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Ignazio Silone, Albert Camus, and Manès Sperber:
Writing Between Stalinism and Fascism

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Abstract

Ignazio Silone, Albert Camus, and Manès Sperber:
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By Jennifer Aileen Orth-Veillon

This dissertation examines the role of the literary in the contradictory political experiences of three authors. I argue that Albert Camus, Ignazio Silone, and Manès Sperber create a literary language that speaks about a type of political abuse and betrayal that the ideologies of twentieth-century radical regimes cannot explain. These authors belong to a rare generation of intellectuals that suffered under both fascism and Stalinism. Each made a break with politics at a time when these political parties dictated their intellectual and cultural communities. This break stripped them of their entire sense of belonging in a world in which politics was everything. They were plunged into space between fascism and Stalinism that operated like a political abyss. My analyses show that fiction became for them a new form of political writing for which this abyss, an abyss characterized by political loss and betrayal, offered possibilities of political and artistic renewal. In these writers' attempts to avoid the political in their literature, they came up with political truths only available through literature: the abuses of fascism and Stalinism were not unprecedented events; they were part of an age-old cycle of political destruction.

In Silone's *Fontamara,* Camus' *La Peste*, and Sperber's *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* I argue that the literary emerges from the ruins of other genres of writing. In Chapter 1 "Pescina Trembles: Ghosts of *Fontamara* and the Earthquake of History," Silone's hidden story about the silencing of Abruzzo peasants arises from the collapse of two forms of historical narrative: the history of Italian politics and Silone's biographical history. In Chapter 2, "Albert Camus and La Peste : Allegory in Ruins," it is the allegorical bridge between Camus' journalism and his literature, which breaks down to reveal another narrative of French political abuses inflicted upon Jews, communists, and *autochtones* in Algeria. In Chapter 3, "Manès Sperber and the End of Austrian Galicia. The Messianic Collapse of Memoir and Literature," the religious story of a fictional shtetl interrupts the political narrative. The book is not only the odyssey of disillusioned communists, but also a story about the destruction Galicia shtetl life.

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Introduction

In Between Stalinism and Fascism: The Contradictory Art of Engagement

> *….il est vain et dérisoire de nous demander justification et engagement. Engagés, nous le sommes, quoique involontairement. Et, pour finir, ce n'est pas le combat qui fait de nous des artistes, mais l'art qui nous contraint à être des combattants. Par sa fonction même, l'artiste est le témoin de la liberté, et c'est une justification qu'il lui arrive de payer cher. Par sa fonction même il est engagé dans la plus inextricable épaisseur de l'histoire, celle où on étouffe la chair même de l'homme. Le monde étant ce qu'il est, nous y sommes engagés quoi que nous en ayons et nous sommes par nature les ennemis des idoles abstraites. ..Voilà ce qui nous empêchera toujours de prononcer le jugement absolu…Dans le monde de la condamnation à mort qui est le nôtre, les artistes témoignent pour ce qui dans l'homme refuse de mourir.*
>
> *-Albert Camus, "Le Témoin de la liberté," 1948*[1]

In November 1948 Albert Camus gave a speech entitled "Le Témoin de la liberté" to an international meeting of writers in Pleyel, a town just north of Paris. More than three years had passed since General de Gaulle had marched in front of cheering crowds along the Champs Elysées declaring France's victory over the Nazis. In 1948, France, however, was still caught in the turbulent wake of post-war politics. The various groups that made up the French Resistance movements during the war, such as the communists, de Gaulle's France Libre, and the Francs-Tireurs, clamored angrily to take their rightful place in the leadership of the Fourth Republic. The controversial series of purge trials of Vichy officials and Nazi collaborators continued to cause rifts among those who wanted to assign blame for the war's most atrocious crimes, which included the deportation of France's Jews. France's position in her colonies, such as Algeria and Indochina, began to weaken, which only added to the never-ending debates of how the country would construct a post-war identity that

would maintain its position as a world power. Nevertheless, the shadow of totalitarianism, and the desire to eradicate it from French soil, became the singular goal of politicians and intellectuals alike. In the midst of this political turmoil, Jean-Paul Sartre called for the absolute political engagement of intellectuals and artists. Camus, however, urged his fellow writers to keep politics out of their work. How then could artists be engaged at a time when it was so important to for them to contribute to the political reconstruction of post-war France?

