsjata that he’s going on an important research mission. A few months later, workers lie to Dsjata about having seen his father by the Danube. The state lies – or chooses official ignorance – about a nuclear accident, an incident that obviously relates to the real-life example of Chernobyl in the Soviet Union. In a school championship, furthermore, the results are fixed and the children lied to. But the children also lie, to each other and to adults, quickly learning how to get by and internalizing the ways in which truth and lies should be handled. When interrogated by one of his teachers, Dsjata wonders less about the truth and more about what he is expected to say.

In the novels above, the image of the child, one that is corrupted, is all the more striking since it is played out against the dominant

concept of childhood as innocent, pure and authentic. The underlying message, supplied by the dominant image of childhood in our culture, says that to corrupt a child is somehow to turn the child against its own authentic nature.

In *The White King* and in *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, playing the game is allowing oneself to be corrupted. In Dragomán's claustrophobic world, Dsjata really doesn't have a choice. 'Living in truth', as Vaclav Havel called it, would entail 'suspending one's participation in the game'.²⁸ To Dsjata, that option doesn't seem to exist – where the state system penetrates his uttermost intimate sphere, the children's games and the family economy, and even affects the will to live among his family members, where his grandfather finally opts out and kills himself.

One way of not playing the game is to commit suicide. Teenagers kill themselves in Müller's as well as Christa Wolf's novels. In Dragomán's novel, furthermore, there are at least two supposed suicides. These may be viewed as authentic acts in a world corrupted by the all-encompassing game of the mass dictatorship. But even an act of suicide can, in the logic of the mass dictatorship, be regarded as a final draw in the game of the mass dictatorship, where all your actions are measured against the needs of the state. In such a system, killing oneself can be regarded as a strike against the governing party – as was the case during Stalin's rule, for example.²⁹

Guilt, innocence, shame and power: The question of agency

The concept of mass dictatorship questions the clear dichotomy between victim and perpetrator and that of guilt and innocence. These were the very questions that Nina Maria Kleivan wanted to problematize through her photo series, re-evaluating the child as a pure, innocent and potential victim in a corrupt adult world. Using child protagonists in fictional depictions of mass dictatorship is one way of bringing these questions to the fore. The possible blurring of the division between perpetrator and victim in a child mirrors the mechanisms of the grown-up world – but the use of children makes the picture clearer, puts the idea in a starker light. Childhood is supposed to be innocent – but is it? And what signifies childhood in a mass dictatorship? Does the oppressive state bring out something other in the child, that is, does it corrupt childhood? And if it does, what does that say about adult life in mass dictatorships?

In her foreword to Kent Klich's photo book *Children of Ceasescu*, Herta Müller writes about her experiences as a pre-school teacher in

Romania: the children demand to sing the party anthem before anything else and become suspicious when she doesn't sing along. 'The children's constant surveillance paralysed me. ... The fabric of their personalities had been abused, and this abuse had been internalised. They had become dependent on it. The destruction of these five-year-olds was complete.'³⁰

Issues of lost innocence, guilt, responsibility and shame are implicitly and explicitly expressed in all of the novels studied here. In Christa Wolf's novel, for example, they are at the very core of the text, informing its every page. To Wolf, the child is not innocent. But how much responsibility does it bear? Is it really responsible for all its actions? And is the adult responsible for what he or she did as a child? These are burning questions for Wolf – as they have been for many of her contemporaries in post-World War II Germany. She asks herself when she first heard the expression 'the Final Solution' and when she understood what it meant. She doesn't know the answer. Nelly claims to have been a ten-year-old when the Nazi order to finally solve the Jewish question in Germany was given, but she doesn't know if that diminishes her guilt – if she indeed bears any.³¹ She asks how many dissidents there were in her town, but she doesn't know, nor if it even matters. When reading the newspaper about pro-Nazi activities and marches in her hometown in the 1930s, she tries to remember her own actions but draws a blank:

Today, almost forty years later, the time has come for a few questions. Their harshness is based partly on Nelly's innocence, she was four years old. (You can't get around the fact that in this country innocence is almost infallibly measured by age.)³²

In the narrator's eyes, the case is hopeless: just living in a mass dictatorship makes someone guilty. One's share of the guilt is only lessened if fewer conscious years have been spent living in it – like those of a four-year-old child. Guilt and knowledge are thus connected: if you know about something, you are implicated. To Wolf, there is also the question of shame. Feelings of guilt trigger feelings of shame, and when the grown-up Nelly ponders on how when young she found it natural that Ukrainian prisoners of war, who worked in a field nearby her village, were inferior beings, this thought becomes in effect a confession.

Guilt and innocence, knowledge and ignorance, are also closely connected to power. Being children, and being treated as such by the grown-up world, the protagonists of the novels studied are supposedly powerless, but their existence on the margin gives them a certain

space, and the novels – most notably Calvino's, Müller's and Wolf's – explore how the children make do with the space that they create for themselves, seizing power and independence where they can find it, thus mirroring the way grown-ups juggle for power in a very restricted reality. Wolf's Nelly works her way up in the Hitlerjugend against the unspoken will of her parents, and in embracing the Nazi ideal she upsets the power structure within the family. The mother, who has been informed against by a customer of the family's grocer for expressing doubts about Germany's chances of winning the war, takes precautions around her daughter. When the news of an attempt to kill Hitler reaches the family, Nelly experiences the unconscious power she wields within the family that her involvement in the Hitlerjugend gives her:

Half sentences which can't be made into whole sentences in Nelly's presence. Careful, you never know. Maybe there had been glances that were meant to say: This is the beginning of the end. Or questions: Is this the beginning of the end? Nelly wasn't given the chance to see the glances, to hear the questions.³³

Christa Wolf lingers on the question of the child and its possible guilt, but the child as a perpetrator is an important question for all of the authors in this study. The ambivalence is great: the child is often a victim and a perpetrator simultaneously, or it becomes a perpetrator because it is a victim. When the school girls unanimously applaud the posthumous exclusion of the self-murderer Lola from the party as well as the college in Müller's *Land of the Green Plums*, they are acting as perpetrators while at the same time being utterly victimized. In this scene, the mechanisms of mass dictatorship are portrayed as a complex oxymoron, joining what are unjoinable opposites. The passage lingers on the long applause, not commenting on it, but taking note of the complex mixture of passive consent, coercion, fear and sense of belonging.

Lola, on the other hand, is a character who plays out all of the imagery of a child being corrupted. She is innocent but tries not to be. Being diminutive, female, poor and from the countryside, and therefore dependent and vulnerable, she is subsequently taken advantage of and abused in different ways. Her autonomy is also denied to her, as her diary, and so her thoughts, disappears, and the existence of her very person is denied after her death. In all of this, the imagery of childhood is put to use as a stark contrast to the – just as culturally derived – image of calculating adults who misuse their advantage. Working for the party,

she is an image of a collaborator, but in the context of the narrative she is less of a collaborator than her more passive roommates.

The child may be easily victimized, but it may also, through its otherness – determined by its age and its ‘special nature’ – turn into an image of resistance. I would argue that this is the case in Dragomán’s *The White King*. Here, through its imagination, the child can create a space where the course of events can be altered and where the boy who runs after the security police van that holds his father knows he will be able to catch up: ‘the prison van could go as fast as it wanted, I’d catch up anyway’.³⁴ In this passage, Dragomán uses the child in order to conjure up the image of ‘David and Goliath’. The boy of his narrative has been beaten in all ways imaginable, but as the story ends he is running faster and faster – dreaming perhaps, but not giving up.

To Calvino, the symbolic implications of using a child protagonist were important.³⁵ In his novel, the imagery of the child’s innocence and its supposed closer contact with nature are vital parts of the narrative, in spite of the book’s neo-realist style. The fact that the child Pin is the only one in the book who knows the path to the spiders’ nests – in fact, he is the only one who knows that spiders have nests at all – is the pivotal metaphor of the book. When he finally entrusts this knowledge to the grown-up world, his trust is abused and the nests destroyed. Thus his childhood innocence is finally lost.

Pin is well aware that as a child he is utterly powerless. But by stealing a German gun he tries to achieve the potency of adulthood as well as that of the oppressor. He steals the gun while its owner, a German soldier, is having sex with his sister, thus symbolically attacking his sexual potency as well.

A real pistol. A real pistol. Pin tries to excite himself with the thought. Someone who has a real pistol can do anything, he’s like a grown-up. He can threaten to kill men and women and do whatever he likes with them.³⁶

Therein lies a child’s definition of the grown-up: someone with the power to threaten, kill and ‘do whatever he likes’ to his fellow man. Here, Calvino’s stance on the subject is obvious: the innocence of the child is definitely to be preferred, even if it’s an illusion, a dream dreamt by a culture that worships childhood.³⁷

Closely related to the issues of power and agency is that of violence. The use of violence – or the threat of it – gives the means to exert power. The child, lacking in body size and physical strength, as well as in

weapons (in another event laden with symbolic possibilities, Calvino's Pin buries his gun and is later unable to locate it), can still be violent but only to creatures that are smaller and weaker. Calvino's Pin and Wolf's Nelly are both cruel to animals, and the children in Dragomán's novel are forever playing exceedingly violent games, if they are not bullying or being bullied. Dragomán seems to suggest that physical violence is the most efficient and clear way of communication in a society that rests exclusively on the threat of violence, pain and injury. The children portrayed in the novel mirror adult society through the threats of violence and the actual use of violence that the stronger inflict upon the weaker. The grown-ups are also prone to using violence in their dealings with children, as well as with each other. When Dsjata and his mother visit an ambassador in order to obtain news of the missing father, the mother is harassed and beaten by the state official. At school, meanwhile, the football coach beats the goalkeeper to a bloody pulp for not doing his best, and Dsjata tells hearsay tales of pupils dying from the violent punishment meted out to them by teachers. In so doing, Dragomán leans towards the allegoric, and the reader is left to wonder if the school institution is in fact not the spitting image of a repressive state, its teachers mirroring violent state officials, taking out their powerlessness upon the even more powerless children, who in turn take it out on each other, making do with the existing codes of violence, threats and harassment. Exaggeration abounds, and the hyperbolic style of the novel also informs the violence in it. The principal threatens to impale the pupils if they are not quiet during a film showing, and a bum in a scrapyard yells at the boys 'to get out, to scam as fast as our legs would take us, because if he saw us inside those gates one more time he'd knock our brains out and pour petrol all over our corpses and set us on fire and throw us in the lake ...'³⁸ In fact, the relationship between the grown-up world and that of the child is defined by violence and threats of violence. In the chapter 'Pickaxe', a couple of labourers order the children to dig up a football field after having first forced them to eat sweets (with or without the wrappings), which the children have to work for in order to pay for them.

To some of these authors – Calvino being an obvious example – the child continues to be an innocent victim throughout the narrative, lacking any true agency. The dichotomy of victim and perpetrator lives within his novel. To others – and here Christa Wolf and Herta Müller are the most notable – the line is a blurry one, one that is easily crossed and recrossed. The children of these narratives take advantage of the wiggle space that their position on the margin gives them: they use this

space both within and outside of the confines of the system and, in thus doing, obtain agency. This implies a significance that goes beyond the child, pointing as it does towards the broader human condition in mass dictatorships. Indeed, the innocent child that is corrupted is one of the strongest metaphors of these novels. The question of which comes first, however, corruption or mass dictatorship, is not easily answered, and verges on the metaphysical problem of good and evil.

The impossible question of childhood

'I was robbed of my childhood. I am still looking for my childhood now.' These words, quoted in a *Times* article from 2009, point to the widespread understanding in our society that it is not enough just to be a small, not yet fully developed human being in order to experience childhood: the term 'childhood' reaches much farther and encompasses a certain quality of life where fleeting entities such as joy, innocence, security, carelessness, love and play all have a part. The article tells the story of one of the Franco regime's so-called stolen children and how the now 80-year-old Xenu Ablana was taken as a child from his republican family and put in a centre run by Franco's Social Aid charity for children of Republicans. There he was taught to be a true Falangist and denounce his own family. Thus, the article argues, he was a child, but had no childhood.³⁹

The idea of childhood and the image of the child is a powerful one, and the symbolic potential of children and childhood is apparent everywhere in our society, on the level of language, in popular media, in religious beliefs, in our everyday dealings with children and in the arts.

In these narratives of growing up in mass dictatorships, the imagery of childhood is put to full use. On the one hand, they offer a sharp mirror of just such a world. On the other, they convey an inverted image of the corrupt adult world of the mass dictatorship. Often, they manage to do both at the same time. Doing so they problematize and question our idea of what childhood is – as well as our understanding of life in a mass dictatorship system.

Notes

1. The interview with Kleivan is accessible at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-news/7470960/Mother-causes-fury-dressing-daughter-up-as-Hitler.html> (accessed 15 December 2010). The photo series is published in Nina Maria Kleivan, *Enigma* (Copenhagen: Boggalleriet, 2010) pp. 55–59.

2. Jenny Hockey and Allison James, *Growing Up and Growing Old: Ageing and Dependency in the Life Course* (London: Sage, 1993), p. xx.
3. *Ein Kind* is one of five autobiographical volumes by Bernhard. These have been published in one volume in English: *Gathering Evidence. A Memoir*, David McLintock (transl.), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).
4. In choosing to write about such a large number of novels from different language backgrounds, I have chosen the generalist approach advocated by modern comparative literature scholars like David Damrosch, who in the article 'Comparative Literature?', *PLMA* 118 (2), pp. 326–330, suggests a research method of 'specialized generalism', where the scholar carefully combines the specialist and generalist view, thus putting the specialized scholarship to use but working with a prudent selectivity which yields something completely other than the 'sum total of a set of specialized studies' or 'a reduction from the plenitude of specialized studies' (p. 329). I thus choose to, while keeping the original works and the research conducted on them by language specialists for reference, work with and make reference to the English translations. My aim is to see general patterns and structures, rather than to conduct studies on the linguistic micro-level.
5. For a discussion on this, see Jay Winter, *Remembering the War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2006). Winter's standpoint is discussed by Peter Pozefsky in his article 'Childhood and the Representation of the History of Stalinism in Russian Cinema of the Transition', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 4 (1) (May 2010), pp. 23–44.
6. Although used by many, Hitler, Stalin and Mao are among those whose propaganda machinery favoured pictures with children. A simple search on the Internet comes up with plenty of illustrative examples. For literature on this, see, for example, Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), pp. 79 f. and Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007), esp. p. 93 f.
7. In her *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992), Lynn Hunt uses Freud's idea of family romance – in short, the child's fantasy of replacing its parents with other, more glorious ones – with Fredric Jameson's concept of the political unconscious, suggesting that revolutionary societies are driven by the unconscious and conscious use of family imagery: effacing and replacing the father/ruler and imagining the citizens of the state as brothers in a huge family.
8. Pozefsky, 'Childhood and the Representation of the History of Stalinism', p. 26.
9. Italo Calvino, *The Path to the Spiders' Nests* (rev. ed.), Archibald Coquhoun (transl.), (New York: The Ecco Press, 2000), p. 184.
10. Italo Calvino, *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, p. 185.
11. For a discussion on this in the Soviet experience, see Pozefsky, 'Childhood and the Representation of the History of Stalinism'.
12. See Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations. Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995) and Johan Paul Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca, NY and

- London: Cornell UP, 1999). Another example is Evelyne Ender, a scholar of French literature, who has studied the uses of memory in modern autobiographical fictions, her thesis being that 'our ability to create a record of past experiences provides the foundations of human individuality'. Evelyne Ender, *Architexts of Memory: Literature, Science and Autobiography* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), p. 3. Her thesis is notably shared by many post-structuralists, see Kerwin Lee Klein, 'On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse', *Representations*, No. 69 (Winter 2000), pp. 127–150, especially p. 135.
13. Kerwin Lee Klein argues that Memory is the subjective (but not individual) counterpart of the supposedly objective History, thus making it useful in a postmodern society where the grand narratives are deconstructed. Klein, 'On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse'.
 14. Juan Goytisolo, *Forbidden Territory and Realms of Strife. The Memoirs of Juan Goytisolo*, Peter R. Bush (transl.), (New York: Verso, 2003), p. 28.
 15. Christa Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, Ursule Molinaro and Hedwig Rappolt (transl.), (London: Virago Press, 2002), pp. 229 f.
 16. Paul John Eakin has written more elaborately on Wolf's renegotiation of the autobiographical pact in *How Our Lives Become Stories* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), pp. 93–98.
 17. Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, p. 406.
 18. Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, p. 5.
 19. Juan Goytisolo, *Forbidden Territory and Realms of Strife*, p. 59.
 20. Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (London and New York: Verso, 2001), p. 1.
 21. Karen Petrone, 'Soviet Culture, State Power, and the Formation of Subjectivities under Stalin', paper presented at the FOLIO International Conference Life in Mass Dictatorship in Literature and Cinema, Lund University, 25–29 August 2010.
 22. György Dragomán, *The White King*, Paul Olchváry (transl.), (London: Doubleday, 2008), p. 218.
 23. Bernhard, *Gathering Evidence. A Memoir*, p. 3.
 24. Calvino, *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, p. 42; p. 46.
 25. Dragomán, *The White King*, p. 279.
 26. Calvino, *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, p. 51.
 27. Calvino, p. 76. Sten is the name of a simple machine gun, Gap stands for Grupo Azione Patrioti, and Sim is the abbreviation for Servizio Informazione Militare.
 28. See Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?*, p. 91.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
 30. Herta Müller, 'A good person is worth as much as a piece of bread', in Kent Klich, *Children of Ceausescu* (New York: Umbrage, 2001).
 31. Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, p. 234. Wolf refers to Hermann Göring's orders to Reinhard Heydrich.
 32. Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, p. 54.
 33. Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, p. 277 f.
 34. Dragomán, *The White King*, p. 316.
 35. Calvino discusses this himself in a foreword to a later edition of the novel. See Calvino, *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, p. 25.

36. Calvino, *The Path to the Spiders' Nests*, p. 46.
37. For our society's worship of childhood, see George Boas' *The Cult of Childhood* (London: University of London, 1966).
38. Dragomán, *The White King*, p. 217.
39. Graham Keely, 'Find General Francisco Franco's stolen children of the Spanish Civil War, says court', *The Times*, 9 January 2009, quoted from www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article5478183.ece (accessed 18 August 2010).

6

Is Fictional Literature Incapable of Imagining the Shoah?

Björn Larsson

Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood 1939–1948*, in which the author ostensibly gives an account of his traumatic experiences as a child in two different concentration camps, was first presented by Eva Koralnik, Wilkomirski's agent, to the Jüdischer Verlag, an imprint of the reputable Suhrkamp publishing house. Not long before the book was about to be put on the market, Koralnik received a letter expressing doubts about the truth-value of Wilkomirski's book. Koralnik immediately contacted Wilkomirski, including some of the latter's close friends, his therapist and specialists in Holocaust history. After a thorough inquiry, Koralnik convinced herself and the editor of Suhrkamp that Wilkomirski was telling the truth. The book was released in 1995, winning immediate acclaim as a major testimony to the horrors of the Lager, both by Jewish communities and by critics all over the world, not least because it was at the time the only testimony from a child having survived an extermination camp.¹ Wilkomirski received several prestigious awards, and was invited to address conferences about his book and his childhood experiences.

Four years later, however, a Swiss journalist, Daniel Ganzfried, whose father had survived Auschwitz, began to have serious doubts about the authenticity of Wilkomirski's childhood memories. A close reading by Ganzfried revealed that many of the 'facts' described by Wilkomirski did not square with what was known about the camps. Furthermore, if Wilkomirski had been born in 1939, he would have been too young to correctly identify some of the things he had seen in the camps. Further research by Ganzfried showed that the real name of the author was not Wilkomirski but Bruno Grosjean and that he was not a Jew at all, but the child of Christian parents who had abandoned him in an orphanage as a young child. The findings of Ganzfried were published in a substantial

article in *Weltwoche*, which caused a sensation. Several of those who had spoken well of *Fragments* rushed to the defence of its author. However, an independent inquiry by the historian Stefan Maechler confirmed the conclusions of Ganzfried beyond reasonable doubt: Wilkomirski was a hoax.² He was perhaps not a deliberate liar, and was certainly not trying to make easy money from the misfortunes of others, but he had nevertheless imagined a life story for himself out of a ragbag of memories as an adopted orphan and from what he had learned about the concentration camps in books and from interviews with survivors of the Holocaust.

When Maechler's report was published, the reaction was prompt and sharp: Wilkomirski practically lost all credibility overnight. Maechler describes the reaction as 'the sudden transformation of respect into disdain'.³ Wilkomirski himself went into hiding and made few further public appearances, although he maintained that he had told the truth, or rather that he had described faithfully his childhood memories. It was to no avail. It did not help, of course, that one of his staunchest defenders, Laura Grabowski, turned out to be one Lauren Stratford, who herself some years earlier had published a fake autobiography of her suffering at the hands of satanical sects. Or that one of Wilkomirski's sources of inspiration happened to be *The Painted Bird* (1965) by Jerzy Kosinski, another forged autobiography, albeit standing on more solid ground than that of Stratford. Once the credibility of Wilkomirski was undermined, all the qualities which had been ascribed to his book suddenly seemed to vanish into thin air.

Reading Wilkomirski's book today is a somewhat dubious experience; however much one tries to concentrate on what is written, one cannot avoid searching for hints or clues indicating that it is in fact a fictional account. And these are relatively easy to spot too. To begin with, there is practically no chronology and very few proper nouns that would enable the reader to verify the truthfulness of the account, in spite of the fact that Wilkomirski spent, in his own words, 'years of research' and conducted 'countless conversations with specialists and historians' in order to 'clarify many previously inexplicable shreds of memory'.⁴ Second, time and time again Wilkomirski mentions his faltering and rhapsodic memory, to the point where the informed reader of today cannot help but wonder if it is nothing but a subterfuge. Finally, there are a couple of declarations made in the book which, in the light of later events, are tempting to read as a mea culpa: for example, when Wilkomirski states in his afterword that 'legally accredited truth is one thing – the truth of a life another' or when, after the war, he tries to confide in people other than his foster parents and is accused of 'making it up!'⁵

Some critics who had reviewed the book before Ganzfield's revelations actually raised the question of the relationship between objective truth, subjective truth and literature or fiction, as if, in spite of their enthusiasm, they sensed that something was wrong. But to them, Wilkomirski's lack of literary rhetoric becomes an argument for the truth of his memories. A critic in the American magazine *The Nation* wrote, for example: 'This stunning and austere work is so profoundly moving, so morally important, and so free from literary artifice of any kind at all that I wonder if I even have the right to try to offer praise.'⁶

What is even more significant – or disturbing – are the letters that Wilkomirski received from Jews who had been in concentration camps and survived. Some of them had never before dared to talk about their experiences, fearing that they would not be believed. *Fragments* helped them 'come out of the closet', as one reader put it. Some of these former camp prisoners also talked about the 'healing effect' of Wilkomirski's book. Even though not all of them recognize the specific realities described in the book, it is clear that they generally subscribe to the view that Wilkomirski gives a fairly accurate depiction of what life was like in the camps.⁷

If so many readers and critics were fooled, including readers who had first-hand experience of the concentration camps, it must be because the book rang true. In other words, even if historical accuracy is wanting and Wilkomirski 'only' imagined the experiences of a child in a concentration camp, his book could still be largely true to life.

Beyond the question of fiction versus historical truth, it does indeed seem that we have to recognize that Wilkomirski succeeds in capturing something about what it was really like to be a child in a concentration camp. But if we admit that a child could have experienced and sometimes did experience what Wilkomirski imagined, why is it then that the discovery of the hoax caused so much indignation? Few, if any, of those critics who had been formerly so positive towards the book seem to have considered the possibility that *Fragments* could continue to be read as a piece of literature. The editor of Suhrkamp for one, who had originally issued the book, declared that he would not have published it if he had known the truth.⁸

But even though the unmasking of the Wilkomirski hoax – and the consequent rejection of his book – caused a sensation, it was not the first time that fake testimonies have met with strong reactions. Misha Levy Defonseca encountered a similar reaction with her book *Misha: A Memoire of the Holocaust Years*; likewise Herman Rosenblat's *Autobiography* – even more so because the latter was strongly promoted by American talk-show host Oprah Winfrey. Another example is when

it was discovered, as late as in 2005, that the emblematic figure of anti-franquism, Enrico Marco, had never been held prisoner, with the number 6448, in the concentration camp of Flossenburg, as he had stated in his book *Memories from Hell* (1978), but that instead he had been working as a voluntary mechanic in a factory in Kiel. When he was interviewed after the revelations, Marco admitted that he had been 'stupid', but added: 'I was not deported, but I have defended their cause better than anyone'. When Marco is asked why he did not content himself with writing about the sufferings of others instead of claiming that they were his own, he answered: 'I couldn't resist. In saying I, the eyes of my listeners sparkled with interest. It was the force of the testimony'.⁹ Likewise, the discovery that Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird* was a fake autobiography caused uproar in the media, and led eventually to the suicide of the author.

Melissa Katsoulis, the author of *Telling Tales* – an overview of literary hoaxes throughout modern history – is certainly right when she talks about the 'fury' generated by literary hoaxers who pretend to have suffered in the Holocaust; in comparison, most other hoaxes are quickly forgotten and even laughed off.¹⁰ However, it should be pointed out that it is not only faked testimonies of the Holocaust that provoke strong feelings; the same seems invariably to occur with overtly fictional accounts, autobiographical novels or even with authentic testimonies from former concentration camp prisoners.

In his memoirs, Claude Lanzmann writes of the contradictory reactions to his 1985 documentary film *Shoah*: some did not want to watch it because it would revive memories that were too painful, others because they were ashamed of their own passivity. In Poland, sections of the establishment wanted to stop the film from being shown, since it revealed the extensive anti-Semitism in their country both before and during the war. There were also Jews who resented the fact that Lanzmann had tried to give a voice to the dead, not to the survivors.¹¹

Claude Lanzmann himself recently initiated a heated debate about the novel *Jan Karski* (2009) by Yannick Haenel, which won the Médicis prize in France for the best essay of the year, even though it was sold as a novel. Again, the crux of the debate centres on historical truth, with Lanzmann accusing Haenel of falsification. The irony is that Haenel based large parts of his story on Lanzmann's film *Shoah*.¹² The film *Schindler's list* (1993), as well as Jonathan Littell's novel *Les bienveillants* (2006), likewise prompted impassioned debates in the media.

It is no coincidence that it took a long time for Primo Levi to find a publisher for his first book about his experiences in Auschwitz, *Se questo*

è un uomo. The publishing house Einaudi turned him down, allegedly because they thought that oblivion was a way to heal the wounds of the Holocaust but perhaps also because they had some doubts about the truthfulness of Levi's account.¹³ In his later book, *I sommersi e i salvati* (1986), Levi speaks about his own deeply felt fear that no one would believe the accounts of former concentration camp prisoners, that what they experienced was simply too horrible and too painful to be believed. He also points out that the reason for which the SS, even at the very end of the war, continued to exterminate and transport prisoners towards the interior of Germany was to make sure 'that not one witness survived', which of course is proof that the SS knew perfectly well that they, in the eyes of the world, were committing a crime for which there was no excuse or pardon.¹⁴ In his essay *L'écriture ou la vie*, Jorge Semprun discusses his doubts about trying to describe what he went through and why he waited so long before starting; to him the fear was not that he would not be believed, but rather that he would not be able to tell the exact and precise truth about the tremendous sufferings of the camp prisoners or of the horrendous crimes of the perpetrators. When the alter ego of Imre Kertész, in *Fatelessness*, returns home from Auschwitz, he is likewise met by scepticism or even overt rejection. Some do not want to believe that he actually tells the truth, others do not want to hear the truth. Two old men even tactlessly point out that it hadn't been that easy at home either.

Clearly, recounting the story of what Primo Levi has called the 'worst crime in the history of mankind' is not just merely telling another story. That testimonies and studies of these horrific crimes are met by careful scrutiny and lead to heated discussions is not so difficult to understand. Much is at stake: the dignity of the survivors, the culpability of the perpetrators and bystanders, the hope that history will not repeat itself, the burning desire to achieve justice and punish those criminals responsible, and perhaps also the desire for revenge.

Viewed in this light, it is perhaps inevitable that hoaxes like Wilkomirski's and others are forcefully rejected, even though in some cases, such as Wilkomirski himself or Kosinski, it is recognized that their intentions were honest and their descriptions generally true. A common fear among those who criticize Wilkomirski is that books like *Fragments* serve the cause of those who have cast doubt on the true extent of the Holocaust and so make it easier for them to undermine the truth-value of other testimonies. It is worthy of note that the disquiet in Wilkomirski's case derives not only from the nature of the hoax itself but also from the fact that he states that he is not concerned with establishing

what really happened, but only with his subjective perceptions and memories.

What is more difficult to explain, however, is what seems to be something of an anathema – not only on hoaxes, but also on fictional and imaginative accounts of the Holocaust more generally. Even though, to my knowledge, there are no systematic empirical studies concerning the number of fictional novels written on the Shoah, the studies that do exist show clearly that there are very few imaginative literary accounts of the horrors of the concentration camps, particularly of the camps where the extermination of Jews was the primary goal and activity.

In 2005, the French magazine *Le magazine littéraire* published a dossier entitled 'La littérature et les camps'. Almost all of the articles, however, deal with testimonies and documentary accounts of the Holocaust, in one case to raise the question whether or not they should be called 'literature'. Only one of the articles deals with imaginative literature. But the harvest is poor: only around ten titles are mentioned, out of which *Sophie's Choice* by William Styron is the most well known, whereas between 1945 and 1947 alone over a hundred documentary works were published. Other general studies of what has come to be called 'concentration camp literature' do not change the impression that fictional and imaginative accounts of the Holocaust are very rare.¹⁵ It is, for example, no coincidence that Primo Levi chose the format of a scientific report for his testimony or that he always denied that his testimonies were literary texts. In an interview with Philip Roth, Levi declares that before his novel *Se non ora, quando?* (1982), he had only written autobiographical texts, and that to be a true writer one had to be capable of creating characters and describing places where one had never been, in other words to use one's imagination.

Two important clarifications have to be made here, however. The first is perhaps trivial: scarcity is not synonymous with a total lack or absence of fictional accounts. Furthermore, the appearance in recent years of three novels on the topic is perhaps an indication of further attempts to come in trying to recreate through imagination what it was like in the concentration camps; this is especially the case once the last survivors have died and fewer first-hand testimonies are forthcoming.

The first novel is *Il treno dell'ultima notte* (2008) by Dacia Maraini, which tells the story of a female journalist trying to find out what happened to a young Jew that she had loved before the war and who was last heard of alive in the Lodz ghetto. In one scene in the book, the journalist-narrator describes how the young boy and his mother enter the gas chamber and their horror when the gas comes seeping out from what they thought were shower sprinklers. Apart from the fact that this

passage is certainly the most moving and painful of the whole novel, it is also clear that the only way for us – or anybody – to picture how it felt to be inside the gas chamber is by imagination, since no one survived to tell the story. The second novel, *De fattiga i Lodz* (The Poor in Lodz), which appeared in 2009 by the Swedish writer Steve Sem-Sandberg, is perhaps not as clear-cut. In this novel, Sem-Sandberg tells the distressing story of the Lodz ghetto, told through the lives of a number of key individuals and structured as any other realistic novel, albeit with only rare incursions into the inner conscience of the characters. However, Sem-Sandberg explains that he relied heavily in his writing on the Lodz Chronicles, a document of three-thousand pages which forms a kind of report of the day-to-day life in the ghetto, including the deportations and random killings of Jews. According to Sem-Sandberg, he has tried to stay true to what really happened, using only real persons with their real names as characters in the novel, even though he admits to filling in certain gaps where documentation was lacking. The form is thus that of a traditional novel, but the content is not.¹⁶ The third example of a recent imaginative account of life in an extermination camp is the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006), in which John Boynes tells the story of Bruno, the son of a Nazi commander general, who moves into a new home near 'Out-With' (a mistaken pronunciation of 'Auschwitz'). While at this new house at 'Out-With', Bruno has a great deal of time to look out of his window, and starts to see many people in 'pajamas' on the other side of their fence. One day he decides to get a closer look and encounters a young boy of about his own age named Shmel. They talk for many days and become good friends, trying to learn about each other's lives.

The second clarification that must be made is that one should not confuse literary form with fictional content, which is why I have taken pains to use the term 'imaginative' or 'fictional' literature rather than only 'literature' to distinguish it from truthful documentary accounts which sometimes, but not always, borrow some of the rhetorical devices normally used in literary texts. What is scarce in concentration camp literature is not literary form – in whichever way it is understood – but imagined or invented characters, plots or places. Furthermore, fictional novels that do exist, for example by Styron or Appelfeldt, focus more on what happened before or after the Holocaust, but not what went on in the extermination camps as such. Indeed, the falsifications of Wilkomirski and others could be seen as a reaction to the resistance to fictional accounts of the Holocaust and genocide in general. In order to gain credibility, the authors might have felt that the only solution was to present their fiction as truthful accounts.¹⁷

It would thus seem as if there is something in the depiction of absolute evil, of human suffering beyond comprehension and the complete loss of individual dignity, which resists imaginative representation. This raises several important questions about the function of truthful versus fictional accounts of genocide, ethnic cleansing or massacres. Why is it that there are so few novels about life – if ‘life’ is the appropriate term – in the concentration camps? Why are there so few imaginative attempts to give an idea of what it is like to experience the utmost despair and suffering? Is there something in the essence of imaginative literature itself which prevents it from describing the feelings and thoughts of those who are reduced to or treated as animals or non-humans? Or has it rather something to do with the ideologies that serve to legitimize the inhumane treatment and killing of millions of people?

It would be presumptuous to pretend to be able to answer these complex questions within the space of this chapter, even more so since they have been the subjects of debates by eminent specialists for years. However, since no conclusive answers have been forthcoming as of yet, it is necessary that the discussion continues; the importance of the questions warrants that every effort be made to clarify the issues. But before I suggest two complementary paths for further pondering and probing, there are at least three misunderstandings that need to be addressed: first, in the wake of Adorno, that there is no need for literature and particularly for poetry after Auschwitz; second, that language cannot express or describe the sufferings of the victims or the minds of the perpetrators; and finally that imaginative literature cannot say anything true about human existence and reality.

‘Writing a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric’

As is quite often the case with intellectual debate, a provocative catchphrase can easily become the hub around which that debate is centred. That has certainly been true of the famous statement by the German-born philosopher Theodor Adorno, which has been almost automatically quoted in every article on literature and the Holocaust up until today. The problem in using Adorno’s statement as a point of departure is, however, that it is not at all clear what he meant. The phrase first appeared in an article, ‘Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft’, published in 1951, where Adorno in a very theoretical way tries to show that the traditional expressions of culture and art from before the war had become bankrupt. He specifically singles out ‘poetry’ as an example of cultural expression that had been radically undermined by the barbarism of

the Nazis; he did not, however, mention any particular poet by name. Later, in the early 1960s, in an answer to criticism put forward by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Adorno somewhat modified his radical stand. He recognized that there might be forms of art, including poetry, which could be meaningful after Auschwitz, as in the case of Paul Celan, but he maintained that it had to be a literature which broke radically with all hitherto known aesthetic rhetoric, that it must be a kind of literature that is the very negation of the literature that was appreciated in Germany and other Fascist countries before the war, in particular lyrical poetry.¹⁸ For Adorno, hence, the solution is not the kind of literature advocated by Sartre and his followers as an answer to the same problem, namely the 'littérature engagée', which, in the eyes of Adorno, is just another form of authoritarian literature, albeit with good intentions.¹⁹

But what are we to do with the peremptory statement by Adorno? On one level, he was of course right in saying that literature, or more specifically poetry, could not stop the Holocaust. But that does not warrant the conclusion that cultural expression in the 'traditional form' contributed to or was in part responsible for the extermination of the Jews. What about Montaigne, Rabelais, Thoreau, Cervantes, Voltaire, Hugo or Tolstoy, for example? Would the resistance to the Nazi regime have been as strong if literature, including poetry, had not kept the desire for freedom and dignity alive? Would the resistance movement in France have gathered so many followers, if it had not had Vercors, Malraux and Camus as beacons of hope and inspiration? Would the morale of soldiers who defended human liberty and dignity have been higher if they had read the kinds of authors praised by Adorno, like Celan, Beckett or Blanchot? Where would humanistic values and democratic ideals be if writers from Rabelais and Cervantes to Hugo and Solzhenitsyn had not upheld them? The answer is, of course, that no one really knows; there has simply not been enough research done on the effects of literature on actual readers. With few exceptions, the research done in the reception of literature has been carried out on the basis of readings by literary critics rather than by ordinary readers.

There are, furthermore, like in so many other similar assertions about what 'literature' is and what it can do, two major flaws with Adorno's statement and with later interpretations of it. The first of these is that literature is discussed in general, as if there was some kind of common quality to all texts which fall under the generic heading.²⁰ But literature comes in an almost infinite variety: it can be good or bad, read or not read, well read or poorly read, quickly forgotten or remaining for centuries, ironic or serious, blasphemous or sacralizing, experimental or

traditional, critical or uncritical, romantic or realistic and so on. The conclusion is that every statement about literature 'in general', about its real or potential effects on readers, and through them on society and history, should be treated with great caution.

The other weakness is that Adorno, and he is not alone, shows a disregard for existing empirical evidence that points to the use of literature as a way to resist and fight tyranny and oppression. Two examples here suffice: during the siege of Sarajevo, the French Institute continued to operate day and night, organizing readings and theatre sessions. According to many of those who defended Sarajevo, this intense cultural activity represented just about the only ray of hope in an otherwise desperate situation. The other example comes from Primo Levi who, in *'Se questo è un uomo'*, recounts how a poet brought solace by reciting poetry inside the camp, and also how he himself recited Dante to try to momentarily escape the despair and suffering in the camp.

It must also be remembered that the Nazi regime responsible for the Holocaust and the liquidation of millions also enforced strict censorship on literature in the 'traditional' form. The Nazi regime, at least, felt threatened by imaginative literature. If they were right in fearing literature, which I for one believe they were, then we must draw the conclusion that Adorno was mistaken in his criticism of traditional forms of literature and the arts – or at least that he was overgeneralizing. One could even go so far as to argue – which I do – against Adorno, that it is precisely when human dignity and liberty are under threat that good literature has an important role to play.

The experiences of the Holocaust are indescribable

Another type of argument often put forward to explain why literature seems to waver when confronted by evil and unending suffering is the idea that crimes against humanity are unrepresentable or indescribable. On the one hand, it is argued, it is of utmost importance that the truth be revealed; on the other, language simply 'lacks words' to tell the truth about the crimes committed and the sufferings endured. 'How to tell genocide?' asks J. Semujanga, for example, before continuing: 'What forms could this expression take when it has already been declared indescribable?'²¹

In his *L'écriture ou la vie*, Jorge Semprun argues forcefully against the idea that language is deficient and lacks the means to express certain things:

It is not that the experiences [of the camps] are indescribable. It was unbearable, which is another thing, as is easily understood. ... Only

the construction of a controlled story will succeed in rendering some of the truth of the testimony; it is the same with all important historical experiences. One can say anything, in fact. The indescribability that you hear about all the time is only an alibi. Or a sign of laziness. You can always express everything, language contains everything. You can express the most passionate love, the most terrible cruelty.²²

There is hardly any doubt that Semprun is on the right track when he points out that the difficulty in trying to capture the horrors of the concentration camps is not due to the deficiencies of language itself. Nor is it, as has often been said, because it is impossible to understand absolute evil; the extraordinary testimonies of Primo Levi, Imre Kertész, David Rousset and Robert Antelme, all prove the contrary. Clearly, it is possible, if extremely difficult, to describe accurately what the Häftlinge had to endure in the concentration camps. But again, there is an unfortunate tendency among many critics to debate in terms that are too general; only this time the issue at stake is 'language' instead of 'literature'. Difficulty, put simply, is not the same thing as impossibility.

It is curious that no one seems to have taken notice of the simple fact that the majority of witnesses were not writers; most of them had not done any serious writing at all before they set out to give a truthful account of their experiences. When you add to this the fear among former camp prisoners that they would fail to convey the truth, both historically and emotionally, about their experiences, it is no wonder that many of them have felt the Holocaust to be indescribable. It is of course true that language sometimes lacks expressions or words for phenomena which are new to human experience, but as has been shown time and again by great writers, language is sufficiently flexible to overcome these limitations, however difficult they might seem at the outset. It is, I would claim, first and foremost the moral imperative for former prisoners to tell the truth about their experiences wherein lies the real obstacle and origin of their fears, not the insufficiency of language or the extreme and exceptional nature of their experiences.²³

That being said, if the aims were not only to describe and express the horrors of the camps, but also to make the reader feel and experience the same pain and suffering as did the prisoners, then of course language alone would not suffice. Semprun makes an important distinction between the experience of the camps having been 'unbearable', on the one hand, and 'indescribable' on the other. Literature can certainly create strong emotions in the reader, but to ask of literature to replace

first-hand experiences of passion, pain or happiness is asking the impossible. To claim, therefore, that language could replace and be equal to subjective emotional experiences of reality is clearly to misunderstand what language is and what it can do.

Can fictional literature speak the truth?

In any case, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of describing the horrors of the camps and killings does not explain why fictional accounts should be ruled out 'on principle'. On the contrary, it is generally agreed that great writers have the capacity to express feelings and states of mind which historians, journalists or scientists are not able to describe. For one thing, the latter lack the ability to narrate from inside another consciousness, that is, trying to put oneself in another person's place, including one's own if one is writing autobiographically. Furthermore, scientists are notoriously specialized, even more so today than in the past, and can only describe one dimension of a human being, whereas the writer can and perhaps should try to fathom all aspects of a human being. Stephen Vizinczey, for example, comments on Stendhal: 'You don't know what life is about until you have read his books.'²⁴ Milan Kundera states something similar about Kafka: 'Franz Kafka has revealed more of our human existence (in our century) than any sociological or political analysis could say.'²⁵ And not so long ago, Paul Ricœur declared at a round-table discussion in Copenhagen that there was much more truth to be learned about human existence in Shakespeare than in the works of all the philosophers of the twentieth century, including himself.²⁶

As I have tried to show, there is nothing in principle which would stop literature from saying something true about the real world, even if everything in a specific literary work were imagined or invented.²⁷ The difference in truth potential between, for example, literature and science is not a question of fiction versus truth, but lies in the process of verification. Of course, scientific language should ideally avoid all polysemic metaphors or ambiguities, but the requirement of clarity and precision is motivated first and foremost by the necessity to ensure that the intersubjective verification actually applies to the same hypothesis. Ontologically, prior to any verification, all statements by way of language belong to the realm of fiction in the sense that we cannot know beforehand if they describe something existing in the world outside language or if the description corresponds to what actually is the case. There are thousands of hypotheses perfectly spelled out in close-to-unambiguous scientific language that have been proven false,

countless historical or journalistic descriptions of reality which have shown themselves to be incorrect or completely mistaken. No text, be it scientific, mathematic, religious or literary, can in itself or by itself provide guarantees for its veracity. This might sound trivial, but it is very often forgotten.²⁸

Potentially, then, imaginative literature can be used to explore and describe reality as it is. However, the task of literature is not primarily to compete with science. In any case, why should it since we already have science to establish what the case is and express this in statements of the highest possible truth-value. Rather the most useful and urgent function of literature is to provide us with possible models or counter-models of reality, possible ways of thinking, of feeling, of living, of conceiving moral norms, including alternative and more precise uses of language. But literature can be more or less anchored in reality, be more or less realistic, more or less romantic. At one end of the spectrum, we have literature where there is practically no invention at all, like in many autobiographical novels, in which only the aesthetic use of language signals that there is a discrepancy between the work of literature and the world outside. At the other end, we find literature, like fantasy or experimental poetry, in which either the world or the language, and sometimes both, are so far removed from everyday reality that it can be said to describe the impossible.

Interestingly enough, the scepticism or suspicion towards literature – which since Plato has been aired among other great writers such as Cervantes and Flaubert – is not usually directed against literature far removed from reality, but towards mimetic and realistic literature. The fear that literature will give readers a false or deformed picture of reality is in fact based on the supposition that the readers might come to believe that the stories told are true. Literature which signals without a doubt that it is fiction and invention, without any connection to the reality at hand, or a mere play with words, is in this sense mostly considered to be inoffensive. But it is also true that one of the forces of literature is that it can play two games at the same time, both exploring the bounds of credibility and saying something true about the world. In this sense, literature is ambiguous and not easily controlled by those in power desiring to impose one vision of the world as the only truth. On the one hand, literature can question that vision by showing that there are other possibilities. On the other, it can also show that the imposed vision is not true to reality. That is the reason why literature is censored, and why writers in dictatorial regimes are exposed to just as much persecution as journalists.

But if it is neither the insufficiency of language nor the incapacity of literature to say something true about life, what is it, then, that could explain why writers of imaginative literature have been reluctant or hesitant to describe the Shoah in fictional form? In his introduction to *Le génocide, sujet de fiction*, J. Semujanga writes: 'Although there are many testimonies and documentary films on the tragedy in Rwanda, few fictional texts have been published. It is as if the writers are hesitant to take up the subject within a fictional universe.'²⁹ Even though censorship partly explains why there seem to be relatively few accounts of life in the gulags in Stalin's Soviet Union, the studies of concentration camp and genocide literature always mention the same few names – Shalamov, Grossman and Solzhenitsyn – as examples of writers having written fictional novels about the camps.³⁰ Although this would have to be investigated empirically in more detail, it would seem that the scarcity of fictional accounts of the Shoah is not entirely exceptional – even though the Shoah itself is unique – but part of a more fundamental difficulty of imaginative literature to deal with genocide, massacres and crimes against humanity.

It must be pointed out, however, that we are not just talking about the difficulty for imaginative literature to describe pain, suffering or brutality in general. There are many thousands of novels, plays and poems that express feelings of outmost pain and sorrow, of extreme sadism and oppression; novels about war abound, telling the stories of both civilian victims and soldiers. It is also noteworthy that there is no shortage of literary and fictional accounts of individual acts of evil. Furthermore, those who speak of the indescribability of the Shoah tend to think primarily of the suffering endured by its victims. But even if it were true that it is too difficult to describe in literary form what Primo Levi or Robert Antelme painstakingly described in their documentary testimonies, it still remains to be explained why literature has not tried to tell the story of the perpetrators, that of the likes of Eichmann and Mengele. Finally, it must be remembered that literary imagination knows in principle no boundaries: a writer does not have to be Russian to attempt to imagine what it was like to be a prisoner in the Siberian concentration camps, nor be Jewish to try to put him or herself in the position of an internee at an extermination camp.

Where fictional literature seems to have a particular problem, then, is when the pain inflicted is systematic and coupled with a complete disregard for human values and dignity. But if it is true that there is some kind of incompatibility between fictional and imaginative literature on the one hand and genocide – particularly the Shoah – on the other, how could this be explained? Is it at all possible to explain?

Totalitarianism and the ideology of fiction

It is perhaps natural that one would begin by looking at the political systems and ideologies responsible for the Shoah and other genocides throughout history, in order to understand why and to what degree fictional literature has difficulties in coming to terms with extreme suffering and pain caused by human oppression and tyranny. Is there any common ground between those political systems of modern times that have been responsible for crimes against humanity in the form of genocide or ethnic cleansing through mass murder, be it Nazi Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union, Pol Pot's Cambodia, Rwanda or elsewhere?

The most obvious answer is, of course, that we are dealing with ruthless mass dictatorships – rather than dictatorships like those of Franco or Pinochet – aiming at establishing the supremacy of one race over another, of one ethnic group over another, of one social class over another. It is, for example, difficult to deny that the dictators ruling Serbia or Iraq needed some kind of popular support among the majority or their own ethnic-religious group to be able to initiate mass killings of minorities on their territory, or, that is, on what they claimed to be their territory.³¹ On the other hand, the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Serbs in Bosnia and by the Hutus in Rwanda was perhaps systematic, if more of a blood-thirsty frenzy in the case of Rwanda, but it was not part of a definite ideological and political programme.³² In the same way, the mass killings ordered by Saddam Hussein on the Kurds or by the Turks on the Armenians had all the characteristics of genocides, but they were not motivated by any long-term ideological goal of gaining supremacy over the world. But however terrible the sufferings of the victims in these countries, it can be argued that the Nazi and Stalinist genocides occupy a category of horrors all of their own.³³ Both were systematic on a scale hitherto unknown, both were based on an ideology which penetrated all spheres of society, both employed mass murder as a tool to strengthen and maintain their political systems and both had stated ambitions of attaining supremacy over the world.

The question therefore arises whether there was something in these two political systems that could explain why fictional literature seemingly 'gives up' when it comes to describing the horrors of the Shoah and perhaps also, but to a lesser extent, the mass murders of the Stalinist regime. Again, the answer is most likely too complex to be adequately treated within the confines of this chapter. One cannot either – even without entering into the heated debate of 'which was worse' – ignore the differences between the two regimes; there was in principle no

overt racist or nationalist component in the official ideology of Soviet Communism, even though anti-Semitism was widespread. In fact, as Joseph Roth points out in his book *Juden auf Wanderschaft*, the Soviet Union was the first country in the world to officially recognize the Jews as citizens with full and equal rights.³⁴ In the Soviet Union, literature and the arts were actively enrolled in the propaganda machine of the regime, whereas books were indiscriminately burned in Nazi Germany. In the Soviet Union, those who were condemned to death or left to die in the camps were largely picked at random, which made the terror all the more frightening for the ordinary citizen – no one could feel safe, whereas in Nazi Germany one could predict those likely to be carted off: first the Jews, then the mentally retarded, the homosexuals and the Gypsies, and lastly, if it would have stopped there, the Slavic populations. Another notable difference is that there were relatively few purges among the Nazi leadership or of high-ranking officers of the Wehrmacht or SS, whereas Stalin frequently had party and army leaders executed or sent to the camps. Finally, in spite of the fact that millions died in the Stalinist camps, it should not be forgotten that a majority of prisoners actually survived, which was not the case in the Nazi extermination camps.

