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HACKL'S *ABSCHIED VON SIDONIE* AND THE ROMANY HOLOCAUST REMEMBERED

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The owl of Minerva, said Hegel, takes flight only as darkness falls. He meant that our attempts at philosophy, the knowledge of what we are, must always work with memory, knowledge of what we have done. But that memory constantly recedes into oblivion, and so threatens the project itself. There is a passage in the Austrian writer Erich Hackl's documentary novel *Abschied von Sidonie* (*Farewell Sidonia*), published in 1989, that might serve as an application of Hegel's deep dictum. It describes how, in 1938, the inhabitants of the little Austrian village of Letten slowly, after the fact, become aware of a change in their lives. It is not something positive, more a barely perceptible subtraction from the regular pageant of life in the pan-German *Heimat*, the absence of those regular, if transient, visitors, the Gypsies. So regular were their visits that a nearby place, a hill in whose lea they would shelter for a night or two, has been accorded what is otherwise the sole privilege of settled folk, a proper name derived from their own: "Zigeunerberg" ("Gypsy Mountain"). Such an act of naming marks the permanence and, in a sense, legitimacy of the Gypsy presence—if only in a contact zone on the margin of the settled folks' property. But in 1938, as the inhabitants of Letten realize too late, years have already passed without the once-familiar sight of the Gypsies. Of course Hackl's reader understands by this stage of the narrative why the Gypsies no longer come. It is the beginning of what became the Romany Holocaust; the Gypsies have been rounded up. But the citizens of Letten are unwilling to admit this knowledge, even though it has in some sense reached the borders of their consciousness—some of them have glimpsed the corpses of what were once their Jewish fellow citizens being transported from nearby Mauthausen to the Steyr crematorium. However they can think only of their own impotence. The absence of the Gypsies, they decide, must be due to some law of nature, or perhaps the onward march of "civilization."

It is a cruel paradox of postwar German, indeed postwar Western history that this act of forgetting, the unwillingess to recognize the reality of the Romany Holocaust documented by Hackl in *Abschied von Sidonie*, has, by contrast to the Jewish Holocaust and despite the efforts of distinguished researchers such as Gabrielle Tyrnauer, Donald Kenrick, Ian Hancock, Sybil Milton, and many others, continued to the present day. That, of course, is the major motivation of Hackl's artful and troubling documentary reconstruction. Twelve-year-old Sidonie Adlersburg is a Gypsy girl of mixed race, who—unusually—has been adopted as a foundling by the freethinking, working-class Breurather family, and brought up thoroughly assimilated to an alternative Germanic tradition: humanistic, cosmopolitan, tolerant. Yet none of this counts in the barbaric epoch from 1933 to 1945. The acculturated girl is gradually isolated from her society on the familiar, prejudicial grounds of race and color, until at last, in March 1943, she is compulsorily restored to her presumed birth mother and at once transported to Auschwitz, there

writes for confirmation of Sidonie's transport to the mayor of Hopfgarten, the last place her presence was recorded. But this man, an ex-Nazi, refuses to acknowledge responsibility and invents an obfuscatory fiction. Similarly, those who connived at Sidonie's removal from Letten can produce carefully-crafted equivocating official documents which, read one way in 1943, sealed her fate, but, read another way in 1947, appear scrupulously considerate of all parties' interests. A monument to the war heroes of the *Luftwaffe* is built. But for Sidonie even a commemorative tablet is refused. After Breurather's death in 1980, his son Manfred can only achieve the private gesture of an inscription to Sidonie on his father's gravestone. The passionately engaged "chronicler," Hackl's self-figuration in the text, finally succeeds in persuading the local socialists to set an inscription into their clubhouse wall. But official recognition is still denied. Sidonie is written out of the local historian's *Heimatbuch*. The inhabitants of Letten live on as if she had never existed.

But *Abschied von Sidonie* is more than a protest against the local failure to come to terms with the past. It is also a *mene tekel* directed at Austrian and German society as a whole. Estimates as to the number of Romanies who were murdered at Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, Mauthausen, Lackenbach, and elsewhere vary from 275,000 to 500,000, and may yet be revised upwards. Eisenman's recently completed Holocaust monument in Berlin now commemorates the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Yet in postwar Germany there is to this day, outside of some few inscriptions in the preserved camps, no official monument to the Romany Holocaust. The decision to build was taken in 2002. But little progress has been made.

Indeed, an historical line can be drawn connecting this slow advance toward recognition in our day with the slow moves of the immediately postwar years toward official acknowledgment of the Romany fate under National Socialism. The *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* (Federal Compensation Law) of 1952 had defined the victims of National Socialist persecution in such a way as largely to exclude Romanies from its provisions. Victims, under this provision, were deemed to be those who had suffered by reason of political opposition, race, faith, or *Weltanschauung*. But the *Bundesgerichtshof* (Federal Court of Justice), glossing the paragraphs in 1956, decided that only those Gypsies who had been transported to the death camps after Himmler's Auschwitz decree of March 1943 should fall within this definition. It thus excluded those whose fate befell them earlier from compensation under these terms and, in some cases, from any compensation at all. It also seemed retrospectively to absolve the persecutors before 1943 from the charge of racism. Only in 1965 was this view revised to extend the definition back to 1938, the actual beginning of the transports. Only in 1979-1981 were government provisions made to extend compensation after the end of the official applications deadline (1969) beyond the Jewish community. And only in 1982 did *Bundeskanzler* Helmut Schmidt explicitly acknowledge on behalf of the government that Romanies too had been victims of National Socialist racism.