Artists, Camus argues, by creating art, already understand what politics should entail. They are "du côté de la vie, non de la mort. Ils sont les témoins de la chair, non de la loi. Par leur vocation, ils sont condamnés à *la compréhension* de cela même de qui leur est ennemi."[2] Politics, then, should be about protecting lives, even when the law sees the enemies as criminals. It should not totalize through propaganda, but *comprehend* the diversity and fraternity of the human condition in both senses of this verb: to include and to understand. "Les autres," Camus says, "aussi qui croient pouvoir travailler pour l'idéologie totalitaire par les moyens de leur art, alors que dans le sein même de leur œuvre la puissance de l'art fait éclater la propagande, revendique l'unité dont ils sont les vrais serviteurs" (2 : 494).[3] Art should, as politics *should* always comprehend suffering of other human beings. As such, art is incapable of judging or condemning. It had been, however, only three years since V-E Day in Europe and there was no literature that was able to draw the still-warring parties together in the way that literature prescribes.

In his speech, Camus is not only talking about the Nazi-brand of totalitarianism that was defeated in 1945. He is also addressing a form of totalitarianism that had captured the hearts of many French intellectuals and artists by 1948: the Stalinist brand of communism.[4] Fighting Hitler with Stalin had become for

the likes of militant communist, Louis Aragon and fellow-traveler Sartre, a part of the solution to a lasting post-war peace. When Camus published *L'homme révolté* in 1951, which specifically names communism as a failed revolution and criticizes Stalin apologists, he became definitively ostracized from France's elite intellectual community, even when he when he was awarded the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature.

It is precisely this stance against both Nazism and Stalinism that will put Camus in a painful space in which he will be unable to claim political allegiance to any party. In a world and a time period in which having such an allegiance meant everything for his career as a French writer, Camus would never recover from the public lambasting of his position in *L'homme révolté.* In fact, he would face these same attacks when he, once again, opposed the position of the elite group of Parisian intellectuals by refusing to support the Algerian War of Independence for the reason that he did not want to endanger human lives. This time, however, he was not only accused of being a right-wing sympathizer, but a hardened colonialist.

Yet the decade of the 1950s was not the first time period in which Camus publicly condemned the two forms of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Camus' little-known, brief stint as an Algerian communist in the 1930s had given him a taste of what lay behind the party's claims of workers' rights. He joined in order to help resolve inequalities between the French and *autochtones*, the indigenous people, in Algeria. However, the party chose the cause of fighting fascism in Europe instead of helping the terrible plight of the *autochtones.* It was for this reason that Camus left the party just before he was officially expelled by Moscow and denounced as a Trotskyite in 1937. For Camus, neither fascism nor communism could practice politics in the way in which literature could. Literature was a politics of *inclusion* and *justice,* while totalitarianism was a politics of "idoles abstraites," a practice of

exclusion and *injustice.* Unfortunately for Camus, he was, intellectually, a victim of the latter.

While Camus seemed to slip into a painfully solitary intellectual hole, he was not alone. Behind him lay a rich heritage of writers who, albeit in different ways, had experienced this same dilemma of existing in between both totalitarian ideologies. Among others, George Orwell, Arthur Koeslter, Anna Seghers, André Gide, Manès Sperber, and Ignazio Silone make up part of the generation of ex-communists that became caught between Stalinism and fascism between the 1930s and 1950s.

As both political ideologies were spreading throughout Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, intellectuals and artists faced one question: to which ideology should one be loyal? The choice appeared black and white. Not only did the communist party make up the largest resistance group against fascism, this "international party" welcomed participation from women, Jews, and other minorities. However, well before the end of WWII it became apparent that death and deception were becoming party policy under the rule of Joseph Stalin. While some communists dropped out in the early thirties, the majority, due to the immense shock, left in 1938 when Hitler and Stalin signed a pact of non-aggression. Those desperately needing to belong to a political party immediately joined the fascists. Others, who refused to ally themselves with Hitler, were put into danger. The communists had been banned in most European countries except France, and these "exes" could no longer benefit from the protection of the clandestine resistance network. It became especially perilous for the Jews who, each day faced growing persecution, had nowhere to go. They became victims of both fascism and Stalinism.