Notwithstanding the differences, the two regimes share a common feature, as was brilliantly analysed by Hannah Arendt in her essay on the two totalitarian systems: both relied heavily on the capacity to replace truth by lies, reality by fiction, to the point where one might say that the very foundation of totalitarianism is made of fiction; in other words, one of the main characteristics of totalitarianism is the systematic blurring of the distinction between truth and lies, between reality and fiction.³⁵ Arendt repeatedly illuminates how the lies and fictional representation of reality invaded all aspects of life, both political and private. From the Jewish conspiracy to the betrayal of the bourgeoisie, fiction lay at the core of Nazi and Stalinist propaganda, which in turn became the only reality for the masses and party members. Arendt writes, for example:

The efficiency of this kind of propaganda highlights one of the main characteristics of modern masses. They don't believe in anything they see, in the reality of their own experience; they don't trust either their eyes or their ears, but only their imagination, which is easily seduced by all that appears universal and coherent.³⁶

The force of the totalitarian propaganda – before the movements have obtained sufficient power to let fall an iron wall that stops

anything, even the smallest bit of reality, to trouble the gruesome tranquillity of an entirely imaginary world – rests on its capacity to cut off the masses from reality.³⁷

The method is to use, and at the same time transcend, verifiable experiences borrowed from the chosen fiction, and then to generalize them so as to make them inaccessible for individual verification. Thanks to these generalizations, the totalitarian propaganda establishes a world capable of competing with the real world.³⁸

The elite is not made up of ideologues; the education of its members has one and only goal, to abolish their capacity to distinguish truth from falsity, reality from fiction.³⁹

However we conceive literature, it is difficult to deny that a degree of fiction is one of its most crucial components, whether that is because what is told is imagined, or because the use of language introduces a gap between the content of literature and the world outside. My suggestion then, but which of course would have to be subsequently investigated with much more rigour, is that the role of fictional literature becomes problematic, and even redundant, in a society which itself is founded on fiction. Or rather, when the real world is nothing but lies, myths and propaganda, the only efficient way to propose an alternative or a counter-model would be to tell the truth.

What is the task of literature?

The second tentative explanation for the scarcity of fictional accounts of the Shoah is based on the nature of fictional literature itself, of what it is and what it can accomplish. Indeed, any explanation of the possible impact of literature on its readers and on society has to be two-fold, taking into account both the capacity of literature itself to influence the lives of its readers and the way society uses literature.

In her book on the totalitarian systems of Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, Hannah Arendt also comments briefly on the difficulty of providing a literary representation of the concentration camps: 'Nothing can be compared to the life in the concentration camps. We can never grasp it through our imagination since it is beyond life and death.'⁴⁰

The above is not to say that the experiences of prisoners in the camps are on principle indescribable; on the contrary, Arendt clearly believed

that Primo Levi and a few other exceptional witnesses came as close as one can to describing what it was really like to be a Häftlinge in the Lager. What Arendt is saying is rather that it is impossible to capture through 'imagination' the horrors of the camp. But is that true? And if so, why? The explanation given by Arendt, that the horror lies 'outside life and death', is clearly not much of an explanation. It would seem to imply that only those who had first-hand experience of the camps would be able to understand what it was like. Arendt's assertion, I believe, is not a tenable thesis. It would, for one, undermine the value of all truthful testimonies and documentaries already in existence, since their most important function is not to convince the survivors of the camps, but to give those who were not there an understanding, both rational and emotional, of what it was really like. In principle, I do not see why a writer, someone with a sharp sensibility, an exceptional capacity for empathy and exploiting fully the potential of existing testimonies, could not imagine what it would have been like for an individual to be a prisoner in a concentration camp. The above mentioned novels of Sem-Sandberg, Maraini and Boynes seem to confirm this.

However, there is another way of interpreting the words of Arendt, which could form part of the explanation for the scarcity of fictional representations of the Shoah. I have already hinted at what I believe to be the primary task of literature – a task which science, including history and journalism, does not satisfactorily measure up to – which is to give us models and counter-models for how to live, think and feel, and how to use language. The primary task of literature is to help readers – and through them perhaps also non-readers – to both exercise their imagination, and thereby their freedom, and to participate in the quest for meaning. This serves to sharpen and provide nuances to the language that, among other things, we use to talk about what is outside language, including about the worst sufferings and crimes that humanity has inflicted upon itself. The realm of literature, even though it can also contain truths about human nature and human existence, is that of the possible, of what could be. Literature is an expression of our capacity to imagine that reality, including language, could be different than it is. In this sense, literature is an expression of human liberty – of a margin of action which makes us human beyond the determinations of genes, upbringing, sex, social class and so on. That is why in all dictatorships – be they religious, ideological or simply autocratic – writers have always been persecuted, put behind bars or simply silenced. To put it bluntly, the more freedom there is in a given society, the less literature has to offer. The reverse is also true: the less

freedom, the more explosive literature is and the more threatening for those wielding power.

But the experience of the concentration camps, and particularly of the extermination camps in Nazi Germany, shows, I would suggest, that there could be a limit 'at the other end' to what literature can accomplish, namely where there is no freedom at all, where free will no longer exists and where there is no hope that it will exist, exactly the kind of situation that Primo Levi describes so despairingly well in *Se questo è un uomo*. There are countless imaginative novels dealing with illness, including terminal illnesses, but their subject matter is never the illness as such, its progression, symptoms and consequences, but the attitude of the patient towards his or her illness, how to cope with it and eventually fight it. In the same way, there are no poems or theatre plays describing a natural catastrophe per se, or the movements of the molecules in a gas, without at the same time telling how the victim or the scientist perceives and experiences what is happening.⁴¹ The essence of literature, I would propose, is to ask and explore the question of how to be human, of how to stay human and of how not to become inhuman, where the crucial element of humanity is a portion of freedom, or at least the hope to acquire it. Literature, then, is not opposed to science on the level of truth, but to that of free will and liberty which ultimately depends on our capacity to imagine that reality could be otherwise.

But what if that capacity no longer exists, as was the case for the great majority of prisoners in the extermination camps of Nazi Germany? What if the only thing that literature can tell them is that there is no hope, that death is certain, that all that remains is the basic, non-human and animal fight to survive? Where the perpetrators, the Nazis, systematically and efficiently transformed the prisoners into non-humans, taking away their last remnant of human dignity? There would be no sense in imagining that it could be worse, for what could be worse? On the other hand, to imagine that it was not as bad as it was would be morally unacceptable and taking the risk of exonerating the perpetrators. The only thing that remains, unfortunately, is to tell the terrible truth.

In *Se questo è un uomo*, Primo Levi poses the question why some prisoners were able to survive. His conclusion is that those who hoped for salvation, who dreamed of an intervention from above or from the outside and who tried to stay human, generous and compassionate were the most vulnerable. Those who resisted this temptation were those who had given up all hope and dreams and who concentrated only on one thing: to survive from day to day. After the departure of the Germans and before the arrival of the Russians, Primo Levi movingly relates how

he and two others, the only prisoners having enough strength, lit the stove and gathered what food there was. At one point, a French-Pole – Levi even remembers his name, Towarovski – proposes to the other sick people in the ward that they should give a piece of their bread to the three who work for their common survival, which was accepted. ‘This’, comments Levi, ‘was the first human gesture among us, and would have been unthinkable only a day before’.⁴²

Finally, in returning to Wilkomirski, Maechler, at the end of his inquiry into the veracity of *Fragments*, discusses the reasons why the novel was so favourably received and how it could fool so many. One of the psychological reasons he outlined was that the life of Wilkomirski, as it was presented, aroused pity but not exceedingly so, since the story ended well: Wilkomirski survived. The only hitch is that almost no child did survive Auschwitz. While one might accept that Wilkomirski succeeded in giving a subjective and imagined idea of what it was really like to be a child at Auschwitz, the fact that he imagined the survival of his own character is by itself a way of embellishing the story. It gives the impression, falsely and dishonestly, that there was a hope after all, whereas in reality, there was none.

Notes

1. To my knowledge, there is only one other published account by a child having survived Auschwitz, namely *Ein Glückskind* by Thomas Burgenthal (Frankfurt a/M: S. Fischer Verlag, 2007), published more than a decade after Wilkomirski’s *Fragments*.
2. For the details, see Stefan Maechler, *The Wilkomirski Affair. A Study in Biographical Truth*, translated from German by John E. Woods (New York: Schocken Books, 2001), from which I draw substantially in this chapter concerning the facts of the affair.
3. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
4. The edition used for reference is Benjamin Wilkomirski, *Fragments. Memories of a Childhood, 1939–1948* (London: Picador, 1997), first published by Schocken Books, New York, 1996.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 150. It is tempting to assume that this invented accusation was inspired by Primo Levi and Imre Kertész. Both tell of their fear of not being believed, and quote people who thought they were exaggerating, that it couldn’t have been *that* bad.
6. Quoted by Maechler, *The Wilkomirski Affair*, p. 114.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 120–127.
8. Two exceptions are Wilkomirski’s Danish and American editors, who declared that they would be prepared to re-edit the book as fiction, perhaps as a way of saving face. See Bo Bjørnvig, ‘Vidne eller forfatter eller bedrager’ (Witness or Writer or Traitor), *Weekendavisen*, 9–15 June 1999.

9. François Musseau, 'Dans le camp du mensonge', *Libération*, 17 June 2005; all the translations from French are my own throughout. For the philosopher Joseph Maria Terricabres, Marco was 'a great liar who told great truths', a statement which in fact recognizes that the account invented by Marco of his camp experiences had truth-value.
10. Melissa Katsoulis, *Telling Tales. A History of Literary Hoaxes* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2009), p. 235. The Holocaust frauds discussed by Katsoulis are those of Wilkomirski, Defonseca and Rosenblat. A symptomatic detail is that, in 1999, the Swiss lawyer Manfred Kuhn filed a lawsuit against Wilkomirski, the accusation being on the one hand that he had paid for the book under the false pretence that it had been real, and, on the other, that the author had induced him to feel unjustified empathy!
11. Claude Lanzmann, *Le Lièvre de Patagonie. Mémoires* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).
12. 'Litterær kamp om historiens sandhed' (A Literary Struggle about the Truth of History), *Dagbladet Information*, 2 March 2010.
13. Ernesto Ferrero, in his *Primo Levi, La vita, le opere* (Torino: Einaudi, 2007), quotes several editors of Einaudi and their rather evasive arguments over why not to publish Levi. Cf. pp. 28–30.
14. Primo Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), p. 5.
15. See, for example, Anders Ohlsson, 'Men ändå måste jag berätta'. *Studier i skandinavisk förintelslitteratur* ('But Nevertheless, I Have to Tell'. Studies in Scandinavian Holocaust Literature) (Nora: Nya Doxa, 2002); Luba Jurgenson, *L'expérience concentrationnaire est-elle un indicible?* (Paris: Éditions du Rocher 2003); Daniel Dobbels and Dominique Moncond'huy, *Les camps et la littérature. Une littérature du XXe siècle*, deuxième édition, revue et modifiée (Rennes, La Licorne: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006).
16. Two rather recent films should also be mentioned here: *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg and *La vita è bella* by Roberto Benigni, which together with the television series *Holocaust* function as examples of fictional representations of the Shoah.
17. This of course is not new. For a very long time, perhaps ever since Plato, fictional prose has been viewed with scepticism, since it was thought that it gave a deformed picture of reality. All the major novels of Daniel Defoe, for example, were presented as truthful accounts of life experiences, to the point that for many years it was believed that Captain Singleton had discovered the sources of the Nile. Cf. Björn Larsson, 'La fiction n'est plus ce qu'elle était. Quelques remarques sur les théories pragmatiques du concept de fiction', *Orbis Litterarum*, 49 (1994), p. 317.
18. For a detailed analysis of the argument of Adorno, see Lionel Richard, 'La culture est-elle morte à Auschwitz?', *Le magazine littéraire*, 438 (January 2005).
19. It is somewhat ironic that Sartre formulated a catchphrase similar to that of Adorno's, which also has become the centre of critical debate ever since: 'Face à un enfant qui meurt de faim, *La Nausée* ne fait pas le poids' (In front of a child who is dying of hunger, *The Nausea* does not carry any weight).
20. It should be remembered, too, as has been conclusively shown by R. Escarpit, that the extension of the term 'literature' has undergone important changes throughout history; the texts which today qualify as 'literary' are not the same as the ones so defined centuries ago, and also even today there are substantial differences in the classification of texts between different

- countries/languages and cultures. Cf. R. Escarpit, *Le littéraire et le social* (Paris: Flammarion, Coll. 'Champs', 1970).
21. Josias Semujanga, *Le génocide, sujet de fiction? Analyse des récits de massacre des Tutsi dans la littérature africaine* (Québec: Éditions Nota bene, 2008), p. 19.
 22. Jorge Semprun, *L'écriture ou la vie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 25–26.
 23. Some potential witnesses have also declared that it would be too painful to try to remember and write down their experiences. But this psychological obstacle clearly has nothing to do with the nature of language.
 24. Stephen Vizinczey, *Vérités et mensonges en littérature* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), p. 32 (the translation from French is my own).
 25. Milan Kundera, *L'art du roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 141 (the translation from French is my own).
 26. Quoted from memory. The proceedings from the conference at the University of Copenhagen have not been published.
 27. Cf. Björn Larsson, 'La tentation référentielle et le langage de fiction', in Brynja Svane and Morten Nøjgaard (eds), *Les images du réalisme français: Esthétique, réception et traductions scandinaves* (Studia Romanica Upsaliensa 71, Uppsala universitet, 2007).
 28. I use 'veracity' and 'truth' here in their classical and Aristotelian senses. A frequent mistake or sin by omission in much of the theoretical debate on truth – particularly among those who in postmodernistic or relativistic spirit claim that there is no Truth or no truths – is to forget that truth is a measurement used to evaluate what is said in and by language. To use it as a synonym for 'reality' does not help to clarify things. For a more thorough discussion of the concept of 'truth', see Björn Larsson, *Le bon sens commun* (Études Romanes de Lund 57, Lund University Press, 1997), particularly chapters 1 and 6.
 29. Semujanga, *Le génocide, sujet de fiction?*, p 10.
 30. It should be noted, however, that Shalamov, in the same way as Primo Levi, explicitly states that his account is not to be considered as 'literature'. See Jurgenson, *L'expérience concentrationnaire est-elle un indicible?*, p. 24.
 31. The case of Rwanda is somewhat different, as has been pointed out to me by Karin Sarsenov, since it is not clear to what extent the mass murders were systematically organized from the centre of power.
 32. Some of the higher-ranking officers and political leaders in Serbia certainly had the idea of chasing all the Muslim Bosnians 'out into the sea', but it was not a concerted political line and reflected nationalist sentiment rather than an ideological goal.
 33. I do not consider in this study the genocide of the Red Khmers or the millions who died in Communist China for the simple reason that I lack knowledge of the role of fictional literature in these two countries.
 34. Joseph Roth, *Judar på vandring (Juden auf Wanderschaft)* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2010).
 35. Which, incidentally, is the reason why post-modernism, when it becomes ideology rather than an instrument of analysis, should be treated with great caution. It is perhaps not a coincidence that one of the staunchest defenders of ideological post-modernism – that is, that there are no intersubjectively valid interpretations of meaning and thus no way to establish the truth-value of statements by way of language – was Paul de Man, who in his youth

wrote and published anti-Semitic pamphlets. Using his method of systematic deconstruction of meaning, he could always claim afterwards that his texts did not assert what they did seem to assert. See Larsson, *Le bon sens commun*.

36. Hannah Arendt, *Le système totalitaire. Les origines du totalitarisme. Nouvelle édition* (The Origins of Totalitarianism. New edition) (Paris: Le Seuil, Coll. Points, 2003), p. 107. (The translations from French are my own.)
37. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 123–124.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 252: '*Rien ne peut être comparé à la vie dans les camps de concentration. Son horreur, nous ne pouvons jamais pleinement la saisir par l'imagination, pour la raison même qu'elle se tient hors de la vie et de la mort.*'
41. As always, there will be an exception or two, as is the case in some of Robbe-Grillet's experimental novels where he tries to describe a physical place without the presence of a human conscience. Robbe-Grillet, incidentally, started out as a scientist, and it is generally agreed that what saved his literature from being utterly tedious and consigned to oblivion was not the quality of the descriptions, but his use of language.
42. Levi, *Se questo è un uomo* (Einaudi, Torino, 1958), p. 142.

7

Politics, Imagination and Everyday Life in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*

Seonjoo Park

Mass dictatorship

The concept of mass dictatorship is a historical framework with which to analyse twentieth-century dictatorships from a transnational perspective; it challenges the developmental view of history by highlighting the fact that twentieth-century dictatorship regimes were part of a very modern project that found its roots in the nation-state, rather than a pre-modern political abnormality, and as such, they have been an inseparable part of the transnational formation of modernity. Furthermore, the concept of mass dictatorship aims at criticizing the antagonism of the past and present between, in most cases, national/cultural groupings around the world entrenched in the rigid dichotomy of 'perpetrator vs. victim'. It also problematizes the simplistic understanding of power dynamics in the modern regime of the nation-state, and ultimately challenges the complacent stance towards the relationship between responsibility(-ies) and complicity(-ies). And there is more to it. This historical hypothesis tries to do something *un*-historical; it strongly urges us to 'imagine' in order to move beyond the closed dynamics between coercion (from above) and consent (from below). In other words, it puts a heavy emphasis on the role of imagination for us to think and act outside the 'behemoth – a perfect tightly sutured political machine, which does not allow even a tiny space for dissent and resistance'.¹ Here, the term 'imagination' does not mean a romantic search for some beautiful (and ineffectual) ideal, thus conveniently avoiding the issue of historical responsibilities and their politico-ethical consequences; on the contrary, it denotes a frame of mind/perspective which makes us directly confront them. In this sense, mass dictatorship

is not only a historical but also a literary project, or more precisely, it is a transdisciplinary project in which historical analysis goes hand in hand with literary imagination. It is such an inseparable cooperation of history and literature that this chapter tries to explore: to speculate on the role of 'imagination' in the articulation of historical subjectivity within the everyday regulation of the modern disciplinary power of the nation-state.

The more urgent reason to grapple as rigorously as possible with the term 'imagination' for such a project as mass dictatorship is that there is currently a dire poverty of a viable language; even the most liberatory and radical terms such as democracy, justice, freedom and independence are imprisoned within the political, epistemological, ontological terrain of the modern nation-state.² With such a limited set of linguistic tools in our hands, the future of our knowledge and praxis is grim, since every effort to move 'beyond' inevitably ends up with moving back onto itself. The attempt to rework the term 'imagination' – to refurbish it and rethink it – would, thus, be a small part of a more ambitious project to liberate the ideals and their discursive effects from the grip of the nation-state. This task is all the more important in the context of a problematic tension between nationalism and globalization. Now, the 'mass' of mass dictatorship in the twenty-first century is becoming more global, universal and ubiquitous, and as a consequence, the process of massification, or 'nationalization of the mass', is happening in more diverse, subtle and multiple forms due to the re-organized topography of everyday life in an age of globalization. The voluntary consent from the self-mobilized 'mass' to support the current power structure does not occur in the concentrated form of 'people' within a national border, but in a sporadic, dispersed and unpredictable way on a global scale, sometimes across oceans and continents, sometimes in the middle of relocation. To capture the general pattern of coercion and consent is becoming harder, even impossible in this situation, but the making of a 'people' as a collective of legitimate citizens persists, particularly on the level of everyday life. Therefore, it is only by keeping the term 'imagination' – the term usually regarded as an antonym to 'everyday life' in the sense of the ordinary, banal and common – under close examination that we might be able to explore a way of organizing politics that is beyond the global and local reach of the nation-state. In thus examining imagination, it might enable us to live our everyday lives differently; that is, we might live out our own everyday life, not someone else's.

Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*

Nadine Gordimer has consistently explored in her novels lives and experiences that are mundane and yet deeply politicized by the specific setting and context of South Africa. Her novels of fiction such as *The Conservationist* (1974), *Burger's Daughter* (1979), *July's People* (1981) and *My Son's Story* (1990) were all preoccupied specifically with political issues under apartheid. Writing both within and against the context of state-sponsored racism, Gordimer through her novels exposed the 'banality of evil' (to use Hannah Arendt's term), which deeply permeated everyday life in South Africa. Gordimer viewed apartheid as a 'successfully fitted device', that 'in the eye of the beholder is something the average white South African is not conscious of, for apartheid is above all a habit'.³ She responded to this totalized politics of 'habit' with an uncanny critique, showing how 'the discordant elements of a revolutionary subjectivity can unexpectedly surface from within the mundane'.⁴ In the sense that Gordimer takes issue with the distorted vision of South African people (a version of silent consent from below for the apartheid regime), her novels bear a thematic relevancy to mass dictatorship.

Her post-apartheid novel, *The Pickup* (2001), however, is a departure from her previous concerns with South Africa in terms of the setting and theme. *The Pickup* is not Gordimer's first novel to be set predominantly outside South Africa,⁵ but it is the first time she sets out to explore possible problems of 'national identity' within a carefully constructed global setting. The novel begins in a city in South Africa, but Julie, the heroine, later leaves, with the setting shifting to a desert village in an anonymous, poor and desolate Arab country. This change of setting naturally leads to a change of theme – one that departs from the racially charged relationships between blacks and whites in South Africa that has largely shaped Gordimer's work. Ibrahim, Julie's lover, neither black nor white, and a national of an unimportant Arab country, belongs to a category of humanity that South African people like Julie cannot quite figure out. Here, he is registered as 'Black – or some sort of black',⁶ but not one of 'the real blacks who get what's going nowadays'.⁷ In addition, concepts such as 'immigration', 'deportation' and 'exile' are central to the plot, with the phrase from Plomer's poem 'Let us go to another country .../Not yours nor Mine' repeated several times as a refrain that resonates throughout the novel. All this suggests that the nature and range of the relationships Gordimer explores in this novel are much more complex and global compared with her previous novels centred on South Africa.

But these changes do not necessarily mean that her profound concern with the politics of 'habit' in everyday life has been switched to something else. Indeed, Gordimer continues to explore the issue of how persistent and subtle the mechanism of 'nationalization of the mass' has become in post-apartheid South Africa, how deeply the normalizing apparatuses of disciplinarity infiltrate people's desires, and finally, how, nevertheless, the way out could be 'imagined'. The fact that the central plot of *The Pickup* concerns a 'romance' between Julie and Ibrahim, two people who are placed differently – more precisely, unequally – in the order of global hierarchy, may show the weight Gordimer attaches to the role of imagination. The importance of imagination is signalled not only because 'romance' and 'imagination' are closely related in the popular imaginary, but also because the way this seemingly improbable relationship develops, revises and transforms the contour of everyday life – so that it can only be made possible through the active power of imagination. What this 'revised everyday' might be and how it is articulated against the ever-expanding power, in a global context, of the 'nationalization of the mass' is addressed by this chapter.

The political context of the novel's plot: Post-apartheid South Africa and a new global order

The global setting of *The Pickup* relates profoundly to the national question in post-apartheid South Africa. After apartheid, the project of nation building became of central importance; there has been immense pressure to find the resources, policies and visions to 'bind the nation together' and to decisively forge a path for its people away from a traumatized past to a reconstructed future.⁸ However, this project is additionally complicated by the fact that the confining, quarantining, controlling and segregating system of apartheid functioned on the basis of concepts of racial purity and the spiritualized notion of 'the nation'.⁹ In this way, the national question in post-apartheid South Africa becomes quite an ambiguous matter.¹⁰

In attempting to reconstruct a new national map in South Africa, the following question arises: who will be the authentic agent of nation building? Almost simultaneously with the end of apartheid, a struggle emerged with the 'concomitant rise of new dangers in the politics of nationalism and ethnicity, both on the white Right and in black neo-tribal groupings'.¹¹ The portrayal of the black lawyer Motsamai in *The Pickup* illustrates the reversed but continually repeated system of power under the current structure. With his accomplishments and belonging

to a professional class, his entire demeanour exemplifies the assurance and smugness of those occupying commanding posts within newly hegemonic power-blocs. As Neil Lazarus points out, Motsamai is clearly emblematic of the 'African Renaissance' – touting 'Afrostocracy' in the 'New' South Africa.¹² Gordimer's ironic presentation of Motsamai reveals sincere concern about the future of 'New' South Africa – her fear is that what the people in South Africa achieved through a long and hard struggle could turn into the same oppression they fought, but under another name and form in this global order.

The issue of agency in nation building can also be broken down to the issue of identity – or more precisely, what Benedict Anderson called 'imagined identity' – in which it is not only a matter of what kind of nation South Africa will become (how it will embody the ideals of reconciliation, forgiveness and unity in view of a legacy of racial injustice and political oppression), but also a matter of how each individual will find his/her own place in this new 'nation'. Gordimer, in her essays, addresses this question from her own very personal perspective, asking what, once the conflict and struggle of apartheid is over, will be the place for people like her, 'the dissident white', who is 'a minority within a minority', as 'the white ... that was never at home in white supremacy'.¹³ She insists that people like herself should not just follow the lead of blacks, but rather find their own unique path, their own way to resist the oppressive system. However, if the new nation being built on the principles of democracy and equality actually re-creates another type of oppressive hegemony, another kind of discrimination, it will certainly be very difficult for the 'minority within a minority' to find this path. Where and to what will the people who seek a future without any oppressive system belong?

What complicates the nation building project of South Africa even further is the fact that such a project is happening in the context of global oppression. Many critics have argued that the African National Congress (ANC), in its efforts to push for further integration into the global economy, has compromised its revolutionary principles rather than challenging the global neoliberalism agenda that ultimately benefits only a tiny minority of the black elite. Critics like John Saul, Hein Marais and Zine Magubane therefore accuse the ANC of abdicating its responsibility to the poor working-class majority. Alan G. Nasser captures the essence of the complexities inherent in trying to comprehend the actions of governments within the context of neoliberal globalization, rightly pointing out that capitalism is 'a system, not a policy'. Jeremy Cronin asserts, moreover, that a major weakness of macroeconomic policy-making within the

ANC has been a failure to appreciate the fact that 'our problems might be linked to the systematic and objective character of global capitalism and our own semiperipheral position within it. ... The emphasis is on "marketing" ourselves better, convincing the world that "South Africa is not Zimbabwe," rather than on adopting antisystemic measures'.¹⁴

The systematic predicament that confronts post-apartheid South Africa might be explained as a classic case of the mass dictatorship in its reproduction as the all-inclusive global form of disciplinarity. It is a 'dictatorship' not as a political form, but more in a metaphorical sense. South Africa finally achieved racial democracy through a long and hard struggle, but the way people plan and live their lives is still heavily regulated. This time, rule is not executed through the state apparatus by means such as imprisonment, exile or police enforcement, but rather through each group's or individual's desire to survive in the global order. A particular lifestyle of a certain group of people is normalized as 'the life', and South Africa, despite all the effort to build a truly democratic nation, should justify itself as a legitimate one by demonstrating that it is 'not Zimbabwe'. Hardt and Negri, in a similar vein, name this kind of regulation 'Empire', claiming that it is a new and ubiquitous global order replacing the nation-state and that it is 'a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers'. They also point out the penetrating power of 'Empire' over human life and relationships in their 'entirety': '[Empire] not only regulates human interaction but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower'.¹⁵ The new global order not only threatens to engulf the new South Africa but also transcends national borders, penetrating into and ruling directly over each and every aspect of everyday life. Whether the authority and validity of the nation-state is now redundant, as Hardt and Negri claim, is still subject to debate; nonetheless, 'Empire', in its most clear embodiment, constitutes the global drive to catch up with the rich and powerful countries in the First World. Perhaps, 'Empire' is better explained as the 'nationalization of the mass' on a global scale; it is a 'nationalization' in the sense that one fashions oneself along the lines of a certain national model such as the 'American' or 'European', and the 'mass' means that everyone is affected no matter where the person is located. 'Mass' denotes simply the extent of the number of people without any local meaning; local identity does not function as a site of resistance that somehow protects against global flows of disciplinary power. The ubiquitous and immanent mode and structure of the

disciplinary power of the 'nationalization of the mass' on a global scale cannot be explained by the simple binary structure of master/servant, above/below or outside/inside.¹⁶

Ibrahim as a complacent victim of the global order

The characterization of Ibrahim in *The Pickup* is suggestive in this respect. Ibrahim is an itinerant character who, on account of his 'illegal alien' status, is continually on the move from one country to the next. Even when Ibrahim steps into Julie's cosy cottage in South Africa, he looks around 'as if looking for somewhere to place himself',¹⁷ his identity determined by the external conditions such as visa issues, airplane tickets and, especially, the country where he is allowed to stay. It is natural, then, that his identity is ever-changing as he moves from one place to the next and into a new context, and that as such his identity is somewhat unstable and unpredictable. He enters whichever country allows him in, leaves it when he gets a deportation notice or even, in one case, hides beneath the 'underbelly' of an old car with a false name and a dirty overall to stay illegally. His name, clothes and identity shift as he wanders, so that he adopts the false identity of 'Abdu' in a garage in a South African city. He adopts many other false identities in the countries he goes to,¹⁸ and he is willing to continue doing so in the future. As Julie notes, 'an illegal has to be some sort of chameleon, along with all the other subterfuges to be resorted to.'¹⁹ However, the text does not fully endorse Ibrahim's unstable identity; instead, she takes a sceptical stance towards him. At first, Ibrahim seems to deny the idea of any 'given' or 'naturalized' collective identity of the nation-state.

I can't say that – 'my country' – because somebody else made a line and said that is it. In my father's time they gave it to the rich who run it for themselves. So whose country I should say, it's mine.²⁰

Ibrahim's flat denial of the sovereignty of his home country, in fact, does not evolve into the denial of another sovereignty – the global sovereignty of other countries that he wants to emigrate to, such as the United States, Canada or Australia. Rather, his yearning to find a small place for himself within the territory of a globally powerful nation-state becomes more fierce and persistent. With this fervent desire, he comes to imitate and, ultimately, internalize the exclusive mentality of those who have rejected him because those 'who had been refused so often had unconsciously taken on for [themselves] the response of refusal'.²¹

Naturally, his ceaseless relocating does not produce any ground for a resisting displacement. Rather, it reinforces the desire to be accepted into the national order – not the one that he was born into, but the one that he can ‘pick’ from a list. Therefore, in the sense that he is not disturbing the current system of the power regime, but consolidating it by his own volition in wanting to ‘belong’ to powerful countries, he is an agent in the very process of the ‘nationalization of the mass’. Even if he recognizes the absurdity of the claims made in the name of ‘my country’ and all the nefarious, oppressive consequences, his persistent desire to emigrate to the ‘right’ kind of country obviously supports the regime not any less than a self-mobilized national subject. In the global setting of the novel, the nation-states (especially the powerful ones) do not disappear; instead, they are so mystified and internalized that the nationalization of the mass is actually taking place always, everywhere, even in the middle of the desert.

Imagination

Therefore, as long as the way in which the power of the national order in the global form permeates our everyday life in its entirety is recognized, the question remains what alternative currently exists for the individual seeking to adopt ‘antisystemic measures’. The desire to be a legitimate citizen of a new, competitive and powerful South Africa demands loyalties to a global order that divides the people, who must then exploit each other to survive. It is in this context that the term ‘imagination’ becomes significant. It is only natural to long for some force to liberate us from such a paroxysmal power, and ‘imagination’ has traditionally been closely related to all kinds of emancipatory and revolutionary projects in which a critique, the type of critique that ‘will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think’ can be made.²² However, it should also be noted that the role of imagination, in fact, can be played out as both ‘a spontaneous force and [as] a faculty to be tended, disciplined, and trained’.²³ Imagination as both a creative force to transform the system and a domesticated, disciplined mentality strongly suggests that it is a symbolic construct with several (at least more than one) discursive effects – and one which is subject to a long, convoluted process of mediation, interruption and negotiation; it is, therefore, not an instant flame of force ignited spontaneously from one brilliant individual’s brain. If imagination is conceived of as one extraordinary person’s special gift from God, in the

romantic sense of the term, as a transcendental power from somewhere which would rescue us immediately from the sordid reality, then it is just a matter whether we possess it or not. And even if we have that kind of genius around, it is not of much help because we might then fall into the endless loop of moving from one fantasy to another fantasy. But if imagination is understood as a discursive construct, then we, the ordinary people trapped within the most monotonous reality of our everyday lives, are part of it, of course not with full authority and confidence because there are always unexpected twists and turns in the process of linguistic travel. We are still involved, however, in the protracted and winding path of mediation and translation through which imagination is made and unmade on the very same level as everyday life – not above it.

Imagination in *The Pickup*

Gordimer is aware of the problematic nature of imagination, and she seems determined to expose its limitations when it is understood as a romantic, transcendental power, especially in terms of the 'nationalization of the mass' on a global level. Julie's naïve and complacent imagination – imagination which equates with the romanticism and escapism of the westernized middle class in South Africa – is severely criticized through Ibrahim's penetrating perspective. The city represents for Julie a harsh reality in which she as a white, wealthy South African has the freedom to pick up anything she wants, while Ibrahim struggles to survive under the false identity of a 'grease monkey'. Julie seeks an alternative location where she can escape their (opposition) difference in status, and so she romanticizes over the 'veld', the grasslands of the countryside. In this place, she thinks, 'the love wherein there is no possessor and no possessed, but [where] both surrender' is possible.²⁴ It is a place where the political weight of an incompatible social status can be lifted, and Julie and Ibrahim can just be two people who love each other. As long as she holds on to this escapist tendency, Julie's longing for 'another country/Nor yours or mine' is just a sentimental and empty ideal. Ibrahim consistently criticizes this romantic and escapist tendency as 'a typical piece of sheltered middle class Western romanticism'.²⁵ Julie's 'sheltered middle class Western romanticism', moreover, is a desire to transcend the reality and does not stand on any real understanding or knowledge, but on the ignorance of reality – the everyday life in Ibrahim's hopeless homeland, the desert village. When she takes a sudden fancy to a rice field located beside an oasis in the desert and

muses on buying it, Ibrahim accuses her of having a childish dream, another 'adventure' she can afford. When Julie describes her romantic vision of making a decent life out of this luscious green rice field in the middle of the desert, saying, 'Here. You could have it both. The mute desert and the life-chorus green', Ibrahim reveals the ugly and unpleasant truth about Aboulkanim, the owner of the rice field.²⁶ To the extent that Julie's romantic vision is based on a desire simply to escape reality, Ibrahim is quite right in his bitter monologue, saying 'she's a child, they're all children ... innocence is ignorance, with them'.²⁷

That is his – what do you say – his front, the beautiful rice fields. He makes money all right – plenty of it – and do you know how? Do you? He is a smuggler, he calls it import-export, he's a go-between in arms sales for a crowd of cronies over the border, and that's only what I can tell you about Mr. Aboulkanim, there's much more of the same I don't know, that people who know admire him for because he's successful. That's success, here.²⁸

The rice field itself isn't profitable, but it is just an idyllic cover for the unethical smuggling of military equipment over the border. Moreover, Julie's desire is also perhaps a typical capitalist impulse to own (colonize) whatever she sees. Therefore, to the extent that Julie's imagination is based on a desire simply to transcend reality in the romantic sense of the term, Ibrahim is fully justified in his bitter monologue mentioned above: 'she's a child, they're all children ... innocence is ignorance, with them'.²⁹

While the novel does not exonerate Julie for her 'transcendental' imagination, Gordimer also does not romanticize or celebrate the idea of everyday life rooted in Ibrahim's local identity. Throughout the novel, she makes the word 'home' echo powerfully in the journeys of the dislocated Ibrahim. To him, home is a place that reminds him of a sense of duty, obligation and responsibility. It is also a place of stable identity where Ibrahim's mother exerts full authority. However, as Pearsall points out, in Gordimer's novels, 'the everyday, especially home and family' is presented 'as the site of conditioning', and Gordimer 'substitutes mother figures for the conditioning processes of tyrannical politics'.³⁰ In *The Pickup*, too, the mother's attempt to domesticate and settle the son's fluid and changing identity within a familiar and stable structure is a particular form of repression unique to the place of home. Therefore, even if the place of home is based upon a real emotion and attachment, since the home obviously represents another structure of

oppression, everyday life at home cannot be a viable alternative for individuals such as Ibrahim; this applies to Julie, too, as Ibrahim's wife, who in particular attempts to relocate outside of the oppressive framework of the global order.

Imagination as a way out

How then can a way out be 'imagined' for people who feel trapped between the rigid and separatist logic of nationalism and the subsuming, totalizing and gripping global order which in a sense transforms and mobilizes an individual into a well-disciplined national subject of the First World? Recently, several non-literary scholars have suggested the concept of creative imagination as a core element to conceive 'the way out', not in a transcendental way, but in a more transgressive way. 'The multitude', an alternative political subjectivity that Hardt and Negri propose, is an effort to conceptualize the 'counter-Empire' within the very same terrain of 'Empire'. According to them, it is perhaps no longer useful to argue in terms of identity and difference, or inside and outside; it is better to speak instead of singularity and communality: 'We are a multiplicity of singular forms of life and *at the same time* share a common global existence. The anthropology of the multitude is an anthropology of singularity and commonality'.³¹ They also single out 'creativity' as a key to mobilizing lives to entirely different ends – one that also constitutes the only ground for resisting oppression:

Our political task ... is not simply to resist [the processes of building Empire] but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends. The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges.³²

Another example of such efforts at a 'transgressive' kind of imagination comes from the various disciplines within the humanities and social sciences especially focused on the topic of 'everyday life'. Dennis Galvan, an anthropologist specializing in rural West Africa, explores the dynamics of state/society interaction at the rural periphery – which eventually undermines state projects. He describes the processes of consumption and metabolizing as the 'generic' feature of lived experience within the institutional orders of the nation-state, and suggests that even if nation-states function as ordering forms, strategic grids, Foucauldian epistemes,

we are not completely impregnated with the habitus. We tactically poach, rupture and tear them on the very realm of everyday life in a transgressive, illegitimate and 'creative' way.³³

However, even if these attempts recast 'imagination' as an immanent form of force, which transgresses, de-constitutes and transforms from inside the very 'ordered totality' of everyday oppression, the binary of 'perceived reality vs. empirical reality' is still quite strongly maintained in both arguments. While Hardt and Negri claim that the terrain of oppression and resistance is the same, they nevertheless emphasize the different aspects of the terrain when they describe each of them. They approach 'Empire' as a discursive system and, accordingly, are attentive to the process of differences being subsumed into the signification system of Empire; however, they describe counter-Empire ('the multitude') as if singularity exists without any mediation at all – as if this collective identity exists with ontological and existential integrity as an empirical reality. This is true to Galvan's argument as well. He argues that his work is 'to theorize the nation-state and the production of the transnational in experiential, phenomenological terms, to understand them from within and from below', giving the illusion that the 'experiential, phenomenological' world is the one at the bottom (below) separated from the discursive, regulatory, 'politico-phantasmatic' – to use Derrida's term – construction from above. He further claims to be working with this 'raw', 'real' and 'empirical' reality which is 'lived' and not 'mediated' in any other forms.

Reality, just like 'imagination', is made (and unmade) through the inevitable and irrevocable processes of mediation, translation and negotiation. Due to this unpredictable process, reality could be perceived and interpreted in innumerable different, sometimes confusing and contradictory ways. We should not take, then, the substantiality of the 'counter-Empire' for granted, as Hardt and Negri do, or essentialize the everyday practice of 'tearing' the nation-state from below in rural West Africa as 'the' transgression. Instead, their tentative, temporary and fleeting 'effects' should be duly noted precisely because they are perceived as such at one moment; but at the very next moment, they are ready to move on, making unpredictable turns and stops towards the endless discursive process of displacement and relocation. Whatever the dominant power is called (whether it is 'Empire', 'official nationalism' or 'mass dictatorship'), whatever is countering that power (whether it is the creative force of imagination or mundane solidity of everyday life) must be inevitably and heavily mediated just like the power that it is supposed to challenge.

'A way out' in *The Pickup*

It follows that what we should pay most careful attention to is not the moment of resistance but the *way* – the crooked, winding, even confusing way the discursive effects of 'imagined' moment of resistance are captured, articulated and displaced in various cases. For Gordimer, the issue of language was crucial in confronting the apartheid regime in South Africa. In fact, the nuanced and ceaseless dynamics of the political realm is for her, in other words, a language war. The most powerful example in *The Pickup* of how Gordimer conceptualizes imagination to counter the conditioning oppression of everyday life is the moment when she deals with Julie's quandary; there seems to be no way out of the confining binary structure of 'home' and 'wandering', because the former conditions the lives and futures of its inhabitants and the latter reproduces and expands the conditioning. Gordimer revises and refashions this binary structure by introducing a third element, the desert, to show how imagination works in everyday life.

Julie finds this space right beside the village, and contemplates it as a space of 'nothing' and 'eternity' out of time, history or natural cycle. In the desert, there is no meaning or no life – the desert just *exists*.

The desert. No seasons of bloom and decay. Just the endless turn of night and day. Out of time: and she is gazing – not over it, taken into it, for it has no measure of space, features that mark distance from here to there. In a film of haze there is no horizon, the pallor of sand, pink-traced, lilac-luminous with its own colour of faint light, has no demarcation from land to air. Sky-haze is indistinguishable from sand-haze. All drift together, and there is no onlooker; the desert is eternity.³⁴

The desert is described as full of paradoxes and contradictions. Incompatible time frames co-exist here, like 'Always' and 'Now'; it is 'nullity', pure dryness, and ultimately death, but it is also 'eternity'.³⁵ The desert is also a bewildering and incomprehensible place. Julie finds it improbable that a Bedouin woman is searching for pasture for her goat in the middle of the sand, but the woman always seems to be there with her goat. Here, nothing distinguishes one element from another, and all of the contradictory opposites blend: 'There is no measure of space, features that mark distance from here to there. ... All drifts together'.³⁶ In such circumstances, even the most basic perceptions mix and melt together. When Julie is in the desert, the air at dawn even begins to feel

like water: 'It is true that the air is a pure element to walk out into, as different from the element of midday as it is to immerse oneself, move from dry land to water'.³⁷ The desert is the ultimate place of change and transformation in perception; Julie sees a Bedouin woman walk with a goat 'slowly veering, changing direction', and later, the woman turns out to be a child (199). All these paradoxes, transgressions and transformations force us to rethink the entire signifying structure which constitutes our everyday lives within its symbolic dimension.

There is another – more fundamental – transgression going on here. The desert is definitely 'nature', but the impression that this desert makes on us in this description, with its details full of paradoxes and contradictions, is that it is somehow 'unnatural'. Since it seems to exist beyond the natural cycle (or our assumptions about what the 'natural cycle' should be), it is possible to assume that the desert is a symbolic site – a place outside politics, history or ethics, where reflection on our reality from a transcendental point of view can be made. However, when we think more about it, we can find the fact that the idea of 'nature' or 'natural cycle' itself is based on a specific part of geography – mostly a European one – in which four seasons, greenery and water, a certain temperature and humidity are presupposed in the first place. We tend to ignore that what seems contradictory, unnatural and extraordinary in this scene, in fact, is perfectly natural in its own setting: the desert. Accordingly, what is perceived by the reader who internalizes the European setting as the reference for 'nature' as 'symbolic' is actually a flat, literal description of the 'natural' phenomena of the setting. In short, it is the perception that keeps symbol and reality apart, but this perception is deeply flawed, prejudiced and distorted by dominant images and stereotypes – in Hardt and Negri's terms, by the signifying system of 'Empire'. So, when we realize how unfounded our belief in Europe as the 'standard' is, all the assumptions that we have about 'nature' and 'the natural' fall apart – the confidence that we have in our perception falters, and we are finally forced to revise our sense of the reality.

The story does not end here: the additional denotation of the word 'desert', the verb meaning 'abandon' or 'leave', is also relevant to the discursive effects that this 'perceived' reality of the desert might be able to create. When Julie finds no possible alternative, no meaningful future beyond the paradigm of the global structure of national order, the meaning of the verb 'desert' (pronounced differently from the noun 'desert', but profoundly relevant in this particular context) opens up another terrain of resistance. In order to refuse to inhabit South Africa as one inhabits a home, unthinkingly, insulated by the privilege

of ownership and belonging, the act of 'leaving' becomes necessary, even vital. For Julie, the act of leaving or desertion does not amount to escaping from or a simple denial of her political, social and ethical responsibilities. Rather, it means for her the urgent necessity to revise the sense of 'to inhabit', 'home' and 'belonging' – to make her location/relocation more responsible to her everyday life in this globally expanding power structure. In the text, words and reality, through the form of heavily mediated imagination, constantly revise each other on the 'same' level, both opening some cracks in the regulatory and conditioning 'everyday' and making the political realm of everyday life as unstable, tentative and unpredictable as possible.

The way Gordimer makes the term 'nature' turn and twist in its linguistic movement in this desert scene, opening up a possibility in the blurred area of imagination and reality, may have further ethical repercussions because the act of mediation itself is deeply linked to the issue of responsibility. I would argue that Judith Butler is relevant here. She describes how responsibility takes on a social meaning:

[W]hen I'm asked to take responsibility for my action, I'm asked by someone [...] I'm asked to respond to another human being, so I am already in a social situation [...] it is not just the fact of alterity, however, that makes the exchange a social one, but the fact that I am asked in a specific language or through a specific medium, and so am compelled to take responsibility in a language or medium that is understandable to the person who asks this of me; in that sense my efforts to take responsibility for myself are socially promoted and mediated, if not socially constructed, in a specific sense.³⁸

Responsibility is a social matter not just because we are all complicit in a collective guilt, but because the powerful call to recognize our own involvement is mediated in a specific way, which means the issue of responsibility that mass dictatorship raises is basically a literary one – and an unending task as well because it will take on a different meaning, different direction, depending on which medium, under what condition and in whose hands it travels through. *We* participated in the regime of twentieth-century dictatorship, and we are now participating just as much in the ever-expanding disciplinary power of nation-states in an era of twenty-first century globalization – but that does not mean that we have to put the blame on some unidentifiable collective 'we'. Maybe, what we have to discuss now is not about how effectively and validly a space to resist can be imagined, but how there *are* innumerable

different moments in which power and politics – oppression, resistance, complicity and responsibility – are mediated and translated within the very ‘perfect tightly sutured political machine’, or, in Lim’s wording, ‘the nationalization of the mass’. For our everyday life is organized, constituted and controlled by some dominant form of power, but ‘never in the same way, at the same time, never all at once’.³⁹

Notes

1. Jie-Hyun Lim, ‘Series Introduction: Mapping Mass Dictatorship – Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship’, in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone (eds) *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.14.
2. Arjun Appadurai says ‘one of the many paradoxes of democracy is that it is organized to function within the boundaries of the nation-state – through such organs as legislatures, judiciaries and elected governments – to realize one or another image of the common good or general will.’ See ‘Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics’, *Public Culture* 14.1 (2002), p. 45. Lydia Liu questions the meaning of ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ when she states that both colonization and decolonization for the post-colonial states are happening within the same process of nation-building in her article ‘The Desire for the Sovereignty and the Logic of Reciprocity in the Family of Nations’, *Diacritics* 29.4 (1999), pp. 150–177. Paul Gilroy also calls attention to ‘a quiet nationalism which pervades the works of some radical thinkers’, calling it ‘crypto-nationalism’ in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
3. Nadine Gordimer, ‘Living in Interregnum’ in Stephen Clingman (ed.) *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics and Places* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), p. 266.
4. Lars Engle, ‘The Political Uncanny: The Novels of Nadine Gordimer’, *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2.2 (1989), p.98.
5. Her earlier novels such as *A Sport of Nature* and *A Guest of Honor* are also set outside South Africa, either in alternative national or global settings, in different ways.
6. Nadine Gordimer, *The Pickup* (U.S.A: Penguin Books, 2001), p.40.
7. *Ibid.*, p.32.
8. David Attwell and Barbara Harlow, ‘Introduction: South African Fiction After Apartheid’, *Modern Fiction Studies* 46.1 (2000), p. 2.
9. Afrikaner politicians and intellectuals employed a rhetoric of ‘race’ and ‘national identity’ that perhaps allows for (the least equivocal) analogies to be made between Afrikaner and Nazi Party ideology. Some scholars are more cautious about applying the fascist label to the National Party regime (1948–1994), but ‘the totalitarian character of NP hegemony and the obvious strength of racial ultranationalism among the politically dominant Afrikaners alone seem enough basis for a comparison’. See Susan Pearsall, ‘“Where the Banalities Are Enacted”: The Everyday in Gordimer’s Novels’, *Research in African Literatures* 31.1 (2000), p.96.

10. Attwell and Harlow argue that ambiguity seems to be the distinguishing feature of a transitional South Africa. See Attwell and Harlow p. 3.
11. Judie Newman, 'Jump Starts: Nadine Gordimer after Apartheid', in Nahem Yousaf (ed.) *Apartheid Narratives* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2001), p. 22. Frantz Fanon was one of the first theorists to warn of the danger of a national consciousness being co-opted after independence by a rising national bourgeoisie in order to perpetuate and feed their own hegemonic status. He argues, 'The militant who faces the colonialist war machine with the bare minimum of arms realizes that while he is breaking down colonial oppression he is building up automatically yet another system of exploitation. ... In their weary road toward rational knowledge the people must give up their too-simple conception of their overlords.' See Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p.145.
12. Neil Lazarus, 'The South African Ideology: The Myth of Exceptionalism, the Idea of Renaissance', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103.4 (2004), p. 624.
13. Gordimer, 'Living in Interregnum', p. 270.
14. See John Saul, 'Cry for the Beloved Country: The Post-Apartheid Denouement', *Monthly Review* 52.8 (January 2001), pp. 1–51, Hein Marais, *South Africa, Limits to Change: The Political Economy of Transformation* (London: Zed, 1998), Zine Magubane, 'The Revolution Betrayed? Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the Post-Apartheid State', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103.4 (2004), pp. 657–671, Alan Nasser, 'The Tendency to Privatize', *Monthly Review* 54.10 (March 2003), pp. 22–37, and Jeremy Cronin, 'Post-Apartheid South Africa: A Reply to John S. Saul', *Monthly Review* 54.7 (December 2002), p. 38.
15. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. xv.
16. Other critics such as Caren Kaplan and Pheng Cheah also, although in different contexts, point to the 'ordered totality' of current political terrain because of the way power, operating on the level of everyday life in a global context, invalidates the structure of the security and defensive capacity of an interiority, thus the outside/inside binary as well. See Caren Kaplan, 'Precision Target: GPS and the Militarization of U.S. Consumer Identity', *American Quarterly* 58.3 (2006), pp. 693–713, and Pheng Cheah, 'Crises of Money', *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 16.1 (2008), pp. 189–219.
17. Gordimer, *The Pickup*, p. 50.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 12. 'Many things, different countries ... I go where they'll let me in'.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
22. Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?' in Paul Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 46.
23. Marc Redfield, 'Imagi-Nation: The Imagined Community and the Aesthetics of Mourning', *Diacritics* 29.4 (1999), p. 72. Benedict Anderson, in his book *Imagined Communities*, finds the affinity between nation and imagination in this very ambiguity. However, his path-breaking study on nationalism does not sustain the thorough critique regarding the ambiguity; instead, he tends to simplify it by dividing nationalism into the 'official' one and the 'popular' one. He, on the one hand, examines the mass-produced icons and

manipulative strategizing of 'official' nationalism, and, on the other hand, romanticizes the 'authentic', 'popular' nationalism, drawing a sharp distinction between the two, thus not paying much attention to how inseparably these two kinds of nationalism are overlapped.