But if Hackl's book demonstrates the continuation of prejudice against the Gypsies after the Nazi era, it also recalls its far deeper historical roots, in centuries-old institutionalized Germanic anti-Gypsyism, by naming historical institutions whose provenance stretches back to the beginnings of Romany life in German-speaking lands. Eighteen months after Sidonie's adoption by the Breurathers, the authorities are still energetically pursuing her birth mother. A major factor in their ultimate success is the *Internationale Zentralstelle für die Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens* (International Center for Combatting the Gypsy Nuisance), an enormous centralized archive of detailed information about all known persons of Gypsy provenance, which was founded at Vienna in 1935. The social service authorities consult it for assistance. The influence of this organization, founded of course before the *Anschluss*, stretches forward in time to Robert Ritter's *Rassenhygienische und bevölkerungsbiologische Forschungsstelle* (Racial Hygiene and Population Biology Research Unit, 1936), which adapted and expanded the resources of the *Zentralstelle* to include pseudo-scientific anthropological data. It was Ritter's unit that provided the evidential basis for the transportation of Gypsies within the *Reich*.

But the *Zentralstelle* in Vienna also connects the Romany Holocaust to the longstanding anti-Gypsy tradition. For in 1935 it was far from an innovation. In fact, since the end of the eighteenth century Germanic states had sought to establish an informational register of all persons of Romany provenance as the instrument of official control over an ethnic group constantly perceived as a menace or nuisance. The immediate predecessor of the *Zentralstelle* was the *Zentralbüro für die Bekämpfung der Zigeunerplage* (Central Bureau for Combating the Gypsy Plague),

tions. From 1500-1800 no fewer than 148 (and probably far more) anti-Gypsy edicts were issued in German-speaking lands. In 1711, for example, the Elector of Saxony, August der Starke, decreed that Gypsies in his territory were, on first being apprehended, to be beaten and branded. If apprehended again, they were to be summarily executed. If they resisted arrest, they could be shot. Similarly, in 1725 the Elector of Brandenburg, King Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia, authorized the hanging without trial of all male and female Gypsies over eighteen years in his lands. Following the failure of late-eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century attempts at forced assimilation by philanthropic monarchs and evangelical organizations, the nineteenth-century anti-Gypsy measures mentioned above are really only specific transformations of this underlying anti-Gypsy tradition. The National Socialist ideology that led to Sidonie Adlersburg's murder is one further actualization of a persistent cultural stance, which, as the Breurathers testify, is in itself not characteristic of Germanic culture, but capable of fatal influence. It is in this light that the distressing invisibility of the Romany Holocaust for the collective memory in Germany after 1945 may best be explained.

"Porrajmos," the "devouring," is a Romany term used by many Gypsies to refer to their Holocaust. It is not a word used by Hackl in *Abschied von Sidonie*, but it does express a common interest, for it gives unique and independent recognition to the still repressed truth of the Romany Holocaust; just as would a Holocaust memorial with the Romanies' name on it. Perhaps only such act of remembrance could enable the overcoming of an old

who had never even so much as cooked an egg. But eventually her decision led him to take steps of his own. The Kindertransports that began during the tense period after *Kristallnacht* seemed to both of them a good way of speeding me out of harm's way. Anything might still happen.

How different it was at Turners Wood this time. My room—a maid's room under the sloping roof—could be reached only by a dark, narrow staircase. Perhaps it was this nightly climb that plunged me into a black hole of dejection. I did not realize then how fortunate I was to be staying with friends in a house already familiar to me, not in a children's camp or in the home of complete strangers, as did so many other Kindertransportees.

A Saturday three weeks later brought my mother's arrival. The sound of her voice, the comfort of her presence created a sense of home. But by Monday she had to leave. I had somehow expected things would change. Depressed again and increasingly

Drawing Conclusions from a Sojourn in Hades: The Work of Gerhard Durlacher, an Auschwitz Survivor

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In his fine essay "In Memoriam Gerhard Durlacher 1928-1996" (3, 1[1998]: 9-11) Yehudi Lindeman apprised the readers of this *Bulletin* of Durlacher's beautifully written autobiographical essays. Durlacher, the son of German Jewish refugees, wrote in his adopted language, Dutch. At the time of his death, only the first two of the five slim volumes that constitute his *oeuvre* had been translated into English. In the meanwhile, his third and most ambitious book, *De zoektocht* (1991), is also available in English under the title *The Search* (1998). Unfortunately, it has gone largely unnoticed. In addition, several shorter Durlacher texts have appeared posthumously in the original Dutch. These new publications provide reason enough to revisit his legacy.

A brief bio-bibliographical review of Durlacher's life may be helpful. Gerhard Leopold Durlacher was born 10 July 1928 in Baden-Baden, Germany, the only child of a middle-class, music-loving Jewish couple. He was a rather dreamy boy. In 1937, he and his parents fled to the Netherlands. A little over a year after the German occupation of that small neighboring country, Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend public school. Gerhard was tutored for a while. In October 1942, when he was fourteen, the Durlachers were seized and deported first to the Dutch transit camp Westerbork, then, in January 1944 to Theresienstadt (Terezin). On 18 May 1944, the family was sent on to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Gerhard last saw his parents. He was liberated in Gross-Rosen (Upper Silesia) by Soviet troops, who found him more dead than alive, gave him good medical care, and nursed him back to life until he could 'go home.'

Yet, there was no home for this sixteen-year-old, stateless boy. Still far from healthy, he traveled via Prague and Paris until he reached the Netherlands, where he endeavored to catch up on his high school education and to build a life for himself without parental support. He threw himself into schoolwork with single-minded zeal, not only to make up for four lost years, but also to push away the horrendous camp memories. His studies filled the gaping emptiness of his existence.

He finished high school as early as 1947, briefly considered an engineering program but then decided to study medicine. However, the years in concentration camps had done lasting damage to his health. When he needed renal surgery, halfway through his medical studies, the doctors strongly warned him that life as a physician would be too strenuous for him. Durlacher was disheartened but not defeated. He switched to sociology, did well and, in 1964, was appointed a research fellow and lecturer in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. He focused on the poorest part of the Dutch population and published a thorough and sensitive study *De laagstbetaalden* (The Minimum Wage Earners, 1965).

From all appearances Durlacher appeared to be successful in setting up a "normal" existence for himself, especially after he married a fellow sociology student, Anneke Sasburg, in 1959, and the two of them started a family. Yet when he responded to the request by the Dutch literary magazine *De Gids* for a review of two new historical studies—Walter Laqueur's *The Terrible Secret* and Martin Gilbert's *Auschwitz and the Allies*—both published in late 1981, his feelings from the camp years erupted, "the agony and fear, the helplessness and rage, the pain and misery [...] buried deeply, like lava in a supposedly extinct volcano" (*Stripes in the Sky*, p. 9).