These writers, I will suggest, fell into a *political abyss* between these two forms of totalitarianism. The abyss opened up when they were unable to claim

political status as a citizen in a state when having one meant the difference between life and death. Jews like Sperber, who left the communist party at the height of Nazism and then became a victim of Hitler, lived within such an abyss. Perhaps the most dreadful aspect of this condition is what I call *political erasure.* As these writers understood, when they were unable to have official political status, it was as if the did not exist at all. As such, their death or abuse would have meant nothing to the state in question. Their disappearance by the hand of an abusive political system would have simply confirmed the fact that they had never lived in the first place. It was precisely this logic that, as Hannah Arendt points out in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* permitted Hitler to kill the Jews. By stripping them of their political status as German citizens, they became stateless and thus vulnerable to state violence and oppression.

After the war, while writers like Arthur Koestler and George Orwell were extremely vocal about their hatred of the two forms of totalitarianism as well as about their own war experiences, there were less-known voices that expressed what the French literary critic, Anny Dayan-Roseman, calls the condition of being "broyé entre stalinisme et fascisme"(171). Instead of loud, publicized polemics, Ignazio Silone from Italy and Manès Sperber from Austrian Galicia, like Camus, quietly protested in contemplative essays and, most importantly, in literature.

Manès Sperber, a psychologist and disciple of Freud-rival Alfred Adler, left the communist party in 1937. In France, he believed he would remain unharmed. However, after the surrender to the Nazis in 1940 and the beginning of the Vichy Regime in the south, France was no longer safe and he could not join the communist underground. With the help of André Malraux he escaped, but had to stay in a refugee holding camp in Switzerland until the end of the war.

Silone was not Jewish, but as one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, alongside Antonio Gramsci, he became familiar with the barbaric practices of Stalin well before Hitler came to power in 1933. In addition, he was able to see how the Italian fascist bureaucracy ruined the lives of those who were not followers. Although no one knows the exact nature of the relationship, recent scholarship has proved that Silone also had connections to an Italian police officer, Guido Bellone, while he was carrying out acts of resistance to fascism for the communists. After he broke with the communists, he ended his correspondence with Bellone. In an Italy where communism was illegal and those that opposed fascism were imprisoned or killed, Silone had no choice but to flee to Davos, Switzerland, where he succumbed to a deep physical and psychological crisis , which he barely survived.

Both Sperber and Silone, then, fell into a political abyss. Under fascist law, Silone and Sperber were unable to exist in their own (or in Sperber's case) adoptive countries. As war and genocide raged around them, it appeared that they had no way of inscribing the tragic truth of the promise that neither fascism nor communism could fulfill in a personal or political sense. Yet both men expressed an urgency to do so and this urgency meant putting this betrayal into writing. Sperber said to his wife, Jenka, "je cédai enfin; ne pas écrire était devenu plus difficile d'écrire" (qtd. in Manoni, 9). Silone writes in his autobiography, *Uscita di Sicurezza,* that writing became nothing other than an "absolute necessity to testify" (81-82). Neither Sperber nor Silone had ever written literature before they left the communists. Prior to their rupture with politics, they had primarily written with the goal of promoting the party. When they cut themselves off from politics, there was also a rupture with the writing that had given them a place in the political world. This was a time when communist and fascist regimes sought to weave a narrative of political, social, and military conquest; these

regimes annihilated any element that threatened the coherence of such a narrative. How could non-fiction, such as a journalistic article or a political essay even be credible to readers either indoctrinated by propaganda or those grown weary and deeply mistrustful of any kind of political writing?

However, the need to write and to be political while living within the abyss between fascism and Stalinism remained important for Sperber and Silone. Over the course of this dissertation, I will argue that the fiction that these two authors began writing after their break with militant politics became for them a new form of politics and a new form of writing history for which this abyss, an abyss characterized by political loss and betrayal, was was ultimately a source of insight and literary innovation.