24. Gordimer, *The Pickup*, p. 28.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 93–94.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 93–94.
30. Pearsall, p. 104.
31. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 127.
32. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
33. Dennis Galvan, *The State Must Be Our Master of Fire: How Peasants Craft Culturally Sustainable Development in Senegal* (University of California Press, 2004)
34. Gordimer, *The Pickup*, p. 172.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
38. Judith Butler, 'Antigone's Claim', *Theory & Event* 12.1 (2009).
39. Henry Lefebvre and Christine Levich, 'The Everyday and Everydayness', *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987), p. 7

8

Innocence by Association? Everyday Nazism on DVD

Mats Jönsson

‘... to see in culture merely a field of play and transformation of meanings, to reveal the role of latent factors – of silence and of absence – is not enough. Constructive motion is also necessary. Without it, the philosopher of culture remains in the position of a photographer who holds in his hands a negative and does not know how to turn it into a positive’.¹

This chapter focuses on films recorded during what arguably constitutes the most destructive era of modern history – World War II. The material consists of silent, amateur short films of everyday life under the Nazis, which in 2004 were digitally restored, compiled and dubbed with sound on the DVD *Das Dritte Reich privat: Leben und Überleben*. Because of the conventional and traditional narrative strategies at work on this DVD, it will function as a metonym for how many mass media of today describe the past. The prime reason for studying this kind of compilation disc in more detail is the apparent lack of discussion about the subtle, positive and indeed almost revisionist ways in which commercial DVD producers present the past to the general public. Furthermore, an analysis of how such producers turn something negative into something positive lies at the centre of this study.

For want of a better term, the old films – and the new DVD on which they are compiled – are discussed as *audiovisual historiography*, that is, modern means of communication that record, depict, represent and transmit the past via sound and images. It is the styles, narratives and messages of this audiovisual historiography that are under scrutiny. The overall aim of the study is two-fold. On the one hand, the aim is to pinpoint motifs and themes in the original amateur footage; on

the other hand, and more importantly, to study how these motifs and themes were used and abused when the old films were professionally migrated to a digital format in 2004.² At stake are questions concerned with the validity, verisimilitude and veracity of these depictions. Given the nature of both the period and events, however, ethical considerations naturally also need to be taken into account.

As so often is the case when dealing with this kind of material, there are at least two standpoints worth considering before proffering any analysis. The first proposes that the screening of this kind of film and the issuing of a DVD is basically a good thing. Such productions are said to offer new information about hitherto more or less unknown aspects of history – in this particular case of everyday life in Nazi Germany. Therefore, it is argued, there is a recurrent need for such imagery to be shown, especially if we want to obtain a better understanding of this extraordinary era. Not surprisingly, this kind of rhetoric also dominates the text on the cover of *Das Dritte Reich privat*, where the included footage, among other things, is said to depict an everyday life of which we knew so little (*'ein Alltag, von dem wir so wenig wüssten'*). A follow-up point to this argument is that viewers, when confronted with images of everyday life under the Nazi mass dictatorship, may come to realize that the seeming normality depicted differs only marginally to other settings; this, in turn, might impress on viewers the insidious danger that such a system could very well emerge again – whether at home or abroad, both now and in the future. Seen from this angle, the migration of old representations to digital formats are an important tool of remembrance that helps us never to forget.

The counter-argument claims that there are a number of reasons as to why a re-launching of these hitherto more or less forgotten films is a bad, or at least highly questionable, endeavour. One great concern is that the digitally re-mastered material – because of its seemingly unprovocative content, aestheticized style and extensive launching alongside other popular media commodities – might very well lead to *laissez-faire*, stylistically inclined and melodramatic attitudes towards the past among audiences essentially unfamiliar with the Third Reich and its imagery. To the untrained eye, representations of everyday Nazism might even appear innocent and mundane. Moreover, the massive – and often highly aestheticized – launching of them in media stores, museums and on the Internet is said to contribute to making audiences feel more acquainted with the motifs than they actually are, which, in turn, might serve to increase the obvious danger of confusing representations of the past with the actual past itself.

Audiovisual historiography

Broadly speaking, the arguments above all deal with questions of historiography – more precisely with how audiovisual versions of the past affect people's historical memory and knowledge. These questions are more complex than one perhaps might expect, and they have up until now only rarely entered the academic agenda. On those infrequent occasions when debates on these issues do emerge, however, one of the most important ingredients in today's audiovisual historiography seldom gets addressed – the enormous impact of the soundtrack. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the highly commendable ambition to make archive footage of everyday life more believable and trustworthy by dubbing it with sound harbours with it the potential to severely alter both the meaning and message of what was originally silent celluloid imagery.

When approaching the historiographical complexity of this kind of DVD, one also needs to acknowledge that studies of everyday life on the one hand and studies of amateur film on the other share quite a lot in common – not least they both have the historical subject at the centre of their investigations. Normally, he or she is an unknown individual who functions as a representative example of how people in general lead their lives at certain times and places in history. When some of these 'ordinary' people decide to record their surroundings on film, we are presented with prime source material offering unique insights of not only everyday life but of the life of the amateur filmmaker as well. During the past two decades, academic interest in these particular fields of research has grown substantially, and my study is aligned to the latter in its approach to historical and historiographical issues of modern mass media. This growing interest was occasioned by the advent and implementation of an historical turn within many academic disciplines, which was simultaneously paralleled by media producers around the world representing the past on much larger and more ambitious scales than had previously been the case. When The History Channel was launched in 1995, for example, it was only one in a long line of media companies that highlighted 'a new self-consciousness about history' that was formed during a period characterized by 'a peculiarly novel "readiness" for history among the general population'.³ Indeed, it is precisely this new readiness for history that film industries, television channels, computer games companies and DVD producers have taken advantage of and profited from ever since.

The quotes above are attributed to film scholar Vivian Sobchack, who has made a number of valuable observations when describing how

modern mass media represent the past and affect our historical knowledge. In short, Sobchack proposes that formerly binary oppositions such as myth and history or legend and fact are no longer valid in today's mediated world. Instead, she detects a constant dialogic and mutual link at work between that which was formerly conceived of as the uncontested truth and that which everyone once regarded as falsification or, at least, fictionalization and dramatization. According to Sobchack, the medium of film has been central to the spreading of this new blend of fact and fiction, which, in her view, has resulted in a *palimpsest of historical consciousness* – a novel way of thinking about the past that actively combines and connects the above-mentioned oppositions in new and complex ways.⁴ Not surprisingly, her ideas prove highly expedient in analysing the multilevel views on history and history-making that dominate the audiovisual historiography on DVDs such as *Das Dritte Reich privat*.

The historian Alf Lüdtke is another scholar who has recognized the profound impact of mass media on our views of the past, and he explicitly points to the central role of filmmakers within the historiography of modern society, not least with regard to their impact in documenting the history of everyday life.⁵ In relation to the films studied below, however, it needs to be pointed out that the filmmakers Lüdtke rightfully singles out as having had a large impact on modern historiography – among them such prominent names as Edgar Reitz (*Heimat* 1984–2004) and Claude Lanzmann (*Shoa* 1985) – all had long professional training behind them. Conversely, the filmmakers whose short films are included on *Das Dritte Reich privat* were to a large extent amateurs, with little or no knowledge of how to depict an event, person or place with the help of moving images.

Arguably, this last fact might very well constitute the main reason as to why amateur depictions are so rewarding to study when representations of everyday life are in focus. In amateur films, the person behind the camera functions as an eyewitness amidst the events unfolding in front of the camera lens, and, more often than not, he or she does not consciously try to orchestrate, or interfere with, what is happening while filming. The style of such films has been categorized as 'the aesthetics of the doable' (*Ästhetik des Machbaren*), a phrase coined by film scholar Martina Roepke, who proposes that camera-wielding amateurs primarily try to film the best they can at each single moment in time.⁶ This does, however, by no means imply that these individuals are unaware of the ideological context within which they and their filmed subjects perform. Consequently, the amateur films on *Das Dritte Reich*

privat have as much to do with the daily life in front of and behind the cameras as they have with the overall politics at work in Nazi Germany. Of more concern in this study, however, are the ways in which these original films are used when being digitally compiled, edited and the soundtrack added and what kind of historiographical effects and consequences such manipulations might have today.

Telling and showing

The German media company PolarFilm Medien GmbH was founded in 1996 and is today the market leader of historical DVDs in Germany. The main bulk of the DVD *Das Dritte Reich privat* consists of a compilation of many amateur films, which altogether last for 65 minutes. It was put together by the German film producer Karl Höffkes, who is one of the owners of PolarFilm and who for a long time has privately collected and redistributed media representations from the Nazi period.⁷ As is normally the case with these kinds of production pieces, the main film also includes voice-over, music and environmental sound. One function of these auditive devices is to guide the attention of viewers in a certain direction while viewing the images. Thus, the voice of speaker Matthias Ponnier – a German actor portrayed on the Internet as having a pleasant and charismatic voice – operates mainly as a classic narrator, accompanying the images with unprovocative and general contextualizations.⁸ On those occasions when Ponnier's script slightly shifts the meaning of the original material, however, we are confronted with a historiographical strategy that rewrites, or at least repolishes, the past for present-day viewers.

The various forms of music supplement the imagery, with the melodies being included so as to appear diegetic – that is, as if they belonged to the old and original scene; they are of course entirely fictitious and added in the post-production phase, either to strengthen the arguments put forward by the voice-over or to function as an emotionally triggering backdrop against which the viewers should interpret the scenes. It is obvious that the commercial production company PolarFilm in re-issuing the films had fundamentally different ambitions to those of the original amateur filmmakers. However, PolarFilm's conscious effort in trying to minimize the temporal distance to the old material by means of a modern soundtrack sets a complex audiovisual historiography in motion, which not only combines the near with the far, but also mixes new and fictitious sound elements with old factual footage.

As filmmaker and film historian Jay Leyda has rightfully concluded on the subject of compilation films in the documentary genre, “documentary”

and “compilation” have one element in common: manipulation of actuality. This manipulation, no matter what its motive ... usually tries to hide itself so that the spectator sees only “reality” – that is, the especially *arranged* reality that suits the film-maker’s purpose’.⁹ The point here is that on many contemporary DVDs claiming to document the past – and today’s market has an abundance of such products – the soundtrack significantly influences audiences’ perceptions and interpretations of the visual reality presented before them. Elaborating on Leyda, one could perhaps describe this increasingly common narrative strategy as ‘manipulation of historical factuality’, or more correctly perhaps as ‘auditive manipulation of visual historical facts’. Not surprisingly, such sophisticated history-making opens up for a number of historiographical consequences, predominantly relating to the degree to which we can rely on digital representations such as *Das Dritte Reich privat*. For instance, when we see German soldiers in Norway picking blueberries and mushrooms in the forest, Höffkes and his crew make use of sound in ways that not only help us realize how audiences are supposed to interpret this particular audiovisual historiography, but also gives us important clues as to how viewers in general construct their *palimpsests of historical consciousness*.

In this sequence, which is depicted in the images below, the speaker begins by concluding that these soldiers are ‘fortunate’ because they are only present in Norway as occupying forces and now have time to get to know this country (*‘als Besatzungstruppen habe sie die Zeit das Land kennenzulernen’*). Thereafter, we see some of the soldiers standing in the forest picking and eating berries, occasionally looking directly into the camera as if they were addressing us, the viewers; most probably they were only responding to something that the cameraman had said to them at the time of filming. That being said, many buyers of this DVD would seem to recognize this gazing into the camera from similar experiences they themselves have had or have seen before. Consequently, and as so often is the case with amateur film depicting everyday events, the pleasure of recognizing what you see lends the audiovisual presentation a certain amiable, friendly and almost intimate touch. Thus, there are a number of historiographical implications worth recognizing already after these first few seconds of the sequence, but the subtle narrative strategies at work here do not stop at this.

In order to further enhance viewers’ impressions of being ‘present’ on location as it were, PolarFilm has also included samples of birdsong on the soundtrack. In some sense, this sound probably increases the verisimilitude and realism of the scene, especially since it imbues the activities of the soldiers with a calm and naturalistic aura, which contrasts



Figure 8.1 Nazi soldiers on vacation in occupied Norway. Stills from *Das Dritte Reich privat: Leben und Überleben*

with the oppressive regime of the Third Reich occupying Norway at the time the images were taken.¹⁰ By all accounts, this footage does indeed depict Nazi soldiers enjoying a brief, peaceful respite in the Norwegian forest. However, by exclusively showing this side of Nazi soldiers' lives in Norway, modern-day audiences – especially younger generations unfamiliar with the reality of both the invasion and the occupation – risk forgetting the everyday brutality that lay beyond these blueberry hills. It is thus worth emphasizing that the *innocence by association* at work in this and similar scenes is, to a large degree, triggered by the ways in which the voice-over and the birdsong on the soundtrack subtly marginalize the actual context in which the silent images were originally filmed.

A rewarding way to dissect scenes like this one is to distinguish between who is *showing* (the monstrator) and who is *telling* (the narrator). In many cases, visual media's mimetic and representational abilities dominate over their actual meaning-making.¹¹ Or, as has been poignantly formulated by one of the film scholars behind this classic division, Tom Gunning: 'A single shot can seem to show a great deal while telling very little about it.'¹² Contrary to the historical actors behind and in front of the original cameras, contemporary media producers such as PolarFilm almost always lack first-hand experience of the past they digitalize. This does not imply, however, that it is less important for them to make viewers believe in and be affected by the representation. On the contrary, the originators behind *Das Dritte Reich privat* repeatedly try to enhance the validity, verisimilitude and veracity of their images by *telling* more about the compiled amateur film clips, with the help of voice-over and music, than these original silent images actually *show*. Consequently, it is in the auditive dimensions that we find one of the most significant differences between amateur documentations and professional compilations, whereby turning something negative into something positive often entails *telling* something about images that they never *show*.

Niches and free spaces

We learn from the back cover of the DVD *Das Dritte Reich privat* that the moving images included depict a period that on first sight might seem to be both uniform and homogenous, but which on closer inspection reveals 'niches and free spaces in which everyday life is performed in all its multitude'. ('*Nischen und Freiräume, in denen sich der Alltag in seiner ganzen Vielfalt abspielte*'.) Thus, already on the cover, everyday life is promoted as something of an attraction in its own right. Not surprisingly, this kind of rhetorical approach also dominates the voice-over in the

main film. On several occasions, the speaker promotes the films as containing unique images never before seen. This is, however, a truth in need of substantial modification. In fact, one could actually put forward a diametrically opposed argument, suggesting that it is the seemingly familiar and easily recognizable character of the included images that constitutes the most commercially attractive dimension of this and similar DVDs.¹³

No doubt, the Nazi aura surrounding the everyday imagery on *Das Dritte Reich privat* lends the scenes an eerie atmosphere that fortunately few of us were ever part of or experienced first-hand. But in general, these 'mundane' images actually only differ marginally from most other amateur film compilations – be they German or of other origin. For instance, the British DVD *Nation on Film* (2007) and the Swedish, and still ongoing, DVD-series *Mitt hjärtas Malmö* (*Malmö in My Heart*, 2005–) both include themes, motives and events that in many respects resemble those presented on *Das Dritte Reich privat*. In all three cases, we are offered private perspectives on daily life, festive occasions and official events. And in most cases, the familiarity of these images interests the audience more than their potentially exotic or extraordinary dimensions.

But even though such DVDs all share narrative strategies and visual motifs with each other, the original films they compile of course had fundamentally different ideological contexts to relate to. Herein lies one of the most problematic features of today's output of digitalized audiovisual historiography. Presenting pictures of everyday life during World War II in Great Britain, neutral Sweden and Nazi Germany in aesthetically and thematically similar ways undoubtedly enhances the risk of making audiences end up with an ideological and historical entropy that might erase, or at least significantly blur, original contextual differences in favour of easily receivable stories. In other words, just because Sobchack by all accounts is right when discussing the width, depth, complexity and impact of our present-day *palimpsest of historical consciousness*, we must not passively accept this condition without seriously questioning what such relations to the past – and to the representations of it – actually signify.

Subsequently, using iconic symbols from the Nazi era as aesthetically compelling commodities on the cover of and in the films on *Das Dritte Reich privat* carries with it a number of problematic dimensions which are in need of addressing. The image, for instance, of a small dachshund sitting on the wing of a swastika-labelled airplane on the back cover of this DVD is, by all accounts, selected in order to enhance emotionally charged reactions among potential buyers of how

seemingly benign everyday life under the Nazis could be. Objectively speaking, this dog seems both cuddly and innocent, and originally it must have been quite a natural thing to film it sitting on the wing looking a bit lost and out of place. But by including this and other equally 'cute' images of life in Nazi Germany on the DVD-cover and in the films therein, certain aspects of the Third Reich tend to become almost trivialized or made to look innocent. In other words, the way in which this dog is portrayed on the DVD-cover transforms its original function from that of a loved pet into an advertising device. The key question is therefore how much Nazi iconography it takes before a seemingly innocent image such as this goes from being of general interest as historical representation to becoming an ideological tool of subtle digital propaganda, presented under the guise of popular entertainment culture.

The brief and aforementioned declaration made by PolarFilm on the DVD-cover – highlighting 'niches and free spaces in which everyday life is performed in all its multitude' – might help us answer this question. Especially, since it partly reveals a historiographical ambition on the part of the producers of portraying everyday life under the Nazis as being something detached from, or at least parallel to, the overall agenda of this mass dictatorship. The preceding sentence confirms such an interpretation, emphasizing that this was 'An everyday life that we would have known so little about were it not for the privately made 8-mm films that unaffected by and beyond the reach of propaganda have stored the private Third Reich until today.' (*'Ein Alltag von dem wir wenig wüssten gäbe es nicht die Privatgetreten Smalfilme die unverställt und jenseits der Propaganda das Private Dritte Reich bis heute bewahren.'*) Here, PolarFilm automatically makes the overall historical context within which the depicted individuals in Nazi Germany lived into something heterogeneous and diverse, just because their daily activities diverged on personal levels. But one must remember that the everyday 'niches and free spaces' in the Third Reich were permeated by a totalitarian ideology that functioned – and still functions – as an unavoidable backdrop to these images. Despite what the DVD-cover and the voice-over try so hard to *tell* historiographically, the everyday reality *shown* was still Nazi both in origin and in nature. To say that these images automatically were unaffected by and lay beyond propaganda is therefore not only false, but it also exposes an approach to the Nazi past that underlines its innocence. This has potentially severe historiographical implications – not least for young generations by and large unfamiliar with this particular past.

In the midst of everything

The main reason why fairly neutral phrases like ‘niches and free spaces’ are employed to promote this and other similar DVDs has primarily to do with the ability of such wording to downplay Nazi ideology, while, at the same time, indirectly highlighting the ordinary, the common and the unknown. In other words, it is not the ideology so much as the iconography of Nazi Germany that is being sold on such DVDs. The problem is that it is not possible to have one without the other. For if one begins to accept these images as free spaces of ordinariness unaffected by and beyond propaganda, there is a profound risk that one will automatically also accept, or at least fail to question, some of their ideological functions in the past and ditto consequences in the present.

Thus, Walter Benjamin surely made an important observation in 1936, when he concluded that fascism was the ideology that finally aestheticized politics. While fascism in Germany may have met its demise at the end of the war, ideologically laden aesthetics still constitute a major field of investment within visual and audiovisual culture. It has recently, for instance, been convincingly concluded that many of the most popular computer games set during World War II are primarily appreciated by players because of the carefully designed Nazi aesthetics and the abundance of iconized memorabilia: ‘the Third Reich is viewed upon as something like fantastic fiction becoming reality’.¹⁴ In that respect, *Das Dritte Reich privat* shrewdly follows in what for a long time has been one of the most profitable sectors of the global media market: World War II memorabilia entertainment. The key question to pose in this context is what kind of consequences this massive – for it seems to still be growing – mainstream media output will have for future historical consciousness. Is it enough to conclude that it will be palimpsestic and multilayered, or do we need to be more precise by measuring the impact of audiovisual history-making in comparison with the effects of other, more traditional accounts of the past found in books?

The very title of *Das Dritte Reich privat: Leben und Überleben* might be a good place to start looking for answers to some of the questions above, especially its three last words, ‘privat, Leben und Überleben’, which translate as ‘private, living and surviving’. No doubt, these words were chosen with the intention of making the history and historiography of the Third Reich more accessible to the individual, so rendering it more private and intimate. Hereby, the DVD emphasizes the proximity to

the past which is presented, which, in turn, makes it more difficult for the viewer to obtain an overall perspective of this era, its events and people – which, in consequence, might also hinder more objectively inclined studies of overall audiovisual historiography. But in this case, the DVD-cover and the soundtrack of the main film do offer some hints. For instance, both text and speaker emphatically pronounce that spectators are supposed to experience the content as if they were placed in the midst of everything (*Mitten in Geschehen*). This emphasis indirectly confirms one of the most significant reasons as to why digital compilations of amateur footage have been so commercially successful during the last decade. What has happened is nothing less than a fundamental – and therefore historiographically essential – alteration in how the past is being represented audiovisually. Gone are the grand and causally triggered narratives that traditionally were constructed linearly according to canonized dramaturgic conventions. Instead, we now have a 360-degree narrative formula that dominates the scene. This new audiovisual historiography shows everything from the very centre of the events – most preferably from the perspectives of the historical subjects taking part in it. Hereby, the individual behind the camera becomes a kind of stand-in witness through which spectators obtain mediated first-hand experiences from all directions. In other words, audiences are placed in the midst of the historical depiction, and from this front-row vantage point, spectators are supposed to feel as if they are interacting with historical everyday life as if in real-time. Accordingly, contemporary audiovisual historiography can be described as a kind of close encounter with the past of almost tactile dimensions. No wonder that our historical consciousness is increasingly likened to a multimedially compiled palimpsest, simultaneously triggering in us complex responses and meaning-making processes.

In many respects, *Das Dritte Reich privat* constitutes a telling case in point of this new audiovisual historiography – most particularly in its overt ambition to place the audience in the midst of everything. But we are only allowed to see a few carefully chosen facets of the huge body of material residing in PolarFilm's own film archive, and apart from being visually attractive, the clips are almost exclusively selected based on their capacity to be easily understood. Given that 'a single shot can seem to show a great deal while telling very little about it', PolarFilm indeed made the *commercially* right choice when they took on the part of a monstrator rather than that of a narrator. What I am primarily interested in, however, is to what extent their digital history-making is ethically and historiographically acceptable.

Added value

There is one instance where the unprovocative storytelling in *Das Dritte Reich* privat is suddenly replaced by a more problematizing approach, and it is to this which ethical and historiographical concerns can be more fully addressed. The scene commences with the voice-over informing us that certain images on the disc had never been intended for a wider audience, and that the Nazi film censors had therefore immediately banned them. To this contextual information, dramatic classical music dominated by heavy drums is added, subtly abridging the preceding scene with the next one. From the voice-over we learn that the footage depicts German soldiers from an air-squadron on leave at a Russian gypsy camp somewhere along the eastern front. Initially, we see some of the soldiers on a porch in bright sunlight, having their fortune told by an old gypsy woman, who, according to the speaker, is paid to read the soldiers' palms. In front of the old woman, we also see some young girls with their backs to the soldiers but facing the camera.

In the next scene, one of these girls begins to dance topless in front of the Nazi occupying forces, her family and the camera. Although this particular extract only lasts 35 seconds, it effectively demonstrates how genuinely degrading the everyday life of those individuals depicted could be. In fact, this intimate recording of a young girl's nude exhibition of herself constitutes a remarkable exception in comparison with most other images on the DVD. Not only because of its explicit content – there are two other sequences with full nudity on the disc, one of which is included on the cover in the form of a still-life photograph – but also because it informs us about conditions on the Russian front that were probably never intended to be revealed.

In Gunning's terms, this scene *shows* us more than it *tells*, and in that respect it bares strong resemblance to how 'the exotic' has been depicted in Western travelogues and anthropological films since the very beginning of documentary filmmaking. The scene should, however, not be seen as a filmic successor to higher forms of classical art, which for centuries displayed female nudity in private, semi-public or public spaces. On the contrary, that kind of canonized imagery has more in common with fiction films or dramatized documentaries where actors play characters based on a script, thereby at least limiting the otherwise ethically dubious exposure of the performer's real identity. That is certainly not the case with the dancing gypsy girl.

If scenes like this are to be studied as audiovisual historiography, questions concerning the underlying intentions for shooting such scenes

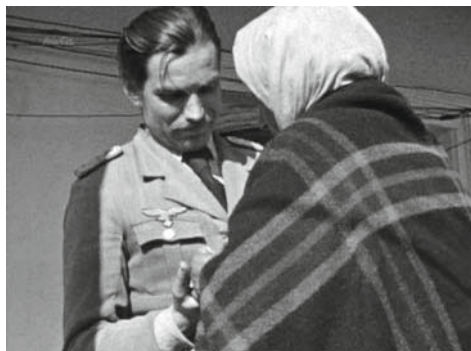


Figure 8.3 Nazi officer on the eastern front getting his fortune told by a gypsy woman. Stills from *Das Dritte Reich privat: Leben und Überleben*



Figure 8.4 Young teenage gypsy girl dances topless in front of crowd and camera. Stills from *Das Dritte Reich privat: Leben und Überleben*

in the first place need to be answered. The German soldiers probably recorded the event because they could do whatever they wanted, and at this specific point in time they wanted to record a topless young girl dancing. The person responsible for the camera saw an opportunity and took it, which is fully in line with Roepke's aforementioned explanation concerning the 'the aesthetics of the doable'. But in order to make sense of these images, it is also necessary to determine to what extent this was an arranged event. It has been convincingly concluded that '[h]istorical questions that arise from gender politics cannot be adequately answered, however, if women under mass dictatorship are forced into a sharp dichotomy of passive victims and demonised perpetrators.'¹⁵ True, the gypsy girl most certainly is the victim of male oppression and voyeuristic/scoptophilic gazes fully in line with classic psychoanalytic theories within, for instance, film studies. However, over the years such theories have been replaced by more subtle descriptions, not only of the activities of historical actors but also of the cognitive activities of spectators. Therefore, it is difficult to solely describe the young gypsy girl as a passive victim based on one short scene. Admittedly, her performance is undertaken within a context of subtle threats, potential violence and male gazes. But the way in which she calmly addresses the camera before, during and after her dance might suggest that she was well aware of what she was doing and why. In that case, it is not the objectification of a passive victim we see here but an active historical subject making the best out of a strange and uncomfortable situation.

It is clear from the above how difficult it is to determine what actually happened during the original filming, which, in turn, only further underlines that we should concentrate our efforts on analyses of how this kind of material is later reused in other media long after the events. Thus, the way in which the scene is dubbed on *Das Dritte Reich* privat gives us a number of important clues as to PolarFilm's intentions behind the inclusion of it. The producers of the DVD chose to insert ethnic gypsy music on the soundtrack to accompany the images of the naked girl dancing. One can only speculate as to the reason why such an obvious change to the original film was undertaken in 2004. Normally, sound is added to commercial productions in order to emotionally engage audiences with the visual representations – the reason being that sound in general, and music in particular, normally triggers people's emotions more significantly than do images alone. With regard to the scene with the young gypsy girl, however, other narrative and historiographical strategies are additionally employed. By adding seemingly diegetic sound to the topless dance, PolarFilm consciously makes

it easier for today's viewers to make sense of and therefore explain these images; that is, the soundtrack makes it appear as if the young girl's performance was a direct response to the music, instead of something she – perhaps – was forced to do by the Nazis or her parents. The causal logic of the scene is thus altered, and the girl's dance occurs as something amiable and spontaneous. In consequence, the potential hostility of the scene is downplayed, especially as compared to how it appears if one views it without sound.

What we are talking about here is the result of a so-called 'added value', which can be described as an extra auditive dimension that significantly enhances the meanings and effects of the images it accompanies.¹⁶ In this particular case, there is little doubt that those behind the production of *Das Dritte Reich* privat wanted to diminish the negative aura surrounding this footage by means of a new and seemingly diegetic soundtrack. The gypsy tune positions viewers closer to what is happening in front of the camera, emotionally linking them to the atmosphere of the scene. But this narrative strategy not only shortens the distance temporally, it also enhances the impression of being close to the naked gypsy girl spatially. The music surrounds us from all directions and we find ourselves *Mitten in Geschehen*. On the other hand, it is of course also possible that a contemporary viewer of the DVD might recognize the added music as something disturbing and out of place, making the whole presentation less trustworthy than the original silent imagery. Regardless of whether we feel inserted into or feel a certain remoteness from this particular scene because of the sound, it is necessary that this kind of complex audiovisual historiography always be analysed in detail if we are to better understand the ways in which the construction of our palimpsest of historical consciousness is affected.

Innocence by association

Based on the above, it seems difficult – perhaps impossible – to single out definite reasons as to why the original scenes were recorded in the first place, and to what degree the presence of amateur cameramen influenced the proceedings we see before us. Was it the will to preserve and save certain images for the future that initiated the filming? Or did the choice to film have more to do with the uniqueness of the imagery in focus? Perhaps the recording was coincidental and someone just urged the filmmaker to pick up the camera and shoot there and then? Did the action begin when the camera started rolling or was the scene already in motion long before the arrival of the camera and its operator?

Whatever the original case may have been, it is surely much easier to extract information about the decisions, intentions and strategies of the responsible parties at PolarFilm, who remastered the old films onto a new DVD in 2004. That the context within which today's media producers operate is fundamentally different than that of the amateur filmmakers during World War II not only makes contemporary digital reconstructions of everyday life under the Nazis less trustworthy as source material, but it also makes the ideological purposes behind the reconstructions of the past more dubious.

A fruitful way to approach these questions might therefore be to focus more on the media employed – that is, on the *mass* media employed. Film, TV, video and DVD have for more than a hundred years dominated popular culture. Today most people still derive the bulk of their information about the past via some of these media. Today's palimpsests of historical consciousness are thus predominantly influenced by representations that combine images with sound and fact with fiction in ways that often distort the original material. The representations of Nazi everyday life on *Das Dritte Reich privat* can therefore, in some sense, be characterized as a sophisticated combination of, on the one hand, factual information about historical events taking place in front of the cameras and, on the other hand, aestheticized reconstructions reinforcing the mythical aura of a particular era with the help of digitalized audiovisual historiography. While the former strategy relies on *showing* what was in focus, occasionally editing the images in order to obtain a better flow in the story, the latter predominantly tries to *tell* more about the imagery than they visually reveal.

Consequently, the centrifugal displays of history from within the events on this and similar DVDs serve the purpose of simplifying the viewers' impression of taking part in the action – a narrative strategy fully in line with how large portions of today's modern-day audience around the world want to experience the past medially. But the almost undetectable re-editing and style, including the insertion of a soundtrack, of these media products fundamentally changes both the form and content of the old films. What this and similar digital products present are not merely compiled recordings from the past that can be described as 'unaffected by and beyond propaganda'. Instead, they should rather be seen as carefully chosen compilations of images that are accompanied by rigorously composed soundtracks, which, in turn, alter the reading – and the meaning – of the past.

In conclusion, *Das Dritte Reich privat: Leben und Überleben* offers few, if any, images of a mass dictatorship that are worth exploring for gleaming

historical information about everyday life during the Nazi period. Or as British historian Peter Lambert recently put it when confronted with the imagery on this same disc: 'This is not history from below, it's history of below!' Therefore, DVDs such as this should primarily be analysed because they offer first-hand insights into the complex ways in which today's sophisticated media companies manipulate old prime source material for their own purposes and intentions. What is needed, in order to better understand the impact and consequences of this massive and still expanding output of audiovisual historiography, is a media literacy that takes into account as many aspects as possible of the original and the compiled material – not least of everyday life, including that of the amateurs behind and in front of the cameras. It is only when this is done that we can begin to dissect how today's global media producers, who in their archives store many negatives, skilfully turn the silent images into something audiovisually positive. It would thus appear as if this study must end on a somewhat pessimistic note. In the epilogue to his seminal study *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film*, Anton Kaes quotes the history teacher Gabi Teichert in Alexander Kluge's film *The Patriot* as saying 'It's hard to teach German history in a patriotic fashion ...' Kluge included this line in an effort to exemplify how the New German Cinema of the 1970s had begun to portray the country's history in new, positive, yet more critical ways wherein everyday life, the individual and the subjective, constituted central components.¹⁷ Today, on the other hand, it regrettably seems as if the ways in which the past are represented, and therefore remembered, rarely reach our cultural, political or, for that matter, pedagogical agendas. Isn't it high time for change?

Notes

1. V. V. Prozerskij cited in Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1997), p. 16.
2. For more on audiovisual media's use and abuse of the past, see Marcia Landy, *Cinematic Uses of the Past* (Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and Robert Brent Toplin, *History in Hollywood, The Use and Abuse of the American Past* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press 1996).
3. Vivian Sobchack (ed.), *The Persistence of History, Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event* (New York: Routledge 1996), p. 4.
4. Vivian Sobchack, 'The Insistent Fringe: Moving Images and Historical Consciousness', *History and Theory*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (1997), p. 6.
5. Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1995), p. 26.

6. Martina Roepke, *Privat-Vorstellung: Heimkino in Deutschland vor 1945* (Hildesheim, Zürich and New York: Georg Olms Verlag 2006), pp. 213–217.
7. For more information on Karl Höffkes, see http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_H%C3%B6ffkes (in German).
8. For more on Matthias Ponnier, see http://www.steffi-line.de/archiv_text/nost_buehne/15p_ponnier.htm (in German).
9. Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film* (New York: Hill and Wang 1964), p. 10.
10. The fact that all amateur images on this disc were shot with hand-held cameras is another factor that enhances the audience's impression that these are trustworthy representations made on location. This is precisely the reason as to why documentary and amateur footage are regularly incorporated in fiction films, television dramas and other historical productions. For instance, when Steven Spielberg shot the long sequence showing the invasion of Normandy in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), he used hand-held cameras in 90 per cent of the scenes. He even used a device called Clairmont Camera's Image Shaker on which the photographer of the film, Janusz Kaminski, could 'dial in the degree of vibration you want with vertical and horizontal settings, and mount it to a handheld camera, a crane, whatever'. The purpose of this was to imitate not just documentary recordings from the actual event, but also to make it look like amateur footage. Consequently, very expensive and sophisticated equipment was employed in order to make the fiction look more real and factual. See Christopher Probst, 'The Last Great War', *American Cinematographer*, August 1998.
11. André Gaudreault, 'Showing and Telling: Image and Word in Early Cinema' and Tom Gunning 'The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde', both in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI 1994 (1990)), pp. 274–281 and pp. 56–62, respectively.
12. Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. 16.
13. The DVD also offers six bonus films with a total duration of 62 minutes. A 60-page leaflet promoting more than seventy other DVDs about World War II is also included in the package. Ten per cent of the films in this leaflet are said to depict everyday life during the Nazi era.
14. Eva Kingsepp, *Nazityskland i populärkulturen : Minne, myt, medier* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2008), p. 292.
15. Karen Petrone and Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Introduction: Meandering between Self-empowerment and Self-mobilisation', in Petrone and Lim (eds), *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
16. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
17. Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press 1989), p. 198.

9

The Good, the Bad and the Collaborators: Swedish World War II Guilt Redefined in Twenty-First-Century Crime Fiction?

Kerstin Bergman

In recent decades, it has become public knowledge among the post-war generations that Sweden was not as neutral during World War II as had been previously claimed.¹ This belated realization has been dealt with in different ways in the Swedish public arena, to which crime fiction is an important contributor. Swedish crime fiction has a long tradition of conveying social criticism, and continuously scrutinizes topical issues. It is currently the most popular fiction genre in Sweden, and attracts a large Swedish (and international) readership.² Accordingly, crime fiction is an important voice in the Swedish public arena. One of the increasingly popular themes in Swedish crime fiction has concerned the memory of Sweden's role during World War II. Through these late twentieth and early twenty-first century fictional depictions, Swedish crime writers have taken part in reshaping Swedish collective, or social, World War II memory into a history that lets Swedes feel better about themselves and their past. In this chapter, Swedish crime fiction from the first decade of the twenty-first century will be examined in order to identify how this is done.

During World War II, some two hundred Swedes became active participants in what, using Korean historian Jie-Hyun Lim's terminology, could be referred to as the German mass dictatorship.³ Most of them joined the *Waffen SS*.⁴ Additionally, Nazi ideology had many supporters among ordinary people in Sweden, and there were several Swedish political parties that promoted such an ideology.⁵ This can partly be explained by Sweden's long tradition of affinity with German culture in general. Primarily, however, nationalism, anti-Semitism and anti-communism were widely accepted in Sweden at the time, not least by major newspapers and at universities. It is impossible to determine how

many Swedes embraced some form of Nazi ideas and how many would have happily cooperated with the Nazis if Germany had occupied Sweden. It can only be concluded that they were many, and as Swedish historian Klaus Böhme has argued: 'Not even in Germany did the Nazis come into power solely by their own force; they only succeeded with the support of opportunists. In this regard the opportunists were almost even more dangerous than the convinced Nazis, most of whom were at least known.'⁶ It is this mix of organized and non-organized, explicit and implicit, ideological and opportunist, convinced and potential Nazi supporters that today's Swedish crime writers take as their point of departure. Lim states that: 'Coming to terms with the dictatorial past demands "thick description" of yesterday's consent and coercion and today's nostalgia *for* and *against* as a multi-layered experience in everyday lives.'⁷ This process is at work in contemporary Swedish crime fiction, and will be examined in this study.

The appearance today of a large number of Swedish crime novels discussing World War II may well be traced to a perceived need among members of the post-war generations for information about what really occurred during the war.⁸ And while twentieth-century Europe has been a fashionable topic in popular history in recent decades, in Sweden and elsewhere, knowledge about Swedish wartime Nazism and relations with Germany remains relatively low among the general public. Indeed, a frustrated disappointment would seem to be the general response among the post-war generations to the realization that Sweden was not all that neutral during World War II – and that teaching in schools on the topic has been far from the truth. This frustration is expressed in contemporary Swedish crime fiction. In Arne Dahl's (penname for Jan Arnald, b. 1963) *Europa Blues* from 2001, the protagonists – in this case, the police – are taken aback when they realize what went on during the war: 'They felt Swedish history change in front of their eyes. Who had told them this at school? Who had enlightened them about the dark heritage of the humanely neutral Northern country? No one.'⁹ Depictions of this past in Swedish crime fiction therefore serve as a form of popular history writing, helping to reduce this type of frustrated ignorance. As will be seen, almost all the novels examined in this chapter display some kind of educational attempt at conveying historical facts to the readers.¹⁰

Mass dictatorship and Swedish crime fiction

The concept of mass dictatorship, developed in recent years by Jie-Hyun Lim and others, is used to discuss twentieth-century modern

dictatorships, so as to render the similarities between different dictatorships more visible. It is a concept that is sometimes viewed with suspicion, however, primarily since it questions the clear-cut distinction between victims and perpetrators by assigning agency to the masses, by making everyone to some extent responsible in the creation and sustenance of the mass dictatorship.¹¹ The concept of mass dictatorship 'implies the attempted mobilisation of the masses by dictatorships, and that these frequently secured *voluntary* mass participation and support'.¹² The limited space for manoeuvre and ability to say no is an obvious point of criticism levelled at the mass dictatorship argument. Nevertheless, ascribing agency to all of those who did say yes or who did not say no to supporting a dictatorial regime is crucial in explaining the realization of many twentieth-century dictatorships.¹³

In the case of the Swedish collaborators and other Nazi sympathizers portrayed in the twenty-first century crime novels discussed in this chapter, there is no question that they chose to join the German forces and/or became Nazis of their own volition, notwithstanding whether they are portrayed as really knowing what they were getting themselves into or not. Not only were they volunteering to (in most cases) fight for the German army, but they were doing this from the position of an outsider wanting to become a part of the mass, not from a position where they were already part of the community and might have had difficulties going against the majority of their peers. This is certainly the case in the two principal novels analysed in this chapter: Henning Mankell's (b. 1948) novel *The Return of the Dancing Master* (*Danslärarens återkomst*, 2000, published in English in 2003) and Arne Dahl's *Europa Blues* (2001).¹⁴ Additionally, a number of other recent Swedish crime novels are cited for means of comparison and to support the arguments made in the analysis of the fictional discussions and portrayal of Sweden's World War II past.¹⁵ The most common scenario in these novels revolves around an elderly male Nazi, or former Nazi, being murdered in revenge for crimes committed in Sweden or while enlisted in the German forces during World War II. A major part of most of these novels, including Mankell's and Dahl's, is then devoted to the identification of the killer, who generally turns out to be one of the murdered man's wartime victims or a descendant of one of the victims.

A recurring theme throughout Mankell's oeuvre is criticism of different expressions of racism. In *The Return of the Dancing Master*, he discusses racism both in the context of Nazism during World War II and contemporary neo-Nazism in Sweden and the wider world. The primary murder victim in the novel, an old Swedish man named Herbert Molin,

is a convinced Nazi. During World War II, he voluntarily joined the Waffen SS. After the end of the war, he returned to Sweden, changed his name and worked as a police officer. Since his retirement a few years ago, Molin has been hiding out in an isolated cabin outside Sveg in the Swedish mountains, afraid his past will catch up with him. Mankell portrays Molin as a lonely and not very likable man. The reader primarily accesses Molin's ideas through quotes from his diary, which he has kept ever since he decided to join the German forces in 1942. In 1999, however, Molin's whereabouts are finally tracked down by Aron Silberstein alias Fernando Hereira, the son of a Jewish dance teacher in Berlin whom Molin had brutally murdered back in 1944 or 1945. Silberstein proceeds to flog Molin to death to avenge his father's murder.¹⁶

In Arne Dahl's *Europa Blues*, Leonard Sheinkman, an elderly Jewish professor emeritus of neuroscience, is murdered, with his killers using a method developed by pain researchers in Germany during World War II.¹⁷ The professor is believed to be a German Holocaust survivor who came to Sweden after the war, learned Swedish, studied to be a medical doctor and eventually pursued a brilliant research career. During the murder investigation, however, it is revealed that the professor lived under false pretences. It turns out that he was in fact a Swede by the name of Anton Eriksson, who studied medicine in Sweden before the war and worked at the State Institute for Racial Biology (Statens institut för rasbiologi, SIFR) in Uppsala. In 1937, Eriksson moved to Berlin in order to continue his medical education at the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institut für Rassenhygiene.¹⁸ During the war, he was employed in Weimar as an SS-officer conducting medical research in a secret pain research laboratory, using prisoners from Buchenwald as guinea pigs. It is at this laboratory that the method later used in his murder is developed; a method aimed at inducing maximal pain by inserting a sharp wire – and probing with it – through the temple into the brain's pain centre, while the 'patient' hangs upside down in order to create optimal blood flow to the brain.¹⁹ It is revealed that, at the end of the war, Eriksson stole the identity and wartime diary of Leonard Sheinkman, one of the Jews killed at the laboratory. Eriksson also copied Sheinkman's concentration camp tattoo and got circumcised, escaping to Sweden where he lived as a Jew, had three children and eventually became a successful scholar of neuroscience.²⁰ Eriksson, however, is eventually tracked down and murdered by Sheinkman's granddaughter. It turns out that her father, Franz Kouzmin-Sheinkman, had traced Leonard Sheinkman to Sweden in the 1980s, but arriving at what he assumed to be his long lost father's doorstep, he was murdered by Eriksson and his body dumped in a ditch and never identified.²¹

The other crime novels examined share many similarities with the two novels by Mankell and Dahl outlined above, all of which are drawn upon in this chapter to discuss how crime fiction today takes part in reshaping the social, or collective, memory of Sweden's World War II past.

Educational attempts in Swedish crime novels

As already noted, many contemporary Swedish crime writers appear to have taken it upon themselves to educate the public about what happened during the war. It is also common that these authors let their protagonists reflect upon this lack of knowledge – in the public arena as well as in the educational system – about Swedish wartime Nazism. Mankell, for example, clearly has an educational ambition with *The Return of the Dancing Master*. He describes Swedish pro-Nazi sentiment in the 1930s and 1940s, and how widespread this was in Sweden at the time.²² In doing so, he is well aware that to many of his readers this is not common knowledge. The main protagonist in the book, the policeman Stefan Lindman, typifies the majority of Swedish readers who learned about Nazism in Sweden only long after the end of World War II.

[I]n the 30s and up to around 1943 or 44, Nazism had been much more widespread in Sweden than most people nowadays were aware of. There had been various branches of Nazi parties that squabbled between themselves, but behind the men and women in the parades there had been a gray mass of anonymous people who had admired Hitler and would have liked nothing more than a German invasion and the setting up of a Nazi regime in Sweden. He found astonishing information about the government's concessions to the Germans, and how exports of iron ore from Sweden had been crucial in enabling the German munitions industry to satisfy Hitler's constant demand for more tanks and other war materials. He wondered what had happened to all that history when he was a schoolboy. What he vaguely remembered from his history classes was a very different picture: a Sweden that had succeeded – by means of extremely clever policies and by skillfully walking the tightrope – in staying out of the war. The Swedish government had remained strictly neutral and thus saved the country from being crushed by the German military machine. He'd heard nothing about quantities of homegrown Nazis.²³

Dahl also explicitly approaches the Swedish ignorance concerning war history and the Holocaust, and in particular he addresses Swedes'

unwillingness to even approach the issue. One of the policemen in Dahl's novel, Paul Hjelm, ponders this reluctance while on the way to interview the son of the murdered Nazi professor.

[Hjelm] was in agony over having to touch the Holocaust and the concentration camps and the European anti-Semitism. He happened to be Swedish, and Swedes don't like such taboo topics. We start sweating. If possible, we avoid them, but if we still have to approach them we do so with a kind of distancing reverence and a series of clichés about how it can never be allowed to happen again. The Holocaust is an abstraction best mentioned in big words from a rostrum, not something to deal with close at hand. We were not involved in it, we can never understand it, it's none of our business, and you will have to deal with it without us. An unholy alliance of Swedish bogus neutrality and lack of historical awareness. We *were* very much involved. It *is* certainly our business. We *can* certainly understand it. We *have* to. World champions of turning a blind eye.²⁴

The frustration borne of Sweden's wartime associations with Nazism and the country's involvement with Germany, which had been expunged from the Swedish public arena as well as from the Swedish educational system for so long, is very clear. Also this reluctance to approach the issue is regarded as something typically Swedish, characterizing the way Swedes handle all uncomfortable or difficult topics. Crime writer Emma Vall (pseudonym for the collaborative work of Maria Hengren, b. 1962, Eva Swedenmark, b. 1944 and Annica Wennström, b. 1966) arrives at the same conclusion as Mankell and Dahl (in the first quote), when she writes: 'It is frightening, really, how little we know about our own history.'²⁵

As previously stated (see also note one), the fact that Sweden harboured many Nazi sympathizers during World War II has only been publicly discussed in the last few decades. Frustration over having been kept in the dark about Sweden's murky wartime past is a common response from the post-war generations, which is reflected in the genre of crime fiction as well as in Swedish society in general. An exception is Peter Gissy's (b. 1947) crime novel set in 1982, where information about Swedish and Danish involvement with the Nazis during the war is treated as common knowledge among post-war generations; it is not anything that surprises or shocks the main characters of the novel. This assumption of common knowledge would seem a more likely point of departure for a novel in the 2000s rather than one set in the 1980s, but

it is notable that most of these crime writers still today continue to treat the extent of Swedish wartime guilt as a shocking revelation.

The purpose of the extensive inclusion of historical facts in these novels could possibly be to increase the sense of realism and to give the impression that the author is knowledgeable, rather than being designed to serve a true educational purpose per se. Regardless of the intent, however, the educational function is still present. In Dahl's *Europa Blues*, the reader is provided with historically accurate information about, for example, the institutional development of racial biology in Sweden and its German equivalent.²⁶ The history of Weimar and Odessa, and their respective roles in Nazi history, are also recounted.²⁷ Sven Westerberg's (b. 1945) novel contains extensive information about the bombing of Dresden in 1945.²⁸ Gissy writes at length about the World War II Nazi camps in Denmark and the escape of war criminals via Denmark and Sweden. In a postscript, Gissy also stresses that this part of his novel is based on reality.²⁹ Vall describes the situation in Norway and in Sweden among ordinary people during the war.³⁰ While in Ann Rosman's (b. 1973) novel, the educational aspect primarily concerns an account of gold transports during the war.³¹

With his experience as a journalist, Olle Lönnaeus (b. 1957) refers to historical individuals in describing Sweden's Nazi-friendly past.³² The educational ambitions in the novel primarily concern both past and present Swedish Nazi organizations, and Lönnaeus builds on historical research concerning Nazism in Sweden. In so doing, he talks about the different factions and leaders and their activities, and also about their collusion with Nazi Germany during the war.³³ Meanwhile, Inger Jalakas (b. 1951) mainly describes what happened in the Baltic region during World War II, and Sweden's actions during the extradition of the Balts (*Baltutlämningen*) are mentioned, if not really discussed.³⁴ Ingrid Kampås' (b. 1957) focus is on the way the Swedish Church handled Nazism and the relationship to Germany, on what went on at Ravensbrück concentration camp, the German euthanasia programme, as well as the wartime situation in Finland.³⁵ Willy Josefsson (b. 1946) educates his readers about the deportation of Danish Jews to Germany in 1943 and about the many Danish Jews who escaped to Sweden.³⁶ Aino Trosell (b. 1949) focuses attention on the situation in Norway, and discusses the lists of Jews and other 'unwanted' people created by Nazi sympathizers in Sweden during the war.³⁷

The range of topics related to the war is thus wide, but all are dominated by the issue of how Swedes in different ways dealt with Nazism during the war. Moreover, in spite of the diversity, the treatment of the

topics is similar in the different novels in that the authors are trying to make their readers connect with history. By inserting historical facts into what are gripping fictional stories, Swedish crime writers turn the 'history lesson' into an engaging adventure for the reader. By doing this, and by establishing intriguing fictional characters – some of which the reader is encouraged to identify with – the authors also make it easier for the reader to make sense of the facts and ascribe meaning to them. As American film scholar Bill Nichols has put it: 'our hunger is less for the information in the raw than for stories fashioned from it. ... [W]e hunger for news from the world around us [including historical facts] but desire it in the form of narratives, stories that make meaning, however tenuous, dramatic, compelling, or paranoid they might be.'³⁸ It is in this way that contemporary Swedish crime fiction effectively takes on the role and educational function of popular history.