The book review developed into the moving account "Strepen aan de hemel" published by the Dutch magazine in 1982; in 1985 it became the title story of his wartime memoir, published in English in 1991 as *Stripes in the Sky*. Durlacher conjures up the desperate hope and the devastating disappointment of the moribund concentration camp inmates when, in August of 1944, Allied airplanes traced their vapor trails across the sky above Auschwitz without bombing the gas chambers and crematoria. Careful research done by the two afore-mentioned historians, especially by Gilbert, confirmed Durlacher's consuming memory that the fate of the prisoners had not been worth a bomb to the Allied command. The inmates' crushing sense of total abandonment "by God and the world" proved justified, and that devastating feeling of utter desertion haunted Durlacher through the years. In the Epilogue to his slim collection of war memories Durlacher reproaches the Allies for their "national autism" (*Stripes*, p. 99).

Yet, even within Europe, under the sway of the Nazis, there were individuals who were not indifferent. For Durlacher, King Christian X of Denmark and many of the King's civil servants, as well as the majority of the Danish population are the shining example. They rescued the vast majority of the Danish Jews and they insisted that the International Red Cross inspect the concentration camp in the fortress Theresienstadt. Some of the ramifications of this Danish insistence on Red Cross inspection only became clear to Durlacher while reading Gilbert's study. In order to hoodwink the international inspectors, the German command of the fortress had ordered a series of beautification measures. Since Theresienstadt was vastly overpopulated, these Potemkin-like stratagems of the spring of 1944 entailed, in mid-May, the transfer of 7,500 inmates to the dreaded concentration camp, Auschwitz. Young Durlacher and his parents were part of this group of unfortunates.

Despite this bitter recognition, Durlacher writes with great respect in the third story of *Stripes in the Sky* about the remarkably courageous attitude of the Danes vis-à-vis the systematically perpetrated inhumanity, deemed incredible by most other contemporaries. Although rumors about atrocities were rife, few people were able to allow these unspeakable horrors to enter their consciousness, without suffering serious mental damage themselves. Durlacher's "Afterthoughts" to the title story reads:

> A world in which the aged, the ill, children and pregnant women are destroyed as useless garbage, in which every human dignity is jeered at, in which a human being is nothing more than vermin-ridden cattle, no

> longer useful once it has consumed its own muscle tissue, can only be faced up to by a few. Reports about what was happening 'over there' cannot be accepted for they undermine all our values.

This is how Durlacher attempts to explain the conduct of the silent bystanders in most of the occupied lands, as well as in the Allied countries at the time, and he adds: "It then takes courage and determination to open your mouth and protest" (*Stripes*, pp. 25-26).

Animated by the positive reception of his slim volume of war memories, Durlacher turned to his early childhood recollections, which reach back to the beginning of 1933, the time Hitler came to power. In 1987, *Drenkeling*, the Dutch original of *Drowning: Growing up in the Third Reich* (1993), appeared. It is another slender book with short accounts in the present tense. Durlacher succeeds in recapturing the feelings of disempowerment and helplessness, a feeling that dominated his early childhood in Baden-Baden. In these short pieces he also tells of the willingness of individuals to stand up for humaneness, of simple people like his nurse maid, Maria, or the waiter, Fritz, or a non-Jewish neighbor boy who stood by him when he was dropped by all the others. These people were like spots of light in the gathering, increasingly threatening darkness. After half a century, with quite some trepidation, Durlacher revisited the region of his early years. The repeatedly proffered excuse: "We didn't know anything, well hardly anything," arouses his indignation and caused him to close his book of early memories with the following tart observation:

> This is not a country of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. Anyone who wanted to hear could hear. Anyone who wanted to see could see. The speeches in which hoarse demagogues proclaimed our destruction were blared from every loudspeaker since January 1933. The measures aimed at isolating us, which daily chipped away our freedom, were printed in big bold letters in every newspaper. Countless Germans allowed themselves to be led into barbarism. Countless Germans, indifferent or paralyzed by fear, watched us drowning before their eyes. And a few of them, courageous like Fritz, the waiter in Riva on Lake Garda, rescued one of the drowning from the waves.
>
> *Drowning*, p. 97

Once Durlacher's devastating memories had broken out of their vault, he felt the need to have them corroborated by research in libraries and archives as well as by contacting his former fellow prisoners. *The Search* tells of this quest and of his link-up and the eventual reunion with some of the eighty-nine "Birkenau Boys," who, teenagers at the time like Durlacher himself, had not been sent to the gas chambers during the Auschwitz selection of 10 July 1944. At the reunion in Israel, they discovered that they were spared as a group because two Jewish women, mistresses of the camp commander and of one of his highly placed subordinates, had pleaded for the boys to be assigned to labor details rather then be gassed with their families (*The Search*, pp. 169 ff). This revelation supplements Durlacher's earlier unraveling of the history of the Auschwitz "family camp" in "The Illusionists," the afore-mentioned third story in *Stripes in the Sky* (pp. 43-70).

Durlacher's account of his re-connection with each of the handful of his fellow survivors in the United States, Canada, and Israel is deeply moving and so is his rendering of each individual's story of survival. For every one of them it had been immensely difficult to live with the memory of a destroyed childhood, with the recollection of the horrors and humiliations experienced in the concentration camps, with the grief for murdered close relatives and friends, with the rage against both the perfidy of their torturers and the indifference of the rest of the world. Despite those heavy and lasting burdens, many of these survivors had managed to become professionals and several of them, Durlacher included, had been able to find some solace in music and the arts. Only two of them were religious Jews; the dozen or so others all led more or less assimilated lives, forgoing the comfort of traditional faith.