Silone's Fontamara, published in 1933, and Sperber's trilogy, *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* which he started writing in 1940, do not represent works of art that have been born out of ideologies or politics, much like what Camus had suggested in his 1948 speech "Le Témoin de la liberté." Unlike other critics, I will argue that Sperber and Silone fulfill Camus' sense of political engagement. As Camus says, it is the very artistic quality of these novels that invests them with political significance. The claim I will make in this dissertation is that it is precisely from this uncomfortable place of the in-between, where these writers had no political space to occupy, that they were able, to *comprehend* the plight of those who had been truly victimized or *erased* from the political world of fascism and Stalinism. I suggest specifically that it is in their literary work that we can see how not only Sperber and Silone, but also how Camus himself, express their own experience of the political in-between in order to tell us about those who exist there, but have no voice.

In chapter one, "Pescina Trembles: Ghosts of *Fontamara* and the Earthquake of History," I argue that most criticism of Silone focuses on either how this novel sheds light on his biography or on how it produces political, religious, or moral dogma, which preaches anti-communist, anti-fascist, and pro-socialist Christian ideas. There is an enigma in his personal and political life that no one knows how to answer and this has sparked a big debate in Italy and around the world. However, while it may seem paradoxical to counter an enigma with fiction, I differ from these critics by approaching *Fontamara* from a literary perspective. Through this literary reading of *Fontamara,* I will claim that Silone exposes the political erasure of peasants from the Abruzzo, his native region in Italy, from the political world for the centuries leading up to fascism and communism, which is an erasure that can only be communicated by a ghost story. The more we examine this ghostly narrative, we start to see how it resonates with Silone's own personal and political ghost story. Hence, it is only through ghosts that we not only have access to these erased voices, but also come to an understanding of his own experience of being caught between fascism and Stalinism. Silone's haunting past and the larger, collective ghostly story of Abruzzo peasants are bound together around forms of erasure that can only be communicated indirectly. Together, they haunt the novel as they attempt to communicate something about the consequences of being silenced by politics.

I would suggest that Camus may have been talking about Silone's Abruzzo peasants when he claimed that an artist, "Par sa fonction même il est engagé dans la plus inextricable épaisseur de l'histoire, celle où on étouffe la chair même de l'homme" and that this same artist bears witness "pour ce qui dans l'homme refuse de mourir." That is to say, Silone's exposure of the peasant voices reveals what politics could not entirely erase, that which refuses to die in an oppressed population. In fact,

Camus admired Silone's writing about peasants. In an Algerian literary review, he wrote, regarding Silone's second novel, *Bread and Wine*, "il n'est point d'œuvre révolutionnaire sans qualité artistique…*Le Pain et le Vin* répond à cette exigence…Est ce n'est pas sa moindre grandeur à travers les haines de l'heure le visage d'un peuple fier et humain, qui demeure notre seul espoir de paix" (1 :250).[5]

Thus far, I have found no evidence indicating that Camus's own literary work was directly inspired by Silone's. However, given that Camus appreciated Silone's capacity for comprehension of those that had no political voice by artistic means, his novel, *La Peste*, demands a similar reading. In chapter two, *Albert Camus and La Peste: Alleory in Ruins*, I argue against a conception of the plague allegory that only serves as a metaphor for Nazism, the Holocaust, or for authoritarian regimes more broadly conceived, which is the way most critics interpret the novel. Instead, I focus on an element of this text that gets left out by this kind of a reading. The plague's allegory does more than just refer to historical events; it may also reveal the way allegory *is unable to* refer to them. I look at how the text stages a conflict between two forms of writing that Camus had himself undertaken: the journalistic, an objective, precise way of writing and the literary, an artistic way of writing. In this encounter, I discover something that cannot be captured by the idea of allegory as metaphor: a silent present of the suffering *autochtones* of Algeria. This staging, in fact, argues against any sort of allegorical reading. By reading journalism and literature together in this way, the allegory, as I will propose, falls into ruins as the novel comprehends another story that extends beyond the Holocaust: one of communism and colonialism. Many critics read *La Peste* as having turned away from colonialism and few have commented on its relation to communism. In Camus' journalism about *autochtones*, he talks about a silence that he calls *literature* when he is unable to articulate the

suffering he sees, a suffering he links in part to the failure of communism to account for the *autochtone* rights in colonial Algeria. Literature, *La Peste*, I will show, find ways to make this silence speak in order to reveal a story of political abuse, which allegory cannot comprehend.