Engaging the reader: Personal connections and 'authentic' documents

In order to make their readers engage with the history of Nazism, many of the crime writers at hand use narrative devices designed to draw the reader in close. Most common is to create a personal connection between the protagonist and Nazism, and almost as widespread is the utilization of 'authentic' documents. The latter produce a sense of realism by indirectly providing the reader with access to the thoughts and images of fictional wartime Nazis.

Henning Mankell, for example, makes knowledge about the Nazi past more graspable through his protagonist's discovery that his own father had been a committed Nazi before, during and after the war, right up until his death.³⁹ By describing how surprising and shocking this realization is to the protagonist, Mankell shows that anyone – even those we might least suspect – could have been, or could be, committed Nazis. The point is further stressed when the seemingly innocent daughter of the murdered Nazi is, at the end of the novel, revealed to be a convinced Nazi herself, deeply involved in a contemporary global neo-Nazi network.⁴⁰ In Peter Gissy's novel, there is also a personal connection between the protagonist and the Nazi past, as the main protagonist's late mother was German. Her parents died during the first year of the war, and she came to Sweden in the 1950s.⁴¹ And yet it is not revealed why her parents died or were killed, and it thus remains open to interpretation whether they were Nazis or victims of the Nazis. In Emma Vall's novel, the protagonist, a journalist, turns out to be the granddaughter

of a Norwegian Nazi, and her visiting Norwegian colleague is revealed to be her first cousin (a grandson of the same Nazi).⁴²

Arne Dahl introduces a similar scenario in *Europa Blues*, when one of the policemen finds out that his mother's Finnish uncle was affiliated not only with the Weimar pain institute, but also with the Nazi murder victim and a former Italian Nazi who is now an organized crime boss.⁴³ The uncle is, however, portrayed as having been a more hesitant participant in the research than the other two men, and after the war he finds it very difficult to have the crime on his conscience.⁴⁴ The story of the uncle's agony enables the reader to pity him and to consider his appalling actions as less voluntary – even though as a Finn he was by no means forced to collaborate with the Germans. The idea that the uncle was somehow made to do something against his will perhaps contributes to distancing the reader from the guilt for what happened, as all guilt is then assigned to the 'evil' Germans, with the uncle being cast more into the role of that of a victim. However, the policeman, who inherited his uncle's fortune, is deeply troubled by the fact that the gold his uncle took from his victims' teeth during the war now finances his own good living.⁴⁵ By the depiction of how this torments the policeman, some of the guilt is actually brought to bear on the reader in a stronger way than in most of the other novels. This is one of the rare occasions where a character that the reader is likely to identify with personally struggles with feelings of guilt concerning what happened during the war.

Aino Trosell uses a different approach. Instead of focusing on Nazi wartime collaborators, she tells what primarily concerns a contemporary story about neo-Nazism. In thus doing, she shows how difficult it can be to resist Nazi propaganda, especially when it is promoted by someone close and in a situation where one's family is threatened. The main character of Trosell's novel, tannery worker Siv Dahlin, is exposed to severe pressure from her new lover, who turns out to be a prominent Swedish neo-Nazi organizer. Dahlin finds herself on the verge of actually joining the neo-Nazi movement, as her self-esteem is ruined, her life and her daughter are threatened and her lover keeps her captive and bombards her with Nazi propaganda.⁴⁶ Accordingly, Trosell helps the reader understand why so many Swedes were pro-German during the war and joined Nazi organizations, and how impossible it must have been for many Germans not to partake in and support the mass dictatorship. In subjecting her protagonist to this kind of stress, Trosell makes her novel unique among those studied here: in none of the other novels is the reader as likely to identify with a character who is considering becoming a (neo-)Nazi.

Another common way of emotionally engaging the reader is by evoking 'authentic' wartime documents – documents which are presented as authentic, but which are in fact fictional. These appear in the majority of the novels in the shape of personal journals, diaries, newspaper articles, letters and photographs. The journal or personal notebook is a particularly common device of giving a voice to the dead, used, for example, by both Mankell and Dahl. Mankell's readers primarily access the murdered Nazi collaborator's ideas through quotes from his journal, which he had kept since his decision to join the German forces in 1942. In Dahl's novel, information about the Nazi collaborator is found in the diary of one of his victims.⁴⁷ In Gissy's novel, as in many of the others, the existence of documents – letters and photographs found in the murder victim's safe – helps the investigators understand what happened in the past.⁴⁸ (The letters are from his wife who remained in Germany after the war with their two children and whom he had secretly visited every summer.) There are also important documents in Emma Vall's novel, consisting of notes made by a Norwegian Nazi. The notes connect him to the murder of Norwegian resistance fighters. Incriminating documents are further at play in Willy Josefsson's novel, where a photograph of four Nazi sympathizers, who killed Jewish refugees and stole their valuables, constitutes a kind of documentation of their crime.⁴⁹ In Aino Trosell's novel, a wartime register of Jews, and other Swedes the Nazis did not like, plays an important role, and in Sven Westerberg's novel cryptic diary entries are key to understanding who the murdered man was and why he was killed.

In all the novels, these 'authentic' documents have a significance that goes beyond merely providing clues. They primarily serve to contribute to the establishment of a more intimate connection between the reader and wartime events and characters. Simultaneously, however, other aspects of the novels do the exact opposite, that is, they create a *distance* between the reader and the reality of wartime Nazism. This will be further addressed below.

What attracts fictional Swedes to Nazism?

The novels examined display a striking absence of discussion of and statements concerning the reasons why the fictional Swedes portrayed decide to become Nazis and/or to join the German forces during World War II. Most of these collaborators join the Waffen SS, either the fighting troops or the medical teams surrounding the concentration camps. In the case of the former, the only author to really address the

issue of why is Henning Mankell in *The Return of the Dancing Master*. The descriptions in this novel of what makes Nazism attractive to a Swede are the most explicit and extensive found in any of the novels examined.

Molin, the murdered Nazi in Mankell's novel, decides to join the German Nazis in order to fight 'for the new Europe and the defeat of Bolshevism'.⁵⁰ His wartime journal shows that at the age of 19 he was already a convinced Nazi. It is further described how his parents and their social circle were convinced Nazis and supported, perhaps even encouraged, Molin's decision to join the Waffen SS.⁵¹ At first, Molin is excited and happy about the choice he has made.⁵² Eventually, however, he discovers the terror of war, and fights more in order to survive than from conviction. His journal reveals that while fighting in Russia in the winter of 1943, the initial optimism he held is turned 'into doubt, then despair, and finally fear'.⁵³ The novel establishes that soon 'his naïve enthusiasm had turned to terror'.⁵⁴ In August 1944, Molin is severely injured and ends up in Berlin. After this, his fear turns into hatred, and he seems more convinced than ever that he is fighting for a good cause, even as he understands that Germany is about to lose the war. In a letter to his parents, he writes that he cannot understand why not more Swedes join the fight against the Russians.⁵⁵ It is also made clear in the novel that although Molin conceals his opinions later in life, he remains a convinced Nazi until the day he dies. In Molin's case, therefore, it is an ideological conviction that draws him to the Nazis. His conviction is grounded primarily in a strong dislike and fear of communists, a dislike obviously traceable to his upbringing and the Swedish social circles to which his parents belonged. In *The Return of the Dancing Master*, Mankell thus refers to the fact that fear of communism was widespread in Sweden at the time, and constituted a fundamental part of the ideology Swedish political parties subscribed to in promoting Nazism in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁶

In addition to those Swedes who joined the Germans as soldiers, there are also several characters who worked as physicians in Germany during the war, primarily in the proximity of concentration camps. These men are also said to have belonged to the Waffen SS, but their participation in the mass dictatorship was not in a fighting capacity. Arne Dahl, Peter Gissy and Inger Kampås all present Nazi physicians as their main villains. While Gissy's Nazi character is said to have executed unwanted patients in a Danish hospital, the perpetrators in Kampås' and Dahl's novels both conducted medical experiments on prisoners in German camps. Dahl gives the most detailed description of how and

why Swedish Nazi collaborator and physician Anton Eriksson ended up at the pain research institute connected to Buchenwald in Germany. It is explicitly stated that Eriksson's reason for moving to Germany was a disappointment in the way the Swedish State Institute for Racial Biology in Uppsala was developing, as its new director was moving away from the more surgical approaches to racial hygiene.⁵⁷ Founded in 1921, the actual institute in Uppsala, run by the Swedish state, was the first of its kind in the world.⁵⁸ In 1927, the Germans modelled the Kaiser-Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics (Das Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik, KWI) in Berlin after the Swedish precursor.⁵⁹ In Dahl's novel, Eriksson leaves Uppsala for the Berlin institute, and eventually ends up at the pain institute in Weimar.⁶⁰

The acceptance of Eriksson's ideas and the research possibilities he receives in Germany make him a willing participant in supporting the Nazi mass dictatorship. During the war, Eriksson never pauses to think of the ethics of what he is doing, and in the diary of one of his victims he is described as a cold and calculating scientist, oblivious to the suffering of his human research subjects.⁶¹ When the war is over, Eriksson successfully hides under an assumed identity and in no way acknowledges his past convictions. Although he never mentions his Nazi past and is said to have perhaps almost even 'become' his Jewish victim Leonard Sheinkman, whose identity he adopts, Dahl makes it clear that Eriksson remained an ideologically convinced Nazi throughout his life.⁶² Just like Mankell, Dahl thus chooses to portray ideological conviction as an important reason why his character actively searches to be part of the Nazi mass dictatorship. Dahl, however, also combines this conviction with an aspiration of scientific endeavour.

The choice to present fictional (Swedish) Nazis as medical researchers conducting experiments on involuntary human subjects is clearly a literary device so as to make these Nazis appear as evil as possible. It is hard to imagine anything else that would generate quite so much repulsion on the part of readers. Dahl's Nazi researcher develops a method to cause humans as much pain as possible, while Kampås' Nazi physician pours corrosive chemicals into the vaginas of young girls 'just to see what happens'. There seems to be no useful purpose for these experiments, other than to torture people. By demonizing these Swedish collaborators as the worst of the worst, Swedish contemporary crime writers further distance their readers from the guilt associated with war atrocities: the collaborators are depicted as monsters that makes any identification with them extremely hard, that is, people so dissimilar that it is

almost impossible for any reader to even begin to understand their motivations. This delineation of characters supports the Sonderweg thesis, as it enforces the otherness of the Nazis and portrays them as completely alien creatures.⁶³

Perhaps the demonization of the Swedish Nazi characters is also related to the reluctance of crime writers to address the reasons behind why these men chose to become part of this mass dictatorship. By rendering what happened completely unimaginable, these novels uphold the presumed distinction between the Nazis and everyone else. Sweden's relationship with Nazi Germany during World War II, and the responsibility for what happened, is thus kept at a safe distance. Only one Swedish crime writer, Aino Trosell, can be said to be really trying to adopt another approach, by showing how difficult it might be to resist Nazi indoctrination.

Blame inverted – Guilty murder victims and innocent murderers?

A fundamental part of the narrative in crime fiction is usually the discovery and capture of the murderer – the villain of the story. The novels analysed here, however, diverge from this pattern in that the blame is often primarily placed on the murder victim (the Nazi), while the killer (taking revenge) is considered more or less innocent – or at least excused.⁶⁴ Also, cases where the murderer is captured and punished are actually quite rare. At the end of Henning Mankell's novel, for example, the murderer (Silberstein) disappears, never to be caught by the Swedish police. Additionally, throughout the novel Mankell portrays Silberstein in a very humane way, consequently encouraging the reader to feel empathy for him despite the atrocious murder he commits. At the end of the novel, Mankell's police protagonist wishes that Silberstein 'would get back to Buenos Aires. Smoke a few more French cigarettes in peace and quiet. The crime he'd committed had been atoned for long ago'.⁶⁵ These are the last words before the 'Epilogue', with the conclusion therefore being that the real criminals of the novel are the murder victim (Molin) and the other Nazi sympathizers. Silberstein, for his part, is depicted as being without guilt by virtue of avenging his father's death. The situation is almost identical in Arne Dahl's novel, where former Nazi collaborator Eriksson is murdered by the granddaughter of one of his victims; again, she is portrayed as being completely justified in her actions. After identifying her as the murderer, police officers in the novel also express the hope that she will never be caught.⁶⁶

Similar descriptions are found in many of the novels under study. In Emma Vall's novel, for instance, the murder of a former local Swedish Nazi leader is never officially solved, since everyone who knows the truth decides to keep quiet about it.⁶⁷ At the end of Ann Rosman's novel, a former German Nazi officer who arrived in Sweden after the war is shot by a Polish concentration camp survivor (a woman whom he had raped and sentenced to be executed), and in so doing, she also prevents him from killing the policewoman who is the main protagonist.⁶⁸ The reader is never told whether she is punished for this murder, but there is no mention of any attempt at arresting her, even though police are present.

In Inger Jalakas' novel, Andrei Ryzkov, an opportunistic Estonian of Russian descent who collaborated first with the communists and then with the Nazis, lives under an assumed name in Sweden.⁶⁹ Ryzkov is killed by Jussi Hauka, an Estonian refugee whom Ryzkov had informed on, which had resulted in Hauka being imprisoned by the Russians before then being involuntarily drafted by the Nazis.⁷⁰ The police never catch Hauka, but at the end of the novel he turns himself in after enjoying 'a last spring in freedom ... enjoying the sun and the warm breeze. He had seen the first coltsfoot, like little suns on the south facing slopes. He had seen the bulbs he planted on the balcony sprout and bloom, crocus, daffodils, and tulips. He had heard the first bees of spring among the sallow and hazel. He had heard the first chaffinch sing'.⁷¹ After thus experiencing spring for a final time, Hauka is ready to give up his freedom and accept his punishment. The reader never learns what this punishment will be, but the police treat Hauka very well and allow him all the time he needs to tell his story.⁷² The detailed and loving description of the Swedish spring also makes it easier for the reader to identify with Hauka as fundamentally being a good man, even though he has committed murder.

There seems to be consensus in these novels that it is not a real crime to kill a Nazi or former Nazi, and that those who take revenge on their tormentors can never really be blamed for doing so. In Stieg Larsson's (1954–2004) novel, *Harriet Vanger*, a victim of incest, kills her father. Even though she is not a victim of Holocaust atrocities, Larsson makes it very clear that her deed is morally sanctioned: her father is a monster who is not only a Nazi sympathizer, but also a serial killer and incestuous child rapist. She is never brought to justice for killing him; instead, her 'crime' is hushed up by those who know if it.⁷³ In Peter Gissy's novel, there is even an explicit ethical discussion on how serious a crime it is to kill a war criminal. In an argument between two policemen, one

of them expresses the idea that war criminals should not live among ordinary people, and that one cannot really blame victims who kill a person who has tormented them or their family members. The other policeman, the protagonist, tells his colleague to be very careful of who he expresses such opinions to, indicating that this attitude is politically incorrect, even though he himself might not judge his colleague for expressing such an opinion.⁷⁴

In a few of the novels, the murderers do, however, get punished, even if not brought to justice. In Willy Josefsson's novel, for example, the murderer, who is the son of a Swedish Nazi, dies as he falls off a cliff during a struggle with the protagonist. The murderer is thus never arrested, but pays for his crimes by dying the same way his father's victims died during the war.⁷⁵ Similarly, in Gissy's novel, the murderer is never caught by the police, but at the end of the novel some fishermen find him drowned.⁷⁶ The reader is not enlightened to what actually happened, but can only conclude that he somehow 'got what he deserved'. In these cases we are dealing with murderers who are descendants of the wartime generation, and this might help explain why it is easier to let these specific murderers be punished for their actions than to punish someone who is a direct victim of war atrocities.

At the end of Olle Lönnaeus' novel, a former Swedish Nazi – and murderer – is shot by a man avenging the death of his parents.⁷⁷ But contrary to most other characters in the studied novels, the man goes to jail for his actions; the imprisonment can, however, also be regarded as 'punishment' for his being a bully and unpleasant character. Nevertheless, the reader is informed that he is eventually released, and he is depicted in a better light at the end of the novel than at the beginning. This could indirectly be interpreted as meaning that his killing of the Nazi (in combination with his atoning for this in prison) has improved his moral status.

Hence, in these crime novels all sympathy and empathy, and also many attempts at enabling reader identification, is directed at the victims of the Nazis, despite the fact that many of them themselves turn into vengeful murderers. This inverted blame is not otherwise common in Swedish crime fiction. Although introduced in Swedish crime fiction by legendary crime writers Maj Sjöwall (b. 1935) and Per Wahlöö (1926–1975) in the novel *The Abominable Man* (*Den vedervärdige mannen från Säffle*, 1971, which appeared in English in 1972), this particular narrative device has only been used by a small number of Swedish authors since.

Trosell's novel can be said to be more 'politically correct' than the others, in that all victims of Nazi war atrocities remain 'innocent' – none

of the victims in her novel resort to murder. At the same time, Trosell illustrates that things are not as black and white as one might assume. The main protagonist in her story comes close to becoming a neo-Nazi, and a former neo-Nazi who has switched sides comes to her rescue by preventing her murder at the hands of her neo-Nazi lover.⁷⁸ Through Trosell's main protagonist it is illustrated that anyone could probably become a Nazi under the 'right' circumstances, but on a more positive note, her saviour demonstrates that Nazis might actually have the ability to change.

A reluctance to judge – It could have happened anywhere, anytime ...

Henning Mankell opens *The Return of the Dancing Master* with the story of a British executioner secretly flying to Germany in December 1945 in order to execute 12 German war criminals. Discussing the executions, the man in charge says to the executioner: 'it could just as easily have been the other way around. ... No people are inherently evil. On this occasion the Nazis happened to be Germans, but nobody is going to convince me that it couldn't have happened just as easily in England. Or France. Or the USA, come to that'.⁷⁹ Already from the outset of the novel, Mankell is thus questioning the '*Sonderweg* thesis which seeks to set Nazism ... apart from parliamentary democracies of the "West" – which promotes the idea that there was something 'abnormal' about Germany and/or the Germans, in comparison with the rest of the Western world, which allowed a mass dictatorship to develop.⁸⁰ In thus doing, Mankell opens up the possibility that Nazism is not confined to a certain time and place in German history, but that it could reappear anywhere at any point in time.⁸¹ Throughout the novel, Mankell also repeats that Nazism is far from an extinct ideology, as can be witnessed in Sweden and other countries.

Similar thoughts are presented in several of the novels scrutinized. Emma Vall's protagonist voices criticism of Swedes who did not oppose the Nazis during World War II, but an old man who actively fought against Nazism in Sweden tells her: 'Don't judge, people did the best they could. There was no one who could really understand what went on during those years. Nothing makes me more uncomfortable than when someone tries to hold people responsible for what happened after the fact. That is self-righteous and superficial. The same kind of cruelty takes place in all different corners of the world, and we still don't understand it. Angola, Yugoslavia, Chechnya.'⁸² Vall combines the

comparison of what goes on in different parts of the world today with a plea not to judge the Swedes who were pro-German during World War II. The statement can also be interpreted as a general plea not to judge individuals who do not stand up against their peers, including ordinary Germans who supported the Nazi regime. This does not necessarily mean, however, that everyone should be considered innocent. Confronted with the idea of shared responsibility found in the concept of mass dictatorship, the statement could also be interpreted as implying that everyone is responsible. Rather the argument here is that, in retrospect, people's past actions should not be blamed, as there is no way of knowing what someone might do if confronted with a similar scenario today. Furthermore, susceptibility to indoctrination in Trosell's novel illustrates how easily someone might be persuaded that joining a Nazi group is a reasonable thing to do.

In Inger Kampås' novel, Edmund Vilmberger, the adult son of fictional Swedish Nazi collaborator Gabriel Vilmberger, functions as the moral guiding light. Edmund, who has been hidden away at home since birth because of his deformed face, is portrayed as a good-hearted 'monster'. He is an intellectual soul who communicates with the world through his computer. In an e-mail to a friend, Edmund refers to Jerzy Einhorn (1925–2000, a Polish Jew who came to Sweden in 1964, and became a celebrated author and medical doctor), and with Einhorn he concludes: 'fear, threat, order, mass-psychosis – people have trouble holding on to an opinion diverging from that which is commonly accepted. It's much easier to be conformist, to think what everyone else thinks, instead of thinking for yourself and acting on that. And we should not judge people too hard – we who were never tried'.⁸³ Here it is even more explicit than in Vall's novel that the do-not-judge attitude applies to the possible judgment not only of Swedes during the war, but of all those who were part of the German mass dictatorship. Furthermore, the description of how hard it might be to go against one's peers is in line with the concept of mass dictatorship.⁸⁴ In most other crime novels examined in this study, however, the idea of not judging applies primarily to those individuals who murder Swedish Nazi collaborators and German Nazis. Mankell, Vall and Kampås all diverge from this pattern by displaying a more general reluctance to judge and point the finger at what others (including non-Nazis) did during World War II. This can be interpreted as meaning that no one is innocent, and thus no one should judge others. That Trosell's protagonist almost 'crosses the line', as previously discussed, further illustrates that no one can know what they would do when put to the test. Simultaneously, however, the reluctance among

the authors to blame anyone for what happened, in Sweden and elsewhere, also contributes to an increasing gulf between what actually happened during the war and the way it is perceived today.

Neo-Nazism as a contemporary threat

Many of the crime novels that deal with Swedish Nazism during the war also tell a parallel story about contemporary Swedish neo-Nazis, implying that history may be in danger of repeating itself.⁸⁵ This is also a way of bringing the topic closer to the readers – to stress its relevance today.⁸⁶ Among the novels examined, Aino Trosell primarily explores the Swedish neo-Nazi movements currently operating, and shows how closely their members still follow in the footsteps of the war generation of Nazis.⁸⁷ In a majority of the novels, contemporary neo-Nazi movements are presented as being barely distinct from Hitler's Nazis – rather they are the natural successors. Surviving Nazi supporters from World War II are depicted as well-respected grandfathers of the younger generation; they are looked up to as authorities in light of their experiences. At the same time, they are also regarded as dinosaurs, an archaic presence in today's society. An essential difference between the generations is the access to and use of modern communications technologies.⁸⁸ It is often stated that the Internet has an 'underground' where everything, also the Nazi networks, exists, and in Henning Mankell's novel, neo-Nazi support is quickly summoned through the use of mobile phones and e-mail when needed. In Emma Vall's novel, the murdered Nazi, who was a local Swedish Nazi leader during World War II, functions as an ideologist for the contemporary neo-Nazi movement.⁸⁹ He also appears to be the only computer savvy Nazi of the war generation, as he communicates with the neo-Nazis via a website.⁹⁰

Furthermore, in most novels it is stressed that the members of the new Nazi movements are intelligent and calculating – a far cry from the more visible skinheads rallying and fighting immigrants in the Swedish streets. In Olle Lönnaeus' novel, the reality of the new Swedish organizations and their history is described at length, and Mankell's protagonist notes that the new organized Nazis 'had nothing to do with the little neo-Nazi boys with shaven heads. They were not the ones who robbed banks, murdered police officers or beat up innocent immigrants. He was clear about the difference between them and the weirdos who demonstrated in the streets and shouted the praises of Karl XII'.⁹¹ The Swedish neo-Nazis are thus portrayed as part of a modern and efficient, though secret, organization – a well-established part of a global neo-Nazi

network. In fact, the alarming truth that Nazism did not die after the war, that 'Fascism is alive and kicking albeit in a different guise', is stated throughout Mankell's novel.⁹² Nazism is said to still be a flourishing ideology, well supported by strong organizations, envisioning for the future a more successful Nazi mass dictatorship than that which was defeated in 1945. 'The old form of Nazism is dead. And yet it's still alive, and growing, in new forms. If you turn over the right stones, they come teeming out. Racists, supermen. All the creatures who look for inspiration from the rubbish dumps of history.'⁹³

In Mankell's novel, it is also stressed that Nazi support comes from the masses, that it is not only a top-down movement. Reading about Nazism in Sweden in the 1930s and 1940s, Mankell's protagonist notes that 'behind the men and women in the parades there had been a gray mass of anonymous people who had admired Hitler and would have liked nothing more than a German invasion and the setting up of a Nazi regime in Sweden'.⁹⁴ By the same token, he concludes that he can still sense the existence of this mass today: 'Behind all those small groups and local organisations that kept coming and going, changing their names and symbolically scratching one another's eyes out, he could still sense the gray mass assembling at the blurred periphery.'⁹⁵ Here the masses hiding in the shadows are pointed out as the real danger. Moreover, the line between 'ordinary' people sympathetic to the Nazi ideology and those actually secretly being organized Nazis is blurred.

These twenty-first century crime novels thus indicate that the danger today lurks just under the surface, in the shape of both neo-Nazi organizations and ordinary people in Sweden passively supporting their ideas. There is no doubt whatsoever which standpoint the authors take when it comes to neo-Nazis. In Trosell's novel, the wartime generation of Nazis are never actively involved in the main plot; instead it is the neo-Nazis who are arrested and brought to justice and their actions made public.⁹⁶ There is no room for ambiguity or moral conflict: all neo-Nazis are villains.

Reshaping the memory of Swedish World War II history?

It is obviously considered important to educate readers of contemporary Swedish crime fiction about wartime events and, as previously shown, many authors have reflected upon the general public's lack of knowledge concerning Swedish wartime Nazism. Nevertheless, almost contradictory to the whole purpose of discussing these issues in crime fiction today is the fact that in many of the novels, the true identities

and pasts of the murdered Nazis are never made public after they have been discovered by the police (this is different from where the neo-Nazis are concerned). In Willy Josefsson's novel, the newspaper company that was bought with stolen Jewish treasure after the war donates a large sum of money to Jewish war victims and their survivors, but nothing is ever made public.⁹⁷ In Arne Dahl's novel, the fact that Eriksson had been a former SS-officer and war criminal is never made public; the police even decide not to tell Eriksson's Swedish children the truth about their father's Nazi past.⁹⁸ The actions of Dahl's and Josefsson's fictional police officers can thus be said to be a continuation of the tradition of denial in regard to Sweden's relationship with Germany during World War II. Even though the individual police officers in question now know better, by hushing up the details they ensure that the Swedish general public remains ignorant about Swedish involvement in Holocaust atrocities. While actual readers of the novel might have increased their knowledge, the (somewhat contradictory) message still appears to be that it is not necessary to discuss this in public. And since these policemen are clearly the intended objects for reader identification, their withholding of the truth cannot be read as criticism of the long silence in the Swedish public arena concerning Sweden's wartime guilt.

There is also a strong reluctance in these novels to associate the protagonists, or any other object of reader identification, with the German mass dictatorship. This implies a distancing from, rather than coming to terms with, any Swedish guilt concerning World War II. Even though there are attempts at drawing the reader in close – such as the involvement of protagonists' relatives with Nazism and the 'authentic' documents discussed above – the distancing elements still dominate. First-hand encounters with Nazis and their thoughts are rare, and, furthermore, it is not even regarded as necessary to make the knowledge about Nazi war criminals public – although it is important to write about them in the same novels.

The villain who constituted a threat to society and therefore had to be confined or removed was a common figure in the tradition of nineteenth and early twentieth-century crime fiction. In more recent crime fiction, however, readers are expected rather to understand and sometimes even pity the criminals. Today pure evil is rare. Instead the villains are mostly presented as victims of society, of bad childhoods or of other external factors. This is also applicable to many of the non-Nazi murderers in the crime novels examined. The Swedish World War II Nazi criminals in current crime fiction, however, represent a return to the old, evil criminal who is never excused. This fiction stresses that the

Swedes who joined the Germans were monsters and that killing them is almost a good deed, at least if one (or one's relatives) was a victim of wartime atrocities. The association with the German mass dictatorship constitutes a stigma, in fiction as in reality, and perhaps this is the reason why the studied contemporary crime writers break with current conventions concerning the portrayal of criminals.

The 'mass dictatorship hypothesis' contradicts the idea that only a few perpetrators are responsible for the suffering of many 'innocent victims', propounding instead that the responsibility is shared among everyone; no one can be considered completely innocent.⁹⁹ Swedish crime writers' approach to the issue – how they single out evil perpetrators – could perhaps at first glance appear at odds with the mass dictatorship hypothesis. However, by including Swedish collaborators in the German mass, and thereby including them in the German guilt while excluding them from the Swedish community, these authors do in a sense also appear to subscribe to the hypothesis. And yet, when it comes to the apportioning of Swedish guilt, these authors appear to choose the easy way out by only pinning the blame on individuals and by creating a distance between these individuals and society. The reluctance in the novels to make the knowledge about individual Nazis' crimes known to the public means that guilt remains at the level of the individual and, therefore, it does not become part of the Swedish public arena and consciousness. Furthermore, in addressing broader Nazi history not attributed to identifiable individuals, they touch upon events and places not commonly associated with Sweden or Swedes, such as the gold transports in Ann Rosman's novel, the Norwegian and Danish camps in Emma Vall's and Peter Gissy's novels, as well as depictions of experiences from the German concentration camps. When considering the whole body of crime fiction material, the strong focus on what occurred in Denmark and Norway during the war also contributes to diverting attention away from what went on in Sweden.

Regardless of the strong tradition of social criticism in Swedish crime fiction, when it comes to dealing with Swedish cooperation with Nazi Germany during the war, contemporary crime fiction rarely discusses the role of the Swedish authorities. Blame is primarily ascribed to individuals, rather than to the Swedish government or Swedish society as a whole. A Swedish collective that crime fiction readers and protagonists could possibly identify with is thus never blamed. Instead the blame is placed on individual citizens – on people 'we' could perhaps have been, but never were, and in this way any sense of guilt is kept at arm's length. Although eager to stress the past and present dangers of Nazism,

Swedish crime writers today still in fact ‘play it safe’ by not casting blame on anyone or anything that readers are likely to identify with – and so do not really engage with what it was that attracted so many to Nazism. This prevents readers from approaching any sense of collective guilt for what happened. In thus doing, these crime writers take part in reshaping Swedish collective World War II memory into a sanitized version of history that lets Swedes feel better about themselves and their past. Their readers might learn about history, but hardly learn from history.

Notes

1. After World War II, an official investigation, the Sandler Commission, was made into Swedish refugee policies and the activities of the Swedish security police during the war. A few other similar efforts were also made but only lasted a couple of years. And while the above resulted in the levelling of harsh criticism, there were no legal consequences. Thereafter, the extent of Sweden’s wartime activities remained concealed for a long time. (Cf. Johan Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral. Svenska erfarenheter i andra världskrigets efterdyning* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2008) pp. 105–112.) In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a big history research project on Sweden during World War II (‘Sverige under andra världskriget’, SUAV) was launched, resulting in about twenty Ph.D. dissertations. Today, however, this project is considered to have been ‘incomplete and restricted’, in particular since the moral issues concerning the Holocaust were never dealt with (Johan Östling, ‘Småstadsrealismens sensmoral. Svenska berättelser om andra världskriget’, in *Historieforskningen på nya vägar*, Klas-Göran Karlsson, Eva Helen Ulvros and Ulf Zander (eds) (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006) pp.163–179, my translation). The common image presented in these studies was that Nazism was of very marginal importance and influence in Sweden during the war, while the active resistance against it was prominent. The Swedish attraction to Nazism was rarely even addressed in this research (cf. Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral*, p. 24). This image then became predominant in Sweden. In the 1990s, however, Sweden’s relationship with Nazism during the war was once again approached. The starting point was Swedish historian Heléne Lööw’s dissertation *Hakkorset och Wasakärven. En studie av nationalsocialismen i Sverige 1924–1950* (1990) and Swedish journalist Maria-Pia Boethius’ critical book *Heder och samvete. Sverige och andra världskriget* (1991), both thoroughly examining Swedish wartime Nazism. These studies, and others following in their wake in the 1990s and 2000s, concluded that Nazism had been a much larger movement in Sweden prior to and during World War II than previously acknowledged, far from the marginal phenomenon claimed by earlier research. Studies of Swedish twentieth-century racial biology, anti-Semitism and sterilizations motivated by racial hygiene – elements not limited to Nazi ideology, but widespread in Swedish society at the time – also contributed to creating a new image of Sweden during the war. In this new research, culminating in another big research project in the early 2000s entitled ‘Sweden’s Relationship with Nazism, Nazi Germany, and the Holocaust’ (2000–2006) (cf. the final report

- at <http://www.vr.se/download/18.65bf9bc10cd31363a180001073/nazism.pdf> (accessed 22 June 2010)), moral issues related to the Holocaust and the issue of Swedish Nazism had a prominent place. This has also influenced the public debate in Sweden since the 1990s, placing Sweden's role in relation to the Holocaust into the focus of this debate (cf. Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral*, pp. 24–26).
2. The top ten bestseller lists in Sweden (published since 2001 by *Svensk Bokhandel*, a Swedish book trade journal) invariably include a high proportion of crime novels, most of them Swedish. In the top ten for fiction in 2009, seven of the books were crime fiction, six of these Swedish; in 2008 eight out of ten were crime fiction, all of them Swedish; in 2007 seven were Swedish crime fiction; also in 2006 seven were crime fiction, six of them Swedish; in 2005 seven were crime fiction, four of them Swedish (this year the top three were Dan Brown novels), and finally in 2004 five novels in the top ten were crime fiction, four of them Swedish (see <http://www.svb.se/bokfakta/svenskatopplistor> (accessed 18 May 2010)). Before 2004 only monthly lists were made.
 3. Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship. Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship', in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone (eds) *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship. Global Perspectives* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). The Swedes volunteering to be part of the German mass dictatorship were not unique. During World War II, there were 22,000 Dutch, 6000 Danish, 6000 Norwegian and 750 Swiss soldiers in the Waffen SS alone. (Lars Gyllenhaal and Lennart Westberg, *Svenskar i krig 1914–1945* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2008), pp. 334–335.) Historically, the Swedish collaborators were thus comparatively few. In Swedish crime fiction, however, they are quite common.
 4. Of the 200 Swedes that joined the German forces, 180 were in the Waffen SS. (Gyllenhaal and Westberg, *Svenskar i krig*, pp. 245–246.)
 5. These political parties did, however, not have any real power and were not very successful in public elections (cf. Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral*, p. 28). Tobias Hübinette, the somewhat controversial Swedish Korean studies scholar and Nazi expert, has examined the seven Swedish Nazi parties that were most important during World War II. Hübinette's lists of members and other people associated with these parties (and with the pro-German association Riksföreningen Sverige-Tyskland) contains around 28,000 names (Tobias Hübinette, *Den svenska nationalsocialismen. Medlemmar och sympatisörer 1931–1945* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2002)). The study is so far the most inclusive and accessible survey of Swedish Nazis during the war, but Hübinette has also been called into question for being much too inclusive in his selection. Swedish historian Johan Östling refers to Hübinette's study as a 'spectacular act of accusation' (Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral*, p. 354, my translation). During the war, a similar survey attempt was made by Swedish editor Holger Carlsson, who wrote and published *Nazismen i Sverige. Ett varningsord* (Stockholm: Federativs/Kooperativa förbundets bokförlag, 1942). Carlsson describes the background to the existence of Nazism in Sweden, but his primary mission is to describe and make public as much information as possible about Nazis and Nazi organizations operating in Sweden in 1942. Some other important studies of Swedish World War II Nazism are

- Eric Wärenstam's *Facismen och nazismen i Sverige* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1972) and Heléne Lööv's *Nazismen i Sverige 1924–1979. Pionjärerna, partierna, propagandan* (Stockholm: Ordfront förlag, 2004). A nuanced discussion of the difficulty, even among scholars, to produce conclusive evidence of the extent of Swedish Nazi sympathies during the war is found in Bibi Jonsson's *Blod och jord i trettioalet. Kvinnorna och den antimoderna strömningen* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2008), pp. 195–199.
6. Klaus Böhme, 'Inledning', in Thomas Hübinette, *Den svenska nationalsocialismen*, pp. 7–10, my translation.
 7. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 17.
 8. Between 2000–2009, there were about thirty Swedish crime novels published that contained some form of Nazism as a major theme (this figure is based on a survey of *Jury* – a Swedish quarterly crime fiction periodical in which all crime fiction published in Sweden is reviewed and described – from 2000 and until 2008, when *Jury* was terminated. Additionally, crime fiction reviews and publishers' websites have been examined for novels published in 2009. Johan Wopenka, member of Svenska Deckarakademin (The Swedish Academy of Detection) and a former editor of *Jury*, provided invaluable assistance with the survey.
 9. Arne Dahl, *Europa Blues. Kriminalroman* (Malmö: Bra Böcker, 2001), p. 301. Since *Europa Blues* is not yet available in English, all quotes from Dahl's novel are my own translation. This applies also to the other Swedish crime novels discussed in this article, if no official English translation is available.
 10. For a discussion of crime fiction as popular science, see Kerstin Bergman, 'Crime Fiction As Popular Science. The Case of Åsa Nilssonne', in *Codex and Code. Aesthetics, Language and Politics in an Age of Digital Media*, Kerstin Bergman et al. (eds) (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, Issue 42, 2010), available at <http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/042/>, pp. 193–207. The nature of these educational attempts will be discussed later.
 11. Cf. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', pp. 3–4 and 17.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 3. My emphasis.
 13. To clarify, I would like to distinctly set apart my stance from all kinds of historical revisionism (sometimes called negationism) that deny facts accepted by mainstream historians and which intend to diminish the suffering of groups of people, or individuals, under modern dictatorships.
 14. The reason behind this choice is threefold: first, of those Swedish crime writers approaching the issue at stake, Mankell and Dahl are among the most successful, thus reaching, and perhaps influencing, a large readership; second, they are more extensive and explicit in their discussions than most other crime writers that touch upon the subject; third, having published their novels at the beginning of the 2000s and being well-respected names in the genre, it is likely that Mankell and Dahl have influenced other writers that have since approached the issue.
 15. These are: Aino Trosell's *Om hjärtat ännu slår* (2000), Emma Vall's *Vänskapspakt* (2000), Jan Mårtensson's *Ikaros flykt* (2001), Ingrid Kampås' *Människans Varg* (2003), Christian Braw's *Skuggan* (2004), Peter Gissy's *Man med kapuschong* (2004), Willy Josefsson's *Den slutna cirkeln* (2005), Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2008, translated by Reg Keeland (pseudonym for Steven T. Murray), Sw. *Män som hatar kvinnor*, 2005), Sven Westerberg's *Flugfiskaren*

(2006), Camilla Läckberg's *The Hidden Child* (2011; Sw. *Tyskungen*, 2007), Åsa Larsson's *Until Thy Wrath be Past* (2011; *Till dess din vrede upphör* (2008), Olle Lönnaeus' *Det som ska sonas* (2009) and Ann Rosman's *Fyrmästarens dotter* (2009). Fuller bibliographical details are given below. Although not all of these novels are explicitly mentioned in this chapter, they are part of the material used. Of the approximately thirty Swedish crime novels from the first decade of the twenty-first century dealing with Nazism (cf. note 8), ones not mentioned here have been left out since they only address contemporary neo-Nazism, or only deal with German war criminals residing in countries other than Sweden, or are set wholly in the 1940s and 1950s. Furthermore, historical novels (with the exception of Gissy's novel set in 1982) have been left out since they do not explicitly portray contemporary people dealing with the past.

16. Henning Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master* (*Danslärarens återkomst*, 2000), translated by Laurie Thompson (London: Vintage, 2003), pp. 465–466.
17. Cf. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, pp. 95 and 287.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 299 and 301.
19. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 283–284 and 287.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 302–303.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 317–321.
22. Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, pp. 256–257.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 256–257.
24. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, p. 116.
25. Emma Vall, *Vänskapspakt* (Stockholm: Alfabeta bokförlag, 2000), p. 70.
26. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, pp. 299–300.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 284 (Weimar) and 291–293 (Odessa).
28. Sven Westerberg, *Flugfiskaren* (Göteborg: Tre Böcker, 2006), pp. 50 and 61–63.
29. Peter Gissy, *Man med kapuschong* (Göteborg: Tre Böcker, 2004), pp. 184–188, 242–243 and 301.
30. Cf. Vall, *Vänskapspakt*, pp. 7–15 and 35.
31. Ann Rosman, *Fyrmästarens dotter* (Malmö: Damm förlag, 2009), pp. 179–182 (camp experiences); 221 and 239 (gold transports).
32. Olle Lönnaeus, *Det som ska sonas* (Malmö: Damm förlag, 2009), p. 276.
33. Lönnaeus, *Det som ska sonas*, pp. 273–276.
34. Inger Jalakas, *Den ryske mannen* (Stockholm: Normal förlag, 2006), pp. 109–110. During the Extradition of the Balts 1945–1946, Sweden extradited 167 Baltic soldiers who had fought for the Axis alliance during World War II against the Soviet Union, even though there was no legal basis in the Hague Conventions for the extraditions.
35. Inger Kampås, *Människans varg* (Stockholm: Prisma, 2004), pp. 247–248 (Swedish Church); 168–170, 246 (Ravensbrück); 173–175 (the euthanasia programme); and 116–117 (Finland).
36. Willy Josefsson, *Den slutna cirkeln* (Stockholm: Bonniers), pp. 212–215.
37. Lists like these were actually made in Sweden during the war, and also the Swedish security police kept registers of people who were considered 'politically unreliable'. These registers included communists and Nazi sympathizers, as well as anyone who was in any way associated with someone considered politically unreliable (Löow, *Nazismen i Sverige 1924–1979*, pp. 420–425).

38. Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries. Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. ix.
39. Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, pp. 265, 269–273, 311, 360 and 501.
40. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 485–486.
41. Gissy, *Man med kapuschong*, pp. 65–66 and 233.
42. Vall, *Vänskapsakt*, pp. 217–220.
43. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, pp. 310–314.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 313–314.
46. Aino Trosell, *Om hjärtat ännu slår* (Stockholm: Prisma, 2000), pp. 243–271.
47. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, pp. 237 and 285.
48. Gissy, *Man med kapuschong*, pp. 115–116, 140 and 145–147.
49. Josefsson, *Den slutna cirkeln*, pp. 278–279.
50. Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, p. 184.
51. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 187–188
52. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–184.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
56. Cf. Lööv, *Nazismen i Sverige 1924–1979*, pp. 442–443.
57. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, p. 300. In 1936, Harald Lundborg, director of the Swedish State Institute for Racial Biology (Statens institut för rasbiologi, SIFR) and an outspoken pro-Nazi, was replaced as director by Gunnar Dahlberg, who was more interested in medicine and statistics than in racial hygiene (Gunnar Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning. En historik över Rasbiologiska institutet*, 2nd ed. (Lund: Lund Studies in the History of Science and Ideas/Ugglan 4, 1995)).
58. Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning*, p. 11.
59. Hans-Walter Schmuhl, *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics 1927–1945. Crossing Boundaries* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), pp. 29–30. It has not been proven whether any Swedish physicians did study in Germany under the Nazi regime, but it has been shown that several Swedish physicians visited Germany during this time. Among the facilities they toured was a Nazi medical elite school in Alt-Rehse, close to Ravensbrück. The school contained a laboratory, today referred to as Laboratory X, in which unspecified research was conducted (it has not been possible to establish what kind of research), and rumors about close cooperation between the school and the Ravensbrück concentration camp have not been possible to prove either. (Cf. Nils Hansson, Göran Bergkvist and Peter M. Nilsson, 'Svenska läkare var gäster vid nazisternas elitskola', *Läkartidningen*, no. 5, vol. 106 (2009), pp. 301–303).
60. Whether there was actually such an institute in Weimar during the war is not clear, but similar research institutes did probably exist in Germany during the war, cf. the previous note.
61. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, pp. 237 and 285.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 301 and 303–304. It is, however, indicated that shortly before he gets murdered he expects the past to eventually catch up with him, and perhaps there is also, if not a hint of remorse, at least a semi-conscious intent to come to terms with his true past before he dies (cf. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, pp. 35–38, 64–66 and 91–95).

63. The *Sonderweg* thesis 'seeks to set Nazism ... apart from parliamentary democracies of the "West"' and promotes the idea that here was something 'abnormal' about Germany and/or the Germans in comparison with the rest of the Western world, which enabled the development of a mass dictatorship (cf. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 3).
64. It is of course not true that in all other crime novels the murderers are purely bad. In recent crime fiction especially, there is often sympathy for the murderer due to, for example, his or her childhood traumas. It can even be regarded an increasingly common trend in crime fiction today that those who suffered as children are depicted with empathy in spite of their crimes of vengeance. It is very uncommon, however, that these murderers are regarded as completely innocent. Additionally, it is not the case that all *victims* in other crime fiction are innocent: many of them are killed for the reason that they are bad.
65. Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, p. 498.
66. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, p. 334.
67. Vall, *Vänskapspakt*, pp. 168, 180, 185 and 191–194.
68. Rosman, *Fyrmästarens dotter*, pp. 180–181, 317 and 319.
69. Jalakas, *Den ryske mannen*, p. 69.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–19, 29–31, 46–48 and 197–199.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 206–208.
73. Larsson, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, passim.
74. Gissy, *Man med kapuschong*, pp. 259–260.
75. Josefsson, *Den slutna cirkeln*, p. 357.
76. Gissy, *Man med kapuschong*, pp. 299–300.
77. Lönnaeus, *Det som ska sonas*, p. 316.
78. Trosell, *Om hjärtat ännu slår*, pp. 243–271 (Dahlin's struggle), and 274–279 (changed sides).
79. Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, pp. 9–10.
80. Cf. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 3.
81. After this introduction, Mankell's contemporary story begins in the Swedish province of Härjedalen in October 1999.
82. Vall, *Vänskapspakt*, p. 187.
83. Kampås, *Människans varg*, p. 178.
84. Cf. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', passim.
85. Cf. the ongoing "'war of position" against fascism' (Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 18).
86. Not included in the study material are a number of Swedish crime novels from the 2000s dealing solely with neo-Nazism, and which do not address the World War II past. Some examples are Per Gahrton's *EU-politikerns död* (2001), Jean Bolinder's *Martin Luffas hemlighet* (2002), Annika Bryn's *Den sjätte natten* (2003), Hans Christian Cars' *Mordet på Gärdet* (2004), Fredrik Ekelund's *Blueberry Hill* (2004), Henrik P. Molin's *Fristad* (2004) and *Domen* (2004), Ulla Bolinder's *Utsaga* (2005), Lennart Lauenstein's *Korsskändaren* (2005), Olov Svedelid and Leif Silbersky's *Hämnden är aldrig rättvis* (2006) and Inger Jalakas' *Hat* (2009). Once again, I would like to thank Johan Wopenka for his assistance in the identification of these novels. It is noteworthy that with the exception of Svedelid, all the authors are less established, or less

commonly known, as Swedish crime writers. Historicizing Nazi crimes by connecting what goes on today with the World War II past thus appears to be a more common strategy among more well-known Swedish authors of crime fiction.

87. Cf. Trosell, *Om hjärtat ännu slår*, pp. 208 and 235.
88. Cf. Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, p. 471.
89. Vall, *Vänskapspakt*, pp. 168, 180 and 185.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 180 and 185.
91. Lönnaeus, *Det som ska sonas*, pp. 68–70 and 276–277; Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, p. 258. Karl XII (1682–1718) is considered the main warrior king in Swedish history, and he is often celebrated by neo-Nazi supporters today.
92. Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, p. 505.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
96. Cf. Trosell, *Om hjärtat ännu slår*, pp. 280–281.
97. Josefsson, *Den slutna cirkeln*, p. 357.
98. Dahl, *Europa Blues*, p. 335.
99. Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship', p. 17.

10

Who Are 'We'? The Dynamics of Consent and Coercion in Yi Mun-gu's *Our Neighbourhood*

Shin Hyung-ki

Dialect and satire

This chapter addresses the question of who 'we' are, as it is presented in the Korean novelist Yi Mun-gu's controversial short story collection *Our Neighbourhood* (1981), which concerns life in a small farming village in Korea in the 1970s.¹ The term *woori*, which is the grammatical collective subject 'we' in Korean, entails a homogeneity with which its members identify. Because they are not 'others' to each other, this 'we' calls for an exceptional fraternity that forces its constituents to accommodate each other. This requirement, or expectation, should be seen as a latent feature of the customary practice of calling the group to which one belongs 'we'. From the modern period onwards, Korean peasants have come to be thought of as the most 'we-like' of the 'we'. This characterization is grounded in the idea that the peasants, who replenish the soil with their sweat, retained what was left of the traditional community. Of course, it would be very difficult to verify the true 'we' of the peasants portrayed in this collection of short stories; rather, these stories call into question just who belongs to the 'we' in 'our neighbourhood'.