Just like Durlacher's previous books, *The Search* consists of a number of separate stories, each of them recounting a specific episode as truthfully and concisely as possible. All of them are meticulously researched and they are seamlessly connected. The reader is made aware of many insoluble tensions and unanswerable questions. How can concentration camp survivors reconcile the incongruity between their heavily burdened memory and "normal" daily life, without beginning to doubt their mental images and without repressing them? On the other hand, how do we, who were spared their ordeal, or how do younger generations face former death-camp inmates? How do we overcome our awe, our uneasiness, our powerlessness, and our guilt feelings vis-à-vis people who had to go through hell? How do we hone our understanding for their sensitivities, the personal ones as well as those regarding threatening social and political developments? How do we commemorate?

Durlacher gives us small hints. In all of his books, the ones mentioned above as well as the two subsequent collections of short autobiographical stories —unfortunately not (yet) translated into English—*Quarantaine* (Quarantine) of 1994 and *Niet verstaan* (Not understood) of 1995, he distills the essence of his experiences. Time and again he takes care to offset his horrible memories with examples of human kindness, of helpfulness, and of courage displayed by individuals he encountered before and

lier literary books, all in one volume, under the title *Verzameld werk* (Collected Works, 1997). Another volume containing Durlacher's interviews, talks, and newspaper articles followed in 1998. Mrs. Durlacher gave it the title *Met haat valt niet te leven* (One Cannot Live with Hatred), a quotation from a Durlacher interview of 1995 *(Met haat,* p. 126).

These posthumously published materials show most clearly Durlacher's propensity to draw personal and political conclusions from his life's experiences. In his critical reflection "Herdenken is vooruitzien" (To Commemorate is to Look Ahead), written for the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands, he recalls the extremely cold reception that greeted the survivors from both the German and the Japanese prison camps upon their return to the Netherlands, when the war was finally over. After a brief summary of the horrors these prisoners had gone through, he remarks: "The people who returned from Hades have rarely had the feeling of finding recognition or comprehension for their sojourn in the nether-world. And perhaps that is too much to expect." In this context Durlacher repeats the passage from *Stripes in the Sky* dealing with the unimaginability of the dehumanization in the concentration camps, quoted above, and he concludes:

> Yet this kind of imagination is of great importance. No longer for us, but for all of the people who come after us. Not for the sake of history, but for the sake of the future. The system has not ceased to exist after May of 1945. In many countries and under many regimes this cancer is still virulent. Oh God, may it stop!
>
> *Met haat,* p. 17

Durlacher's 1993 interview in connection with a literary soirée he had organized for a group of refugees, started out with words of empathy: "I can imagine only too well how displaced one feels in a country where one does not know the language, the culture. Refugees who are requesting asylum live in a totally separate world" (*Met haat,* p. 116). Open houses in the refugee centers when visitors are invited to watch the asylum seekers perform exotic dances or engage in foreign arts and crafts, were of no use. To Durlacher they were like a day at the zoo. It was demeaning and should be avoided. Instead, he wanted to do his part "to put the brakes on barbarism" (ibid., p. 119).

> Violence is on the rise and conditions are deteriorating. The spiral has to be bent in a different direction. [Elie] Wiesel said: 'The most deadly sin is indifference.' This statement would be enough to earn him the Nobel Prize. There is a great danger that people resign themselves to what is going on: we think it is terrible, but we fail to comprehend the misery. It is a world-wide feeling.
>
> *Met haat,* p. 119

He granted that it is difficult to stop the harmful process of privatization and individualization, but he warned that whosoever locks his or her soul against what happens abroad will soon turn a deaf ear to people close by. Yet Durlacher saw glimpses of hope, as many Dutch high school students began to find his books on their reading list, and in Germany thousands of young people took to the street in order to protest against neo-Nazis and against racial violence (*Met haat,* pp. 116-119).

"Dezonde der onverschilligheid" (The Sin of Indifference), a recurrent Durlacher theme, is the title of a contribution he made in 1987 to a workshop on "Violence Against Children in South Africa." In this presentation, he reminds people of the fact that indifference made the genocides of the twentieth century possible: the murder of over a million Armenians in Turkey, of twenty million Russians under Stalin, of over six million Jews and Gypsies under Hitler, of tens of millions of Chinese under Mao and his wife, of a million Ibos in Africa, of three million Bangladeshi and two million Cambodians in Asia, and on and on, with an ever climbing number of deaths in South Africa even as Durlacher was speaking. "The word INDIFFERENCE gnashes between my teeth," he continues, as he tries to fathom that propensity within himself and within others. He returns to the devastating Auschwitz experience, described so unforgettably in the title story of *Stripes in the Sky* and repeats his afterthoughts of 1982. Since that time, he said:

> [M]uch, too much has passed by our eyes and ears, but also by our hearts. The stream of brutality that goes by via the media and via our own observation, numbs us by its very force, causes us to be hopeless and even apathetic[. . .]. Nobody can be open to all of the injustice perpetrated on a daily basis, not even to everything one hears and sees day after day. Nobody has the ablity of Atlas to carry the distressful world on his shoulders. Yet, this should not be seen as an excuse for doing nothing.
>
> *Verzameld werk,* pp. 509-11

Quickly writing a check in order to appease one's conscience only to hurry back to the order of the day would not do for Durlacher. What is needed, he pleaded, is active intervention, courageous resistance:

> If we teach our children to raise their voices and demand respect for our fellow human beings, if we encourage them not to rest until they are being listened to, then the downtrodden will know that they are not alone and deserted, like we were at the time, and that will give them the strength to persevere in their call for justice.
>
> *Verzameld werk,* pp. 512-14