After *La Peste's* publication in 1947, Camus reads the first volume of Sperber's trilogy, *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* entitled *Der verbrannte Dornbusch.* In a 1951 letter to Sperber, Camus writes*:*

> J'avais aimé le BUISSON [the French title of *Der verbrannte Dornbusch*]C'est un des livres de ce temps – beau sombre et nécessaire. Mais j'ai aimé par-dessus tout ce qui manque précisément quelques-uns des grands livres de ce temps: la compassion; et un certain tremblement d'humanité qu'il me semble que je saurais reconnaître presque dans l'enfer (qtd. in Stancic, 407).[6]

Camus seems to recognize Sperber's ability to comprehend a humanity which totalitarian politics has left out, which is something that this French author perhaps attempted to communicate in his own literature. In chapter three, "The Destruction of Manès Sperber's Galicia: A Collapse of Memory and Narrative," I examine Sperber's own theory of political abyss as a means of including diverse aspects of politics and religion, which he explains through a radical revision of Jewish messiansim. At the heart of Sperber's trilogy, an epic-like novel of disillusioned revolutionaries who wander around Europe trying to escape arrest and persecution from both Stalinism and fascism, the story is suspended to tell a fable. One of the heroes, Edi Rubin, suddenly, without explanation of how he got there, finds himself in the only surviving Jewish shtetl in Poland in 1944. He tries to get the Jews, who will all be deported, to join with the Poles and Ukrainians, who end up killing the remain Jews, in resisting the Nazi onslaught. It is only a rabbinical student, named Bynie, a lover of Hegelian

philosophy, who survives. French critics have tried to isolate this fable as its own separate novel from the rest of the trilogy, but as I will argue, this separation leaves out an essential function of its position in the book. The fable serves, I will suggest, as a *necessary collapse* of Sperber's narrative, a collapse that anticipates a collapse in his memory when he attempts to write about his shtetl's destruction during WWI in his memoir, *Die Wasserträger Gottes*, almost forty years later. These two collapses, read together, are inextricably bound and they tell a more comprehensive story of what has been repressed about Austria's shtetl Jews from official history. I will show that it is only literature that permits the interweaving of these collapsed narratives.

Through the work of Silone, Camus, and Sperber, I aim to bring together a specific moment in history, a moment in which two forms of totalitarianism crushed those living outside its dogma, and the plurality of ways that literature sought to narrate "*ce qui dans l'homme refuse de mourir.*" From the abyss between Stalinism and fascism, their writing bears witness to the silence of those personal and political histories that return, in innovative narrative forms, with a new and forceful literary voice.

Chapter One

Pescina Trembles. The Ghosts of Fontamara and the Earthquake of History

I.

Introduction: Pescina Trembles

In the early hours of Monday morning, April 9, 2009, Pescina, Italy trembled in a way that was eerily familiar. Glass broke, buildings collapsed, and a great dust cloud rose from the ground. It was difficult to distinguish among the cries of the young, the old, the men, and the women. I had been in this Abruzzo town doing research at the Centro Studi Ignazio Silone only one month prior. On Tuesday, the archivists at the Centro Studi informed me that the former medieval abbey, which housed Ignazio Silone's archives, suffered minimal damage. The family who had kept me fed and housed during my travels there was safe.

The possibility of dangerous aftershocks diminished in the days following the earthquake, but, as their ninety-nine-year-old mother insisted, they slept in their car in open fields near Pescina for weeks. This woman had barely survived the earthquake of 1915, the most devastating the region had ever endured. In 2009, within a matter of minutes she and the rest of this Abruzzo town, including those who had not been alive in 1915, traveled back ninety-four years to a time of an unforgettable human catastrophe. The story of this earlier earthquake, which killed 3,500 of Pescina's 5,000 inhabitants in thirty seconds, is one that all Pescina residents know as well as nursery rhymes (Pugliese, 40).