Yi's anthology was written during the final years of President Park Chung-hee's 'developmental dictatorship'² (1961–1979) and published after the latter's assassination. The stories depict how the country's turbulent history plays itself out in the daily lives of common people, not only in response to the extremely rapid pace of economic development under Park Chung-hee's plans, but also in light of the recent history of liberation from colonial rule under the Japanese Empire in 1945, the subsequent division of the country by the United States and the Soviet Union, the Korean War (1950–1953) and the solidification of two competing political systems on the peninsula into separate nations.³

During the course of Korea's modern history, 'we' was a designation that interpellated a collective subject in the space between state and (ethno)nation, but it did so by illuminating the quotidian dark side of that 'we'. What was demanded of the people by the interpellating 'we' from the colonial period on was a *collective leap*. This collective subject 'we' inspired the national resistance to Japanese imperialism, and it was the same 'we' that led the fighters who achieved class liberation from the comprador bourgeoisie in North Korea.

The Park Chung-hee era began with the declaration that (the South Korean) 'we' had to become the pillar of the 'Modernization of the Fatherland' and 'National Restoration'. Here, the collective leap became the coercive force for emergency sacrifice and devotion. To that extent, the leap of coercion was often accomplished through the fear of being excluded. How this fear produced consent is one of the major questions of modern Korean history, and Yi Mun-gu's *Our Neighbourhood* explores the issue through his convincing portrayal of the interior lives of villagers in the Park Chung-Hee era, offering an exemplary illustration of the operation of the mechanisms of coercion and consent through fear. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Yi Mun-gu does not offer an idyllic view of rural life in *Our Neighbourhood*, nor does he espouse the explicitly oppositional critique of the system that was characteristic of the so-called 'people's literature' (*minjung munhak*) movement that began in the 1970s.⁴ The collection takes the form of an anthology or a kind of linked diary that begins with 'Mr. Kim', and moves on to 'Mr. Yi', 'Mr. Choi', 'Mr. Chung' and so forth. Initially, critics read it as 'a detailed report of the shock experienced by a peasant village in the course of modernization'.⁵ Yi Mun-gu had spent his childhood in a farming village in Ch'ungch'öng province in central South Korea, but thought of himself as a descendant of noblemen who knew well the reality of country people, and hence posed as a supporter of the peasants. He also stood with those who criticized the way modernization proceeded.⁶ Park's regime, which seized power in a military coup d'état on 16 May 1961, considered itself a genuinely revolutionary force and was able to secure broad popular support by propagating the goal of a 'national revitalization' that would help the Korean people escape the shackles of generations of poverty. Support for the Park regime, however, dwindled as Korea entered a period of pro-economic development in the 1970s. This was largely due to the emergence of several problems within the 'developmental dictatorship' that was meant to propel the 'Modernization of the Fatherland'.⁷ As a term that entailed a mutual fraternity, 'we' came to be imagined as a latent form of the existence of the masses that opposed the Park Chung-hee

system. In 1972, Park enacted the October *Yusin* Restoration and put in place the *Yusin* system, which dissolved formal democracy and promoted the idea that the special circumstances in Korea made dictatorship necessary for the sake of economic development.

The stories of *Our Neighbourhood* testify to the fact that 'everyday life' during the period of the 'Modernization of the Fatherland' at times resembled a battlefield on which people barely survived. The peasants guaranteed a cheap labour force devoted to national development; they were effectively a domestic colony coerced into sacrificing themselves for the sake of development. 'Our neighbour Mr. Kang', for example, who is unable to farm, is so depressed by the realization that the 'price of one *doe*[approximately 1.8 litres] of barley can't even buy a cup of coffee' that he becomes bedridden.⁸ Falling into despair and claiming he has 'lost the will to live' (p. 192), Mr. Kang epitomizes the peasants' resignation to the fact that they are doomed to oblivion. The extent of Mr. Kang's suffering notwithstanding, for the most part, all of the title characters endure their day-to-day troubles, and put in as much effort as possible – but to no avail. And since they don't exist as a collective 'we' in this novel, there is no 'we' to protect them. Their intersecting stories may be read as an elegy, depicting powerless peasants unable to counter their fate of impending disappearance. Just as the fictional peasants' daily life had become unbearable and reached a breaking point, so did Park Chung-hee's *Yusin* system become all but impossible to sustain. Indeed, Park was assassinated by one of his subordinates in 1979, and a brief period of democratic struggle followed, leading to the 'Seoul Spring' student demonstrations and the Kwangju People's Uprising of 1980. That was not, however, the end of the Park Chung-hee era, as another military dictatorship took its place shortly after what proved to be an extremely brief period of democratic rule in 1980.

Our Neighbourhood presents the exhaustion and plight of the peasants from their own point of view and makes the reader empathize with them. From the colonial period onwards, Korean peasants were exploited and suppressed by foreign powers, by the authorities and by capital. As such they came to be regarded as an important constituent of the people who had no choice but to rise up in opposition. In the grand narrative of the people's victory over oppression, the peasants therefore had to be resurrected as a positive 'we' representing a spirit of mutual cooperation. However, as a homogeneous group to be revitalized, 'we' had, at the same time, to be the folk or the nation: by calling 'us' that, 'we' became the object of mobilization. The writer Yi Ki-young, for example, made a name for himself with a novel from 1934, *Kohyang*

(*Hometown*), about peasants in the colonial period, and demonstrated this new sense of 'we' in his full-length novel *Ttang (The Ground)*, written after the North Korean Land Reformation (March 1946). His novels present the peasants as heroes of a folktale who were unified through land reform and who worked together to increase production. The collective 'we' formulated with these heroes at its centre – a unilaterally self-sacrificing agrarian *Gemeinschaft* – became the correct choice for constructing the new nation. The agrarian *Gemeinschaft* was seen as the original infrastructure of an ideal nation, and its community solidarity promptly became an ideal rallying cry for the nation.

Our Neighbourhood is not restricted to this sort of genealogy. Its stories do not subscribe to the established convention that depicts peasants as potential heroes. Rather, peasants are presented as a group hounded by poverty and struck by new changes – a group that is finally destroyed. No longer farmers, they end up as workers in the city and have to be dissolved into the lumpen proletariat. Because the peasants in these stories are so comprehensively marginalized, the text cannot be explained as part of the revitalization of the agrarian *Gemeinschaft*. Confronted with forced separation from their land, the weary protagonists doubt that revitalization is the most effective way they have of protecting themselves. They already seem to recognize the fact that theirs is a 'we' that is merely called into service whenever there is an opportunity for mobilization.⁹

The peasants in these stories sometimes lose themselves in the fragrance of a 'beautiful past', and even though it is not a distant one, it is ultimately a place to which they cannot return. The changes that threaten them simultaneously tell them that the future is already at hand and that they are left to find their own path across its threshold. In this sense the stories are not comparable to many other contemporary works. Yi Mun-gu's persistent use of the peasant dialect of Ch'ungch'öng province (which is difficult even for Korean people to decipher) appears related to that sense of lost time. While dialect imparts a liveliness to the peasants' intellectual physiognomy, it is also a characteristic feature of an inaccessible past and as such serves to make this elegy for the peasants even more mournful. This effect *localizes* the dramatic village as a special place, and imparts to it the sublime air of something slipping away. Generally speaking, due to the communal spirit it evokes, the use of dialect in modern Korean novels has come to form an obstinately sentimental line of resistance to a modernization of the kind that wants to tear everything down. However, whether the solidarity of dialect can be a new kind of solidarity is doubtful, given that it is impossible to stay in the past, even when the peasants say they

would want to. Yi Mun-gu attempted to faithfully 'restore' the 'unknowable' dialect of Ch'ungch'öng province, but contrary to what one may have expected, he was not trying to make a blueprint for solidarity by using dialect.

Rather than voice indignation or anger, the narrators in these stories (or perhaps the author behind the narrator) often adopt a satirical demeanour. Satire becomes a way of speaking when the situation doesn't allow it. The ambiguity and humour of the dialect depicts the wretched spectacle of peasant life far more comically than one would expect, but this device also allows these powerless 'simpletons' to express their rage. Satire does not usually make an exception of the satirist himself, and often has a double meaning, especially when the subject of the satire cannot extricate him/herself from an ironic situation. Here, the solidarity of dialect is another object of the satire. In this respect, satire adheres closely to its literal definition, and rather than being a form that expresses confidence in the future, it operates as an investigation of limits by taking a close look at the complexity of the present and asking what the available options are.

As suggested above, *Our Neighbourhood* shows how critical points of history are revealed through everyday lives that continue *until* the moment when radical change can no longer be held at bay. The heroes of the novel, who exert every effort in trying to maintain their everyday lives, serve simultaneously to sustain the Park Chung-hee regime. This is exactly how the Park Chung-hee regime managed to go to the lengths that it did, and it is also why the lives of ordinary people must be problematized. Presumably if one can claim that a collective 'we' does indeed exist, it would have to reside in the day-to-day of everyday life. It, in turn, would constitute the point of departure from which a discussion of *who* 'we' are might fruitfully proceed.

The melancholy of the rural village

In Yi's novel, the daily life of the village is banal and depressing in spite of the slogan Park Chung-hee's administration has adopted: 'Let's all live well too'. The narcissistic dream of development encouraged by the regime is totally negated, and in this context the deafening sound of the morning wake-up call over the loudspeaker (the 'New Village broadcast') announcing 'Things have improved!' ('Our Neighbour Mr. Yi', p. 34) can only be heard as an insult.

Most of the farmers in the stories are indebted to the national bank and have no hope of escaping that predicament. 'Our neighbour Mr. Choi',

for example, has to put all of his daughter's wages from the factory, plus the money his younger children earn by picking wild greens, into servicing his debt. He is already deep in despair, knowing that in spite of his efforts, their situation will not improve. The novel sees the destitution of the peasants as being, above all, related to government policy. Surviving as a farmer has become untenable because the government purchase price for produce is unreasonably low, while higher-priced items are imported. Seen in this way, the villagers are oppressed victims but no one comes forward to voice their despair, and their silence is melancholy. The village simpletons all lose their nerve in front of the state authority, which practises a kind of 'leadership' that encourages people 'only to plant the new high-yield crop varieties; if you plant native rice, your rice beds will be trampled' (p. 115). To these people with no authority and no official outlet to express their opinions, the village is like an internment camp without barbed wire, and their use of dialect ends up becoming either the vernacular of the internment camp or of muttering to oneself.

The peasants are heavily in debt as a result of purchasing agricultural chemicals and fertilizer, but buying household items such as televisions or electric fans on monthly credit is an entirely different matter. 'Our neighbour Mr. Yi' even complains about how tourist associations and year-end parties have become commonplace events in the village. During this period, diversions and consumer trends became widespread as farm wages rose, and the tradition of mutual assistance had long since disappeared. The village is even described as a trash heap that must be exposed as defenceless against the 'yellow wind' blowing down from Seoul. Likewise in Yi's work, regardless of how poor they are, most of the peasants can't resist the allure of consumption and simply have to get a television set. By now, the loudspeakers that had once played 'New Village' songs blast out 'Jingle Bells' as Christmas approaches; the wives in the stories, who nurture their consumer appetites in front of television screens aglow with the splendour of Seoul, scream at their incompetent husbands, making their destitution seem all the more wretched. The satirical observations in *Our Neighbourhood* acknowledge that this is not an easy situation from which to extricate oneself.

Lefebvre points to the absence of 'style' as a special characteristic of contemporary daily life.¹⁰ There is bound to be chaos when fixed forms of life or action begin to collapse or are suppressed because the line between the possible and the impossible is erased. In *Our Neighbourhood*, consumer desire is a primary factor hastening the destruction of style, and 'our neighbour Mr. Chang' is one example of someone who wholeheartedly sets off down this path of 'depravity'. As farmland becomes

the object of speculative capital 'development' schemes, the peasants are able to sell their land and join in the consumer parade, buying beer and 'hamburger steaks' to eat. Mr. Chang, having decided to sell his land, shouts, 'Where is the law that says I shouldn't do what everyone else is doing?' (p. 231), thus vividly expressing his *ressentiment* towards the 'other' as an agent of consumption. The peasants who have acquired 'a taste for money' are no longer the peasants of the past. About to be driven away, 'Mr. Chang' uses the money he received from selling his land as seed money for a real estate business.

Contrary to expectations, the village is a space where the old ways of life could be destroyed rapidly. If the village is 'looked down on' as unbalanced compared to the city, it is because this particular quality easily triggers confusion of time and place;¹¹ that is, the village has ceased to be a sentimental hometown and is now merely a backward place one should leave. The peasant who longs for the centre but resides in the periphery has to experience completely different temporalities simultaneously, and in the end, his own space disappears and he falls into a fragmented, empty state. The destruction of a way of life is necessary for this process to play itself out, and the fact that he can't immediately become an advanced urbanite makes this fragmentation of the peasant even more profound.¹² Unevenness is a condition of everyday life in modern times that many Koreans have had to cope with since the colonial period. The fragmentation caused by unevenness and the powerless melancholy of not being able to make any choices is not merely an unusual part of modern daily life, but one of its permanent structural conditions. Satire reflects this fragmentation and melancholy through the investigation of borderlines, and this is especially true of the satire in *Our Neighbourhood*, which appears frequently as a cold smile towards the peasants themselves.

The main characters in *Our Neighbourhood* use all their strength to maintain their existence, in part because of the inertia of daily life, but also because they have no other choice. When 'Our neighbour Mr. Kim' quarrels with his neighbour and decides to poach electricity to run the water pump needed to water his dry paddies, it is not because he is a dedicated farmer: on the contrary, his desperate act appears to be born from the fear of being forced down a dead-end road. Merely surviving can be such a strain that there are times when it becomes impossible. There is the case of 'Our neighbour Mr. Chung', who begs his village headman to mobilize the 'student service corps'¹³ in order to save money on labour for rice planting. In one ridiculous and pathetic scene, Mr. Chung goes to the town slut for money to buy the cheap black bean

noodles the students demand as payment for their labour. She agrees, but demands sexual services in return. When Mr. Chung returns with the noodles, the students are gone and have trampled his rice bed on their way out.

At the most basic level, a sense of self is the resolution of an inner dialogue, and in this novel, 'our neighbours' are shown in direct confrontation with the unconvincing reflection of themselves in their daily lives. The satire here is that the peasants are not 'innocent', so it becomes apparent that they must despair at their own shameful appearances.

In these short stories, daily life is the site of constant humiliation. It is perilous and terrifying to be in a state where existence is constantly in the process of destroying one's way of life and sense of self, but it is even more difficult to find the 'we' that keeps one afloat. It is obvious that the protagonists recognize the similarity of their respective situations, but the 'solidarity in adversity' between them appears very slack; on the contrary, they emerge more as the 'discarded' lumpen of the village. If a way of life is the expression of unity and is established through unity, then the irresolvable fragmentation that inevitably follows the disintegration of a way of life makes solidarity very difficult to maintain and change seem all but inevitable. The peasants knew they could only survive by changing themselves to fit the needs of the situation. The melancholy of their village was the condition of jettisoning the past while embarking on a course of change, but it already seemed to be an emotional state that was outwardly receptive to coercion. The sad state of not being able to protect oneself was itself a rallying point. For the villagers, the melancholy of daily life was not new: it could also be seen as part of a long history of change.

Change, or fear

People like 'our neighbour Mr. Ryu' – who ruined his farm by giving in to pestering public servants ordering peasants to plant new high-yield varieties of rice and who then lost his mind by using poisonous chemical pesticides – and 'Mr. Kang' who 'lost his will to live' all become refugees unable to leave their own lots. They are confined to their hopeless village and the melancholy of an everyday life reminiscent of an internment camp. Mr. Ryu's wife becomes a yogurt beverage delivery person, and through her, the trivial details of social life in the village become visible as on a folding screen. Whether it's the chatter of the women-folk about 'married life', the scenery of the new belief in Nichiren,¹⁴ or spreading the story of the village men's wild night out that ended in a crime of passion, all of it is ridiculous and shameful. The people are

ignorant or shameless, as if they have no memory or intention anymore and merely go along with whatever happens. In the end, the fact that Mr. Ryu is injured as he is about to finish recording a television broadcast can be read as foreshadowing the fate of all the refugees.

None of the peasants in *Our Neighbourhood* retain any of the features of the so-called 'noble savage'. They are as disgruntled as they are desperate, and often appear suspicious or coarse, even savage or depraved. Furthermore, there is no longer any display of fraternity between good neighbours. In the story 'Our neighbour Mr. Yi', Mr. Yi actually points out that the village mindset is something to be wary of, rather than to lament or be nostalgic about. The narrator tries to discover the reason for this in the 'frequent excursions' of people from the village, when 'most of the strapping young men leave and try to make it in the wide world, only to crawl back after struggling for a few years' (p. 48) doing factory work and some 'light business'. They return as outcasts rejected by the big city, but their efforts show them, nonetheless, mindlessly trying to catch up with the urban dwellers. The rural village, then, becomes a refugee camp for city rejects whose defining characteristic is their dream of the city; although they are in the village in body, their minds are elsewhere. These men, who were once sent on tours of local factories after the harvest, put on airs as though they were being taken on a luxurious resort vacation.¹⁵ Admirers of spectacle, they 'thought everything they saw was proof of development, and believed that saying so showed how worldly they were'. Their role in the story is to be overwhelmed and to 'make noise about how much better things are [now]'. For them, the memory of the past only accentuates the present, and as true believers in progress, they ignore anything that might contradict their views.

As mentioned above, these refugees see themselves at the same level as city dwellers, believing that they are in step with the most current trends. They have set opinions on every subject and are certain their beliefs are the right ones: they are the masses. Mr. Yi, however, fears them because of the fact that they see themselves as 'men in the street' (*el hombre medio*), who derive comfort from identifying themselves with everyone else, but don't actually want to live with others.¹⁶ The masses are an entity with an intense hatred for anything outside of itself, and that bullies anyone who is different. To Mr. Yi, the masses are a fearsome group because they are incapable of going against the current, and as such, are likely to have extremely violent 'morals':

Yi knew all too well the dangers of separating himself from the masses. In a neighbourhood where people would say anything about

anything, anywhere, and where they believed that writing an anonymous letter to the authorities was patriotic, he was wary of getting blamed for something and becoming an object of hatred. But he also didn't want to get caught up in bad habits like that and have something go wrong and make the neighbours suspicious of each other. And what if he had to sell himself out and ruin things for someone else? All of these things had him too scared to argue anymore. Also, he didn't like being put into some brackish mix with the masses without any other fresh water. Although he would never be seen as anything but common earthenware due to his appearance, he told himself to keep his head on straight and not impose his attitude on anyone else. But there was no right way to go about it. He was less educated than others, so even if he tried to emphasize that he was different than the others, he didn't have enough in his arsenal to back up his claim (p. 49).

For Mr. Yi, it wasn't even a question of expecting the 'we' to somehow come to his rescue, as he had enough difficulty protecting himself. What is more, he was tormented by the dilemma of being lumped together with 'the masses'. If being included in 'the masses' came about as a result of not being able to protect oneself, by extension, Mr. Yi's fear can also be seen as a fear of change. Although he tries to differentiate himself from the rest of the villagers, his admission that he isn't able to is identical to the dilemma of being confronted with the fragmentation of one's self as one struggles to survive. The truth is that for Korean people, the fear of not being able to protect oneself is not just a memory of victimhood – it is also the bone-chilling memory of people capable of transforming into almost anything. Mr. Yi's fear of the masses is clearly driven by this memory.

During the post-liberation struggle between the political left and right, and all through the Korean War, most Korean people experienced the extreme terror of having one's fate decided by a mere gesture. During this period, ideological division and the violence of exclusion from the so-called body of 'citizens' had become quite severe, and no one's rights were guaranteed at all. In other words, although they were called citizens and mobilized as such, the people were little more than potential targets to be ripped from their social contexts, stripped down and forced out into the streets. The fear of being killed was intensified by the total arbitrariness of the violence of exclusion, which 'regulated' who, what, when and where exclusion would take place.¹⁷ It was a fear of not knowing *why* someone might become the target of the violence

of exclusion. In this situation, any way of life unable to protect itself from the violence of exclusion had to be abandoned at once. This fear that laid everything bare ultimately became a very effective foundation for state authority (or violence). Looked at in this way, the lives of Korean people were existences that had to be summoned by the fear of having everything taken away at any moment.

Yi Mun-gu was also deeply affected by this fear in his own life. In his autobiographical work *The Kwanch'on Essays*, he recalls his father's untimely death in the maelstrom of the Korean War as a watershed moment that put an abrupt end to his happy childhood and hastened his family's decline. Insofar as he describes his life as being divided into the prosperous and beautiful past, prior to his father's death, and the hardships suffered after everything had broken apart, the event seems to have left behind an incurable wound. Following his father's death, Yi's life journey – a ruined and troubled life – was incorporated into the nation's. In his later work, 'Spindle Trees in Changsök Village',¹⁸ he recounts the horrific nightmare of an ideological massacre. His reflections on the intensity of the incident underscore the continuing horror that the survivors experienced. For the citizens who had been stripped down and forced to choose either the sword or mobilization, there was ultimately little difference between the anti-communist banner waving of the immediate post-war period and the shouts for development during Park Chung-hee's 'Modernization of the Fatherland'. They were just entities who could be reduced to 'national traitors' at any time.

A collective 'we' was constantly invoked in these situations, but the only 'we' to which this could possibly refer to was one mobilized by fear. Paradoxically, in order for this 'we' to refer to something all-inclusive, it had to be one that partitioned off the object of exclusion. However, while being defined as the object of exclusion, the boundaries of that 'we' came to be drawn arbitrarily. That is why the 'we' that is trying not to be excluded invariably ends up committing the most violent and radical exclusion and becoming an agent of violence. This is how exclusionary violence operates. Indeed, neighbours committed ideological massacres.¹⁹

The 'masses' that 'our neighbour Mr. Yi' fears are truly frightening neighbours: certain that their perspective is universal and correct, and eager to identify with everyone, they try to assuage themselves by excluding anyone who is different. The fact that Mr. Yi tries to differentiate himself from them indicates his awareness of the threat of exclusion even as he rejects inclusion in the group. Of course, he can only reject them internally, but he does try to stand apart from the 'masses'.

His dilemma becomes a question of surviving the dead-end of everyday life while still protecting himself.

The best route to survival?

There is a scene in ‘Spindle Trees in Changsŏk Village’ in which the narrator asks an old man in his eighties, who had survived the deadly vortex of the Korean War, if he had a ‘trick’ for not getting killed, and how he survived. Without hesitation, the old man ‘confidently’ reveals his ‘trick’ to staying alive:

Thing is, there’s just one thing you gotta be careful of. You wanna know what that is? It’s that any time there’s trouble, start saying ‘I’m a moderate, I’m in the middle,’ before anyone even asks, and all those people going around ... you know, the kind of people who, if they think the X are losing, they’ll run right through X and attach themselves to Y and vice versa. ... They started killing people close to them, so in the end, there was no one left. Don’t know if that’s how I wanted to live, but I looked for those people from the get-go.²⁰

Words like ‘moderate’ and ‘middle’ that should be uttered ‘before anyone asks’ were meant to forcibly alienate one’s position in a situation where it was uncertain which side would act first. Preemptively taking a moderate stance points at the gray areas of self-preservation, where it becomes a camouflage allowing one to side with the ‘winning’ side the moment it becomes apparent which side is going to enact the violence. The old man’s testimony that, in order to avoid becoming a target of elimination, one must begin by letting the ‘people close to them’ die proves that someone must be sacrificed in the political vortex of war. This means that exclusion is not determined according to a division of friend or foe, but that friend and foe are determined by the process of exclusion. When exclusionary violence is being enacted, there is no such thing as prior friendship. Even when ‘people to be careful of’ appear as a group, they have no intention of choosing their position, but completely break apart, piece by piece. The fact that they can flip-flop about anything makes them mindless voids.

Yi’s Mun-gu’s reflections on the war in ‘Spindle Trees in Changsŏk Village’ may be read as historical research on the subject of exclusionary violence. The ‘people to be careful of’ mentioned by the old man can easily be seen as the ‘masses’ that ‘Our Neighbour Mr. Yi’ fears, and the pride of the masses in the present can be seen as the result of having

ended up on the 'winning' side. The 'masses', then, are a void that can accept anything. Although in the majority, they are a mass formed of individual pieces and defined by exclusion of the other. Hence, complete internal solidarity is impossible – their bond is made possible solely through the fear of exclusion.

The old man's reflections on the war can also explain how people endured the hardships of the Park Chung-hee era. As far as the masses were concerned, daily life may not have been able to destroy them anymore, but that was because they had not retained a sense of self to be destroyed. Having lost their own selves and their way of life, they were capable of any kind of work. Their 'transparent' identities, those capable of becoming anything, act as prisms that refract the exclusionary violence. As people in a backward, come-lately farming village they would be considered refugees, but by aligning themselves with the current administration, they are viewed as loyal and honest citizens. The aggressive 'morals' that so frightened Mr. Yi could just as easily burn with patriotism, a patriotism so hostile and full of fear as to take on the form of exclusionary violence. But daily life governed by fear must be maintained up until the critical point. The old man indicates a method of survival – by recognizing what the 'people gotta be careful of'. But the problem for 'our neighbour Mr. Yi' cannot be resolved by mere recognition. He has already recognized the 'masses', but he is unable to protect himself from them.

In 'Our Neighbour Mr. Hwang', the last story in *Our Neighbourhood*, Mr. Hwang comments on the difficulties that befall Mr. Yi. Unlike most of the other protagonists in *Our Neighbourhood*, who are either powerless victims or fearful and timid people, Mr. Hwang is a shameless villain. Although a member of the neighbourhood, he is a loan shark and corrupt shop-owner who routinely sells spoiled food. Consequently, the neighbours do not hold him in high esteem. At the end of the story, there is a scene in which the neighbours denounce Mr. Hwang. When Mr. Kim speaks, we can see that the 'we' to which he refers to here is more exclusionary and different from the 'masses':

All I want to say is, well, it's nothing, but for folk like us who keep our eyes to the heavens and live off the land, we have natural wisdom, and neighbours, and friendships and so on and so forth. But to people who sell things, the peasants are the same as plants, animals, and everything else. You're all here because of our work, but once you go to work, your conscience is the first thing out the window. Even if it seems like you think your job gives you power, there's no

reason to think you're above us folk who wear the sky and eat the soil ... but that looking down on us can't last long. I'm not a learned man so I can't talk about history, but even I know that people who think they're above other people are doomed to failure. That's why we're all here today, and that's why our children are here, and so on and so forth ... (p. 317).

The 'we' that Mr. Kim refers to here are the people whose perspiration waters the earth. This view holds that the natural community that 'wears the sky and eats the soil' is the basis of every social structure. What cannot be ignored is that the 'we' make it possible for every member of society to live by nourishing themselves with the soil and replenishing the land: it is not only a matter of upholding proper 'morals' because it awakens the moral principles that are the original sense of equality. Mr. Kim is rebuking capitalism's rude 'citizens', who think of the peasants as natural objects. It is only at this point that dialect is used pointedly to express the peasants' opinions: this is the end point of satire.

There is, all the same, a break in Mr. Kim's voice that is a forceful expression of his indecision over how they can distinguish themselves and show Seoul the nature of the 'grass roots'. Above all, it is unclear how inclusive the 'folks like us' are, or more concretely, it is unclear whether the 'people with natural wisdom' that Mr. Kim mentions believe that they are correct and have confidence in being clearly distinct from 'the masses'. If Mr. Kim is wrong, and 'we' indeed can be divided up according to 'our' jobs, it is still unclear why Mr. Yi fears the 'masses'. Is it perhaps because they were also once farmers? Through the linked story form, the peasants in *Our Neighbourhood* form a large group unable to resolve the dilemma of losing their selves in the process of trying to manage their daily lives. The same goes for Mr. Yi. After all, it is the fear of not knowing how to keep himself from changing that makes him wary of 'the masses'. Seen in this way, the solidarity of the peasants is nothing more than a fragment of old memories, or even an imagined scene, which might be why the dialect of Mr. Kim's denouncement of Mr. Hwang is ultimately reduced to the ramblings of a broken man.

The people who commit ideological murder in Yi Mun-gu's autobiographical work 'Spindle Trees in Changsŏk Village' were not special villains, but neighbours until the day of the crucial incident. A boundary 'between us' makes little sense when imposed on how villagers who 'wear the sky and eat the soil' were able to kill someone close to them. Mr. Kim's 'we' – the 'people with natural wisdom' – are actually the same common people of 'our Neighbourhood' who have a difficult time

protecting their selves. As suggested above, daily life does not confirm the stability of the village community; rather, it is something precarious that carries with it the destruction of their selves and their way of life. For the neighbours, the road to becoming a 'we' should be found through deep contemplation of the issues close to them, rather than through censure of those who hold them in contempt.

There is no road to reinvigoration

Our Neighbourhood testifies to the fact that Korean peasants in the 1970s were like refugees from daily life. The melancholy that envelops 'our Neighbourhood' is the sadness of watching one's entire world painfully breaking apart and losing one's self in the process. The villagers are already fragmented beings, having been repeatedly forced down dead-end roads and asked to accomplish impossible tasks. Furthermore, although the depiction of the daily lives of the protagonists distinguishes between 'the masses' and the neighbours who become unable to experience fear as fear, they agonize over not being able to differentiate themselves from the group. Everyday life compels the villagers to surrender and transform, and their inability to resist enables the continuation of authoritarian rule, as was the case under the Park Chung-hee regime.

Our Neighbourhood breaks down the Lefebvrian 'style' of life and shows how, and through what process, fragmented people, who are incapable of maintaining an acceptable sense of self, embrace the violent mechanism of exclusion. That is, those who were able to transform themselves were those who had already been pushed onto a different path, and as such, are the people who were capable of anything. As we can see through 'the masses' motivated and transformed by their capitulation to fear (of either total ruin or murder), the situation of the divided 'we' is indeed frightening. The short stories in *Our Neighbourhood* awaken this fear. Even as they differentiate themselves from 'the masses', the protagonists, who are unable to fully distinguish themselves from the group, are conscious of the coercion but have already confirmed their consent by being unable to oppose it. This is how fear operates as the mechanism of coercion and consent to form the 'the masses' in Yi Mun-gu's fictional community. However, rather than being completely separated from them, the protagonists of *Our Neighbourhood* either occupy the margins of the group or become one of them. That is what is so striking about this text – it does not propose a resolution to the problem of 'the masses' by someone who is not one of them, someone superior to them who can lead them; for Yi Mun-gu, there is no realist hero.

The renewal of the protagonists, which was demanded by virtue of the new and meaningful subject 'we' established in Korean literature from the colonial period onwards, was a common condition of the recognition of historical necessity. This is especially true in so-called 'proletarian stories', where reform is presented as a means of developing class consciousness. The positive hero who leads reform efforts (depicted as models) in these stories would unify the 'we' towards a common goal and help strengthen 'our' solidarity. In other words, the protagonist's reform symbolizes a 'we' that has also been reformed. In this kind of renewal story, the protagonist helps 'us' to overcome hardship and undergo a positive transformation. What must be questioned, however, is whether reform is always an effective method of resolving issues. Reform via a collective leap can also be explained as an integral part of a propaganda campaign encouraging citizens to answer to national mobilization. The renewal of the hero that leads 'us' is ultimately nothing more than a means of demanding the collective leap, and the renewal that demands the collective leap is related to the themes given by propaganda that encouraged the realization of (national) mobilization.

Our Neighbourhood does not present a positive outlook for renewal. There are no exemplary characters in the stories, and it is unclear in the novel whether the people who are slowly falling apart can somehow be bound together as the 'we with a cause' – that Mr. Yi dreamed of in 'Our Neighbour Mr. Hwang' – rather than the frightening 'masses'. As stated in the introduction, these stories can be read as an elegy for the peasants, who were beginning to disappear at this point in Korean history. However, if no one person or group is held fully responsible for allowing the situation to reach that point, then the people in the novel cannot be held to be innocent either. Ultimately, the characters must engage in careful introspection. The glibness of the sporadic use of satire throughout the novel seems to hint that in order to understand their declining situation, the protagonists must reflect on the possibility of failing themselves. But cannot the self be confirmed by recognizing its complicity in the extent of the negative situation? Even if the blame should not lie fully with the self, as something that questions the obligations of everyday life, it can be a way of resisting the flow of the tide.

The characters in *Our Neighbourhood* are ashamed of their own lack of power. This shame defines 'the masses'; it is the shame of the individuals unable to distinguish themselves from the group, and the shame of not being able to oppose the fear that pressured 'the masses' to transform into 'the masses'. Rather than speculating on what kind of actions would arise from this shame, we should see it as something that enables

contemplation of one's own situation. This kind of shame must be distinguished from the tendency to see the self as a victim and from the tendency that hardens resentment, because, more than anything, by demanding careful ethical self-reflection about the position one must take, this shame is what enables the individual to refuse the mobilized collective leap that is 'we'.

Deciding on one's personal stance is a question of dignity. There is no special skill yet that can resuscitate a changed situation in one stroke. On the contrary, in order to make a dignified choice that looks out for a way of life and looks after the solidarity of 'we', one must take responsibility for the lost self. It would be difficult to dream of an age of a 'we with a cause' without serious reflection on one's personal responsibilities.

Translated by Jenny Wang Medina

Notes

1. The nine-volume *Our Neighbourhood* series began with the publication of 'Our Neighbour Mr. Kim' (*Hankookmunhak* [Korean Literature], November 1977) and ended with 'Our Neighbour Mr. Cho' (*Saegyemunhak* [World of Literature], December 1981). The anthology of these short stories was published by Minumsa in Seoul, 1981.
2. For more on 'developmental dictatorship', see Lee Byeong-Cheon, 'The Political Economy of Developmental Dictatorship', in Lee Byeong-cheon (ed.), trans. by Eungsoo Kim and Jaehyun Cho, *Developmental Dictatorship and the Park Chung-hee Era: The Shaping of Modernity in the Republic of Korea* (Paramus, NJ: Homa & Sekey Books, 2006).
3. Korea was a Japanese colony from 1910–1945. It was 'liberated' by the United States and the Soviet Union after Japan's defeat in World War II. However, this 'liberation' included the division of the peninsula at the 38th parallel, to which each victor's army dispatched troops. The division was formalized with the establishment of separate states in 1948: the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north. Hostilities between the two states broke out in 1950, ending with an armistice, but not a formal truce in 1953. The two countries remain officially at war to the present day.
4. *Minjung munhak* (people's literature) is a literary movement that began in the 1970s. It presented a positive hero who recognized the people's aim of history and described his or her victory over the subordinated consciousness. It was a dominant literary trend but fell out of favour in the 1990s.
5. Kim Uchang, 'The Village in Modernization', *Our Neighbourhood* (Minumsa, 1981), p. 318.
6. 'Modernization' may here refer to the worldwide standard of modernization, but also refers directly to the realization of the slogan 'Modernization of the Fatherland' introduced by the military regime of Park Chung-hee to force the country to catch up with the developed world.

7. For more on 'developmental dictatorship', see Yi Pyŏngch'ŏn's introduction, 'Political Economy of Development Dictatorship and the Korean Experience', in Lee Byeong-cheon (ed.), *Developmental Dictatorship and the Park Chung-hee Era*.
8. Yi Mun-gu, *Our Neighbourhood* (Minumsa, 1981), p. 193 (References to the novel will henceforth be in parenthetical citations).
9. These kinds of situations can also be found in South Korea. In earlier discussions of 'national resistance poets' like Shin Tongyŏp, who called for unity of the people and denounced foreign power, I point out that the 'we' that is interpellated through emotional and moral dimensions in well-known poems like 'Narrative of the People' is not a huge departure from the drive for national mobilization. Thus, I believe it is worth comparing the national sharing of the development ideology that Park Chung-hee's system demanded when it called 'us' out to various other perspectives. Shin Hyung-ki, *Beyond the National Narrative* (Samin, 2003).
10. Henri Lefebvre, *Hyŏndaesaegye ui ilsangsŏng* (La vie quotidienne dans la monde moderne), trans. by Park Chŏngja (Saegye ilbo, 1990).
11. The narrator laments the fact that the village, as a trial ground for an 'evil commercial spirit', acts as a 'dumping ground for test products and defective products' (p. 224).
12. The idea of a 'way of life' that I refer to here is influenced by Giorgio Agamben's 'form-of-life'. Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End*, trans. by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 3–11.
13. The 'student service corps' were high school students and soldiers mobilized to farm land in order to assist peasants.
14. A minor Buddhist sect that emerged in Japan in the thirteenth century.
15. In the Park Chung-hee period, industrial plants were the objects of sightseeing tours, especially for peasants. The plants were regarded as showrooms of state development. The peasants and students were forced to visit famous factories, and so were forced to support state power.
16. Ortega y Gasset, *Daejungui panyŏk* (La Rebelion de las Masas), trans. by Hwang Bo Yŏngjo (Yŏksapip'yŏngsa, 2005), pp. 19–20, 106.
17. By and large, the civilians slaughtered during the Korean War were never confirmed as wrong-doers. They were branded 'reactionaries' and 'insurgents' only after they had been killed.
18. Yi Mun-gu, 'Changsŏk-ri hwasal namu' (Spindle Trees in Changsŏk Village), in *Nae momŭn nŏmu orae sŏ itkŏna kŏrŏ wat'ta* (My Body Stood for Too Long or Walked Here) (Munhak Tongne, 2001).
19. For more on how civilians were involved in ideological massacres during the Korean War, see Park Ch'ansung, *Maŭllo kan hankuk chŏnjaeng* (The Korean War in the Villages) (Tolpegae, 2010).
20. Yi Mun-gu, 'Spindle Trees in Changsŏk Village', p. 55.

11

Swedish Proletarians towards Freedom: Ideals of Participation as Propaganda in the Communist Children's Press of the 1920s

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Alfred Andersson witnessed as a young boy the social and economic downside of Swedish class society during the mid-1920s. He was one of capitalism's victims, doomed to a life of hard labour under unequal conditions. But Alfred refused to remain a victim: he fought back by organizing himself. This is, of course, if you believe his testimony in a two-piece letter published in the Swedish communist children's periodical *The Young Comrade* (*Den unge kamraten*) in the beginning of 1924. In the letter he describes why he became a communist and how he successfully organized a local revolutionary children's club.¹ His is a model letter in the radical paper that targeted children between the ages of nine and 14. Young Alfred's story touches upon several themes promoted by the editors. For instance, he doesn't stay silent or accept things as they are. Rather he depicts himself in the position of an opponent to the current societal regime. In that position he opposes, for example, the inherited poverty that is most likely to make his a hard life as it had done his father's. Furthermore, he opposes bourgeois children's organizations such as the Scout movement or the Christian Sunday school. He turns to communism, therefore, as a way of liberating himself from oppression. From the editors' point of view, his letter served as an inspirational didactic example depicting the need for class struggle.

Why this interest in children's stories in a paper of relatively limited circulation?² In the unpretentious texts to be found in the periodical, often describing ordinary everyday life situations, the reader obtains a fascinating glimpse of the dictatorial ideal in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the political strategies to achieve it. The texts serve to illustrate one paradoxical aspect of modern dictatorial systems, which rest equally on coercive power and on the infiltration of everyday

life:³ power within mass dictatorships flows both upwards from the masses and downwards from political representatives, especially in the pre-stages or beginnings of dictatorial regimes. In publishing the children's stories, attempts to influence the praxis of everyday life are made, revealing the ambition of politician-editors to define and take control over their audience's lives. At the same time, the motives for publishing stories told from the children's point of view were connected with arguments emphasizing the liberating and progressive effects on children. Together this can be understood as a paradoxical fusion of perspectives or interests. The central question asked here is how and why the forces of liberation and coercion co-existed in the communist children's periodical. Protocols, policy documents, reports and statements of different kinds are all used in order to contextualize the published materials.

A protocol statement from the constituent congress of the Swedish Workers' Children's Union (*Arbetarbarnens förbund*) – in charge of *The Young Comrade* from early 1925 – illustrates the ambiguity of interests that existed within the political organization, and thereby the periodical:

The entire operation of the Workers' Children's Union is based on the children's self-activity. The children are through their own observations and experiences brought up to know and understand the present social order, so they themselves can fight the ills in their lives. In this way the Workers' Children's Union raises good, talented and battle-ready members for the Young Communist League in Sweden.⁴

It is worth noting that the initiative to constitute the organization did not come from Sweden. In fact, the children's union was strongly influenced by and subordinated to the Young Communist International that had been formed in 1919.⁵ Nor was *The Young Comrade* a new phenomenon. The paper's establishment in 1924 continued along the path laid by its predecessor, *The Children's Magazine (Barntidningen)*, which had been issued by the Young Communist League in Sweden since 1919.⁶ In that year the Swedish youth organization, the immediate superior of the later formed Workers' Children's Union, joined and actively took part in the work of the Young Communist International.⁷ The name change of the children's magazine in the mid-1920s was an example of the Swedish communists' eagerness to be part of the hardened international revolutionary struggle.⁸ The renaming of the paper to *The Young Comrade* is explained in the first issue as being inspired by a German equivalent, *Der Junge Genosse*, the main children's paper of the Young

Communist International in Germany.⁹ This type of magazine was to be found all over Europe at the time as well as further afield. Two Scandinavian examples referred to in this study are the Danish *Pioneer* (*Pioneren*) and the Norwegian *Children's Paper* (*Barnebladet*). Meanwhile, across the Atlantic in the United States, the Young Communist League published *The Young Comrade/New Pioneer* from the mid-1920s well into the late 1930s.¹⁰ The Swedish periodical's influence peaked in 1929, when the children's organization had about 2500 active members.¹¹

The fusion of perspectives, the opposing interests from below and above, is present in all of the studied magazines. It is clearly a characteristic of the propaganda in the communist children's press. There are two important aspects of this propaganda strategy. Firstly, the ideal of participation is quite prominent in giving a voice to perspectives from below. The literary forms chosen – letters, short stories, reports and so on – often cast the narrators as victimized witnesses providing first-hand information. Secondly, these letters, stories and reports, which documented children's experiences and their visions of a better future, were utilized (for example, through editorial choices of context) as propaganda in favour of a dictatorship of the proletariat. The propaganda strategy's underlying formula was that the perspective from below is needed for effectuating the perspective from above.

Another fusion of perspectives concerns my own point of view in relation to the point in history when the stories were published. Ideological deductions made from the published experiences are quite provocative, as they recurrently equate liberal democracy with oppression and welcome the dictatorship of the proletariat as a vision of freedom. The provocative edge is blunted, though, when realizing that the dictatorship was not the end goal. Marxist-Leninist visions do not halt until mature communism has been achieved: a classless society where the state has withered away under socialism.¹² It is important to remember that the context in which the children's periodicals appeared was the pre-revolutionary stage in a liberal democracy. This of course affected the strategy choices made and visions pursued. The dictatorship of the proletariat, as seen by Swedish revolutionaries during the 1920s, was but one station en route towards freedom. Historical development represented, from their point of view, still undefined possibilities.

Culture of the masses or culture for the masses?

Alfred Andersson's letter is best understood as worker-correspondent literature. In *Radical Representations*, Barbara Foley explains that the

genre's roots are partly to be found in revolutionary Russia and the Proletkult movement.¹³ In this context, Lynn Mally points out in *Culture of the Future* that ordinary Russians wrote stories of their lives, labour and political struggles.¹⁴ Soon socialist journals' solicitation of these autobiographical stories mobilized a large-scale movement of worker-correspondents.¹⁵ Telling one's own story was of course not new to Russians, or indeed other peoples: autobiography was, and still is, one of the most common forms of storytelling. Rather it was the encouraging of the masses to write down their stories that was new. The ideals of Proletkult, in spite of the fact that the formal organization of the Russian movement rapidly disintegrated in the early 1920s, gave an ideological framework to mass culture based on participation. At the same time, it was undoubtedly an effective instrument of propaganda. An illuminating example mentioned in Matthew Lenoe's 2004 work, *Closer to the Masses*, was the founding of the Soviet official newspaper *Worker (Rabochii)* in early 1922. Initially the paper's stated ambition was to give a voice to the masses from below. This changed, however, after the personal intervention of Joseph Stalin: it thereafter talked *to* the masses instead of through them.¹⁶

The essence of Proletkult was often debated, but one thing was quite clear to all: common men, women and children ought to be involved in art and culture. This was the revolutionary way of understanding the collectivist purpose of culture. In thus doing, it differed from the supposedly individualistic bourgeois ways of understanding culture.¹⁷ Conflict over these ideals was present in Sweden too. It was no coincidence that the dominant communist publishing house during this period distributed a series of books on the subject. The series was entitled *Red Culture (Röd kultur)* within which titles by Anatoly Lunacharsky, Maxim Gorky and Alexander Bogdanov, among others, were published.¹⁸ All these authors were intimately associated with the development of Proletkult and the belief in culture's revolutionary potential.¹⁹ Another example of the debate surrounding Proletkult was when the leader of the Swedish Young Communist League, Nils Flyg, in a preface to *Our Study Work (Vårt studiearbete, 1921)*, envisaged culture as a way of waging class struggle.²⁰ The preface aroused heated discussions within the Swedish workers' movement. Reformists strongly argued against Nils Flyg, emphasizing that cultural and educational issues should not be dragged into the realm of class struggle. They expressed the opinion that workers should seek to embrace the cultural heritage of bourgeoisie society by sharing and contributing to it; in other words, they sought to achieve compromise between the classes.²¹ The existence of two conflicting standpoints

is obvious when reading the communist and social democratic press of the 1920s. Eventually the debate toned down in favour of the reformist stand.²² This was also true of Sweden's overall political development at the time. For, in the early 1930s, Swedish social democracy entered into an era of political dominance that lasted several decades.²³

It is also worth mentioning that Nils Flyg initiated the start-up of *The Children's Magazine* in 1919 (later *The Young Comrade*).²⁴ In fact the Young Communist League of Sweden in the same year gave him the responsibility for setting up the whole communist children's organization.²⁵ The new organization became a revolutionary alternative to the already existing social democratic children's organization, *Sagostunds rörelsen* (The movement of fairytale moments).²⁶ The written instructions given, below, to the leaders of the revolutionary children's club are an example of the paradox of interests at play. The divergent interests of the children in the club and those of the political organization were a problem that had to be overcome, in order to keep the children in the organization at the same time as upholding the latter's function as an instrument of propaganda:

There is a certain art to making a programme for a children's club, and it is on precisely this which it all depends, if you want to keep up the young ones' interest in the long run. Therefore we proceed very carefully. We ask them what they want. One wants this, another wants something else, a third wants something completely different and so on. So we take all of the different preferences and put them into the programmes. One of the requests forms the first programme, a second request forms another, a third the third meeting, and so on. No one gets forgotten. All get what they want. All are satisfied. But the programme must of course be suitable so that our tasks aren't forgotten. A short lecture about some socialist demands must be delivered.²⁷

Although the bottom line of the organization was concerned with making loyal revolutionaries out of the children, it would be all too simplistic and reductive to characterize the children's leaders as merely cynical and calculating communist propagandists. In fact many seemed to believe that if the children were only given a chance to understand and express their own class position, they would automatically turn to the revolutionary ideology. The movement's influential Marxist pedagogue, Edwin Hoernle, was a proponent of this stance. As a central figure in the German revolutionary children's movement, together with

Clara Zetkin, his thoughts also influenced the Swedish movement.²⁸ The essay 'The work in the communist children groups' (1923) forms a kind of account of his experiences working with German proletarian children.

We don't find much of our teaching and learning material in books and publications. Instead we find it in the shifting realities from which our children come to us, realities in which they will work and struggle and that we only have to seize and use. The art of the group leader consists of sharpening the eyes and the ears of his little friends, in order for them to observe life from a proletarian point of view, and of loosening their tongues' restraints so that they repeatedly ask questions, stimulate them so that they themselves tirelessly seek satisfactory answers. ... We shall, when the children reply with the slogans they have heard on the streets, in their parent's home or read in the newspapers, play the role of the sceptic or the bourgeois opponent and ask aggravating counter-questions. In this way we present the whole depth and complexity of the problem to the children, and we make them familiar with the fact that thinking is hard work and an art that must be learned.²⁹

Participation was a very important means for promoting exactly the questioning attitude that Edwin Hoernle emphasized. In the long run this was thought to work in favour of the communist revolutionary struggle. A mass revolution naturally depends on the participation of the masses. The dominant argument was that it was society's grass roots that held the key to keeping the communist revolution going. In the words of Lynn Mally, common men, women and children must participate because 'only the industrial proletariat could express the collective spirit of socialism'.³⁰ This line of thought was often expressed in the communist press. In the Swedish *Young Comrade*, for instance, proletarian children were frequently urged to contribute:

For a workers' paper to be a workers' paper it shouldn't only be read and sold by workers. No, it should first and foremost be written by the workers themselves. ... You must write your own paper! Write about how things are in school, if you work as a delivery boy in a shop, or a delivery girl, write about that, how big is your pay, how long are your working hours, are you already working in a factory or a workshop, write about that, write about everything you see and everything that happens to you, write about your father and mother

and what they do for you and your brothers and sisters, write poems and short stories if you can.³¹

These exhortations were not solely the initiatives of individual editors. On the contrary, this participation was the expressed will of the global communist youth movement – a direct and centrally organized order. Documentation from the second international conference for communist children leaders, which took place in Moscow in 1925, provides evidence of this. In a circular letter from the management, signed by the leader Pekka Paasonen, the need for change in existing papers was highlighted with the following declaration: ‘They are papers for children but are not children’s papers. In most cases they are edited by adults, as the children’s participation is small. The conference decided: Our children’s papers must be written by the children; until then they can’t be considered true children’s papers.’³² A Swedish delegate to the conference, Gerda Malmros, reported that an English magazine (its title is not mentioned) was held to be the best example of a true children’s paper;³³ Malmros was in fact one of *The Young Comrade’s* main editors during the mid-1920s.³⁴ In terms of the participatory ideals expressed above, The Danish *Pioneer* is worthy of note. The editor of the first three issues (November 1924 to January 1925) was an 11-year-old boy (who by the January issue had turned 12) called Mendel.³⁵ Or at least, this is what is stated in the periodical.