In the text fragment "From Tivoli to Danang" Durlacher drew a personal conclusion with important ethical and political ramifications, one that may give pause to American readers. Like all of Durlacher's stories, this text is built on his own experiences and narrated in the first person, mostly in the present tense (*Verzameld werk,* pp. 529-82). He told how in the early nineteen-fifties, in appreciation of the stand the majority of Danes had taken during the Nazi era, young Durlacher, then a student of medicine, hitchhiked to Copenhagen. In the Tivoli Gardens he met an American couple en route to Wiesbaden, where the young man, just out of law school, would work as a counsel to the U.S. Air Force. The young American was robust and full of vitality, the narrator's antipode. The lawyer's wife was a rather sensitive musician. The three of them became fast friends and eventually Durlacher's wife, Anneke, joined the warm relationship. As early as his first visit to Wiesbaden, the narrator noticed how, in the privileged military environment, his lawyer-friend gradually forfeited his progressive stance. After the Americans returned to the United States, a lively correspondence developed between the two couples. In the meantime, the war in Vietnam had started and raged on relent-

lessly. American Marines secured the Air Force base in Danang. In the spring of 1969, shortly after the American bombardment of Cambodia, which escalated the war horrendously, the lawyer announced to his Dutch friends that he had an assigment in Europe and that he hoped to visit them for a few days. He added, as an aside, that he had become a high-ranking executive at Kaiser Aluminum, one of the major American warplane and armament manufacturers. Making a connection between his own war-time experiences and the current events in South-East Asia, Durlacher replied fiercely that the lawyer and his family would be welcome only as refugees from the Nixon-regime.

Mrs. Durlacher adds in her "Afterword" to the fragments that her husband wanted to show with this book as well as with everything else he had written, that the personal and the political are inseparable. She is convinced that if "From Tivoli to Danang" had been completed, it would have been a passionate plea for watchfulness lest history keep repeating itself (*Verzameld Werk*, pp. 507-86, esp. pp. 584 -86). That is why this reviewer deems it urgent that Durlacher's books are read not only by students of the Holocaust but also by concerned citizens who want to learn from a thoughtful survivor.

Works by Durlacher:

The following titles are available in English: *Stripes in the Sky: A Wartime Memoir* (1991), *Drowning: Growing up in the Third Reich* (1993), and *The Search: The Birkenau Boys* (1998), all three of them translated by Susan Massotty and published by Serpent's Tail Press (London, New York). Quotations from texts that have not appeared in English were translated by the present author. Readers of German can find Durlacher's fourth book, *Quarantaine*, in an excellent German translation by Maria Csollàny under the title *Wunderbare Menschen: Geschichten aus der Freiheit* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1998). Durlacher's Dutch publisher is Meulenhoff in Amsterdam.

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His Seventy-Fifth Birthday (Burlington, Vermont: Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont, 2001), pp. 223-237.

Vossen, Rüdiger, ed. *Zigeuner. Roma, Sinti, Gitanos, Gypsies zwischen Verfolgung und Romantisierung. Katalog zur Ausstellung "Zigeuner zwischen Romantisierung und Verfolgung – Roma, Sinti, Manusch, Calé in Europa" des Hamburgischen Museums für Völkerkunde* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna: Ullstein, 1993).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations, Robert!

Robert Bernheim successfully completed his doctoral degree at McGill University. On 24 January 2005 he defended his dissertation, "The Commissar Order and the Seventeenth German Army: From Genesis to Implementation, 30 March 1941– 31 January 1942."

Bernheim is a founding member of the outside advisory board of the Center for Holocaust Studies. Currently teaching at Middlebury College, he created and continues to run the summer course at UVM, "The Holocaust and Holocaust Education."

Summer Courses

For the 12th year, Continuing Education at the University of Vermont offers:

The Holocaust and Holocaust Education for Teachers of Grades K-12. This year's course will be held 27 June – 1 July. Although this course is primarily intended for teachers, it is also open to undergraduates and cross-listed under World Literature and Holocaust Studies

This year, for the first time, we offer a companion course for teachers who have already taken The Holocaust and Holocaust Education:

Teaching the Holocaust. This 5-day seminar for teachers and teachers in training offers an in-depth exploration of methodologies for teaching the Holocaust. This course will be held 11– 15 July 2005.

For more information on either course, visit Continuing Education's website: http://learn.uvm.edu/.

RACE AND "HEALTH" IN NAZI GERMANY STEPHENSON'S HILBERG LECTURE

Gabrielle Piscitelli

On Tuesday, 26 October 2004, the Center for Holocaust Studies presented the twelfth annual Raul Hilberg Lecture, delivered by Professor Jill Stephenson from Edinburgh University. Professor Stephenson's research has largely focused on women in Germany during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi era. When she started her research, she did not think that this topic would have substantial depth. Now she has written numerous publications and has even appeared on British television and radio as an expert on this area. I was privileged not only to listen to her lecture but also to briefly meet her.

For the Hilberg Lecture, Stephenson's topic was "Two Sides of the Coin: 'Aryan' Health and Racial Persecution," an issue that is not studied enough when dealing with the Holocaust. She made an analogy between the racial persecution conducted by the Nazis and the behavior of a gardener. As she put it, a gardener discards weeds and unwanted or imperfect plants, in order to prevent them from inhibiting the growth of desired plants and flowers, "We eliminate these imperfect specimens to allow the perfect ones to flourish and prevail." This is exactly how the Nazi party treated Germany and its society. The Nazi party had an obsession with "racial health." They firmly believed that race and health were directly linked, that genetics and hereditary characteristics determined a people's health.

The Nazis planned to allow the "Aryan" race to prevail by eliminating and persecuting anyone who was not "Aryan." Their mission was simple: "Retaliate first." This meant that the enemy was to be weakened, while at the same time more resources were to be provided for those who were "valuable."