In 1915, only a few steps away from this woman's home stood the school from which Ignazio Silone, author of *Fontamara*, had escaped to save his life. A few steps in the other direction are the places where his mother was killed and where his brother, Romolo Tranquilli, remained trapped beneath rubble for five days. After digging his brother out with his bare hands, fourteen-year-old Silone knew his youth had ended.

When Silone jumped through the window of his school, he not only escaped from his own death, but also from Pescina and the only world he had ever known. With no parents, he was whisked away to Rome for boarding school. Thus began a series of escapes that would shape his life and his literature. He ran away from school and eventually became a communist leader in Italy. When he understood the practices of Stalin, he left the party. And, although the exact nature of his relationship to the fascists remains unclear, he broke these political ties as well by ending his correspondence with Italian policeman Inspectore Guido Bellone. In Mussolini's Italy, where his brother had been imprisoned, Silone had protection from neither the underground communist resistance network nor the fascists. He was forced to flee to Davos, Switzerland, where he lived in exile until the end of the war. Gravely ill, dejected, without political status, and without family, it seemed that he had no more ties to life.

It was from this in-between, voiceless place of life, death, and exile that he began to gain a sharper insight into those closest to him, those who had been truly victimized and silenced by political abuse: the *cafoni* from his native Abruzzo. *Cafoni,* the word Silone uses to describe the most destitute, landless peasants from this region, is usually derogatory, associated with the qualities of boorishness and backwardness. However, Silone recasts it as a term of respect and, while not romanticizing the image

of peasants, he admires the “immense wisdom” they attain from “intimate contact with animals and nature, through their direct experiences of life’s great events such as birth, love, and death.” For generations, the *cafoni* had never benefited, but suffered, from government or politics. He compared their plight to European Jews, who were “so crushed by their sorrowful experiences with the state that they can no longer imagine a government composed of human beings.” Silone was proud “to have given a new name, that of cafoni, to those sufferings” (qtd. In Pugliese, 350).

The *cafoni* seem to be situated in what I will call in the chapter a *political abyss:* a space in which a people not only lack political status, but have no hope of ever achieving one. They live within a state, but are unable to claim any rights as a citizen. Since they have no power to claim rights, they can easily become subjects of political abuse. The deaths or suffering of these people are left unrecorded by official state history precisely because, with no political rights, it is as if they had never lived in the first place. This lack of recorded historical abuse and its resulting deaths is what I call *political erasure.* What is erased of these people is not only their death, but also the fact that they had ever existed.

Like the *cafoni,* Silone seemed to fall into his own kind of political abyss when he left politics at a time in history in which belonging to a party was the key to survival. As such he became a target of political erasure because, politically, he no longer existed. Perhaps his death and his life might have been lost to history if he had not begun to write literature. Finding a voice in literature gave a line to survival.

In writing his first novel, *Fontamara*, he realized that he had never really escaped his native Abruzzo or the earthquake. Even though his family had been better-off financially, he had been closer to the plight of the *cafoni* than he had imagined. Literature for Silone would become a new kind of politics, a way of bearing witness to

not only the experience of the poor and downtrodden, but also to his own life and unique political experience.

With its publication, *Fontamara* was an overnight success, but since 1933, critics have not changed much about how they interpret Silone's first novel. Then and now critical interpretations seem mostly concerned with what is political, moral, and biographical in the novel. However, I would suggest that his work is neither completely political nor moral nor completely biographical. It is neither communist nor fascist. *It is literature* and, as such, is open to meanings that go beyond the dogmatic or referential. In this chapter, I will argue that *Fontamara* tells a story about Silone's people and the earthquake of 1915 that *escapes* dogmatic interpretation. There is an enigma in his political and personal life that no one seems able to answer. It may seem paradoxical, but I would suggest we may get a better grasp on what *is not known* or *what has not been said* about Silone through literature and its capacity to use silence as an important means of expression. I will attempt to explain that *Fontamara* is about the silence of the Abruzzo peasants from the political world during the centuries leading up to fascism and communism. The tale is one of these peasants' political erasure and their difficult survival, a tale that has never been told. This unrecorded history is, in fact, communicated by a ghost story in *Fontamara* that resonates with Silone's own personal and political ghost story about his past. In the novel, the peasants emerge at the beginning of the book *as ghosts* of a village massacred by the fascists. In looking at other Silone texts, there is an imagistic and a sonorous similarity between these ghosts and the dead members of Silone's family, some who have died well before Mussolini for reasons of political abuse. Hence, it is only through a ghost story, through a fiction, that we not only have access to these erased voices, but also to an understanding of Silone's own experience. His individual

ghost story and the larger, collective, political ghost story of the peasants are bound together and, together, these two traumatic stories communicate the consequences of what it means not only to be silenced politically, but also what it means to survive this silence.