The promotion of children’s participation was a long-term policy. In a policy document in the form of theses on press issues put forth at the first international conference in Berlin in 1922, participation was strongly emphasized as making way for class consciousness by attracting children to and keeping them within the communist movement.³⁶ The theses also stressed that participation was not solely about offering child correspondents the opportunity to write for the larger, national children’s papers. Equally important was giving them reasons and possibilities for exploring and developing their creativity in smaller groups set up for writing, for instance local communist school papers.³⁷ Herein the influence of Proletkult ideas is once again seen. Organizing creative children’s groups was an important feature in the Russian movement, due to the high hopes pinned on children for the future. In order to change society man must be changed and the best place to start is with children. The most successful of the Russian groups was based in the province of Tula in 1919, where *Children’s Proletkult (Detskii Proletkul’t)* was published. It was staffed and edited by children who expressed their revolutionary visions.³⁸ Other Russian examples from the mid-1920s are *Pioneer (Pioner)* and *The Drum (Baraban)*.³⁹

Edwin Hoernle pinpoints what the participation ideal was all about. In relation to his thoughts on the purpose of literature within the German organization, he notes that the poems written by children were 'from an aesthetic point of view, for the most part badly rhymed prose', but then he emphasizes the process of writing as 'the child's struggle for mastering a concentrated expression'.⁴⁰ What counted was not the end result but the way in which one arrived at it. Working with literature in the children's groups was thought of as collective work. For instance, Hoernle wrote that in scripting and performing theatrical plays, a new kind of literature emerged, one that was a product of collective work and challenged the 'bourgeois opposition between the artistic active individual and the passive art consuming masses'.⁴¹ The emphasis on participation is best understood when the tie between ideology and literary form is highlighted. The slogan of the participatory ideal could be enunciated as follows: amateurism signals collectivism, whereas perfection singles out individuality. An example of how this was thought to work was when amateurish art products directly corresponded with the children's own experiences:

The teacher tells her female pupils to recite Christmas poems. Our comrade recites the proletarian-revolutionary version of 'Silent night, holy night!' This paraphrasing is totally useless from an artistic point of view. Nonetheless, it completely fulfils its purpose as agitation, because the teacher asks: Where have you learned that? And the pupil answers: In the communist children's group. The teacher argues about incitement, but the children perceive the poem as something that corresponds with their experiences. A consciousness of class conflict is starting to awaken.⁴²

Periodicals like *The Young Comrade* did not seek perfection. Ideally they wanted the mass to speak in its own voice. In 1925, participation was once again stressed by the editors: 'Not until all comrades participate with sketches from school, home, work, or write a poem or do a drawing – not until then will *The Young Comrade* become our own paper.'⁴³ It bore fruit. Although for some it never went far enough, a fairly large proportion of *The Young Comrade's* texts were reader-generated; observations, experiences or fantasies expressed in letters, poems, drawings and short stories. A typical example is a letter from Helmi Svensson, a pupil at Engelbrekt public school in Stockholm. She tells of how the school's rich kids make fun of the poor kids' worn out clothes, and she says that if all mothers and fathers were communists this injustice wouldn't

exist.⁴⁴ Another example is a short story by a girl called Ragnhild, who writes about how Stina and Olle were orphaned. Their unemployed father died of pneumonia, and their mother later died from the burden of being their sole provider.⁴⁵

A systematic approach to the ideal of participation is exemplified in the Norwegian *Children's Paper*. The editors frequently used prize competitions for securing both participation and the realization of their own propagandistic ambitions. In the second issue of 1921, the paper's first publishing year, a competition titled 'My home' was launched in which children were urged to send in written depictions of their home.⁴⁶ In the fourth issue, the editors were forced to admit that only one contribution had been received. But because the standard of the contribution was allegedly deemed to be so high, it was decided to publish the piece and award the writer, an eight-year-old boy called Arvid Morgan Dahl, with the five kroner that constituted the first prize. In his contribution, Arvid describes how he lives with his two younger siblings and his mother and father, the latter a railway worker, in a flat which consists of a room, a kitchen and a hallway.⁴⁷ The competitions continued despite the initial low participation. For example, in the September issue of 1922, a prize competition on the topic 'The most fun day of the holidays' was announced.⁴⁸ In the next issue, the topic of the competition was 'What do you want to become when you grow up?'⁴⁹ The number of contributions received was now considerably higher. The winner this time round was 12-year-old Alf Nagel who wrote: 'I want to become a deliberate communist and a good carpenter, so that I in the new society can build good homes for the many that in the capitalist society are oppressed by distress and poverty and all the wretchedness of diseases, because they live in such poor housing, contrary to the rich capitalists who live in their magnificent castles.'⁵⁰

Although 'I' was at the centre of pieces like Alf Nagel's and other children's stories, their purpose from the propagandists' point of view wasn't expressive subjectivity. They were politically motivated with the aim of inspiring a revolutionary consciousness and a sense of collectivism. In this context, Barbara Foley suggests that 'the individual speaker projects little interiority and unabashedly serves as a vehicle for exploring larger political questions.'⁵¹ The propaganda strategy at play in the papers analysed is best described as children's voices from below being subordinated to the political will from above. The often high level of ideological predetermination found in the competitions of *The Children's Paper* makes for interesting observation. 'Why do we celebrate the 1st of May?' is the competition question posed in the November

1922 issue.⁵² In the January issue of 1923, the question set is 'Why am I a communist?',⁵³ the next being 'What are class differences?'⁵⁴ And even if the question asked wasn't ideologically predetermined, those contributions that stressed an ideological stance were often those that won. Alf Nagel wanting to become a carpenter and communist in order to build decent homes for the people epitomizes this.

The culture of the masses turned into propaganda

Along with stressing the importance of voicing children's opinions and experiences, the press theses from the Berlin conference also articulated detailed demands on the form and content expected in the papers. Thus the ideal of children exploring their creativity was limited by regulations of content and form. Nine topics that had to be addressed were (1) general questions concerning the working class and farmers' struggle against capitalism, (2) the most important political events, (3) the Communist Youth League's and Communist Party's work and liaison with the communist children's organizations, (4) adults' working conditions and lives outside of the workplace, (5) children's everyday lives and struggles in regard to school, child labour, home life, life on the streets and in the countryside, (6) the work of the children's organizations, (7) criticism of opposing organizations such as the Scout movement, (8) children's movements in other countries with special focus on Soviet Russia, (9) anti-religious propaganda, especially when writing about scientific achievements. These topics could be presented in the form of articles, stories, poems, jokes and so on. Every article had to be short, deal with a maximum of one or two problems and be written in simple language with clearly highlighted headlines.⁵⁵

The intersection between the expression of a voice from below and the politicizing of experiences from above is amply illustrated by young Alfred Andersson. His story fulfils many of the required subjects. (1) He starts a revolutionary children's club. (2) He writes how the communist youth movement helped him. (3) He mentions his father's and brother's working conditions and his mother's one day at a time attitude. (4) He suspects he will probably follow in his father's footsteps. (5) He explains how the children's club helps him in standing up to a local authority. (6) He urges other children to start revolutionary children's clubs instead of joining, for example, the Scout movement or the Christian Sunday school. (7) He takes a clear stand against a Sunday school teacher and her religious convictions.⁵⁶ Many of these aspects are depicted in his outburst against the abovementioned Sunday school teacher, telling her

what he thinks about the hypocrisy permeating Christians when they speak of peace and brotherly union:

By the way, we saw how the word of God influenced man during the World War, when the priests blessed the soldiers before they went out to kill other soldiers. Heaven's glory, have you seen it? What about brotherly union of the people then? I wonder if the director of this factory wouldn't get pretty grimy if he was to unite with my father and brother. No, I am sure he would resist, especially if we were to gain from it. That is why, dear deaconess, you can feed those stories to someone else. And goodbye, because I am going to a board meeting with our new children's club.⁵⁷

Alfred Andersson's story of the struggle against local authorities clearly offers collectivist views on politics. Organizing the club is a revolutionary act within the grasp of a proletarian child. It is not less revolutionary just because the arena may seem small from an adult point of view. The ideology infusing the young boy's club clearly bears marks of Leninism, especially regarding the strong belief in the act of organizing as a concrete and effective method for class struggle.⁵⁸ Vladimir Lenin's view on organizational skills was that of a direct link between these skills and the possibility of successful proletarian political activity.⁵⁹ The improvement of such skills was therefore emphasized as the most efficient weapon available.⁶⁰ This Leninist thesis is propagated through Alfred Andersson's story. The impact of the Leninist ideology was even greater given the letter's context in the periodical. An extensive obituary on Lenin titled 'Ilyich will be with us' and the celebrating poem 'Comrade Lenin is dead' were published on the pages preceding the first part of the young boy's letter.⁶¹ It is hard not to think of Lenin when reading Alfred's words.

A question that must be asked here concerns authenticity. Did the young boy Alfred Andersson really exist and did he write the letter? Although there is no direct evidence that the author of the letter may in fact not have been a young boy, suspicion arises when comparing the story's content to the content preferred by the international organization of children leaders. The letter fits the model a bit too perfectly. The suspicion is especially warranted given that false letters had been published before.⁶² But a perfect fit does not, of course, automatically imply that this letter is a fake testimony. It could, for instance, be the result of mentored writing in a Proletkult children's group. Documentation on political activity in relation to *The Young Comrade* shows that campaigns

aimed at supplying the paper with texts were organized by the Swedish communist youth movement.⁶³ Irrespective of whether the stories are authentic their propagandistic use is obvious. And that is what is of concern here. From the very beginning, the press was stressed as an important arena for class struggle by the communist movement. Lenin's views on this issue can be divided into two lines of argument. One line is that the press could communicate tactics by telling sympathizers what to do or how they should behave in regard to their enemies, and the second was that the papers could function as a collective organizer by being a focal point, and that the building of a newsgathering and distribution system within the movement could help train, prepare and unite the rank and file.⁶⁴ Accordingly, the press was considered important for both building community and influencing that community into acting in certain ways. A passage in the circular letter from the 1925 conference of children leaders in Moscow gives examples of how these thoughts were supposed to be implemented in the children's press. In this, emphasis was also put on the non-journalistic efforts of the papers in question. It was argued that aside from journalism, actions of different kinds should be taken, including 'demonstrations, protests at workplaces (the children can make expeditions to the workplaces and so on), strikes by exploited children (with the support of the adult workers' organizations of course) and actions in school'.⁶⁵ The main goals of the communist press were to inspire and organize revolution, and an important task in achieving these goals was to promote a sense of community and willingness to act.

Letters between children's groups played an important part in spurring the children into action and for developing a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. Periodicals like *The Young Comrade*, *The Pioneer* and *The Children's Paper* were effectively transformed into post offices as correspondence was strongly urged. The papers distributed, translated and published letters from around the world. An example from *The Young Comrade* illustrates the importance of correspondence:

As a response to a letter from a young comrade in one of our own children's clubs, *The Young Comrade* has received the following greeting to the worker children of Sweden from the young pioneers in 'Krasnaia Presnia'.

Be saluted dear young comrades!

We send you all a fraternal letter and a warm revolutionary greeting. We would really like to get more acquainted with you and to learn of your living conditions. Here in Moscow we all live very

well, us young communists, and it is very sad to hear that you over there have hard times. Dear comrades, write more letters, so we can get to know more about you. Also, write to your comrades in other children's clubs.

With fraternal hope of a quick response.

11th section of Pioneers.

1st group,

'Krasnaia Presnia', Moscow.

Our young Russian comrades eagerly await letters. That's why all children's clubs now must write some lines in response. All letters arrive more quickly if they are sent via *The Young Comrade's* editorial office.⁶⁶

This type of international correspondence was frequently published in the children's periodicals. Letters from Russia, Germany and the United States are just some examples. As in the case of texts by child correspondents, however, the lofty goals were seldom reached. In internal documents it is often reported that the editors and other representatives wanted more correspondence between different national children's clubs.⁶⁷ The letters sent and received were seen as a way of promoting internationalism and collectivism. It was also a way of getting the children to move from thought to concrete action. Edwin Hoernle stressed the importance of writing letters as it 'serves the function of consolidation of the spiritual community' and makes the children think collectively. 'Soon the children understand that the correspondence isn't a private matter, but a concern for the whole group, the whole movement. Instead of the word "I," the word "We" appears. We think like that. We ask ourselves, we have done this and we send you our regards.'⁶⁸

It is quite obvious that the culture of correspondence between the different clubs was a rich corpus from which propagandistic points could easily be made when selecting certain letters to be published. Therefore, the choices of the editors turned this culture into a means of propaganda. For example, those letters published from Soviet Russia mostly gave expression to the supremacy of the Soviet dictatorship of the proletariat. Even in the short letter just quoted, the supposedly exemplary Soviet model and the possibilities for the Swedish working class is contended: things are going well for the young communists in Soviet Russia, but they are sorry about the hardships their Swedish comrades have to endure. Another example comes from *The Pioneer* in Denmark, in which Moscow Pioneers express their regret that the Danes can't celebrate the October revolution as the Soviet Russian Pioneers

do: 'We Pioneers in the free country know how hard it is for you to celebrate this great day. When we celebrate we remember you in every word. In October we hear the sighs of our oppressed brothers in the East and West.'⁶⁹

Raising an army of young red soldiers

The ultimate goal of the communist children's organizations was articulated as turning children into soldiers for the revolutionary cause. The press was viewed as a significant tool in achieving this. In *Theses and Resolutions Adopted at the Third World Congress of the Communist International* (1921) it is stated: 'The Young Communist press, and the organizations as a whole, must be employed for the purpose of instilling into the minds of the young communists the consciousness of being soldiers and responsible members of a Communist Party.'⁷⁰ Preparing the young ones for 'battle' permeated the doings of the Swedish section of the youth organization, even when it came to the designing and presenting of children's games in the paper. *The Young Comrade* often published detailed instructions for games such as 'The Strike', which is presented as follows: 'Two, three or four groups of workers are struggling against their employers in order not to get their wages cut. All of the workers are organized in unions, but the employers try to enlist scabs among them. The employers' representatives therefore try to capture workers and bring them to the factories, while the workers' representatives try to keep the workers away from work.'⁷¹ Another such game presented was 'One for all – all for one'. It was said to be a 'lively and fun game that requires the collective action of the participants, strengthens the arm and leg muscles and intensifies the powers of observation'.⁷²

The educational efforts made by the periodical also exemplified the ambition to imbue the girls' and boys' daily lives with an element of class struggle. For instance, a rhyming ABC was presented (the rhymes are lost in translation here). The children could learn 'G' as in 'Generals dress in nice clothes/with stripes, stars and other things/Generals order workers to war/when capitalists don't get along'. 'K' as in 'Kings, princes, queens and princesses/they are fun in fairy tales/But when in reality still/they're but proof of all that's wrong.'⁷³ Other attempts at reaching into the children's lives were the publishing of communist jokes and cartoons, at least until late 1925. Up until this date, every issue had a section titled 'Jokes and puzzles'. Most jokes were more or less ideologically charged. An example of one such joke is as follows: 'The employers say police, police, the workers are arming themselves! The

police wonder: why haven't you told us this before? The employers say: because, before it was just us doing it.⁷⁴ Furthermore, some examples of picture rebuses depicting sentences could be mentioned. Appearing in the Norwegian *Children's Paper*, among others, answers to the riddles were often highly politicized phrases. One example is 'Workers of the world unite'.⁷⁵ Another example is 'Revolution is the locomotive of history'.⁷⁶ The rebuses are also highly politicized in the Danish paper. In the first issue of 1924, there is one in which the children are supposed to put together the names 'of great leaders and spokespersons of the working class's cause' in a certain way.⁷⁷ The names included were Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Engels, Trotsky, Liebknecht, Gustav Bang, Karl Marx, Spartacus and Jack London. The answer was Leningrad.⁷⁸

Worth mentioning about the cartoons in the Swedish periodical is that they caused some displeasure among higher authorities for being too frivolous. Gerda Malmros' report from the Moscow conference for communist children leaders explains that certain remarks were made about them. The importance of the communist periodicals staying on a straight and politically stern line was also emphasized at the conference, which took place in late September 1925.⁷⁹ This disapproval from up above obviously had an impact, as already by the double issue of October and November that year changes were made to the Swedish periodical. The section 'Jokes and puzzles' was retitled 'Games and puzzles',⁸⁰ and it was left out altogether by the time the December issue came out.⁸¹ Henceforth, both jokes and cartoons appeared much less frequently than had previously been the case. Notwithstanding, it is important to note that there wasn't any general ban on humour per se imposed by central policy-makers. On the contrary, humour was seen as one way of winning over children to the communist cause.⁸²

When reading *The Young Comrade* it is clear that militant ideals dominated the thoughts and activities of the children's clubs, or at least, that is, how the thoughts and activities were presented in the periodical. One example is a letter from Einar Persson, a member of the Nacka red scout corps.

When we, a couple of boys, on 4 February 1924 established our scout corps, we had no idea what work we would carry out. But two comrades in the youth club, Sigge and Ragge, helped us. We started out with things that are of delight to all boys, that is, various sailing chores such as knotting, reading maps, learning the compass, signalling, hygiene, simple medical treatment and gymnastics. ... During our work together we have secured a closer comradeship than we

would have done if we were just to roam the roads without a goal. This summer we will educate ourselves in proper outdoor life. We have gotten hold of linen for tents and we will take along a first aid kit in case of accidents. ... [W]e don't want you comrades all around Sweden to join the bourgeois boy scouts. Ask the comrades in the youth clubs to help you instead, because we must form our own movement. And then you should write in *The Young Comrade* of how things are going, because we dearly want there to be more of us gathering the worker boys, which will found the great army of red soldiers ready to fight for a better society.⁸³

The experiencing of nature and fresh air wasn't the prime motivation, however, for arranging outdoor activities such as hiking. Edwin Hoernle emphasized in his guidelines that the leaders of the children's groups were not responsible for drawing up hiking plans. Instead, the group as a whole was to be involved in the preparations as a way of serving the revolution. Before going off on a hike, a technical commission was to prepare the equipment and organize educational tours on different sights; likewise a propaganda commission must have prepared leaflets, banners, badges and so on; and afterwards, like Einar Persson did, the group had to report to the periodical about the hike. 'In this way the whole group gets involved with the hike, it becomes the joint work of the group and the hike serves the great common goal.'⁸⁴

The more militant ideals from the mid-1920s are related to the reorganizing of the group and its renaming to the Pioneer organization in 1925. When the Workers' Children's Union was constituted that year, a shift to a much more controlled organization became fact. Ever since the beginning of the 1920s, the Third International had increased its demands for more centralized rule from Moscow.⁸⁵ The above reorganization was, therefore, an example of that demand being met. In the mid-1920s, articles dealing with the Young Pioneer Organization of the Soviet Union appeared increasingly often in *The Young Comrade*. The Soviet Pioneers also consisted of children between the ages of nine and 14, but it was, of course, much larger than its Swedish cousin. As mentioned, the editors eagerly and repeatedly tried to establish correspondence between Swedish and Soviet Russian children. Together with the published letters, glowing reports describing the Soviet Pioneer movement were supposed to inspire and impress the Swedish children. One such report was on the growth of the movement in Soviet Russia, which at its inception in 1922 had only 4000 members; this figure had risen to one million by 1925.⁸⁶ Two years later it was reported that there

were two million Pioneers in the Soviet Union. By comparison, Sweden at the time had only 1200 members.⁸⁷

The word 'pioneer' appeared increasingly frequently in the paper during this period. This is an interesting example of how central leadership directives were reflected in the letters published in *The Young Comrade*. In the autumn of 1925, the Workers' Children's Union in Sweden decided to change the name of the organization, renaming it the Pioneer movement instead of using the term children's club.⁸⁸ A boy called Sven in a published letter wrote that the trend towards using the word pioneer was very positive, because the term 'children's club' deterred older children from joining the organization. He welcomed the word 'pioneer' much because of, it seems, the aura of militarism characterizing it: 'The groups we talked about we will name "pioneer unit". The groups in a block become a "pioneer section" and in a town or a district "pioneer division".'⁸⁹ Once again suspicion might be raised concerning the authenticity of some letters, when taking into account the close alignment between central policy-making and the selection of texts published. In other words, a voice supposedly from below, a child, expressed what had already been decided from above. Timing was often perfect.

Another example pointing to militaristic tendencies was the announcement in the autumn 1925 issue of the equipping of the renamed Swedish pioneer organization with an official uniform consisting of a brown khaki shirt with a red Soviet star on the left arm and a red pioneer scarf.⁹⁰ In the same issue, there are detailed descriptions on how militant pioneer groups were to organize in schools as a way of taking control of and promoting the communist proletarian view among children. The central thought was that it took only one or two pupils to initiate a group with the purpose of influencing all the children in the school.⁹¹ The organizational form that this group took was that of the Leninist pre-revolutionary party subordinated cell system. Lennart Lundquist's analysis of the system on a general level, in *The Party and the Masses*, shows that this kind of 'communist organizational work is based on the principle that communist cells should be created wherever there are proletarians or semi-proletarians' in order for the Communist Party to speak on behalf of the interests of the whole working class.⁹² The transformation into a cell system was a decision made in January 1925 by the Executive Committee of the Third International, the highest decision-making organ, and concerned all bodies within the International.⁹³

People in the revolutionary organizations were supposedly now to become directly involved in different kinds of action. The same also

applied to the children. One task given to Swedish pioneers, as was communicated through *The Young Comrade*, was to keep track of and report on their own school activities. This was sanctioned from the top of the international organization responsible for coordinating the national youth and children divisions. It was Hoernle's belief, for instance, that the school constituted the main arena of struggle for communist children's groups in pre-revolutionary society. He stated that it was here that children stand eye-to-eye against the class enemy, and that proletarian children of all eras had hitherto fought this battle in a primitive, unorganized and unconscious manner. He argued that it was now time to learn to wage the battle in a purposeful and organized way. He goes on to list occasions where features of class struggle arise.

The teacher prohibits the children to wear the Soviet star but tolerates nationalistic emblems. The teacher demands that the children sing nationalistic songs but revolutionary songs are prohibited. The teacher physically abuses the children, he makes them pray, he engages in chauvinistic and counter revolutionary propaganda in classes of German essay writing, reading and religion.⁹⁴

A strategy to fight against the above was to disclose the particulars of such injustices. In the policy document concerning press issues it was said that all of the bourgeois school system's faults must be exposed. The children were to be the movement's eyes and ears in schools and write about what they experienced, especially when it came to physical abuse of pupils, detention, patriotic and religious education, and limitations imposed on children's possibilities to express and agitate their revolutionary political views.⁹⁵ Reports of these kinds were regularly published in *The Young Comrade*. From 1926 the percentage of reports written by different club members, in relation to for instance fiction, increased.⁹⁶ This observation is very interesting given the central question of the study. During the mid-1920s, centralized power weighed heavier and heavier on the children's organization. At the same time voices from below in the form of direct reports received a larger share of print in the periodical.

Physical abuse, conservative teachers and pupils feeling intimidated by the Christian worldview inflicted upon them were frequent themes in the reports from schools. One example is a short letter from 'Comrade I.W (12 years)', who tells of how the teacher in his school overtly warned pupils of becoming pioneers. The letter ends with an appeal to his comrades, urging them to increase their level of agitation

as a way of resisting teachers' counter-agitation.⁹⁷ Another example is a letter from 'K.O.K', describing how a teacher of a gym class in the school of Södra Katarina in Stockholm physically abused a boy because he didn't sit down when instructed to. Standing in front of his classmates with his hands on the floor, the boy received five blows from a rope.⁹⁸ A third example is from the village of Björneborg in Värmland. A young boy writes about the Soviet symbol and a teacher in his school:

It was during what we call a free drawing hour in school. It is an hour when you are allowed to draw what you want. You probably know about it, it exists in every school. Anyway, a boy drew the Soviet symbol, the star with the hammer and the sickle. When he was done he showed it to the teacher. The teacher looked sternly at the boy and said: 'Go and sit down!' The boy went away and sat down. During that same hour there was another boy that had gotten the same idea and sat drawing the same symbol, the Soviet symbol. He didn't finish his work that day, but he eventually finished it, and some days later he showed the teacher his work. Then the teacher looked even more sternly at this boy and told the boy to get back to his seat. When he had taken his seat the teacher held up the drawing-block showing the drawing to all the other pupils. Then he said: 'The free drawing hour isn't supposed to be used for drawing these kinds of things. You may absolutely not draw anything like this again.' But what's the use of a free drawing hour if you can't draw what you want? The Soviet symbol is beautiful, and all workers' children who hear how their parents sympathize with those who want what is best for the workers, must also realize that the Soviet realm is the workers' realm, and that this is something that workers in other countries should honour. Comrades in the schools! Use the free drawing hour and the free writing hour or the essay hour to put forth the workers' children's perspective on things.⁹⁹

The issue of not being allowed to draw the Soviet symbol might seem to be trivial. But seen from the revolutionary organization's point of view, it wasn't. The importance of symbols was strongly stressed by leaders, as was the significance of children being able to convey these symbols in different forms. According to Edwin Hoernle, symbols and artistically expressing the symbols functioned as a way of building a sense of community among the proletarian children.¹⁰⁰ It followed that an attack on their symbols was an attack on their sense of belonging.

Political confrontations become educational debate

Public debate on the communist children's organization in Sweden reached fever pitch in 1928, both in the bourgeois and social democratic press. In the parliamentary elections of that year, known as the 'Cossack' elections, the reformist social democrats lost 14 out of 104 mandates in parliament. Meanwhile, the revolutionary Communist Party of Sweden, the conservative rightwing party and the Farmers League picked up seats where the social democrats had lost.¹⁰¹ The serious blow to the reformist socialists was largely explained by their electoral collaboration with a communist fraction that was not loyal to the Third International.¹⁰² Parties on the right victoriously used the fact of this collaboration in the election campaign, by warning that a vote for the red faction was tantamount to voting for Moscow. It is not farfetched to consider the debate on the Pioneer movement, which started in bourgeois papers in the spring of 1928, as part of the campaign to instil a fear of the communists. Due to the successful campaign the social democrats experienced defeat on all political levels. Their main organ *The Social Democrat (Social-Demokraten)* presented the results of the Stockholm municipal elections in bellicose headlines: 'Stockholm election a black day for Swedish social democracy'. Further, it was emphasized that entering into cooperation with the communists had been a 'terrible political mistake'.¹⁰³ It didn't matter that this collaboration was with a less radical fraction of the Communist Party.¹⁰⁴

The run-up to the 1928 elections, held in early autumn, had been dominated by attacks from the right. In the wake of the communists' 1 May demonstrations in Stockholm, the conservative papers *The Evening Post (Aftonbladet)* and *The New Daily Sundry (Nya dagligt allehanda)* attacked the Pioneer movement. One of the reasons for this attack was that a pioneer had carried a placard depicting a burning Bible with the slogan 'separate school from the church and abolish religious education'. *The New Daily Sundry* described the Pioneer organization as 'preachers of hate and seducers of children'. A couple of days before the elections, the paper once again attacked the organization in an extensive front-page feature, in which the Workers' Children's Union was accused of spreading 'poisonous propaganda against religion, the fatherland and the social system'. This time the social democrats were also indirectly attacked.¹⁰⁵ On Election Day, the social democrats experienced a historical defeat, with the latter shortly afterwards clearly distancing themselves from the communist children's movement.¹⁰⁶

The Social Democrat strongly criticized 'the Bolshevik's barbarian child propaganda', and announced that Stockholm's vice-mayor, the social democrat Oscar Larsson, had 'condemn[ed] the nasty poison'.¹⁰⁷ He is quoted further as saying: 'the hate that Bolshevism preaches in its child propaganda is just as fatal to the child's spiritual growth as polluted air and malnutrition is for bodily growth.'¹⁰⁸ The attacks on the children's organization and *The Young Comrade* was continued and made the subject of a campaign by the teacher's periodical *Swedish Teacher's Paper* (*Svensk Läraretidning*).¹⁰⁹ In three extensive editorial articles during the autumn of 1928, the problem of the revolutionary periodical was addressed.¹¹⁰ Something must be done, it was argued, about the disobedience and rebellion promoted by *The Young Comrade*. Texts allegedly written by children were summarily dismissed as propaganda written by older communists.¹¹¹ A number of counter-strategies were presented: firstly, it was stressed that schools had to intensify their ambitions when teaching the truth about the Soviet system. Schools should also intensify the promotion of good children's literature as an alternative to the bad literary examples in *The Young Comrade*. Secondly, teachers should arrange meetings with parents in order to appeal to them as caring parents, letting them know their children will be impeded in life if subjected to propaganda. Thirdly, the importance of gaining the support of more reformist-oriented sections of the working class was flagged up, with the hope expressed that they could convince children that communism wasn't the right way. Finally, if the above didn't help, it was suggested that the children should, in accordance with the editors' understanding of Swedish childcare laws, be separated from their parents, in order to secure that the 'rape of their souls' ended, and that the Pioneer movement would be deprived of its recruitment pool and so wither away.¹¹²

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Pioneer movement clearly felt that it was under attack on many different levels and from different political parties. As the movement's main mouthpiece reported, confrontations took place in schools, in public debates and even in legislative work, but instead of retreating it continued to maintain the struggle on all fronts, convinced even more of the rightfulness of its cause.

The attacks on the Pioneer movement are growing increasingly. Our Pioneers in schools are questioned by their teachers on who the Pioneers are, on what relations they have with the Pioneers, are threatened with weaker marks, receive detention if they belong to the Pioneer movement. ... The School Teachers' Association has several

times debated the question on how to counter the Pioneer movement, and most recently in the newspaper press they have proposed the prohibiting of the movement by law. So far it has not reached the point where we need to fight for our legality. The attacks against the Pioneer movement from the bourgeoisie, the teachers and the social democrats, only proves the rightfulness of the movement's existence, and our mission is to make it clear to the workers that it is important that the children of the working class are educated in becoming fighters for the working class.¹¹³

The Workers' Children's Union also responded forcefully in the public debate during the 1928 clash. Their representative Paul Almén explained, for example, that older communists didn't need to poison younger cohorts, because the children's experiences of capitalist society had already done exactly that. Furthermore, on allegations whether articles were authentic or not, he said the Pioneer movement and *The Young Comrade* simply let the children express their bitter experiences of society.¹¹⁴

Paul Almén's statement that the periodical was a mouthpiece through which children could express their experiences is to some degree true, at least when considering the pedagogics on which the work and goals of *The Young Comrade* were built. The editors' aims with their publicist activities, presented for instance in policy documents, were to some extent surely the deliberation of the children's creativity. But of course this does not tell the whole truth. A truer statement would be that the texts were written and used at the intersection of participatory ideals and Leninist propaganda. The truth in this context is a paradox of individual expressions from below and the communist political movement's propagandistic choices from above. The letter from the young boy Alfred Andersson, in which he writes about his revolutionary children's club, is just one of many examples. From our twenty-first century perspective, children's right to self-expression is taken for granted. But in the 1920s, this idea was still quite progressive. The experiences expressed, along with editors' attempts to organize creativity, capture very well the essence of participatory ideals. The voices from below, with all of their amateurish flaws, were needed as a base from which a sense of community could be built. On the other hand, the opportunities to exploit this for the sake of propaganda represented a more manipulative machination. Choices made from above, as analysed in this chapter, signified politicians' ambitions to make political use of the sense of belonging shared at the base. In sum, the voices of the masses are needed in order to take control of the masses.

Notes

1. Alfred Andersson, 'Brev till arbetets söner och döttrar i Sverges land från Alfred Andersson' (Letter to sons and daughters of labour in Sweden from Alfred Andersson), *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barnkillen* (The Young Comrade – Paper for the Young Communist League's Children's Clubs), No. 1–2, 1924, p. 9; *ibid.*, No. 3–4, 1924, p. 7.
2. The periodical had a nationwide circulation (it was issued once a month but sometimes every other month) of about 3000 copies from 1925 to 1930 among children aged between nine and 14. Although it continued to be issued until 1934, only five issues were distributed in total between 1931 and 1934. Göran Sidebäck, *Kampen om barnets själ: Barn- och ungdomsorganisationer för fostran och normbildning 1850–1980* (The Struggle for the Soul of the Child: Children and Youth Organizations for Education and Norms 1850–1980) (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 1992), p. 243.
3. Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship', pp. 6–9. Paper presented at Lund University, 12 October 2009.
4. *Protokoll fört vid Arbetarbarnens förbunds konstituerande kongress söndagen den 22 Mars 1925* (Minutes of the Workers' Children's Union of the Constituent Congress Sunday, 22 March 1925), p. 3: Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Stockholm (The Labour Movement's Archive in Stockholm), Arbetarbarnens Förbund, mapp Protokoll och resolutioner från kongresser 1925–1929 (Workers' Children's Union, the folder Minutes and Resolutions from Congresses 1925–1929). Translations from Swedish, Danish and Norwegian here and elsewhere are those of the author (J. V.)
5. Sidebäck, *Kampen om barnets själ*, p. 223.
6. An important thing to note when using the word communist and the name Young Communist League in the context of Swedish politics is that the Communist Party of Sweden did not take its name until 1921. In 1917, a number of radical socialists left the Social Democratic party and formed Sweden's Social Democratic Left Party (Sveriges socialdemokratisk vänsterparti). It was this party that formally became the Communist Party of Sweden in 1921, and which joined the Third International. Consequently, it was the Sweden's Social Democratic Left Party's youth organization that initiated *The Children's Magazine*. Jan Bolin, *Parti av ny typ? Skapandet av ett svenskt kommunistiskt parti 1917–1933* (A Party of New Type? The Creation of a Swedish Communist Party 1917–1933) (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2004), pp. 310–317.
7. *Kommunistiska ungdomsinternationalen 1 år: November 1919–November 1920* (The Communist Youth International, 1 year: November 1919–November 1920) (Stockholm: Frams Förlag, 1921), pp. 9 and 19.
8. Sidebäck, *Kampen om barnets själ*, p. 246.
9. *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barnkillen*, No. 1–2, 1924, p. 2.
10. Dale Reed, 'Holdings on United States Socialism and Communism at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace', *Labor History*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (1986), p. 522.

11. Sidebäck, *Kampen om barnets själ*, p. 227.
12. Lennart Lundquist, *The Party and the Masses: An Interorganizational Analysis of Lenin's Model for the Bolshevik Revolutionary Movement* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982), pp. 85–86.
13. Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations – Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929–1941* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 286.
14. Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 18.
15. Jeremy Hicks, 'Worker correspondents: Between journalism and literature', *The Russian Review*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (2007), p. 568.
16. Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 32–33. Matthew Lenoe would probably critically classify my theoretical stand as an expression of the shared modernity thesis, which is according to him characterized by the downplaying of differences between, for instance, Leninist regimes and liberal democracy (pp. 4–5). In spite of this, I find his empirical research very interesting and useful. Concerning the similarities and differences of the systems in winning and then administering power, my understanding is that both systems are based on the masses in the form of a broad base of the population and on finding ways of relating to the experiences of the masses. The systems differ concerning, for instance, what is done with these experiences: are they transformed into an election result that is revaluated in the coming elections, or are they turned into a rigid system of dictatorial coercion?
17. Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'The Bolsheviks' Dilemma: Class, Culture, and Politics in the Early Soviet Years', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (1988), pp. 601–603.
18. Anatoly Lunacharsky, *Arbetarklassens kulturuppgifter* (The Cultural Tasks of the Working Class) (Stockholm: Frams Förlag, 1920); Maxim Gorki, *Småborgaren och revolutionen* (The Petit-Bourgeois and the Revolution) (Stockholm: Frams Förlag, 1920); Alexander Bogdanov, *Vetenskapen och arbetarklassen – Proletär dikt* (Science and the Working Class – Proletarian Poetry) (Stockholm: Frams Förlag, 1921).
19. Mally, *Culture of the Future*, pp. 4–5.
20. *Vårt studiearbete: Studiehandbok* (*Our Study Work: Study Guide*) (Stockholm: Frams Förlag, 1921), pp. 5–9.
21. Jimmy Vulovic, 'Bildning, kulturjournalistik och det nya Sverige – Om Arbetarnas bildningsförbund och den svenska modellen' (Education, culture journalism and the new Sweden – About the Workers' Educational Association and the Swedish model), in Ellinor Melander (ed.), *Presshistorisk årsbok 2010* (Press Historical Yearbook 2010) (Enskede: Svensk presshistorisk förening, 2010), pp. 65–68.
22. Jonas Åkerstedt, *Den litterate arbetaren: Bildningssyn och studieverksamhet i ABF 1912–1930* (The Literate Worker: Educational Views and Study Activities in ABF 1912–1930) (Uppsala: Avdelningen för litteratursociologi vid litteraturhistoriska institutionen, 1967), pp. 62–104.
23. Donald Sassoon, *Hundra år av socialism: Vänstern i Europa under 1900-talet* (One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century) (Stockholm: Atlas, 2002), pp. 57–62.

24. A document, dated 27 June 1919, from the Swedish Justice Department shows that it was Nils Flyg who was given authorization to publish *The Children's Magazine*. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Stockholm, Arbetarbarnens Förbund, mapp Handlingar rörande barngruppen 1919–1924 (Workers' Children's Union, the folder Documents relating to children's clubs 1919–1924).
25. Sidebäck, *Kampen om barnets själ*, pp. 217–222.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–214.
27. *Instruktion för barnverksamheten* (Instruction for the children's activities) (Stockholm, 1920), pp. 6–7: Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Stockholm, Arbetarbarnens Förbund, mapp Handlingar rörande barngruppen 1919–1924.
28. Sidebäck, *Kampen om barnets själ*, p. 215.
29. Edwin Hoernle, 'Arbetet i de kommunistiska barngrupperna' (The work in the communist children's groups), *Proletär barnuppfostran (Proletarian Child Care)* (Göteborg: Röda bokförlaget, 1976), p. 181. The essay was originally published in 1923, p. 7.
30. Mally, *Culture of the Future*, p. 61.
31. *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barngruppen*, No. 1–2, 1924, pp. 1–2.
32. Pekka Paasonen, *Till alla kommunistiska ungdomsförbunds centralkommittéer: Om betydelsen av andra internationella ledarekonferensen för den kommunistiska barnrörelsen och de viktigaste närmaste uppgifterna* (For all the Communist Youth League Central Committees: The Meaning of the Second International Conference of Leaders of the Communist Children's Movement and the Most Immediate Tasks) dated Moscow, 19 December 1925, p. 5: Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Stockholm, Arbetarbarnens Förbund, mapp Handlingar från internationella konferenser 1922–1929 (Workers' Children's Union, the folder Documents from international conferences 1922–1929).
33. Gerda Malmros, *Rapport från andra internationella barnledarkonferensen i Moskwa, avhållen tiden den 23–30 sept. 1925* (Report of the Second International Children Leadership Conference in Moscow on 23–30 September 1925), p. 5: Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Stockholm, Arbetarbarnens Förbund, mapp Handlingar från internationella konferenser 1922–1929.
34. *Redogörelse över Arbetarbarnens Förbunds verksamhet under tiden från och med den 25 April 1925 till och med den 1 Juni 1926* (Description of the Workers' Children's Union's Activities During the Period from 25 April 1925 until 1 June 1926), p. 2: Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Stockholm, Arbetarbarnens Förbund, mapp Verksamhetsberättelser och rapporter från förbundet 1925–1930 (Workers' Children's Union, the folder Annual reports and reports from the federation 1925–1930).
35. *Pioneren* (The Pioneer), No. 1, 1924, p. 8; *Pioneren*, No. 2, 1924, p. 8; *Pioneren*, No. 1, 1925, p. 8.
36. *Teser till pressrapporten på den internationella barnkonferensen* (Theses to the Press Report on the International Children's Conference), p. 1: Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Stockholm, Arbetarbarnens Förbund, mapp Handlingar från internationella konferenser 1922–1929.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
38. Mally, *Culture of the Future*, pp. 180–182.
39. Ben Hellman, *Barn- och ungdomsboken i Sovjetryssland: Från oktoberrevolutionen 1917 till perestrojkan 1986* (Children's Books in Soviet Russia: From the

- October Revolution 1917 to Perestroika 1986) (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1991), pp. 17–19.
40. Hoernle, 'Arbetet i de kommunistiska barngrupperna', p. 202.
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
 43. *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barngillen*, No. 1, 1925, p. 2.
 44. Helmi Svensson, 'Den fattiga Stockholmskamraten' (The poor Stockholm comrade), *Den unge kamraten*, No. 3–4, 1924, p. 11.
 45. Ragnhild, 'En berättelse från Norrland' (A tale from the North), *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Arbetarbarnens förbund (The Young Comrade – Paper for the Workers' Children's Union)*, No. 12, 1927, p. 8.
 46. 'Mit hjem' (My home), *Barnebladet – Utgit av Norges kommunistiske ungdomsförbund (The Children's Paper – Published by the Communist Youth League of Norway)*, No. 2, 1921, p. 6.
 47. Arvid Morgan Dahl, 'Mit hjem', *Barnebladet*, No. 4, 1921, p. 4
 48. 'Ny præmieopgave' (New prize competition), *Barnebladet*, No. 9, 1922, p. 7.
 49. 'Ny præmieopgave', *Barnebladet*, No. 10, 1922, p. 3.
 50. 'Hvad vil du bli, naar du blir voksen?' (What do you want to be when you grow up?), *Barnebladet*, No. 11, 1922, pp. 3–4.
 51. Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations – Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929–1941*, p. 286.
 52. 'Ny præmieopgave', *Barnebladet*, No. 11, 1922, p. 4.
 53. 'Ny præmieopgave', *Barnebladet*, No. 1, 1923, p. 4.
 54. *Barnebladet*, No. 2, 1923, p. 4.
 55. *Teser till pressrapporten på den internationella barnkonferensen*, p. 2.
 56. Alfred Andersson, 'Brev till arbetets söner och döttrar', *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barngillen*, No. 1–2, 1924, p. 9.
 57. Andersson, 'Brev till arbetets söner och döttrar i Sverges land från Alfred Andersson', *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barngillen*, No. 3–4, 1924, p. 7.
 58. Three fundamental characteristics of Vladimir Lenin's concept of organization have been crystallized: (1) politics and organization is always interrelated as two sides of the same coin, (2) organization must be subordinated to politics and (3) organizational form should be flexible; it should be determined by situation and tactics. Lundquist, *The Party and the Masses*, pp. 110–111.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 60. Bolin, *Parti av ny typ?*, pp. 96–97.
 61. Oskar Tarchanov, 'Iljitsch skall vara med oss!' (Iljitsch will be with us!), *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barngillen*, No. 1–2, 1924, pp. 3–6, and Einar Nilsson, 'Kamrat Lenin är död!' (Comrade Lenin is dead), *Den unge kamraten – Organ för Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbundets barngillen*, No. 1–2, 1924, p. 7.
 62. Jimmy Vulovic, 'Kommunistiska berättelser för barn. Materialism, kollektivism och internationalism i Barntidningen 1919–1923' (Communist stories for children. Materialism, collectivism and internationalism in The Children's Magazine 1919–1923), in Bibi Jonsson, Magnus Nilsson, Birthe Sjöberg and Jimmy Vulovic (eds), *Från Nexø till Alakoski. Aspekter på nordisk*

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- No. 44, 1928; and 'Pionjärmötena' (The Pioneer meetings), *Svensk läraretidning*, No. 45, 1928.
111. 'Proletär uppfostran', *Svensk läraretidning*, No. 43, 1928, pp. 815–817.
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12

The Masses in Their Own Write (and Draw): *A Heroes' Register from the Great Cultural Revolution in Yunnan*

Michael Schoenhals

In August 1968, a 400-page anthology of reportage, essays, eulogies, poems, proclamations, drawings, photographs, letters and more was published in an initial print-run of 10,000 copies by a grand alliance of social organizations in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, southwest China. The anthology bore the title *For Truly Great Men Look to This Age Alone: A Heroes' Register from the Great Cultural Revolution in Yunnan*.¹ Students of Chinese, or revolutionary, literature are unlikely to have taken note of it: its aesthetic value was already limited when it first appeared, and it has not increased since. It hardly merits a mention in histories of literature.

Why, then, bother here to resurrect a book like this from the rubbish heap of history? Not because – and this much also needs to be said from the outset – dog-eared copies of it today fetch in China's antiquarian bookshops the equivalent of 13 months' wages earned by an average worker in 1968.² And not because of its status as a rare non-state-sponsored tome from the era of high Maoism, even though this aspect of *Heroes' Register* is in itself noteworthy. Prior to 1967, and again after 1969, only state-run publishing houses were able to legally publish books in socialist China. The editing, typesetting, printing and distribution of *Heroes' Register*, however, bypassed official channels: it was achieved instead with the help of students from one of Kunming's middle schools, employees of the *Yunnan Daily*, a lithographer's workshop and a local printing plant. On the title page, where state regulations called for the name of a duly registered publishing house (e.g. the Yunnan People's Press) to be visible, it merely said: 'Yunnan August 23rd Workers' General Headquarters'. And where the publisher's address, publishing permit number and a numeric book identifier were supposed to appear, there was only a blank space.³



Figure 12.1 Cover of *A Heroes' Register from the Great Cultural Revolution in Yunnan*. Xiang Zhaobin and Wang Xianjin (eds), *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao – Yunnan wenhua dageming yingxiongpu* (For Truly Great Men Look to This Age Alone: A Heroes' Register from the Great Cultural Revolution in Yunnan) (Kunming: 8.23 gongren zongbu, 1968)

The names of the two men that appear as joint editors on the book's title page are those of writers still active in 2010, more than four decades after *Heroes' Register* appeared. The web-page/blog of Xiang Zhaobin (1943–) is a self-promoting miscellany of information about his more recent literary endeavours (including those of writing *Star-Plucker*, a work of science fiction) and embedded web-TV clips, including one since deleted by the People's Republic of China (PRC) cyber censor but apparently showing

a dentist successfully alleviating toothache in her male patients with the help of little more than a generous display of impressive mammary assets.⁴ Wang Xianjin – who like Xiang in 1968 had only just graduated from the department of literature at Yunnan University – describes himself on his web-page/blog as a retired engineer and lover of fiction who ‘for the past couple of decades’ has been busy working on a magnum opus in twenty volumes entitled *The East is Red*. Aside from being hard at work on this as of yet unfinished work, he explains that he has also written *Famous People’s Love in Marriage*, remaindered copies of which interested readers are invited to purchase directly from the author.⁵ The above notwithstanding, neither Xiang’s nor Wang’s careers since the end of the Cultural Revolution warrant treating *Heroes’ Register* like anything along the lines of an early ‘lost masterpiece’.

The only one reason – which more than makes up for the absence of others – motivating serious interest in *Heroes’ Register* is the fact that it is one of no more than a handful of known self-documenting accounts by the ‘dictating masses’ themselves of the ‘dictatorship of the masses’ (as the Cultural Revolutionary socio-political order was indeed spoken of at the time in the PRC). When it was published, its young editors obviously had no way of knowing how this ambitious publishing endeavour would come to be viewed by future generations. It cannot even be taken for granted that they gave much thought at the time to how posterity – or historians – would one day view it, although its title does suggest that they cared. (The line ‘For Truly Great Men’ would have been recognized instantly by their contemporary readership as having been taken from Mao Zedong’s 1936 poem *Snow*.) Four decades on, *Heroes’ Register* is a work out of step with the current times: modern China bears no resemblance to what was expected or willed at the time the anthology was written, and the present seems happy, most of the time, not to be reminded of what the past may once have been like.

Mass dictatorship

As a by-product of how historians and non-historians alike tend to periodicize the first three decades of the PRC, mass dictatorship as a subject – if it is raised at all – is almost invariably conflated with the Cultural Revolution and in particular with what *The Cambridge History of China* refers to as its ‘manic phase of ... turmoil’.⁶ In actuality, as the unprocessed documentary record shows, such conflation, while convenient, fails to accurately account for the origins of the socio-political praxis of mass dictatorship – as distinct from the underpinnings of Mao Zedong’s

cultural revolutionary endeavour as a whole. The political and quasi-legal rationale for mass dictatorship had first been formulated by two of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) most senior legal (rather than political) figures already in 1963. In a joint statement to the 4th session of the 2nd National People's Congress which met in late November of that year, Xie Juezai, Chief Justice of the Supreme Peoples' Court, and Zhang Dingcheng, Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, expanded on what they identified as 'complex issues where contradictions between ourselves and the enemy combine with contradictions among the people'. Chinese society, they said, was full of such issues:

In quantitative terms, they make up a far larger number than that of [legal cases] processed by the judicial organs under normal circumstances. If one were to rely purely on the resources of the judicial organs, and simply employ the means of legal punishment, then one would not be able to handle them well. To fundamentally resolve them would prove impossible. The only way to resolve these problems is by relying on mass movements and a struggle – protracted and complex – conducted by the broad masses in concert with the judicial organs.⁷

Mao Zedong's party leadership, Xie and Zhang continued, was adamant that the individuals implicated in these 'complex issues' were to be 'brought under control and transformed' by relying first and foremost on the 'popular masses':

This is to say, [these individuals] are to be brought under control by way of a movement in which the masses have been boldly aroused and present the facts, reason things out, and persuade by way of reasoning and struggle. Furthermore, after [these individuals] have been struggled, it is the masses that are to be relied upon to subject them to dictatorship, to supervise and transform them.⁸

As envisaged here, dictatorship bore little resemblance to any operation of a Big Brother-like state machinery – brutally anonymous and impersonal in its modernity. Rather, it would in the Cultural Revolution prove to be the dark side of direct democracy: the unfettered 'mass' application of coercive powers devolved to 'grass roots' communities from and by the state.