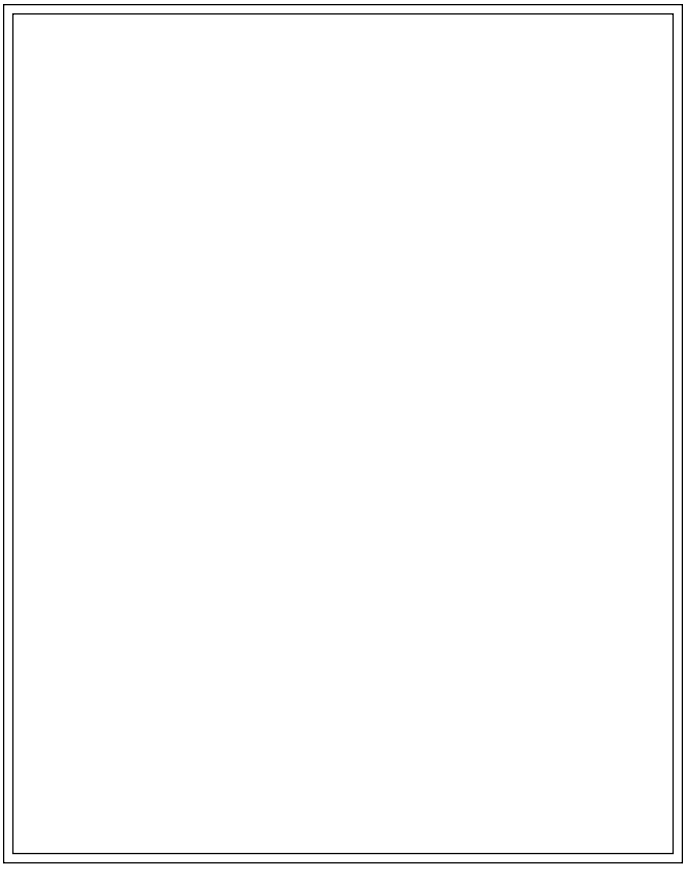
Although one joke at the time said that to be an "Aryan" you had to be as tall as Hitler, as blond as Goebbels, as chaste as Röhm, and as thin as Göring, the definition of "Aryan" went far beyond the blond, blue-eyed stereotype to include the everyday habits and behavior of the people of Germany. Anyone who did not fit the Nazi ideal was "imperfect" and "defective." This included the following groups: Jews, Blacks, homosexuals, gypsies, the feeble-minded, schizophrenics, chronic alcoholics, the blind, the deaf, manic depressives, those with any physical deformity, slobs, and many others. Anyone who fit into any of these categories was persecuted to the fullest extent, because such "imperfect" "non-Aryans" threatened to prevent the "Aryan" race from growing and prevailing.

These were the two sides of the coin: Side one) making sure the "Aryan" race, the "valuables," and only they, always came first. This meant that almost all of Germany's resources (food, supplies, etc.) were given to "Aryans" first, which made rationing of all resources extremely stringent. Side two) restricting all others. This meant that those who fit any part of the "non-Aryan" profile were discriminated against severely. Jewish assets were stolen and given to officers of the regime. Jews were excluded from the professions. In the 1930s, Jewish children were not allowed to attend schools with "Aryan" children. The persecution grew worse, and soon crossed into physical restrictions, such as giving Jews and workers from eastern Europe minimal food during the war.

Another class of people that was discriminated against was those who had "'Aryan' antecedents," but refused to conform to the Nazi norm for behavior. These included petty thieves, prostitutes, habitual drinkers, and women who did not keep neat and orderly homes. Instead of taking away their businesses and assets, the Nazis dealt with this group by compulsory sterilization,

herd were denied marriage twice and then, on the third appeal, finally allowed to marry. The reasons for the denials were those according to the Marriage Law. The woman had been classified as feeble-minded and sterilized in 1935. Because of her sterilization, the marriage application was denied the first time. The second time they applied, they were denied permission because the shepherd was devaluing his race by being prepared to marry a woman who had been sterilized. Following the third appeal, they were allowed to marry because, Stephenson speculated, the woman had just lost a brother in the war and had two other brothers still fighting. How could Germany deny the ability to marry to someone who had lost a family member in service to the Germany army? According to Stephenson, cases similar to this one were not uncommon.

Unfortunately, Germany was not the only country performing sterilizations at this time; between 1899 and 1941, 36,000 people were sterilized in the United States of America. The "weeding" the Nazis performed on Germany society by sterilizing those "imperfect" people occurred between 1934 and 1944, when an estimated 400,000 felt the impact of the "Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring." We forget that the Nazis targeted and persecuted not only Jews but also many other innocent victims as they put into practice their sick and twisted views of a "perfect race." There is no such thing as the perfect race and there never will be. The world is, and should be, diverse.



About the Contributors:

Melanie Gustafson is associate professor and director of Graduate Studies in History at the University of Vermont. Her most recent publication is *Major Problems in the History of World War II*, co-edited with Mark Stoler. Her scholarly work has focused on women and political parties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Loreen Nussbaum, professor emerita of Foreign Languages and Literatures at Portland State University, is also the author of "Anne Frank and Gerhard Durlacher, Two German-Dutch Writers: Parallels and Contrasts," due to appear shortly in Broos, Ton and Thomas F. Shannon (eds.), *The Low Countries: Crossroads of Cultures* (Münster: Nodus, 2005).

Gabrielle Piscitelli is a first-year student at the University

BOOK REVIEWS

Hidden from the Holocaust: Stories of Resilient Children Who Survived and Thrived. Kerry Bluglass. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003. xvii + 271 pp. Cloth. $49.95. ISBN 0-275-27486-3.

Kerry Bluglass is a senior psychiatrist at the University of Birmingham, UK, who, late in her career, has come to address the issue of the emotional outcome for children hidden during the Holocaust. Excerpts from fourteen interviews conducted in 1997 with survivors from France, Holland, Belgium, and Poland provide the core of the book. Wisely, Bluglass emphasizes the significance of oral history of the Holocaust, as well as the difference between "unmediated" testimony and her narratives based on interviews. Her concern is to present child survivor narratives as a piece of Holocaust oral history and to draw conclusions based on her clinical assessments. Her overall conclusion attests to the resilience and positive emotional adjustment of her interviewees, a testament to the human capacity to emerge whole from adversity and trauma.

The narratives, while evidently abridged and edited, are similar in construct to those of many Holocaust survivors. That is, they present the facts of survival in largely chronological fashion,

Clearly, a convergence of psychological and non-psychological factors contributed to the survival of the most vulnerable of Holocaust victims—children, utterly dependent on the good will of others, and, ultimately, faced with the task of emergence from childhood into adulthood under severe disadvantage. That resilience played a role in a positive outcome is highly suggestive, although we will never be able to measure this factor relative to others in a truly substantive manner. That Michael Bukanc emphasizes the role of resilience, not in himself, but in his rescuers, reminds us of the crucial role of those who enabled survival during the Holocaust.

Carroll Lewin
University of Vermont

The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response. Peter Balakian. New York: HarperCollins, 2003. 475 pp. Cloth $26.95. ISBN 0-06-019840-0.

Peter Balakian opens the *Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* with a love story. It begins in the summer of 1893 when Alice Stone Blackwell and Ohonnes Chatschumian began translating Armenian poetry together. As the notable daughter of American political reformers and the poor theology student who had migrated from Russian Armenia learned each other's languages, they pledged not only their love but their commitment to helping Armenians then living under the harsh conditions of the Ottoman Empire. Blackwell and Chatschumian formed the United Friends of Armenia and, with Julia Ward Howe, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," as its first president, launched "America's first international human rights movement" (p. 19). This movement raised American awareness of the Armenian situation and helped "define American ideas about international human rights and responsibilities" (p. 19). These ideas included the need to raise money, to mobilize relief teams that would travel to places of disaster, and to lobby Congress and the President. In 1896, Americans "raised more than three hundred thousand dollars in an age when a loaf of bread cost a nickel" (p. 70) and the symbol of American humanity, seventy-five-year-old Clara Barton, led America's first international American Red Cross mission to Turkey to help the "starving Armenians" (p. 75). From 1915 to 1929, the Committee on Armenian Atrocities raised $116,000,000 (which would be today more than a billion dollars) and engaged in more relief efforts. Americans understood that the stakes were high. The massacres of the 1890s, the American public learned, resulted in the death of around 200,000 Armenians—100,000 were murdered and 100,000 died from disease or famine (pp. 5; 110). Worse was yet to come. After the Young Turks (the Committee of Union and Progress) took control in 1908, violence escalated under what Balakian calls "a government-planned genocide." Between 1915 and 1922 the Armenian death toll reached over a million to a million and a half (p. 180). Henry Morgenthau, the American Ambassador in Constantinople from 1913 to 1916, was reported in a 1915 *New York Times* article as stating: "Turks admit that the Armenian persecution is the first step in a plan to get rid of Christians, and that Greeks will come next. Jews are also marked for slaughter or expulsion" (p. 284).

Balakian's book builds on the work of earlier scholars of the Armenian genocide, especially that of Vahakn Dadrian, as well as the insights of scholars of the destruction of European Jews. Yet this book is also a political commentary on Turkey's relationship to this history. This is evident in the introduction and the epilogue, which deal with the Turkish government's continual denial of the genocide and its attempts to erase it from the historical record. Balakian also details the pressure the Turkish government has exerted in American political and academic circles, and the counter-efforts of Armenian-Americans, over the use of the word genocide and the presentation of this history. Balakian quotes Emory University professor Deborah Lipstadt; "Denial of genocide—whether that of the Turks against Armenians, or the Nazis against Jews—is not an act of historical reinterpretation. Rather it sows confusion by appearing to be engaged in a genuine scholarly effort" (pp. xviii and 389). While Balakian's book is a scholarly effort, its introduction and epilogue frame it as a political morality tale. According to Balakian, Turks who participated in the genocide in the past and those who deny the genocide today are to be criticized. Both are perpetrators; both must be denounced for their actions.

Mining a rich lode of personal accounts, missionary testimony, and official reports, Balakian keeps the horrifying details of the massacres and genocide at the center of his narrative. He shows that what Armenians, diplomats, and foreign missionaries lived through and survived to testify about was later confirmed by Turkey's military and diplomatic allies at post-war tribunals. Together these accounts contribute to a solid historical record of a situation that can clearly be termed a genocide. But Balakian is not content to simply string together statistics and individual reports. He wants readers to feel the emotions of the past, emotions that he clearly feels himself—grief, despair, anger, hope, and optimism. He uses numerous American newspaper reports to evoke the feelings of the day as Americans learned of the atrocities. They document the outpouring of sympathy and activism by Americans. Thanks to modern technology it is easy to access, read, and examine many of the articles that make up what Balakian calls the "beginning of modern human rights reporting." I was especially interested in the *New York Times* article from 10 September 1895 because Balakian states that it was perhaps the first time the word "holocaust" was used "to describe a human rights disaster." The article's headline is "Another Armenian Holocaust" and, according to Balakian, it "describes the mass murder of more than five thousand Armenians by a force of one thousand Turkish troops in the Erzinjan district of eastern Turkey" (p. 11). After accessing the article I was shocked to discover that Balakian got the headline correct but not the facts. According to the *Times*, "1,000 Turkish troops were sent to Kemokh, and five villages were pillaged. Five thousand persons were rendered homeless." The article goes on to report that "men, women, and children were tortured" but it does not describe a "mass murder." If Balakian wants to suggest that "homeless" is a code word for "mass murder" then he needs to show that the *Times* did this consistently. In fact, Balakian states, the *Times* used "conclusive language" in its reports about "the Turkish slaughter of the Armenians": "systematic," "deliberate," "campaign of extermination," and "systematic race extermination" are words used in articles under headlines like "Eight Thousand Butchered" and "Denying

Armenian Atrocities" (pp. xix, 11). Therefore, if "homeless" is not a code word, why does Balakian begin his almost 400-page study with a misuse of facts, when so many other reports clearly show mass murders that were, cumulatively, a genocide? This "mistake," "misreading" or whatever we might call it is a serious issue, most especially because of the way Balakian has framed his study. If he is concerned with the denial of the genocide then he needs to be absolutely precise in all his details. The facts need to balance the emotion.

There is much to be praised in this book but also much to question. For instance, Balakian describes and suggests that the Armenian genocide was a template for the German Holocaust but he does not fully engage the scholarship that looks at the range of influences on Hitler and Germany. Instead, Balakian consistently returns to the human stories. He helps us know better some well-known Americans, like Alice Stone Blackwell, and unknown Armenians, like Ohannes Chatschumian. And what of their love story? In the summer of 1894 Chatschumian returned to Leipzig to continue his studies there. After a long illness, he died in May 1896. Stone Blackwell never married, continued translating poems, and worked for Armenian relief and other political causes until her death in 1950.