When the Cultural Revolution kicked into high gear in August 1966, it actualized Xie's and Zhang's shift *away from* what today might be

seen as a conventional autocratic dictatorship (that is, one satisfying the definition proposed by the world's largest and most widely used encyclopaedia⁹) towards one mediated primarily, if not exclusively, by complicit 'masses'. The latter would over the next two-and-a-half years be free – no, actively encouraged by Mao Zedong and his comrades-in-arms – to subject those whom they regarded as deserving enemies to a broad range of innovative forms of dictatorship. Young activists were particularly enthused by sweeping declarations like the following, occurring in a communiqué from the CCP Central Committee's 11th Plenum, published in the *People's Daily* on 14 August 1966:

The Plenary Session holds that the key to the success of this Great Cultural Revolution is to have faith in the masses, rely on them, boldly arouse them and respect their initiative. ... Oppose the creation of a lot of restrictions to tie the hands of the masses. Don't be overlords or stand above the masses, blindly ordering them about.¹⁰

By the winter of 1967, a new song entitled simply 'Revolutionary Dictatorship' (a march in C major composed by the well-known People's Liberation Army officer/composer Tian Guang), with lyrics lifted verbatim from the writings of Mao, appeared in a popular Shanghai songbook, with over 100,000 copies published 'for the broad masses'.¹¹ At the CCP's 9th National Congress, which met in April 1969, Mao's chosen successor as party chairman and 'closest comrade-in-arms', Minister of Defence Lin Biao, delivered a retrospective on the movement he had helped launch. In the part of his report which amounted to a run-down of the specifics of the Cultural Revolution, he re-affirmed: 'We rely mainly on the broad masses of the people in exercising dictatorship over the enemy.'¹²

A hybrid record

Heroes' Register is a record in words and images from and of the years when the 'broad masses of the people' in Yunnan attempted to 'exercise dictatorship over the enemy'. It is not a purely factual record, nor is it fiction, but something more appropriately described, perhaps, as faction – that hybrid literary form about which the Canadian-American writer Witold Rybczynski once remarked 'Faction is stranger than fiction.'¹³ Like a docudrama script, the texts and images in *Heroes' Register* would seem to selectively re-enact dramatic events. Here and there, snippets of 'raw' data are added, as is commentary purporting to explain and illustrate 'what it all means!'

Had it been a state-sponsored publication, *Heroes' Register* would have been vetted for political correctness in accordance with the regulations and directives emanating from the communist party authorities. Those regulations had always been very strict. On the supreme Maoist meta-level of epistemological reasoning, they set out to define and distinguish between 'fragrant flowers and poisonous weeds'.¹⁴ On the base level of the state's *Indices* as kept and updated locally, they amounted to crude labelling exercises: 'Sensationalist hyping of violent and murderous children' (reason for banning in 1956 a cartoon entitled *Band of Heroes and the Brave*) or 'Slanders the People's Liberation Army' (motive for the withdrawal in the mid-1950s of *The Heroic Death of Zhang Xinfu* from circulation in Beijing libraries).¹⁵ In 1968, the regulations were in a state of induced Cultural Revolutionary flux, which meant that publishing and distributing almost anything other than the words or images of Mao Zedong was fraught with great authorial and editorial danger. As a result, while the total number of Chinese journals in the humanities, literature and arts duly appearing with permission of the authorities had been 127 in 1965, that number had by 1968 been reduced to zero.¹⁶

Like the PRC state, the communist party was also dysfunctional in 1968: in 1981, some senior party members would even claim, looking back, that 'in the "Great Cultural Revolution", the party had ceased to exist'.¹⁷ Lest this be assumed to mean that any anarchic extraordinary vetting – censorship or self-censorship – of what appeared in print by other political actors was, as a result, somehow more liberal or less draconian, it has to be stressed that this proved not to be the case. 'Mass dictatorship' may, in this respect, have been a less effective political regimen, but certainly not one less ambitious. At times the results bordered on the absurd. In the spring of 1968, customers in nine different provinces and cities across China complained to the staff of state-run bookshops about an official colour print showing Mao Zedong waving to Red Guards from the Gate of Heavenly Peace in which, they insisted, the words 'revisionist party' (*xiudang*) could clearly be made out in the strands of hair on the CCP Chairman's head. An investigation of the original photograph on which the poster was based (as well as of the original lithographic plates from which it had been printed) found no evidence of anything untoward. A notification went out from Beijing to bookshops, ordering them *not* to suspend sales of the poster, as well as instructing them to inform people who might insist otherwise that it did *not* say 'revisionist party' on Mao Zedong's head.¹⁸

Heroic emotions

The dominant emotional tenor of the self-documenting literary contributions to *Heroes' Register* is – perhaps not surprisingly – that of heroism. Passionately felt, it is rarely expressed in a language that deserves to be called beautiful, or with words seemingly chosen with great care. Rather, it is raw, unmediated and often angry – and it is as such that it oozes from the pages. Fury, righteous indignation and heroic pathos characterize the eulogies and tributes to the fallen heroes of one's own 'mass' organization. Frustration, disappointment and a curiously naïve fearlessness all find expression in poems like the one translated below, composed collectively by students at the Kunming Institute of Engineering on 23 August 1966. Entitled 'Surrounded and Cursed, We Must Fight for the Truth', it is a clarion call to action and youthful rebellion against the *ancien régime* of the pre-Cultural Revolutionary communist party: in effect, given its date and what happened in the months that followed, it hints at what the 'dictatorship of the masses' would be about:

Kick those needless worries,
lose those pointless illusions.

Piss off, you...
paltry selfish distractions!

Piss off, you...
shameful personal emotions!

Become a real revolutionary,
fearing neither heaven nor earth.

Should I die, then so be it!

* * *

Some curse and call us 'counter-revolutionary',
call us 'terrible',
and say we 'direct our spearhead against the party'.

That is nonsense,
slander!

We have boundless love,
for our great leader Chairman Mao!

We guard with our lives,
the Party Centre headed by Chairman Mao!

Only those
ghosts and goblins who bear not the rays of the sun,
will attack in vain our great leader Chairman Mao,
and seek to topple the great Chinese Communist Party.

We will never respond,
but will drag out all the ox-ghosts and snake-demons,
and beat them to a pulp!

* * *

Some say we 'make trouble'.
Yes!

All of those
old ideas and old culture,
old customs and old habits!
They deserve trouble,
the more, the better!
Topple them, let them bite the dust,
trample them underfoot,
and with all your might, shout aloud:
'We rebel against you!'
We are the sworn enemies of the 'four olds',
promoting the 'four new' with righteous ardour!

* * *

For our beloved Chairman Mao,
for our beloved Party Centre,
we will mend our ways at a moment's notice,
should they not accord with the people's interest!
Only the truth accords with the people's interest,
and we swear to die,
in battle to defend the truth!

For our beloved Chairman Mao,
for our beloved Party Centre,
will single out the enemy,
clearly tell right from wrong,
and defy death.

Charge! Charge!! Charge!!!¹⁹

By the time a majority of the contributions to *Heroes' Register* came to be written, *this* particular 'fight' – part anticipated, part imagined – had already been won. By 1968, these self-styled university student rebels could look back on two hard but successful years of far more than simply telling their personal emotions or anyone who still dared to call them 'counter-revolutionary' to 'piss off'! They had been years dominated by the spectre of death; other poems in *Heroes' Register* remember fallen fighters without whose ultimate sacrifices the 'fight for the truth' would surely have been doomed.²⁰

Violent language

The vocabulary, as distinct from the tenor, of *Heroes' Register* is almost entirely one of violence. As such, it embodies the reality in which the contributing authors lived and wrote. Later conservative estimates of the total number of persons in Yunnan whose so-called 'abnormal deaths' (*fei zhengchang siwang*) between April 1967 and August 1968 may be attributed to clashes between armed segments of the civilian population were in excess of 5,000.²¹

Yet, there was far more to the use of metaphors picked from the cluster 'politics is war' (or the cluster 'a revolution is not a dinner party' – as Mao was famously quoted as saying in the *Little Red Book*) than mere passive portrayal, illustration or 'factional' representation of lived realities. Also at work in the choice of language employed by members of 'mass' organizations was what cultural historian Lynn Hunt identified in the case of the French Revolution as a power-constituting process:

[P]olitical language could be used rhetorically to build a sense of community and at the same time establish new fields of social, political, and cultural struggle – that is, make possible unity and difference at the same time. ... [L]inguistic practice, rather than simply reflecting social reality, could actively be an instrument of (or constitute) power. ... Words did not just reflect social and political reality; they were instruments for transforming reality.²²

In 1968, communication in Yunnan's 'mass dictatorship' aimed at persuading the self as well as the other that political activity *was* analogous to revolutionary war by extraordinary means (means that were civilized (*wen*) or by comparison 'civil' – as in Mao's injunction to 'struggle by reasoning and not by coercion or force'²³) and that people holding political views different from 'us' were the enemy. Among the youth in particular, *this* 'understanding and experience' which aimed at 'transforming ... social and political reality' through quasi-martial behaviour had, by the time *Heroes' Register* appeared in print, prevailed for quite some time.

One way of discovering just what constituted the ratified vocabulary in which communication increasingly took place is by looking at the attempts made at the time to produce Chinese-English 'glosses' of the metaphors and language of Cultural Revolutionary 'struggle by reasoning'. In the spring of 1968, one such attempt produced the 300-page *Handbook of Commonly Used Terms in the Great Proletarian Cultural*

Revolution (Chinese-English), edited by Crossing the Big River and Red Flag, two obscure self-constituted social organizations based in Beijing colleges.²⁴ Another was the remarkable 600-page volume entitled *The May 7 Collection of Terms & Expressions (Chinese-English)*, edited by 15 'revolutionary teachers and students' of the Central China Teachers Institute's Foreign Languages Department in the city of Wuhan in 1968. In their preface, they introduce themselves as 'a new revolutionary contingent, one that does not include any stinking authorities who have studied in England or America, or any ugly and ferocious professors or PhD scholars, and one which makes no use of piles of mildewed, rotten, and smelly old books'.²⁵

The better part of the *May 7 Collection* lists some 6,700 terms and expressions 'in current use'. As explained by the editors in their brief preface, 'our principle has been mainly to list positive and commonly used political terminology, but also to include a small amount of negative stuff (*fanmiande dongxi*).' The latter so-called 'negative terminology', the editors explained, 'has been put in quotation marks throughout'.²⁶ The word 'war', of course, was selected for inclusion as an independent entry and was *not* put in quotation marks. What happened to the word 'peace' (*heping*), however, was a different story altogether. Perhaps most telling is the simple fact that *by itself*, it did not even warrant a glossary entry. In a dictatorship, peace could perhaps be dispensed with – so it might appear! But not quite, as there was still an entry made up of 14 longer words or expressions each beginning with the characters *heping*. Here is a sample:

- '*heping gongchu*' 'peaceful coexistence'
- '*heping jingsai*' 'peaceful competition'
- '*heping guodu*' 'peaceful transition'
- '*heping yanbian*' 'peaceful evolution'
- '*heping shizhe*' 'peace emissary'
- '*heping gongchu wuxiang yuanze*' 'the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence'
- '*heping xiangchu*' 'to live at peace with; to live together with ... in peace'
- '*heping qipian*' 'peace hoax'
- '*hetan*' 'peaceful negotiations'
- '*hetan pianju*' 'peaceful negotiations' plot; 'peace talks fraud'²⁷

The degree of suspicion with which 'peaceful' activities or states were viewed by the editors is illustrated by the fact that a full half of the

14 examples involved quotation marks, thus signalling the presence of 'negative stuff'. A crude quantitative assessment of language like this, of course, fails to bring out the creative element with which real people in real communicative settings speak or write, listen or read; but it is worth noting all the same that there had been *no* similar bias at work in state-sponsored pre-Cultural Revolutionary glosses, such as the *Chinese-English Glossary of Current Affairs Words and Phrases* compiled in 1964 by the New China News Agency.²⁸

'Hitler Reincarnate!' – The uncompromising dictatorship of the masses

Nowhere in *Heroes' Register* is the association of 'peaceful' with 'negative stuff' more striking than in the factional narratives in which the 'August 23rd' alliance – that had organized and sponsored the publication – describes 'mass dictatorship' in action. In all of these stories, the confrontation is in actuality one between different segments of the 'masses', although – as one would expect – the opposing side over which dictatorship is, in one form or other, more or less effectively exercised, is implicitly understood to be the 'anti-mass'. The reference to the Nazi 'Führer' in the curious title of the vivid 20-page-long 'Hitler Reincarnate! The August 23rd Battle Flag Flies Forever: A Glorious Epic of Heroic Resistance Mounted in Defence of East Wind Mansion by the Heroic August 23rd Warriors' (by authors writing under the name Perilous Peaks) is typical, referring as it does to the members of the 'Artillery' faction – the sworn enemy of 'August 23rd'.²⁹ Once designated reincarnate National Socialists, anything other than their total subjugation by violent means could easily be construed as appeasement, and 'peaceful coexistence' (as in the aforementioned glossary) would certainly have become, almost automatically, 'negative stuff'.

In 'Hitler Reincarnate!' the story revolves around East Wind Mansion, a large department store built in 1961 and located on a major intersection in downtown Kunming. As the 'Artillery' and 'August 23rd' factions clash in December 1967 over control of the building, a stand-off emerges: in the words of Perilous Peak, a 'counter-revolutionary political incident begins to unfold', comparable to the 'burning down of the *Reichstagsgebäude*'!³⁰ As experienced from inside East Wind Mansion by 34 members of the 'August 23rd' faction (two ordinary store employees, the rest men and women with links to the construction company that had built the Mansion), the stand-off was about being at the receiving end of violence perpetrated by 'ruffians' and 'thugs' (*baotou*), which was

how Perilous Peak referred to the masses belonging to the 'Artillery' faction:

At eleven a.m., the thugs again had a full meal of rice, and ate their fill. When they realized that this despicable act of theirs did not in the least deter our August 23rd fighters, determined like steel to hold out and defend the East Wind Mansion, they immediately launched yet another frenzied attack. Our August 23rd fighters were only able to repel them by using some of our very last bullets and hand-grenades. By two p.m., when our August 23rd fighters only had about a dozen rounds of machine gun ammunition left, the thugs blared out the following from their transistorized amplifiers: 'August bandits holding the Mansion: you will soon be out of bullets, so hurry up and capitulate, hand over your weapons, and you will not be killed!' Our August 23rd fighters holding the Mansion responded by shouting down at them from the roof: 'To defend Chairman Mao's revolutionary line is no crime! To protect the property of the state is no crime! We would rather die than capitulate!'³¹

As one would expect in a book called *Heroes' Register*, the masses from the August 23rd faction in the story stubbornly resist a number of additional offers to exit the East Wind Mansion and 'capitulate' to the Artillery faction. The ensuing fire fight is depicted in pencil drawings like figure 12.2, one of many accompanying 'Hitler Reincarnate!' (others are discussed below). The banner flying from the roof is that of August 23rd.

The dictatorship of the masses in the story soon took its predictable climactic turn from bad to lethal worse:

More bandits emerged from below and charged at the fighting girls with their bayonets. 'Long live Chairman Mao!' the girls shouted at the top of their lungs as they fell in a pool of blood. ... Three male fighters were no longer in a position to pull back to the fourth floor, when one of them, Wang Anlong, shouted 'Jump from the windows and break out!' The three hit the ground outside after having jumped from the third floor ...³²

By the end of 'Hitler Reincarnate!' scores of masses on all sides are dead and wounded. Defeated in the sense of having had to give up control of the East Wind Mansion to the Artillery faction, the August 23rd authors pledge to 'ultimately attain the final victory of the Great Proletarian

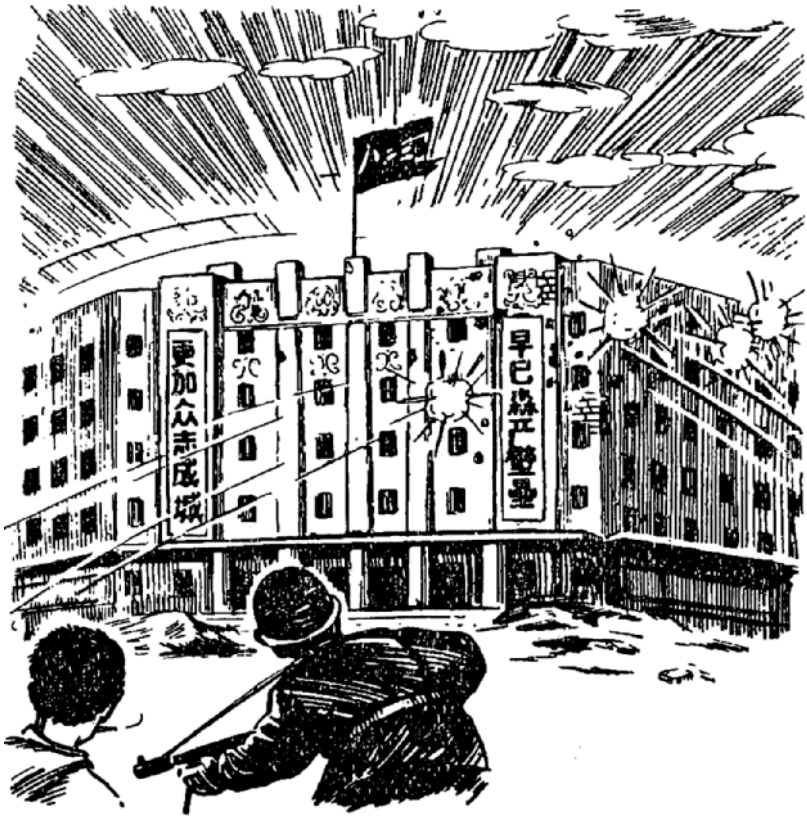


Figure 12.2 East Wind Mansion. Xiang and Wang, p. 139

Cultural Revolution in the Spring City [Kunming] by sacrificing our warm blood and our lives! The fighters of August 23rd can never be exterminated! The fighting banner of August 23rd will fly for all eternity!³³

‘Days and Nights in the Monsters’ Den’ – The dictatorship of the masses victorious

As suggested earlier, the content of *Heroes’ Register* falls outside the realm of the purely factual, without for that matter being entirely fictional. It has since 1968 been selectively mined for nuggets of ‘information’ on the mass politics of the Cultural Revolution in Yunnan, most

notably by the official biographers of leading politicians whom both the Artillery and August 23rd factions had viewed as personifications of all that was wrong with the 'old' pre-1966 order.³⁴ Possibly because of the limitations on official history writing imposed by the CCP since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the trope in which events are told is almost always that of tragedy.

Exactly what the authors of some of the longer stories told in *Heroes' Register* expected their audience to make of them will probably never be known. On the one hand, it is clear that they sought to present a picture of August 23rd as 'together with the broad revolutionary masses of the entire province, holding high the great red banner of Mao Zedong Thought ...', which, translated into a code less impenetrable 40 years later, meant as committed defenders of what they believed to be the CCP Chairman's intentions for Yunnan.³⁵ On the other hand, their narrative contains so many unexplained ruptures and strange turns of events; the immediate reaction of a critical (by no means hostile, possibly even sympathetic) reader today is likely to be one of guarded incredulity. Take, for example, the account of how a group of members of the August 23rd faction imprisoned by the Artillery faction managed not only to survive but win one concession after the other from their captors in 'Days and Nights in the Monsters' Den', written under the pseudonym Raging Billows.³⁶ Were it ever to appear in full in an English translation, it might well provoke a debate in the public sphere of literature similar to that which followed the reprint some years ago of Slavomir Rawicz's *The Long walk: The True Story of a Trek to Freedom*.³⁷ One reader called this curious tale of Stalin's Soviet Union 'A Good Yarn', while another insisted 'IT'S ALL TRUE' (capital letters in original); one reader maintained 'The heart tells the truth', while yet another cautioned visitors to Amazon.com's website to 'Think while you read!'³⁸

In the first seven brief chapters of 'Days and Nights in the Monsters' Den', members of the August 23rd faction endure much suffering at the hands of their captors in the make-shift 'concentration camps' where they find themselves. They are tortured with electricity, beaten, run over by a truck, raped, branded with red-hot iron rods and used for target practice with live ammunition. August 23rd are, furthermore, accused of having, prior to being incarcerated, 'cut out and devoured' the hearts as well as the eyes of their political opponents. Then, in the eighth and final chapter, the 300 August 23rd fighters 'and revolutionary masses' inside 'Emerald Lake Concentration Camp' in central Kunming manage to change their own circumstances for the better. The first change

is achieved by way of little more than stubborn refusal, resistance and perseverance in adversity:

First came the fight to have our blindfolds removed. If one's eyes are covered for a long period, not only will it seriously injure the eyes, but – more importantly – since one is totally in the dark, one will be incapable of doing just about anything. Therefore, we protested vigorously and demanded that we be allowed to see. When our guards refused to come and remove the blindfolds, we took action ourselves; when the gangsters came to grab [those responsible], everybody moved forward to hold them back. The gangsters were at a loss, and had no choice but to let us remove the blindfolds.³⁹

Just why the 'gangsters were at a loss' is left unexplained. As a succession of 'battles' begin to unfold, it is as if what are presented as actual events were, in fact, never really more than metaphorical representations of the attainment of basic human rights – the first one, the removal of the blindfolds, being the right to see reality for what it really is. Noteworthy in this context is the fact that the same month *Heroes' Register* appeared, Kunming witnessed an extremely rare (possibly the only) example of local officials actually employing the discourse of human rights to comment on the events like those it depicted. It blamed disruption and violence on the machinations of a 'tiny handful of class enemies', and called for an immediate end to what it labelled 'human rights violations by mass organizations'.⁴⁰

The second 'battle' in 'Days and Nights in the Monsters' Den' centres on the human right to food. August 23rd is again victorious, but the reader, here too, is left with no clear idea of why or how:

Once that battle had been won, a second one was fought, to improve the food. Those gangsters sought on purpose to ruin the health of the August 23rd fighters and the masses they had locked up. In addition to applying various barbarous forms of torture, they also sought to starve them. Sometimes they would give them no food for a whole day, or just give them some cold rice or cold buns. The only vegetables they gave them consisted of a few grains of bean paste that was simply inedible. They only gave them two dozen bowls to eat from, so when the time came, people had to take turns. It really was even worse than [in the Guomindang wartime prisons] Zhazidong and Baigongguan. So fellow sufferers again joined forces in struggle, demanding and in the end securing the right to two proper meals

a day. Although the vegetables were still downright awful, it was still a lot better than those pitiful grains of bean paste.⁴¹

The vague and sweeping references here and above to successful 'demands' and 'protests' suggests that very possibly, concealed from the reader, there had also been days and nights of negotiations between the Artillery and August 23rd factions: a variant, in other words, of the 'peace talks' fraud' classified by the *May 7 Collection* as 'negative stuff'.

While it might appear puzzling today that a third 'battle' rapidly ensued over the right to 'study' (that is, to read and recite aloud) the writings of CCP Chairman Mao Zedong, it was nonetheless one that barely merited an explanation at the time. Lest it be assumed that this 'right' was regarded as purely political, it should be pointed out that in 1968, to the incarcerated August 23rd fighters, Mao's works were the closest thing they had to a communist equivalent of what the *Quoran* has for the past decade been to Muslims imprisoned by the United States and its allies since the start of the Global War On Terrorism.⁴² Witness the following excerpt from the lyrics of a 'call-and-response' duet written sometime in 1968–1969 for, and presumably performed at least once by, college students in Wuhan:

A: Books!

A and B together: Chairman Mao's books are

A: swords that slay demons,

B: hatchets that cut up mountains,

A: the high aspirations of 700 million people,

B: a grand map unfolding, of mountains and rivers without end.⁴³

The above represents just a small sample of the lyrics which run to 73 lines in total. In 'Days and Nights in the Monsters' Den', the almost divine power accorded to the words of Mao had, by the time of the third 'battle', already played an important role on a number of occasions: so, for example, on the third day of a hunger strike, an August 23rd fighter is said to have told himself that 'our heads may roll, our blood may flow, but we will not abandon Mao Zedong Thought ...' and then proceeded to recite defiantly *but in silence* Mao's words 'Be resolute and unafraid of sacrifice, and you will surmount every difficulty to win victory!'⁴⁴ (The ultimate fate of the hunger striker is not revealed in the story, but it is implied that he died a hero's death.)

Here is the description, then, of the August 23rd faction's battle in the Emerald Lake Concentration Camp over the right, not merely to recite

the words of Mao in silence to oneself, but to do so in chorus and aloud to everyone within earshot:

After that second victory, yet another battle was fought: to permit the study of Chairman Mao's *Quotations* and the singing of revolutionary songs. This really hit the gangsters in their most vulnerable spot. Although they were very much afraid, they did not dare to put up resistance right up front. In the end, they opted for a partial ban, curtailing the right to study certain quotations, like 'Thousands upon thousands of martyrs have heroically laid down their lives for the people; let us hold their banner high and march ahead along the path crimson with their blood!' They never once permitted the study of this particular quotation, and this fully exposed just how hollow those gangsters were deep inside. But, Mao Zedong Thought is an invincible force, and there is no power that will succeed in confining or strangling it. The gangsters did not permit study, yet the fellow sufferers persisted in studying, and in the end there was nothing [the gangsters] could do about it.⁴⁵

Once they had ceded the right to control over the words of Mao, things very swiftly went downhill for the 'monsters' who ran the camp. The story continues:

And so the concentration camp suddenly livened up. Every morning, people would together read aloud from Chairman Mao's *Quotations*, and together sing revolutionary songs. They would employ her [quotations and songs] to strengthen the fighting will of the fellow sufferers; they would employ her to inspire the confidence of fellow sufferers in victory; they would employ her to seek to quickly win over the hoodwinked fighters of the Artillery Regiment; they would employ her as a sharp weapon with which to attack the stubborn enemy with full force! With Mao Zedong Thought as their guide to action and weapon in combat, the confidence of the fellow sufferers grew a hundred-fold, and they went from victory to victory.⁴⁶

The story does not end here. In victory, the authors remember the leader of the August 23rd fighters in the concentration camp (an ordinary worker and communist party member by the name of Xu Fenglin) who had died a hero's death earlier in the story. A final couple of paragraphs remind the reader one last time of the unspeakable suffering he and others had endured in the 'Monsters' Den' and how great their sacrifices had been.

Pencil Drawings

Heroes' Register, as noted already, contains more than just text. In addition to one full colour plate showing Mao Zedong in uniform waving to the crowds below from the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing, there are 48 black and white photographs between its covers, most, but not all, of them serving as illustrations to specific texts. 'January Hurricane' – a reportage from 'mass' rallies denouncing and physically humiliating members of the pre-1967 provincial leadership – is accompanied by photographs of party secretaries Yan Hongyan and Zhao Jianmin taken at the rallies in question. In line with a symbolic convention firmly adhered to in such contexts after 1949, a cross ('x') has been drawn on the bodies of the two men in the photographs, signifying that they were enemies or 'non-people'.⁴⁷ The reportage 'Seen and Heard during the January 16th Counter-Revolutionary Xiaguan Massacre' is accompanied by photographs of the charred remains of buildings. Formal portraits (including of the above-mentioned worker Xu Fenglin) accompany many of the eulogies for the fallen August 23rd fighters.

Perhaps more interesting than the photographs themselves, and certainly open to a far wider range of interpretation as to their symbolic significance, are the altogether 27 different pencil drawings that illustrate events in the stories told, of which no actual photographs were to be had. A selection are reproduced here: the first two accompanied the 'Days and Nights in the Monsters' Den' excerpted above. Figure 12.3 shows the heroic death of a member of the August 23rd faction defying the 'monsters' who had imprisoned her. Armed with nothing more than a copy of *Quotations* and shouting 'Long Live Chairman Mao!' she goes down in a hail of bullets in full view of her comrades who remain behind bars. Figure 12.4 shows young students in the 'Monsters' Den' being shielded by Xu Fenglin in a confrontation. 'Stop!' he shouts at the two armed 'monsters' approaching the group. When they do, he tells them:

You're not allowed to strike the masses! You're not allowed to strike the old workers! You're not allowed to strike the female comrades! You're not allowed to strike the children! If you're going to strike someone, come and strike me. If you're going to execute someone, then let it be me. I am Xu Fenglin, standing committee member of the 30 November organization. I take complete responsibility!⁴⁸

The confrontation momentarily escalates as the unarmed Xu moves slowly forward, advancing towards the terrified 'monsters'. They – revolvers and



Figure 12.3 Death of a member of the August 23rd faction. Xiang and Wang, p. 240

daggers at the ready – are stared down by him, however, and so reveal themselves to be little more than ‘tiny maggots’ in human guise. But rather than stomp on them, as the story suggests he could easily have done, and ‘make mincemeat out of them’, Xu lets them fetch their boss. The boss, whose way of speaking is that of someone who still lives in, or at the very least yearns to return to, a pre-revolutionary world, invites ‘Mr. Xu’ to step out to discuss matters. Xu is never seen or heard from again, but the memory of his heroism is said to have been forever etched into the memory of those masses, the old workers, female comrades and children, he had so fearlessly protected.⁴⁹

Figure 12.5 is one of half a dozen accompanying ‘Hitler Reincarnate!’ It purports to show three teenage girls defending the East Wind Mansion confronting one of their attackers, a curiously Semitic-looking man described in the text as ‘the bandit with the crooked nose’. In the story, the girls are told to raise their hands above their heads and capitulate, something they refuse to do. When instead they proceed to



Figure 12.4 The masses confronting the masses. Xiang and Wang, p. 243

counter-attack by reciting carefully chosen quotations from the works of Chairman Mao, they are told by 'the bandit with the crooked nose' in no uncertain terms to shut up or face death or have their tongues cut off! One 16-year-old girl flatly refuses, and is 'promptly dragged off to a room on the fifth floor ...' (ellipsis points in original). What happens to her there is anyone's guess.⁵⁰

In the text of 'Hitler Reincarnate!' a Chinese Korean War veteran compares the behaviour of the 'bandits' confronting the girls just mentioned with the brutality of Yankee 'imperialist' soldiers in Korea. An 'old lady', meanwhile, shares her impression of the young girls: 'I have lived to be more than sixty years old, and have never seen girls like these, not the least bit afraid of dying!' The difference between the women in *Heroes' Register* and those appearing on the web-pages of its sexagenarian editors today could hardly be more striking.⁵¹ Figure 12.6, finally, shows the climax of 'Hitler Reincarnate!' with a wounded girl defiantly holding high the banner of her 'mass organization' as she confronts the armed 'bandits' who had attempted, in vain, to seize control of East Wind Mansion.⁵²



Figure 12.5 The masses and the 'bandit with the crooked nose.' Xiang and Wang, p. 152

Conclusion

Admittedly, the stories and images collected by Xiang and Wang in *Heroes' Register* are wanting in coherence: yet much of the meaning of the masses in their own write (and draw) is aleatory, in giving chance a piece of the marketplace of ideals where we rummage in times of confusion. We need to remind ourselves that, as J. G. A. Pocock pointed out in *Politics, Language, & Time*, 'it is as possible in principle that a thinker fails to achieve coherence as that he succeeds in achieving it; and when this becomes a historical question, it is obviously no part of the historian's business to furnish his author with a degree of coherence he did not in fact achieve.'⁵³

The timing of the publication of *Heroes' Register* was not accidental. It was made to coincide with what in twenty-first century cable news parlance would be called the 'cessation of major hostilities' in Kunming. On 13 August 1968, the belated creation of an entirely new provincial administration, the Yunnan Revolutionary Committee, finally took



Figure 12.6 Mass dictatorship victorious! Xiang and Wang, p. 154

place. Decrees emanating from no less an authority than the national government in Beijing made the party central's ratification of the composition of the committee conditional upon the ear-marking of a significant number of its seats for 'representatives of the revolutionary masses'.⁵⁴ The message conveyed in the partisan accounts in *Heroes' Register* was, of course, that the only really qualified and deserving 'masses' henceforth to be 'represented' in bodies of political power were members of the August 23rd, and not the Artillery, faction. This is how the editors in their postscript described those members who at this

point saw themselves as the true winners of the Cultural Revolution: 'If the blue sky were a sheet of paper, it would still be too small to write down all the emotions of esteem and boundless loyalty toward Chairman Mao felt by the August 23rd fighters; if the ocean were a fountain of ink, it would still not suffice to write down all the songs of heroic and boundless loyalty toward Chairman Mao felt by the August 23rd fighters.'⁵⁵

Well into the early 1970s, *Heroes' Register* would have continued to receive endorsement from the political authorities. For all their aesthetic and artistic flaws, the stories told in words and images remained, on the whole, *politically* correct. And, as Mao Zedong himself had famously declared at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in 1942:

Politics cannot be equated with art, nor can a general world outlook be equated with a method of artistic creation and criticism. We deny not only that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable political criterion, but also that there is an abstract and absolutely unchangeable artistic criterion; each class in every class society has its own political and artistic criteria. But all classes in all class societies invariably put the political criterion first and the artistic criterion second.⁵⁶

A handful of the most prominent representatives of the 'masses' of Yunnan whose exploits were recorded in *Heroes' Register* made it onto the standing committee of the Yunnan Revolutionary Committee and managed to survive in power through the upheavals of the first half of the 1970s, until the death of Mao Zedong in the autumn of 1976. Then, with the ascendancy of a new national leadership that would soon lead PRC politics away from revolution and towards 'reform', their time came to an ignominious end: they were charged with having plotted to overthrow the government and sentenced to extended prison terms.⁵⁷ The 'mass dictatorship' of 1968 was now denounced as a fatally flawed experiment, and the Cultural Revolution as a whole was said to have been based on an 'entirely erroneous appraisal of the prevailing class relations and political situation in the Party and state'.⁵⁸ It was probably early on in the post-Mao era that most of the 10,000 copies of *Heroes' Register* would have found their way to recycling stations to be pulped and made into new – now blank – sheets of paper. More than once, the CCP Central Propaganda Department in Beijing called on ordinary people to dispose of Cultural Revolutionary artefacts like it.⁵⁹

When the stories were put in writing, the cartoons drawn and the poems composed, *Heroes' Register* was relevant to the time. When the

late CCP chairman was reduced from his divine status to that of being humanly fallible, and his statements in support of 'mass dictatorship' made void, the anthology became obsolete. Nonetheless, ten or fifteen years after its publication, local readers would still have been in a position to speak with some authority on how, where and when it blended fact and fiction. What is impossible to say is at what later date it became what it arguably is today, not only to non-Chinese readers but to the hundreds of millions of Chinese born after 1968, after the Cultural Revolution and after the beginning of 'reform'. It does after all bear out beautifully the mature Leo Colston's observation that 'the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.'⁶⁰

Notes

1. Xiang Zhaobin and Wang Xianjin (eds), *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao – Yunnan wenhua dageming yingxiongpu* (For Truly Great Men Look to This Age Alone: A Heroes' Register from the Great Cultural Revolution in Yunnan) (Kunming: 8.23 gongren zongbu, 1968).
2. <http://book.kongfz.com/10577/80673910/> (accessed on 16 May 2010).
3. Compare Chuban zongshu, 'Guanyu tushu banben jilu de guiding' (Regulations Governing the Recording of Bibliographical Information) (1 April 1954), in *Chuban gongzuo wenjian chubian (1949–1957)* (First Collection of Publishing Work Documents (1949–1957)) (Beijing: Wenhua chuban shiye guanliju, 1958), pp. 157–162.
4. <http://blog.sina.com.cn/xiangzhaobin> (accessed on 16 May 2010).
5. <http://blog.readnovel.com/user/844794.html> (accessed on 16 May 2010).
6. Harry Harding, 'The Chinese State in Crisis', in Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 15, The People's Republic, Part 2: Revolutions within the Chinese Revolution 1966–1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 215.
7. 'Jinyibu yikao qunzhong zuohao sifa gongzuo' (Rely Even More on the Masses and Manage Judicial Work Well), *Gongan jianshe* (Public Security Construction), No. 555 (21 January 1964), p. 11.
8. Ibid.
9. On Wikipedia as a historian's resource, see Michael Schoenhals and Ulf Zander, 'Var och en sin egen redigerare: Wikipedia som problem och möjlighet i undervisningen' (Everyone His Own Editor: Problems and Possibilities of Wikipedia in Teaching), in *Historielärarnas Förenings Årsskrift* (Yearbook of the Federation of History Teachers), 2008, pp. 93–100.
10. 'Communique of the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Adopted on August 12, 1966)', in *Important Documents on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1970), pp. 164–165.
11. *Mao zhuxi yulu gequ ji* (Collected Chairman Mao Quotation Songs) (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 1968), pp. 23–4. On Tian Guang, see <http://www.beijingwww.com/1470/2009/02/13/291@80862.htm>.

12. Lin Biao, 'Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Delivered on 1 April and adopted on 14 April 1969)', in *Important Documents on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China*, p. 56.
13. Quoted on p. 64 of Jack Hitt (ed.), *In a Word: A Dictionary of Words that Don't Exist but Ought to* (New York: Dell, 1992), which defines faction as 'Any literary work portraying real characters or events, as a biography, history, or social commentary'.
14. Compare Timothy Cheek, *Mao Zedong and China's Revolutions: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford St. Martins, 2002), pp. 127–159.
15. *Wuhan shi chuli fandong yinhui huangtang tushu shumu: Lianhuanhua bufen* (Wuhan Municipal Index for Management of Reactionary Obscene and Preposterous Books: Picture Story Books) (Wuhan, 1956), p. 86; *Beijing shi chuli fandong yinhui huangtang tushu di yi pi shumu (caoan) yi lianhuanhua* (Beijing Municipal 1st Index for Management of Reactionary Obscene and Preposterous Books (Draft) II: Picture Story Books) (Beijing, 1956), p. 3.
16. Liu Gao and Shi Feng (eds), *Xin Zhongguo chuban wushi nian jishi* (Chronicle of Fifty Years of Publishing in New China) (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1999), pp. 406–407.
17. Deng Xiaoping cited these 'comrades' without naming names – and refuted their claim more or less out of hand – in conversation with two of his senior ghost-writers at the time. See 'Dui qicao "Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi" de yijian' (Comments on the Drafting of the "Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China", in *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan 1975–1982* (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping 1975–1982) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983)), p. 268.
18. Liu and Shi, *Xin Zhongguo chuban wushi nian jishi*, p. 111.
19. 'Kunming gongxueyuan "Ganchuang", Yao wei zhenli er zhan – zai weigong he manma sheng zhong' (Surrounded and Cursed, We Must Fight for the Truth), in Xiang and Wang, *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao*, pp. 27–28.
20. Jiang Haitao, 'Huainian ni a, Guo Shunxing tongzhi' (Cherishing Your Memory, Comrade Guo Shunxing), in *ibid.*, pp. 294–299; Anonymous, 'Xiangei ni, yingxiong de shisan jun shisi jun' (Dedicated to You, the Heroic 13th Corps and 14th Corps), in *ibid.*, pp. 276–277.
21. See Michael Schoenhals, 'Cultural Revolution on the Border: Yunnan's "Political Frontier Defence" (1969–1971)', *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, No. 19 (2004), p. 52, n. 7.
22. Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), introduction, p. 17.
23. Quoted repeatedly in Xiang and Wang, *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao*.
24. Beijing shiyuan waiyuxi 'Guodajiang' and Hebei Beijing shifan xueyuan 'Hongqi' (eds), *Wuchanjiuji wenhua dageming changyong cihui shouce (Han-Ying duizhao)* (Handbook of Commonly Used Terms in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Chinese-English)) (Beijing, 1968).
25. Huazhong shifan xueyuan geming weiyuanhui, waiyuxi geming weiyuanhui (eds), *'Wu qi' Han-Ying ciyu huibian* (The May 7 Collection of Terms & Expressions (Chinese-English)) (Wuhan, 1968).

26. *Ibid.*, pp. vii–viii.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 346.
28. *Han-Ying shishi yongyu cihui* (Chinese-English Glossary of Current Affairs Words and Phrases) (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1973).
29. Xianfeng, ‘Yongbudao de 8.23 zhanqi: shouwei Dongfeng dalou 8.23 zhan-shi yingyong kangbao de zhuangli shishi: Xitele zaixian’ (The August 23rd Battle Flag Flies Forever: A Glorious Epic of Heroic Resistance Mounted in Defence of East Wind Mansion by the Heroic August 23rd Warriors. Hitler Reincarnate!), in Xiang and Wang, *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao*, pp. 134–155.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
34. Compare Li Yuan, *Zhi weishi: Yan Hongyan shangjiang wangshi zhuizong* (The Truth Alone: Tracing General Yan Hongyan) (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 2003); Ding Longjia and Ting Yu, *Kang Sheng yu ‘Zhao Jianmin yuanan’* (Kang Sheng and the ‘Trumped up Case of Zhao Jianmin’) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999).
35. ‘Houji’ (Editors’ Postscript), in Xiang and Wang, *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao*, p. 399.
36. Bagongzong nutao, ‘Moku li de riri yeye: 8.23 zhanshi zai Xinhua Shan Yunda Cuihu jizhongying douzheng de jishi’ (Days and Nights in the Monsters’ Den: True Record of the August 23rd Warriors in the New China Mountain, Yunnan University and Emerald Lake Concentration Camps), in Xiang and Wang, *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao*, pp. 230–255.
37. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C5%82awomir_Rawicz
38. See http://www.amazon.co.uk/Long-Walk-True-Story-Freedom/dp/1845296443/ref=cm_cr_pr_product_top
39. Bagongzong nutao, ‘Moku li de riri yeye’, p. 253.
40. *Relie huanhu Yunnan sheng geming weiyuanhui chengli* (Hail the Creation of the Yunnan Revolutionary Committee) (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1968), p. 52.
41. Bagongzong nutao, ‘Moku li de riri yeye’, p. 253.
42. For a provocative discussion of the Global War on Terrorism from the perspective of the Cultural Revolution, see Michael Schoenhals, ‘The Global War on Terrorism as Meta-Narrative: An Alternative Reading of Recent Chinese History’, *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2008), pp. 179–201.
43. ‘Mao zhuxi de shu shi geming de shu’ (Chairman Mao’s Books are Books of Revolution), in (mimeographed) *Dongfengjin* (Strength of the East Wind) (Wuhan: Strength of the East Wind Army Regiment, 1969), no pagination.
44. Bagongzong nutao, ‘Moku li de riri yeye’, p. 248.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 253–254.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
47. Cf. Michael Schoenhals, ‘Demonising Discourse in Mao Zedong’s China: People vs Non-People’, in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 8, Nos. 3–4, September–December (2007), pp. 465–482.

48. Bagongzong nutao, 'Moku li de riri yeye', p. 243.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 243–244.
50. Xianfeng, 'Yongbudaο de 8.23 zhanqi', pp. 152–153.
51. This is a discursive mine-field into which only the truly brave (alternatively the politically very correct) dare venture. For a relevant, but superficial, discussion of popular depictions of women in the Cultural Revolution that makes no attempt at comparisons with the present, see Michael Schoenhals, 'Sex in Big-Character Posters from China's Cultural Revolution: Gendering the Class Enemy', in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone (eds), *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (London: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 237–257.
52. Xianfeng, 'Yongbudaο de 8.23 zhanqi', p. 154.
53. J. G. A. Pocock, 'Languages and Their Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought', in J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 6.
54. On the creation and composition of the Yunnan provincial Revolutionary Committee, see Yunnan sheng geming weiyuanhui (ed.), *Wuchanjieji wenhua dageming wenjian huibian* (Collected Documents from the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution), 2 vols. (Kunming, 1969), Vol. 2, pp. 1089–1108.
55. 'Houji' (Postscript), in Xiang and Wang, *Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao*, p. 399.
56. *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, 5 vols. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961), Vol. 3, p. 89.
57. The relevant court documents are in *Lishi de shenpan (xuji)* (The Verdict of History (Sequel)) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1986), pp. 461–546.
58. From the CCP Central Committee's 1981 'Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China', excerpted in Michael Schoenhals (ed.), *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966–1969: Not a Dinner Party* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), p. 297.
59. See Michael Schoenhals (ed.), *Selections from Propaganda Trends, Organ of the CCP Central Propaganda Department*. Published as *Chinese Law & Government* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe), Vol. 24, No. 4, 1992.
60. The opening line in L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BD1rAzJgzI>

Postscript

Naoki Sakai

I Mass dictatorship and nationality

In the last seven decades since the end of the World War II, we have witnessed the collapse of a number of polities customarily described as dictatorships. Those of us who live in countries dominated by some amalgamation of consumer-oriented capitalism and parliamentary representative governments are accustomed to view the autocratic forms of state sovereignty, often referred to as dictatorships, to be the antonym of political liberalism. Consequently the word 'dictatorship' evokes in us the image of something exotic, aberrant and abnormal, an image whose function consists in othering, alienating and exoticizing the types of government that supposedly contradict the principles of our democratic and liberal ones. Too often we feel securely distanced from a particular regime as soon as it is designated as a dictatorship.

Above all else, I cannot help noting that the neologism 'mass dictatorship' calls into question this emotive politics of comfort surrounding the word 'dictatorship'. It resituates us in the uncomfortable vicinity of an abnormal and perilous politics that we refuse to associate ourselves with at any cost.

In the last few decades alone, many times we have seen the end of one dictatorship after another. In 1975 Spain's fascist government ended with the death of General Francisco Franco, the country's ruler since the final days of the Spanish Civil War. In the 1980s the autocratic government of Ferdinand Marcos collapsed in the Philippines under the upheaval of what was then called the People Power Movement. In South Korea the autocratic regime of Park Chung-hee, inherited by the military governments of Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, was challenged by student and citizen movements, and the short-lived parliamentary

democracy that was advocated in the 1960 and 1980 revolutions was finally restored there in the late 1980s. Many soviet-style socialist states in Eastern Europe, including the Romanian government of Nicolae Ceausescu, also fell after a series of events in Eastern Europe subsequent to the Polish Solidarity Movement of the 1980s and the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. In 1986, the marshal law that imposed one-party rule was lifted in the Republic of China – Taiwan – and with the forming of an opposition, the Democratic Progressive Party, the dictatorship of the *Kuomintang* (the Nationalist Party) ended, and the process of democratization started there. Following the turmoil in Eastern Europe and Russia, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics disintegrated in 1991, and the following year the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia was dissolved, giving rise to ethnic nationalist republics. After the invasion by the Coalition Provisional Authority led by the United States, the government of Saddam Hussein's Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party was replaced in Iraq; more recently we have witnessed a number of revolutionary changes in the wide-spread Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria where autocratic governments led, respectively, by Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak, Muammar Gaddafi, Ali Abdullah Saleh and Bashar al-Assad were either dissolved or have been severely challenged. On the other hand, one can identify some countries where governments often described as dictatorships prohibiting parliamentary representative politics continue to rule: North Korea, Saudi Arabia, the People's Republic of China and so forth.

In the regime changes mentioned here, the previous governments that were dissolved or replaced by new ones are customarily referred to as 'dictatorships' in liberal mass media in Europe, North America and East Asia. The changes are generally portrayed as historical cases testifying to the democratic potential immanent in peoples, as if any government could evolve into democracy as conceived by liberalism unless hindered by some unnatural or violent means. Yet, it is not necessarily clear why a newer government is less 'dictatorial' than an older one. It seems that these regime changes are described as transitions from some dictatorial forms to more democratic or less dictatorial forms of government, not on the basis of empirical and historical observation, but according to a certain narrative framework in which transitions are illustrated. The regime changes are portrayed for, and conveyed to, the audiences of liberal mass media within the framework of a certain progressivist teleology, and the assumption or dogma upon which this teleology of progress is built is that, in the so-called West at least, people's natural disposition is innately democratic, so that people's aspiration towards

the democratic form of government must be obstructed in one way or another in order for dictatorships to continue to exist. It follows that, whenever a dictatorial regime or despotism is disrupted or crushed, it must be succeeded by a form of state that is less dictatorial and therefore more democratic.

Given the polysemic character of the word 'people', it is worth noting that the particular connotation of 'people' I refer to above is not always applicable. Let us remind ourselves that we understand the masses as 'people' only when they do not put up with any overtly dictatorial form of state. In other words, this notion of 'people' is defined, in opposition to despotism, as a human collectivity in which dictatorship is condemned in due course. Here the word 'people' means much more than a plurality of persons or a gathering of individual human beings, and 'peoplehood' is often adapted to underline the historically specific connotation of this word. It is a structured assembly of multiple humans, and it emerges under particular historical conditions; it is not merely a convergence of people but also a human grouping with a specific consciousness as well as a certain modality of identification; historians most frequently talk about it as if it were interchangeable with a 'nation'. Both 'people' and 'nation' may well imply some trans-historical community, kinship membership, clannish organization or a human group in general, but the 'peoplehood' connotes a particular form of human collectivity; it coincides with the 'nation' and on that basis the modern polity of the nation-state is legitimated. Undoubtedly people's innate hostility towards dictatorship is the platform upon which the historical possibility of 'peoplehood' is envisioned.

Now it is not hard to see how offensive the notion of dictatorship is to the believers of popular sovereignty. Dictatorship denies not only the legitimacy of this sovereignty but also the very duality of modern governance thanks to which the ruled can simultaneously be the rulers. In other words, it is supposed that dictatorship denies the very possibility of 'people' and 'nation'. Not surprisingly, therefore, in modern political thought, dictatorship is defined as a polar opposite to the concept of popular sovereignty, from which all the variants of democracy in modern politics have originated. From the outset, the concept of 'peoplehood' was presented as something incompatible with dictatorship. But, though it was determined negatively, the modern notion of 'people' was nonetheless paradigmatically dependent upon the concept of dictatorship.

How, then, would the idiom of 'mass dictatorship' function in these disciplinary regimes of knowledge production concerning popular

sovereignty and peoplehood? Let us repeat, first of all, that the combination of 'mass' and 'dictatorship' in mass dictatorship does not constitute a *particular* kind of dictatorship through the rules of classification dictated by the classic logic that operates according to the economy of *particularity* and *generality*, of *species* and *genus*.

Here, allow me to remind you of the basic law of classification in classic logic. In the class of horses, for instance, white horses – horses that are modified by whiteness – form a more specific class. Therefore, a set of white horses is a subset of the larger or more general class of horses. When modified by the predicate 'white' – or any other relevant modifier – the set of horses thus modified is bound to be smaller or more specific in the number of its referents than the set of horses not modified.¹ Thus, as a rule, the set of white horses is particular and more specific in relation to the set of non-modified horses. In other words, a white horse is a particular case of horses in general. If this law of classification equally applies to the case of mass dictatorship, the word 'mass' apparently works as a modifier and specifies the generality of dictatorship. One could easily assume that there are many types of dictatorship, and that mass dictatorship is but one. Accordingly, it may appear reasonable to expect mass dictatorship to be a particular case of dictatorships in general.