Melanie Gustafson
University of Vermont

Book Announcement:

Sources of the Holocaust, edited by Steve Hochstadt. Basingstoke, UK and New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2004. 319 pp. Paper. $23.95. ISBN: 0-333-96345-8.

This useful and affordable volume of documentation covers a wide range of topics. The ten sections are: The Context of Christian Antisemitism; The Creation of Monsters in Germany: Jews and Others; The Nazi Attack on Jews and Other Undesirables in the Third Reich, 1933-1938; The Physical Assault on Jews in Germany, 1938-1939; The Perfection of Genocide as National Policy (by far the longest section); 'Arbeit Macht Frei': Work

5. For the musical person, to be unmusical is more or less like being blind or deaf. Thank God that he graciously created music for us to hear, experience, and passionately love.

6. Music is the art form that moves the human spirit most; it has the power to soothe pain and to turn mere happiness into ecstasy.

7. If melody is at the source of music, then it follows that a music for the people may not be limited to pastorales or chorales. Music must always return to lively melody as the root of its being.

8. Nowhere are the treasures of the past so richly and inexhaustibly spread out as in the area of music. To hold them up and give them to the people is our most important and rewarding task.

9. The language of musical tones is sometimes more effective than the language of words. For this reason, the great masters of the past represent the true majesty of our people and are deserving of reverence and respect.

10. And as children of our people they are the true monarchs of our people by God's grace and are destined to receive the fame and honor of our nation and to multiply.

Berlin. 28 Mai 1938

Reichsminister for the People's
Enlightenment and Propaganda
Dr. Goebbels

* * *

The Nazi Party Program of 24 February 1920 contains nothing explicit on the subject of the arts among its twenty-five points; it does state that Jews could not, for reasons of race, be German citizens. However, the arts and race were soon to be linked in Nazi policy. In 1929 the ideologue Alfred Rosenberg founded the *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur* (Fighting Association for German Culture), in which he constantly asserted the message that the decisive factor in all artistic creation was race. This same concept is to be found in his infamous book, published in 1930, *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (The Myth of the Twentieth Century).

Futhermore, according to Rosenberg, the Jews had, through their religion, attempted to destroy the "Teutonic spirit" that underlay the thinking of the "master race." The introduction of race into the arts automatically excluded Jews and the Jewish contribution to the arts in Germany when Hitler assumed power.

Once in control, Hitler made significant changes concerning the administration of the arts. As early as January 1933, he made the decision to have Goebbels head a Reich Chamber of Culture, which was established in November of that year. He then appointed Rosenberg the "Führer's delegate for the supervision of the whole intellectual and philosophical education and teaching of the National Socialist party," so that he continued to play a role in cultural matters.

The change of leadership from Rosenberg to Goebbels did not take place altogether smoothly. The two Nazi ideologues did not like one another; each wanted to be the leader of artistic policy in the Third Reich. The Reich Chamber of Culture, which was to control all aspects of the artistic world in the Third Reich, contained seven sections: the chambers for literature, the press, radio, theater, art, film, and music. As its head, Goebbels therefore had the upper hand over Rosenberg when it came to the arts.

Goebbels held a Ph.D. in German Literature from the University of Heidelberg. He had ambitions to become a writer, and indeed, had published one (unsuccessful) novel in 1926. Goebbels, along with most other Nazi functionaries, in general lost no opportunity to pontificate. It is therefore not at all surprising that he used the occasion of the Reich Music Convention to spell out his thoughts on German music.

Goebbels appointed the celebrated composer Richard Strauss to head the Chamber of Music, with Wilhelm Furtwängler, the famous conductor, as his deputy. Both Strauss and Furtwängler were to have difficulties during the de-Nazification process after the war and remain to this day controversial figures.

Goebbels' knowledge of music was limited, and his relationship with Strauss was fraught with difficulty. Strauss tended to ignore the chamber's bureaucracy and he worked only on matters that he considered worthwhile, such as copyright policy. The major area of disagreement, however, lay in the "Jewish question" as it pertained to music. Strauss refused to oversee the dismissal of Jewish musicians from their posts. Furthermore, the composer refused to end his fruitful collaboration with Stefan Zweig, the notable (and Jewish) writer who was his librettist. After several months of tense discussion, Strauss resigned from the Reich Music Chamber in July 1935 "for health reasons."

The one somewhat beneficial element to emerge from the complex and sad picture of culture in the Third Reich lay in the readiness of the Reich Chamber of Culture to tolerate the formation of the *Kulturbund deutscher Juden* (Cultural Association of German Jews) in 1933. The title was soon changed to the *Jüdische Kulturbund* (Jewish Cultural Association), since (as we have seen) Jews could not be German citizens. The Jewish Cultural Association not only gave the dismissed Jewish musicians an opportunity to perform, but, above all, until the association was disbanded in 1941, gave those Jews who remained in Germany an opportunity to attend concerts, recitals, plays, and other cultural events.

Recommended Reading

Goldsmith, Martin. *The Inextinguishable Symphony: A True Story of Music and Love in Nazi Germany*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 2000.

Kater, Michael. *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich.* New York : Oxford University Press, 1997.

———. *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Steinweis, Alan. *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

SPRING EVENTS

Monday, 28 March 2005

Dean's Lecture
Jonathan Huener
Department of History
"Auschwitz Remembered"
5:00 pm
Memorial Lounge
Waterman Building

Wednesday, 30 March 2005

Susan Tebbutt
Mary Immaculate College
University of Limerick, Ireland
"Romanies and Genocide: Records, Memories, and Reconstructions of Romany Experiences Under the Nazis"
8:00 pm
Angell B106

This lecture honors and is in memory
of Gabrielle Tyrnauer

Monday, 11 April 2005

16th Harry H. Kahn Memorial Lecture
co-sponsored with the Department of German and Russian
Professor Frank Nicosia
St. Michael's College
"German Zionism and the Nazi Assumption of Power: Between Illusion and Reality"
4:00 pm
301 Williams.

THE BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2

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