However, what we have so far demonstrated concerning the idiom of mass dictatorship seems to belie this expectation. Of course, we cannot overlook the rhetorical use of unexpectedness in Jie-Hyun Lim's invention of this neologism. The modification of dictatorship by 'mass' urges us to recognize that the concept of mass dictatorship is not a particular type of a generality called dictatorship. Though an introduction of this concept contributes much to the elaboration of what democracy can mean, it is nonetheless scandalous. It upsets and undermines the neat classificatory arrangement in which the basic variables of modern politics, popular sovereignty, peoplehood, democracy and dictatorship are supposedly accommodated in some coherent fashion.

The unsettling character of this concept consists in the fact that it forcefully calls into question the assumption that dictatorship is somewhat hostile to 'people' as well as the tacit dichotomy between 'nation' as the agency of popular sovereignty and dictatorship as an abnormal exercise of political power that contradicts popular sovereignty. It implies that, rather than being an abnormal exception, the element of dictatorship in itself is almost always inherent in the very notion of 'people' or 'nation'. Hence, the very concept of mass dictatorship entails that neither nationalism nor populism is, by definition and at all

times, an opposition or resistance to dictatorial coercion or a remedy for autocratic government. I do not think that the institution of 'people' or 'nation' is always dictatorial. However, the concept of mass dictatorship suggests and intimates that 'people' or 'nation' may well be dictatorial, autocratic or tyrannical.

Paradoxically it is against the backdrop of modern history in which the words 'people' and 'nation' acquired unparalleled connotations that the concept of dictatorship becomes meaningful. The idiom mass dictatorship signals a certain diagnosis of historically specific reality. Even though it is about dictatorship, it is important to note that mass dictatorship as a diagnosis cannot be equally applied to all cases of dictatorship referenced above. This idiom may well be relevant to the South Korean governments of Park Chung-hee, Chun Duo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, to the autocratic government of Nicolae Ceausescu, to Chang Kai-shek's rule in Taiwan or to the German Democratic Republic. The well-known cases of German national socialism, Italian fascism, Japan's total war system, the anti-parliamentary government of Engelbert Dollfuss in Austria and the Ustase movement in Croatia may well be discussed as examples of mass dictatorship. But I am not sure whether we can comprehend the Francoism of Spain, Saddam Hussein's dictatorship or Syrian Ba'ath Party of Hafez al-Assad and Bashar al-Assad in terms of mass dictatorship.² I am also hesitant to describe the dictatorship of Muammar Gaddafi as an instance of mass dictatorship. So we see that certain instances of what is called dictatorship deviate from the implied diagnosis of mass dictatorship. It may appear that the concept of mass dictatorship cannot be understood as a subset of the general set of dictatorships; neither does it refer to a particular kind of dictatorship as screened and delimited by the modifier 'mass'.

We must keep in mind that this idiom is also potentially able to designate the types of governance not normally called 'dictatorship', for it transgresses the conventional dichotomy between democracy and dictatorship. For example, mass dictatorship invariably refers to a collective psychology that propels ordinary people to collaborate with the system of the state bureaucracy; it can be compared to the McCarthyism of the 1950s, an extreme form of ostracism, characterized by the morbid horror of communist influence on American institutions and espionage by Soviet spies. McCarthyism involved the practice of dishonest allegations of disloyalty, subversion or treason without due regard for evidence, with the intention of oppressing political dissent or criticism. Yet the American society of that period is rarely portrayed as being particularly autocratic or tyrannical. It was believed at that time that

the government of the United States was a manifestation of democracy; Americans more often than not insisted that their state embodied democratic values that distinguished it from other, authoritarian states in the world. Nevertheless, in many respects, the group psychology one glimpses in McCarthyism is ever so reminiscent of some aspects of mass dictatorship captured truthfully by novelists such as Herta Müller and Yi Mun-gu, respectively, discussed by Anamaria Dutceac Segesten in Chapter 2 and by Shin Hyang-ki in Chapter 10 of this volume. In particular, outside North America around that time, many contemporaries noticed striking similarities between what was happening in the American public sphere and what was generally apprehended as fascism in the 1930s. Many outspoken critics of American exceptionalism warned that something like fascism was growing in the United States of America, an alleged leader among the Allies for the defence of democratic values against the Axis of fascist regimes.

Similarly the word 'mass dictatorship' seems to capture the general atmosphere of American mass media during the few years after the September 11 attacks on the United States by Al Qaeda. Many individuals whose ethnic and religious backgrounds define them as 'minorities' in American society felt insecure and had to keep a low profile and avoid certain social occasions such as anti-war demonstrations because patriotic fever was so strong; there was little restraint of xenophobia and racism almost aimlessly directed at Muslims and Arabs.

By and large the idea of dictatorship assumes a configuration of governmentality according to which a given populace is divided into two contrasting groups, a small dominating clique and a majority prevented from participating in national governance. Its political power is understood to be despotic in nature and construed in terms of a clear-cut opposition between those who govern and the governed, between the rulers and the ruled. But the modern notion of democratic government flatly denies this configuration and endorses instead the principle of popular sovereignty according to which the governed are, at the same time, the agents of government. In other words, as far as the principle of popular sovereignty goes, the subjects of the government collectively form an agent – namely the Subject – of the very governance to which they are subjected. From the viewpoint of popular sovereignty, the governed are simultaneously the governors; they are indeed subjects of the sovereign, but concurrently they are sovereigns themselves. Otherwise the concept of popular sovereignty would be an utterly useless oxymoron. And this peculiar agent of popular sovereignty as a Subject subjected to its own governance is usually called 'people' or 'nation'.

In the Constitution of the United States, it is commonly known, this Subject declares and constitutes itself by enunciating the famous phrase 'we the people'.

It is taken for granted that, for the sake of governance, all states have attempted to organize masses into some consistency in terms of kinship relationships, clannish loyalties, bureaucratic hierarchies, church affiliations or nationality. In most cases in pre-modern state formations, different organizations were combined to unify the populace under state rule. In some cases, the resident populace was ruled by multiple states and sometimes served plural sovereigns. It is almost impossible to think of a state that did not legitimate its governance by organizing the populace in one consistent manner or another. But it does not follow from this general observation that all the states have succeeded in unifying and homogenizing those ruled. There is one feature of governance that cannot be forgotten about in pre-modern governmentality: pre-modern states never constituted a homogeneous and internally coherent and unified population whose members are bound together by common sympathy prior to the formation of the territorial national sovereign state. And there are some states, even in the twenty-first century, that are not fully committed to the task of constituting a homogeneous and unified population. Yet, these states are exceptions.

When modern territorial national state sovereignty emerged in Western Europe in the eighteenth century, a new type of mass organization came into being, namely 'the nation'.³ The type of internal coherence particular to the nation is generally called 'nationality'. According to the classical definition of nationality given by John Stuart Mill, nationality means:

A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any others – which make them co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively. This feeling of nationality may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion, greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.⁴

In the final analysis, it is shared sympathy that keeps people unified in the new form of community called 'the nation'; it is a feeling that they know they have in common with all the other members of this community, but that they do not share with non-members of the nation. The membership of the nation demands that an individual sympathize with the other members of the same nation but remain indifferent, if not antipathetic or xenophobic, to individuals of other nations. There may well be many different factors which could generate the feeling of nationality among the disparate members of a nation. Of course, a number of institutions are required to prepare the conditions of possibility for this new community to exist for its members, and Mill refers to the possession of a national history as the most important of the required institutions for the formation of nationality. Most nation-states have attempted to create the institution of a national language and other institutions such as universal conscription, common currency, national education, and universal suffrage. Characteristically Mill discusses the *facticity* of belonging to the nation on the one hand and the actuality of the constitution of the nation on the other, in terms of the emotive and sensational participation of each member of the national community. The reality of a nation as a community, which he calls the 'Nationality', manifests itself in the feeling of nationality. In short, nationality actualizes itself in the feeling of nationality. In this respect, *the reality of the nation is, above all else, aesthetic in nature*. With certain institutions being necessary to continue to create the sense of nationality, the nation as 'a society of sympathy' is essentially of an aesthetic order. Since the novel is a genre of aesthetic practice that contributed so much to the creation of the feeling of nationality, not only in Western Europe and North America in the nineteenth century, but also in East Asia, Northern and Eastern Europe, the study of novelistic literature cannot be overlooked in the investigation of various manifestations of mass dictatorship. This explains why contributions collected in this volume are indispensable to the exploration of the workings of mass dictatorship.

II From relational identity to specific identity

The modern national community is of an aesthetic order; it actualizes itself in the feeling of nationality. How is this new formation different from previous forms of communities appropriated by pre-modern states? How is the nation so drastic an arrangement that nation-building necessitated the destruction or transformation of previous communalities almost without exception?

Here, I would like to follow the historical transitions of societies in Northeast Asia to illustrate the constitution of the national community in modernization. I somewhat prefer the Northeast Asian cases to those of Western Europe partly because the concept of mass dictatorship has relentlessly problematized the uncritical convention of equating Europe with the site of modernity. In addition, the nation is so recent a construct in East Asia that what had to be done in order to prepare institutional conditions for nationality is still easily traceable.

In discussing the problem of nation-building, it is important to keep in mind that Confucianism was regarded as tantamount to an obstacle for modernization in countries in Northeastern Asia, and that the leading intellectuals, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi of Japan, Lu Xun of China and Yi Gwangsu of Korea, addressed the problem of modernity in relation to Confucianism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Among the progressive intellectuals, modernity was once conceived of as a departure from Confucianism, as a project of liberating individuals from the rules of conduct, the regimes of truth and the normalization of welfare, associated with the Learning of Confucianism, no matter how diversified and conflicting the comprehension of the term 'Confucianism' could be.⁵ In the climate of what one might call 'intellectual modernization' – the same climate extends today in some respects – Confucianism symbolized a loose assemblage of governing institutions, regulatory systems of commodity circulation, disciplinary regimens over knowledge production, protocols of bureaucracy and tributary diplomacy, ceremonial customs, rules of judiciary practice and the habits of the heart. In perceiving the overwhelming advancement of European powers, judicious individuals were encouraged to leave these legacies of the past behind in order to enter the international world regulated by the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* (Eurocentric International Law). Anti-Confucianism was a mark of the *avant-garde* in those days.

Following this loose definition of Confucianism, I do not think it is completely off the mark to suggest that its basic virtues are all defined in terms of particular kinship relations. This is one reason why the Confucian view of the social nature of the human being is frequently summarized by the juxtapositions in kinship relations, 'Father and Son', 'Master and Vassal', 'Husband and Wife', 'the Elder and the Younger' and 'Friend and Friend' or sometimes categorized under the so-called *Five Constancies*. Except for the relation of a friend and another friend – strictly speaking, even this relation is not a symmetrical one – all the threads of constant relations woven into Confucian virtues are hierarchical.

Let us focus on Japan's modernization, partly because the most systematic denunciation of Confucianism in Northeastern Asia for the sake of modernity was launched there in the late nineteenth century by progressive activists, educators, bureaucrats, journalists and statesmen who are generally called 'enlightenment intellectuals'. Fukuzawa Yukichi, founder of today's Keio University and the Jiji Shinpō news agency, is perhaps the best known among Japan's enlightenment intellectuals, and his attitude towards Confucianism is the most idiosyncratic. On the one hand, as Fukuzawa, a leading Japanese social philosopher of the late nineteenth century, pointed out, the *Five Constancies* necessarily give rise to the system of one-sided obligations. On the other hand, these relations help define the individual in terms of webs of irreplaceable rapports. As the number of kinship relations engaged in grows – one is a father in relation to his son, a younger brother in relation to his elder sister's husband, a husband in relation to his wife, a vassal in relation to his superior in his administrative service, and so on – one's individual identity also becomes thicker and more concrete. So, this concreteness is nothing but a sum total of the rules of conduct on what one has to do and how one has to behave in relation to a particular acquaintance who also occupies a concrete position in webs of kinship relations. For each practical norm, the position of an acting individual is defined in relation to other individuals, towards whom his or her conduct is directed or projected. In Confucianism, therefore, every moral imperative is dialogically determined and situated in concrete social relations. In this respect, Confucianism is situational ethics.

For Fukuzawa Yukichi and other progressive intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in East Asia, Confucian ethics was a representative of the pre-modern social formation. Take the case of affiliation in kinship for instance. In order to belong to a kin, an individual must occupy a particular position in the network of relations. One must occupy the position of a son to one's mother, of a nephew to one's uncle and of a grandfather to one's granddaughter in order to belong to a kin or family. The position that a subject occupies in a kin is determined by a great number of dialogic relations. As soon as one joins a kin, one becomes a son to a particular person, a cousin to other individuals, and an uncle to certain other members of the kin, and so on. From the viewpoint of ethical demands imposed upon an individual, belonging to a kin is entirely different from belonging to a community of credit card members, for instance.

What is expected of an individual member of credit card membership is summarily expressed in his or her contract with the credit card

company, and he or she is totally independent of and indifferent to other individual members of the credit card community. What matters in this type of belonging is an individual's subjection to the terms of contract with the totality represented by the credit card company. In this belonging, one is allowed to be totally anonymous to other members of this community. Precisely because of the indifference and anonymity structurally allowed for in the community of credit card members, it can be said that every member of this community is *equal*. Every member is equal and entitled to be treated as such, thanks to the very constitutive relationship between an individual member and the totality of the community as defined by the contract between the individual member and the credit card company. An individual member belongs to a credit card membership just as an individual cat belongs to the species of cats.

The national community is structurally homologous to the community of credit card members, but the former is decisively different from the latter with respect to aesthetic bonds that tie its members together. No member of credit card community would sacrifice him or herself for the sake of other members because it is not a community of sympathy, but the national community is characterized by a strong sense of camaraderie, of shared destiny, and communal death. It is expected that all the members of the nation are *fantastically* connected together through the feeling of nationality. It is in the sense of aesthetic constitution of national community that the nation is an *imagined* community.⁶

In the ethics of relational identity, the rules of conduct are not generalizable independently of whom a particular action is directed at. Therefore, they cannot be avowed in a declarative imperative statement in the propositional form of 'one ought. ...' The subject of the imperative statement is always specified in relation to the interlocutor. Both the subject of ethical action and the interlocutor at whom that action is directed are identified in terms of familial and clannish differentials, and the paradigm of familial differentials is realigned each time in a dialogic perception of the social occasion. The social relation upon which the Confucian norm is conferred is reciprocal, not only in the sense of the mutuality of obligation, but also in the sense of mutual recognition. A younger brother recognizes his addressee as his elder brother. As a result, the elder brother is entitled and obliged to behave as the older sibling to his younger brother who is similarly entitled and obliged.

In these reciprocating relations, an individual is never linked to the whole without comprehensive kinship, clannish and hierarchical mediation. To belong to a certain family is always to occupy a particular position within the webs of kinship relations, and one's particular

position there is dependent upon the persons one is in a relationship with. The system within which a person is identified is built upon a series of *personal* relations, relations of 'you' and 'me'. Each of these relations is articulated with the use of the honorific: I have children and, in this respect, I am a father in the personal relation to them. But, in the company of my mother, I am a son. What I am is thus dependent upon the people I am with. And, to belong to a kinship is nothing other than the fact that my position or identity within that kinship is reciprocally determined and projected by whom I am with. My identity is therefore relationally determined and outlined by the specified use of the honorific. In this respect, in Confucian ethics, one's personal identity is primarily conferred on the individual by *relational identification*. And this reciprocal articulation of one's identity requires some space of dialogic proximity in which the reciprocal determination and projection is executed in the dramaturgy of the honorific.

It should be noted that essentially there is no room for equality in this conception of the human being and social relations, whereas, in contrast and without fail, mass dictatorship justifies itself by means of an egalitarianism. The moral principle of formal equality is largely absent in Confucian ethics. By this I am not saying that Confucianism does not allow for anti-authoritarianism or does not encourage fairness among people. On a limited number of occasions, undeniably, mutual reciprocity may take forms analogous to some equivalence in commodity exchange. But, it does not constitute an equal relationship. Instead I suggest that the liberal idea of formal equality is not viable in the Teaching of the Sage Kings. For, in Confucianism, two people who constitute a reciprocal relationship are never defined as two exchangeable entities. Confucian ethics is never enunciated from the positionality of the third person singular.⁷

Since the individuality of each person is a consequence of many relations which she or he is engaged in, no individual is conceived of as exchangeable with another. In Confucianism, it is impossible to conceive of a *surface* upon which the anonymity of 'one', the indiscriminate individual of individualism, can emerge. (This must be designated as *surface* rather than space because firstly it is a condition for something else to emerge or take shape. It is not merely a set of conditions that guarantee the possibility for certain things to be; more specifically it is a sort of screen against which such things as ethnic characters, national sympathy and 'public opinion' are allowed to manifest themselves. It goes without saying that this *surface* is what Michel Foucault called 'population'.⁸)

This is one reason why Fukuzawa Yukichi, famous for his insistence upon the equality of humanity, believed that Confucian ethics should be repudiated in order for the very idea of equality to be introduced to Japan.⁹ Yet it is important to note that, whereas Fukuzawa insisted upon formal equality, he did not hesitate to embrace racial inequality or the hierarchy of ranks developed through colonialism. More generally, Fukuzawa never denounced social inequality or the hierarchy of positions introduced into society as a result of competition or work. He absolutely endorsed the principle of formal equality, but would never denounce the actuality of the social hierarchy that resulted from open competition. And most importantly, equality is not a descriptive term. It is prescriptive since it *expresses* a relation. In the late nineteenth century, equality was a new modality of relating to others. In short, what Fukuzawa advocated was the formal equality of liberalism.

Then, why was this principle of formal equality absolute to Fukuzawa Yukichi? What he attempted to achieve by endowing an ultimate value to the self or one's single body was to open a social forum in which the individual was stripped of these kinship relations. Or, more precisely, he attempted to install the epistemic regime whereby the individual could be posited as devoid of the properties that were attributes of mutually reciprocating relations. Instead of being postulated as already and always caught in the webs of kinship relations, the human being was first posited as an autonomous individual 'independent' of these relations.¹⁰ It goes without saying that what was at stake in his argument about formal equality was the essential condition for the possibility of a new communality called the nation.

By now it should be clear that this diagnosis need not be limited to the Japanese historical case of the Meiji Restoration (1868) in which the polity was transformed from the Baku-Han Shogunate system, consisting of the Tokugawa clan and some three hundred feudal domains, into a modern parliamentary monarchy. It is a large-scale historical transition – of course, generally referred to as modernization – in which a state sovereignty whose legitimacy is sought in some symbolic representations of kinship – the word 'legitimacy' itself derives from kinship – is replaced by a new state sovereignty capable of postulating its population as an assembly of autonomous subjects through individuation as well as totalization. All the polities in East Asia had to go through a similar process to individualize and totalize their populaces, regardless of whether it was the Republicanism of South Korea, the Chinese Communist Party, the Kuomintang on Taiwan or Japanese Emperorism. As a matter of fact, the Meiji Restoration was rather incomplete from the viewpoint of

modernization since the Japanese state continued to rely upon the legitimacy of familial lineage while, in theory at least, the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China and even the Republic of China ceased to legitimate their polities through familial lineage.

It is significant that Fukuzawa's insistence upon human equality was accompanied by his demand that a person's identification must be liberated from the constraints of hereditary social rank; only when people were conceived of as comparable indivisible units and as individualized individuals could there be a social forum in which equality was concretized as a universal value. Yet the positing of an autonomous and independent individual definitely led to a new way of defining individual identity, which Fukuzawa called 'nationality' or 'national body (*kokutai*)'.

That 'nationality' and 'national body' are juxtaposed here is due to the fact that the word *kokutai* was first introduced during the early part of the Meiji period as a translation of the English word 'nationality'. Counter to those 'imperial scholars' who proposed implementing the superiority of Japan within the union of religion and state, as evidenced in the words 'a line of emperors for ages eternal', Fukuzawa argued for an institutionalized consciousness to integrate the nation rather than appealing to the old notion of legitimacy based upon familial lineage. He knew that heredity and succession were woefully insufficient to legitimate the new polity of the nation-state. In addition to the 'flawless' imperial line, he insisted upon the necessity for the 'forms in which things are collected together, made one, and distinguished from other entities'. He argued,

Thus *kokutai* (the national body) refers to the gathering together of *a species* of people who share suffering as well as pleasure, the creation of a distinction between fellow countrymen and foreigners, the fostering of more cordial and stronger bonds with one's countrymen than with foreigners. It is living under the same government, enjoying self-rule, and disliking the idea of being subject to foreign rule; it involves independence and responsibility for the welfare of one's own country. In the West it is called 'nationality'.¹¹ (Italics by Sakai)

Moreover this 'nationality' was to be expressed through certain emotions, that is, a 'feeling of nationality': 'A feeling of nationality may originate in the identity of race, or religion, or language, or geography. Although the reason may differ from country to country, the most important factor is for a race of people to pass through a series of social changes and embrace a common sentiment for the shared past.'¹² In

the context of the Japanese situation at the time, this is an almost exact rendering of John Stuart Mill's explanations of 'nationality' and 'society of sympathy', as quoted above. The definition of 'nationality' is based upon the individual's desire to attribute the sense of nationality to race, the permanence of the governmental body, or language and customs. It was on the basis of these definitions that various and quite distinct discourses of the national body consequently developed in modern Japan. Of course it cannot be concluded that subsequent views of 'the national body' all referred back to Fukuzawa's interpretation. To the extent that they never questioned the existence of the Japanese as a nation, however, all subsequent interpretations of the national body presuppose this basic apprehension of nationality in one way or another, for the existence of the Japanese nation as an ethnic unity is nothing but a collectivity which internalizes the feeling of nationality. Above all else, the nation is an aesthetic construct.

Many different interpretations of the national body or *kokutai* have been offered since the Meiji Restoration, but the majority of them have failed to address how the idea of the national body could legitimate the polity of a modern nation-state itself. The partial reason for this is that nationality was so successfully established and naturalized in Japan, that the Japanese nation was widely believed to be an entity existing trans-historically. Some interpretations of this term merely repeat the myths of national origin and thus are not worth discussing in this chapter. Others seek the legitimacy of the modern Japanese nation-state only in the domain of the Imperial Household or the judiciary. Generally speaking we should remind ourselves of the dearth of historical analysis on both the formation of the Japanese nation and the nature of modern power.

Fukuzawa's interpretation of the national body is exceptional, however, precisely because it testifies about how this body played an essential role to create the national community and illustrates how the modality of individual identification had to be altered in the feeling of nationality.

Most importantly Fukuzawa realized that it was impossible to construct the nation without a distinction between Japanese and non-Japanese, a distinction underlying the international constitution of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*. From this standpoint he regarded the 'division between self and other' (between fellow countrymen and foreigners) as foundational. Through the positing of foreigners, the national community of fellow countrymen comes into being. Only when the reach of one's sympathy is clearly delimited can one be endowed with the feeling of nationality; only when an individual is capable of feeling

sympathetic towards all the members of the nation while remaining indifferent to the foreigners can one truly belong to the newly emerging community of the nation.

Yet it is of decisive importance that the countrymen whom you are expected to feel sympathetic towards are neither your relatives, neighbours, friends, nor their relatives. In the overwhelming majority of cases, those you sympathize with are strangers whom you have never met. In this respect, your connection to other members of your nation is analogous to your relation to other members of a credit card community. You are not *related* to other members of your national community. You have no acquaintance with the members of the society of sympathy to which you belong. Your compatriots are strangers, and the nation is imaginary precisely in this sense.¹³ It goes without saying that the ethics based upon relational identity is irrelevant in this new community called the nation.

Fukuzawa's insight concerning the 'division of self and other' is remarkable for two reasons. On the one hand, he could conceptually comprehend the coming of the *international* world because of which Japan had no other option but to open to the West. On the other hand, he appreciated the principle of nationality that is only viable in a world set up by the schematism of *internationality*. In a decisive manner he appreciated that Japan was in the *international* world, and that there was no way to escape it.

The institution of the Emperor was invented to respond to the situation of the international world. It was a strategy to unify some three hundred feudal domains into one and to establish the territorial national state sovereignty of Japan. Although Fukuzawa personally rejected the Christian image of the Emperor denoting 'one gaze, equal love, universal brotherhood all over the world' (*isshi dôjin shikai kyôdai*), the idea that a 'feeling of nationality' should accompany the expansion of the Japanese empire and extend beyond the residents of the Japanese mainland was subsequently accepted.¹⁴ This way 'impartial and universal brotherhood' came to be understood as attaining a broad universalism, which extended beyond the residents of the Japanese archipelago with the expansion of the territory and population of the Japanese Empire.¹⁵

In the history of modern Emperorism, until the inauguration of the New Constitution in 1946, the first half of the phrase *isshi dôjin shikai kyôdai*, that is, 'one gaze, equal mercy' or 'one look, equal love', was irreparably associated with the figure of the Emperor; it symbolically represented the very relationship between the Emperor and the individual subject, between the state and individuated Japanese, as

being between the one who provides love to his subjects individually and the one who demands such love from the symbolic figure who represents the totality of the nation. It is no accident that the figurative representation of the relationship between the Emperor and his subject ('a parent and his or her baby') showed an eerie resemblance to that of the shepherd and his lost sheep.¹⁶

While the old pastorate that Foucault discussed in his analysis of ancient governmentality in early Christianity was actualized in the space of the dialogic proximity in which the element of socio-physical distance mattered, the new one was deployed in the space of, and in, representation. The new pastorate of Emperorism actualized itself in an entirely different sort of forum in which members of the nation were not acquaintances of each other. Emperorism was set up on a new *surface*.

While the initial propagation of Emperorism was very much dependent upon the availability of new technology – photography, mobile print, telegram and later cinema – the space, which this new pastorate inhabited in, was of a different order from that of the ancient pastorate.¹⁷ It was essentially a pastoral power in the element of the *mass media*. Just as Foucault stressed two moments, individuation and totalization, in the pastoral power, we must acknowledge that nationality introduces a new mode of identification and accomplishes individuation and totalization. In this regime of individual identification, there is no mediation between the individual and the totality, no mediating organization such as family, clan, church, guild, village and feudal domain. The individual participates directly in the nation. As a result of this direct participation of the individual in the totality – through the symbolic figure of the Emperor in the case of Japanese modernization – the individual is cut off from the network of kinship positionalities. Thus emerges the new regime of individual identification. Instead of identifying with a relative position within the network of kinship, clannish and guildlike relationships, the individual begins to identify with the totality of the national community in the same way that a potato belongs to the species of tubers or a cat belongs to the species of cats. At the same time, a new social space emerges in which the individual becomes independent of the *relational* identity performed on the occasion of a dialogic encounter with an interlocutor, whereas the same individual continues to behave according to relational identity in private spheres such as the family. Against the generality of humans, the individual now identifies with the particularity of a nation and belongs to the *species* of a nation. In contrast to the *relational* identity, this new regime of individual identification may be called a *specific* identity. This is what nationality

implies: a person is individualized through totalization. And it is under the conditions of individualization and totalization that equality is recognized as an indispensable asset of every individual belonging to the nation.

Old institutions that stipulate the relational identity do not necessarily disappear in modernization, unless they are incompatible with the principles of nationality. People continue to identify themselves with particular positionalities within the network of kinship, so, for instance, the imperative of equality is not indiscriminately applied to everyday conduct in the affairs of a family. Nonetheless, when there are open contradictions between nationality and affiliations of a non-national type, severe conflicts ensue. Hence, the process of nation-building frequently involves bloody struggles.

The concept of mass dictatorship is rarely relevant in societies where nationality has yet to gain primacy as the principle of social formation. The idea of modernity dictates how we are able to distinguish certain social formations, in which the form of community called 'nation' or 'people' is the organizing principle, from other social formations in which 'nation' is not readily available. Of course, modernity is a topic of on-going debate: while it might suggest a matter of large-scale organization such as the emergence of global capitalism and the Eurocentric system of international law, it might also mean changes taking place in aesthetics in everyday life: the emergence of a new relationship between the individual and its self, new modes of social conduct and new economies of desire.

III Mass responsibility and responsibility

The concept of mass dictatorship has been criticized by some readers who are concerned with the intricate problems of historical and political responsibility. Mass dictatorship as an analytical category calls into question the simplistic binary oppositions of consent and coercion, voluntary will and external oppression, self-mobilization and forced mobilization; it complicates the relationship between the victimizers and the victims of the oppressions and atrocities committed in the past; it makes it almost impossible to construe historical crimes of the past as interactions between opposing collective agents, the Germans vs the Jews, the whites vs the blacks, the Japanese vs the Koreans, men vs women and so forth. Is mass dictatorship some sort of reactionary tactic with which to exonerate ordinary people from historical responsibility and juridical culpability, as some critics have argued?

It is necessary to return to the problem of responsibility, in regard to which the idiom of mass dictatorship seems to demand an answer to the following question: Can a collective identity such as nation, civilization, ethnicity or race serve as a historical agency in the place of the individual for responsibility? This question in turn gives rise to additional questions about our conception of power: Does power always postulate a process of interaction between two actors in which, if one is active, the other must be passive? Does power exclude such relationships as complicity, instrumentality, solicitation, coordination and affect? And does power have to be apprehended as an external relationship between two independent actors, so that its effectuation is necessarily expressed by a transitive verb? Can we not conceive of power sometimes in the middle voice?

In modern juridical language on responsibility, its agent is primarily an individual person, even though it could be a legal person (*fictive person*), as long as it is recognized as representing a state, corporation, foundation, family or other organization. According to modern law, it is determined that, even if you are a member of a nation, a corporation or a family, you cannot be held accountable for a crime committed by an other member or members of the same nation, corporation or family because you cannot be judged guilty by association. Roughly the same can be said about the victim of a past crime, atrocity or oppression. Even if a victim is another member of your ethnicity, nation or family, you are not entitled to claim the status of victim or demand reparation on behalf of that other member. You cannot fashion yourself as a victim of historical crime by association. As Jie-Hyun Lim persuasively demonstrated in his 'Towards a Transnational History of Victimhood Nationalism: On the Trans-Pacific Space', victimhood cannot be inherited from one generation to another either in the lineage of the family or in the continuity of the ethnicity, the nation or the race.¹⁸ By the same token, one cannot demand that, because of the shared nationality, ethnicity, racial identity or familial pedigree, a person should shoulder the sense of guilt for an atrocity, misdeed or injustice committed by other member(s) of the same nation, ethnic group, race or family. Nevertheless it is important to repeat that, in spite of all this, mass dictatorship does not exonerate the ordinary people from historical responsibility and juridical culpability.¹⁹

The problems of historical responsibility for past acts of injustice do not dissipate even when it is ascertained that one is not held accountable for past acts of injustice committed by one's parents and relatives, compatriots or ancestors. For, the traces of past injustices linger on, and

the social reality in which we live today is to a large extent structured by the legacies of colonialism, collective violence on minorities, discriminatory regimes established by wars and so forth. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative for those who are alive now to face and deal with the consequences of historical crimes and injustices which structure much of our national identities, positions in socio-racial hierarchies, status in the global economy and degrees of civilization.

In this respect, the idiom of mass dictatorship undoubtedly complicates our understanding of historical responsibility, yet it also contributes tremendously to the further appreciation of our participation in history. Of course, historical responsibility is one of the most significant ways for us to participate in history. Instead of indiscriminatorily, ascribing senses of guilt and victimhood through the collective identity of nationality, ethnicity, race or familial pedigree, mass dictatorship, as an analytical category, urges us to articulate the variety of strategic positions that individuals were obliged to occupy in the past and are solicited to adhere to in the present.

Of particular importance is the politics of positionalities in which the issues of responsibility for past injustices are presented. Let me take the example of the Comfort Women, of the crime of sexual slavery committed by the Japanese military and government during the Asia-Pacific War from 1937 till 1945. Today, after long struggles since the early 1990s involving some surviving Comfort Women, the Japanese government and Japanese governmental officials, mass media in East Asia at large, many feminist activists, politicians in many countries – South Korea, China, Japan, Taiwan, the United States, the European Union and so forth – and the general public in countries in Northeastern Asia, the issue of responsibility for the Japanese wartime sexual slavery is no longer limited to the relationship between some members of the Japanese nation who planned, built, ran and used the Comfort Stations and the women from South Korea, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines and elsewhere who were forced to serve as sexual slaves under the system of the Comfort Stations. Today the issue is addressed by different addressers occupying different and diverse positions to equally different and diverse addressees. The issue cannot and should not be construed in terms of the Japanese responsibility in which the nation of Japan as a whole is held responsible for this insidious crime against the victims trapped in the system of the Comfort Stations.

Responsibility has multiplied and diversified, and today we must ask about those who are responsible for the disavowal of this crime (there was no public recognition that the system of wartime sex slavery itself

was a grave crime until the 1980s), those who deliberately censored the broadcasting and publication of this crime in mass media (the present Prime Minister Shinzô Abe of Japan was said to be involved in the illegal cancellation of the airing of a NHK TV programme on the Comfort Stations) and those who supported the banning of high school history textbooks that covered this topic in Japan.

An individual must respond from a particular position to another individual in a different position, in a specific context, concerning an aspect of the issue of the Comfort Women. But there are many different contexts in each of which responsibility for the system of the Comfort Stations can be a legitimate political issue. Similarly there are a great number of aspects. When a different aspect is at stake, the same individual may well be held responsible to somebody else. In being born after the war and carrying Japanese citizenship, an individual is not responsible for the Japanese wartime sex slavery: he can, however, be held responsible for approving of the Japanese Government's decision to obliterate articles on the Comfort Women from Japanese high school textbooks. Moreover, he must be responsible to the Comfort Women themselves and Chinese, South Korean, Dutch and Indonesian citizens who requested the acknowledgement of guilt from the Japanese State for neglecting their demands to prosecute those involved in the policy decision to build the system of the Comfort Stations. Today, a Japanese citizen can be held responsible for not attempting, after Japan's defeat, to prosecute those officials who instituted the system of the Comfort Stations. As one can see, a dense diversity of positions with multiple contexts will emerge under such inquiry.

Our historical inquiry is thus aided by this concept of mass dictatorship precisely because we cannot continue to be content with a reductionism of historical responsibility to the active agency (perpetrator) versus the passive agency (prey), to an aggressive nation (or ethnicity, race, etc.) versus a victimized nation. We must inquire into the conditions under which historical injustice was committed: some particular political structure in which ordinary citizens were solicited to serve as perpetrators of an atrocity; the configurations of subject positions in which some were assigned to the position of victims while others escaped from it; the set of rationalities according to which some ordinary citizens had to justify their conduct and so on.

It is now clear that what is at stake in historical responsibility is not merely a moral verdict over some nation's guilt or innocence. We are irreparably committed to our responsibility for past injustices, not because we want to identify ourselves with an ethnic group or to assert

our national-belonging, but because we seek to comprehend the diversity of positions as well as the microphysics of power by which ordinary people were led to participate in judgments and deeds of historical injustice. It should be obvious by now that the above-mentioned criticism of mass dictatorship is somewhat misplaced. A rigorous understanding of historical responsibility demands that we go beyond the feeling of nationality in addressing the issues of past injustice, but those critics who claim that the concept of mass dictatorship is no more than a veneer for historical irresponsibility refuse to critically examine how the problem of historical responsibility has been appropriated by the rhetoric of national solidarity. Rather than attempting to close the new horizon opened by the idiom of mass dictatorship, it is our task to examine whether the nationalist mishandling of historical responsibility is a testament to the nationalist critics' regression to victimhood nationalism.

Not surprisingly many chapters in this volume concern one aspect or another of nationalism in Sweden, China, Russia, Romania, Hungary, Germany, South Africa and South Korea. As far as Sweden is at issue, few authors discuss Swedish nationalism in itself and are instead concerned with the Swedish people's wartime infatuation with mass dictatorship, whose archetype is often found in Germany's national socialism.

In Chapter 9, Kerstin Bergman reads some Swedish crime novels depicting a Swedish involvement with Nazism that has been repressed since the end of the World War II. In her discussion, the issues of the Swedish nation appear only indirectly in reference to the disavowed collective guilt. But she does not overlook stressing the potential ubiquity of Nazism, or the extreme form of mass dictatorship, which is addressed in *The Return of the Dancing Master*, a novel by Henning Mankell, one of the most popular detective-story writers in Sweden. One of Mankell's characters in the novel, a British executioner by the name of Stuckford, says 'No people is inherently evil. On this occasion Nazis happened to be Germans, but nobody is going to convince me that it couldn't have happened just as easily in England. Or France. Or the USA, come to that.'²⁰ This sets the tone for the entire novel. Evil is represented in the figure of the national socialism of Germany, but, as a matter of fact, it is inherent in any country; it is so contagious that it can spread beyond the national border. In this respect, Mankell seems to suggest that national socialism is ubiquitous. Nevertheless, Bergman points out the intricate problem of national history, the shared memory of the collective past upon which the feeling of nationality is often built. She seems to suggest that the issues of mass dictatorship creep in through the collective disavowal of a certain national past, a collective refusal to

hold oneself responsible to non-nationals for the mistakes committed in the name of the feeling of one's nationality.

Here one may well ask if it is possible to find this type of evil in virtually any country? Is it a manifestation of universal human evil that could happen at any time in history? Instantly we will see the limits of this ubiquity, a question about why an intelligent and reasonable person could assert that an evil deed of that magnitude could have been committed by anybody, Italian, Japanese – German allies of course – British, French or American. Interestingly enough this universal human evil discloses itself in its antonym, the very principle not of universality but of particularity: the particularity of humanity – nationality.

In many chapters of this volume, Nazism is discussed as if it were a representative manifestation of mass dictatorship in history. The national socialists disrupted parliamentary democracy and imposed an autocratic form of government on the German people. It may well be a type of dictatorship such as one could find it in the Philippines, Libya, Romania and North Korea. The most important aspect to be taken into account, however, is the formation of the national community itself, a community that is projected, produced and reproduced through an historically unprecedented form of social relations and individual identification. Where there is no 'nation' or 'people', mass dictatorship is unthinkable. In the formation of the 'nation', the masses transform themselves and acquire an entirely new quality previously unheard of.

In Chapter 7, Seonjoo Park succinctly underlines this historical specificity with regard to mass dictatorship. 'Now, the "mass" of mass dictatorship in the twenty-first century is becoming more global, universal and ubiquitous, and as a consequence, the process of massification, or the nationalization of the mass, is happening in more diverse, subtle and multiple forms due to the re-organized topology of everyday life in an age of globalization.' (page xx [ms 177]) What underwrites the increasingly diverse and multiple manifestations of mass dictatorship is the nationalization of the mass or a particular transformation of what Park calls 'massification' of multitudes. The very ubiquity, not of Nazism per se but of mass dictatorship, is sustained in the culture – in the biological sense – of the nation in which this malevolent power proliferates and spreads. Multitudes are re-organized into 'people', and consequently the masses are nationalized. Only then would we have to confront the imminent danger of mass dictatorship.

The modern concept of the nation presumes that it exists in an international world and that the nation is possible only in juxtaposition with other nations. Only when the people are distinguished from

foreigners can a nation possibly be imagined. Without discrimination against foreigners, a peoplehood cannot identify itself. Therefore, it is very difficult to prevent nationalism from engaging in an incessant examination of who belongs authentically to the nation and who does not. The discrimination of the foreign is the essential condition of the nation, and hence it cannot sustain itself without xenophobia. In other words, as Fukuzawa Yukichi unambiguously realized, xenophobia is a necessary condition of peoplehood.

In addition to those external or international differences, therefore, the nation is marked by differences such as social classes, races and credal rivalries internally as well as by international differences externally. In any event it is impossible for a nation to fully constitute itself, but the presence of others who do not identify with a nation is singled out as a cause that prevents a nation from being fully constituted. It is supposedly in the phases of transition that the nation is not fully constituted due to internal diversity. Yet, we cannot be sure that the transitional phase will ever be over. We are seriously in doubt that the transitional phase of the nation will eventually be superseded or overcome in a chronological sense. In other words, we are suspicious that what prevents the nation from its complete saturation is not some obstacle, which can be removed or overcome, but an essential constituent without which a nation is never possible to start with.

It is no accident that the majority of chapters in this volume are devoted to the problems of aesthetic manoeuvres: literature, films and historical narratives in which the past of the nation is recalled, imagined and asserted. As a matter of fact, the chapters discuss how much the supposed and imagined integrity of the nation in the present owes to the particular ways in which the past is dealt with: resurrected, interpreted in reference to the ethical conundrums of the present and appropriated into the aspirations for the future. It is no surprise that questions of collective guilt and shame predominate, for it is through emotive-affective responses to these questions that one's belonging to a nation is shaped. It is not only by sharing the glorious and triumphant moments of the nation that one ascertains one's belonging to it. It is also by sharing collective suffering, guilt or shame that one identifies with the nation and declares one's belonging to it. This is to say that the question of individual identification with the nation can never be adequately addressed unless the issues of aesthetics are laid on the table.

Because of its internal logic, an elucidation of the aesthetic nation requires the postulation of the nationality as though it were couched within an order of pre-established harmony. It cannot be denied that,

for so many decades, the idea or ideal of the national community has been a postulate without which no reasonable analysis of individual identification could be conducted. The danger we have to keep in our sights always is that the presumption of national community is taken to be a *fait-accompli* not only as an empirical reality in particular regions and periods but also as a generalized condition in our theoretical investigation. I fear that the nationalist critics of the concept of mass dictatorship have neglected this danger. We could easily lose sight of the possibility that there can be communities other than a national community; there can be other possibilities of community than the national community in which an individual is related to other individuals and groups, according to different logistics and aesthetics.

It is in this context that the concept of mass dictatorship is absolutely momentous. It is an indispensable concept because it interferes with a kind of knowledge formation that does not question the assumed existence of the national community. Mass dictatorship suggests that a national community could exert tremendous violence upon itself, thereby challenging the presumed assumption that, when fully realized, the national community is actualized in which all the violence arising from heterogeneity would cease to exist. It is the assumption of the national community that the community is in the final analysis identical with the *communio*.²¹ It calls to our attention that, precisely because of this communalistic assumption, it is extremely violent.

Today we must acknowledge the diversity of community in the world. What is meant by the diversity of communities does not indicate the geopolitical diversity of different communities juxtaposed with one another in the global expanse of the earth. Rather it implies the diversity of hopes and possibilities that our communality could be shaped according to different economies; it suggests that, even under the regime of the nation-state, it is possible to organize our relation to others without relying upon the formula of nationality; it is possible to manufacture communality according to a logistics not completely dominated by the aesthetics of the nation-state.

Here I should refer to the last chapter in this volume because the author Michael Schoenhals dared to deal with a historical process in which nationality as an aesthetic bond for a new community was being formed. On the one hand, Schoenhals does not hesitate to indicate the ambiguity of the historical situation he discusses. On the other, he notes the degree of violence in which participating forces engaged in what is usually apprehended as the movement of the Cultural Revolution. While he very carefully refrains from reducing the incidents

to a narrative framework of the streamlined history of capitalist developmentalism, he does not hesitate to show a process in which violence shaped the sense of national identity.

One of the reasons why I hesitate to apply the notion of mass dictatorship to societies and social formations in which nationality is yet to be firmly established is that we must not take the form of national community for granted as a universal condition of the present-day world. In this sense, mass dictatorship is neither applicable universally nor potentially present in any and every social formation in the world. But, by the same token, the concept allows us to historicize nationality itself.

As amazingly diversified and, on occasions, contradictory as the volume may appear, what is found here are varied and intriguing responses to the provocative term 'mass dictatorship'.

Notes

1. In the classic logic, the operation of classification starts with the form of proposition, $S - P$, where S designates the subject and P the predicate. In our example, in the proposition 'this horse is white', the subject is 'this horse' and the predicate 'is white'. A judgment which the enunciation of a proposition affirms is already a statement about a member (signified by the subject of the proposition) belonging to a class (signified by the predicate of the proposition). For instance, the proposition 'this horse is white' implies that the subject of the proposition (=an individual designated by 'this horse') is subsumed under the predicate (=the class of 'things white' in general). More specifically, the proposition can be analytically reiterated as a combination of two propositions: 'this is a horse' and 'it is white'. This means that an individual (indicated by 'this') belongs to the general set of horses (indicated by 'is a horse'), but that it also belongs to a sub-set of the set of horses because the concept of horse is modified by 'white'. The general class 'horses' signified by the predicate is particularized by a modifier 'white' in the expression 'white horses', so that the class of 'white horses' is narrower or more particular than the class of horses in general. While the class of horses is generality, the class of white horses is particularity. In the classic logic, classification is ordered by this economy of conceptual generality and particularity. The class of 'human beings' is specified or particularized by a modifier 'male' or 'female'; the class of 'male human beings' could be further specified by another modifier 'old' or 'young'; the class of 'male and old human being' could be further specified and so on. By adding more modifiers, one could pursue a series of particularization, but the end of this particularization and/or predication is the individual that can be a subject but can never be a predicate in the propositional form.

What is scandalous about mass dictatorship is that, even though the concept of mass dictatorship may appear to be the class of dictatorship modified by 'mass', this concept does not follow the conceptual economy of particularity and generality.

2. Jie-Hyun Lim refrains from subsuming the fascist regime of General Franco under the category of the mass dictatorship because it should instead be defined as *'despotismo moderno'*, and did not rely upon the mobilization of the masses through the intervention of the private lives of the masses. Cf. 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship', in Jie-Hyun Lim and Karen Petrone, eds, *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship: Global Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 18.
3. The term 'nation' is known to have derived from its Latin origin *'natio'* and, of course, its etymological roots chronologically precede the modern formation of the nation-state. Naturally it connotes many pre-modern social organizations that are incompatible with the requirements of the modern national community.
4. John Stuart Mill, *Considerations of Representative Government*, H. B. Acton ed. (London: Everyman's Library, 1972), p. 391
5. Above all else, let me note that the equivalent term *Rujiao* was a neologism invented to translate 'Confucianism' into Japanese in the late nineteenth century. Designations *Ruxue* (Confucian Learning), *Rujia* (Confucians), *mingjiao* (the Teaching of Norms), *lijiao* (the Teaching of Rites), *jingxue* (the Learning of the Classics) had existed before the term 'Confucianism' was introduced. What was entirely new with 'Confucianism' was that the hitherto diversified denomination was synthesized under the notion of a religion.
6. Of course, this is the aspect of the national community that Benedict Anderson famously underlined in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1990).
7. Let us keep in mind that the system of personal pronouns did not exist in the classical Chinese or the languages of classical Japanese. As is well known, modern Chinese or Japanese languages are consequences of the introduction of personal pronouns and some other grammatical devices.
8. Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population, Cours au Collège de France, 1977–1978* (Paris: Gallimad/Seuil, 2004) [*Security, Territory, Population*, Arnold I. Davidson ed., Graham Burchell trans. Houndmills & New York: Palgrave, 2007].
9. For instance, the preface to *Gakumon no Susume* and Chapter 6 of *Bunmei-ron no Gairyaku*, Fukuzawa Yukichi Zenshū, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1959) (originally published in 1875), vol. 4. 183–212 [English translation by David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst, Fukuzawa Yukichi's *'An Outline of a Theory of Civilization'* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973)].
10. For a historical analysis of the similar point, see Craig Calhoun, 'Nationalism and Ethnicity', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1993, p. 229.
11. Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmei-ron no Gairyaku*, op. cit., p. 27
12. Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmei-ron no Gairyaku*, ibid, p. 37. [English translation, Fukuzawa Yukichi's *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, op. cit., p. 23.] The translation has been modified in order to show the connections between Fukuzawa Yukichi's and John Stuart Mill's arguments.
13. Of course, this is an aspect of the national community that Benedict Anderson discussed. See note 6 above.
14. Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Bunmei-ron no Gairyaku*, op. cit., p. 37. [English translation, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* op. cit., p. 177.] Let me note that,

although Fukuzawa rejected this characterization of the Emperor, the idea of *isshi dōjin* (literally translated, it is 'one look, equal love' and connotes that every subject is absolutely equal before the Emperor or that the Emperor's love does not discriminate) was adopted to determine the relation of the Emperor to his subjects from the outset of the modern Emperor system. The expression of *isshi dōjin* has repeatedly appeared in governmental ordinances and publications since the first year of the Meiji period.

15. For more detailed discussion on the use of the expression of *isshi dōjin* and social discrimination in modern Japan, see Hirota Masaki, '*Kindai nihon shakai no sabetu kōzō*' (The structure of discrimination in modern Japanese society) in *Sabetu no shosō, Nihon kindai shisō taikai* vol. 22 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), pp. 436–516. For a discussion of the Japanese Emperor System as a displaced Christianity, see Kuno Osamu and Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Gendai nihon no shisō* (Contemporary Japanese Thought) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1956), pp. 126–129 in particular.
16. The social space where this pastorate operated was entirely different from the Egypt or Israel of antiquity, or the Christendom of medieval Europe, to which Michel Foucault referred in his discussion of pastoral power. The Emperor appeared in front of his subjects only occasionally and almost always as an icon or persona. Furthermore, there were no equivalent spatial arrangements to church, temple or other places of worship and gathering where the pastor could share a social occasion with the congregation of his followers, the notable exceptions being pedagogic institutions like schools. One could find no spatial proximity of intimacy, in which the pastor could deploy his interactive tactic to draw an audience's attention to himself personally.
17. The use of the photographic picture started in 1874, six years after the Meiji Restoration. In 1891, it became subject to legislation by the Japanese State. In the 1920s, the *Hōanden* became a universal practice in education in many parts of the Japanese Empire. Among many historical works on this topic, the following stand out: Kōji Taki, *Tenno no shōzō* (The Portrait of the Emperor) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988); Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Yoshio Yasumaru, *Kindai Tennō-zō no keisei* (The Formation of the Image of Modern Emperor) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992).
18. Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Towards a Transnational History of Victimhood Nationalism: On the Trans-Pacific Space' in *The Trans-Pacific Imagination – Rethinking Boundary, Culture and Society*, Naoki Sakai and Hyon Joo Yoo eds. (Singapore, New Jersey & London: World Scientific, 2012), pp. 61–74.
19. Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Mapping Mass Dictatorship: Towards a Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Dictatorship'.
20. Henning Mankell, *The Return of the Dancing Master*, Laurie Thompson trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 8
21. For an insightful analysis of the connections among community, common and communion, see Jean-luc Nancy, *La Communauté Désœuvrée* (Paris: Christian Bourgeois éditeur, 1986) [*The Inoperative Community*, Foreword by Christopher Fynsk, Peter Connor ed., Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney trans. (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).]

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