I will begin with a plot synopsis and then briefly discuss the various interpretations of *Fontamara* since 1933. Then, I will discuss the genesis of *Fontamara* for Silone and will continue with direct examples from the text. Each literary example will enlarge the scope of collective and political catastrophe in relation to Silone's political and biographical history.

II.

Fontamara: The Story of a Stolen Spring

Fontamara begins when a family of *cafoni* from Silone's native village, Fontamara,- Giovà, the father, Matalè, the mother, and their son, who remains unnamed- show up on the doorstep of his home while he is exiled from Italy in Davos, Switzerland. Over the course of the night, they tell him about a catastrophic event that destroyed Fontamara. It is at the end of this night that the novel begins.

Starting with the first chapter, the family members take turns telling how the fascists destroyed their village. One evening after Fontamara has lost its electricity because the residents cannot pay the bills, a fascist agent arrives and tells them all to sign a petition that will grant them greater freedom and more money. None of them can read it, but they sign it out of desperation. The next day, workers arrive in Fontamara to reroute a spring that is the water source for the villagers and their crops. By signing the petition, the villagers signed away their rights to this water. The new "owner" of the spring is a man they call "il Impresario" (the Contractor), a fascist

entrepreneur who usurps not only the water, but also their land. Local officials, who used to help the *cafoni*, have also become fascist collaborators and can do nothing for the villagers except to tell them to comply.

The only force of resistance is Berardo Viola, the protagonist of the novel. He tries on several occasions to organize the *cafoni,* but it always ends in failure. One day a stranger, called “il Solito Sconosciuto” (The Mystery Man), appears and tells them that he can help them revolt. They ignore him and Berardo continues to revolt in his own fashion by vandalizing and burning crops. In retaliation, fascist police come to the town one night, raping women and plundering homes.

Devastated, Berardo decides to stop resisting altogether so that he may earn enough money to marry his love, Elvira. He goes to Rome with Matalè and Giovà’s son to find work. Once there, the two are falsely accused of being Communists. Their cellmate in jail, a real Communist and il Sconosciuto, explains the Marxist doctrine and tells them how they can work together to publish underground anti-fascist newspapers throughout Abruzzo.

Meanwhile, a manhunt is on for il Solito Sconosciuto. He convinces Berardo to accept the guilt as il Solito Sconosciuto and confess to the police. In turn, the real Solito Sconosciuto, when set free, promises to go to Fontamara and help its people. Soon after the real Il Solito Sconosciuto is exonerated, Berardo learns that Fontamara has produced a resistance newspaper. Instead of giving details on where to find the culprits at Fontamara and the identity of the real Solito Sconosciuto, Berardo decides to be executed. Eventually, the Fascists go to the village and massacre the *cafoni* a few days after Berardo’s death. Some of the only survivors are the exiled family that finds Silone in Switzerland.

III

The End of an Enigma? 1933 Readings and Beyond

It could be said that critics have always been occupied with Silone's ghosts. From its publication in 1933, the year Hitler came to power in Germany, to the end of World War II in Europe, readers were fascinated by *Fontamara's* author's troubling political past. He left the communist party because he refused to sign a letter, which he had not read, that would condemn Stalin-opponent, Leon Trotsky . In addition, he refused to join sides with the fascists in Italy and voiced opposition to them. These political ghosts accompanied him into exile as he wrote *Fontamara*. As such, critics universally acclaimed his first novel as a call to resistance against totalitarianism of any form.

Published first in its German translation in Zurich, *Fontamara* was translated into at least twenty different languages by 1935.[7] Looking at the various interpretations, it seems *Fontamara*, like a ghost itself, was at once *transparent* and *elusive* to early readers. *Transparent* because critics claimed they could look right *through it* and find political meaning. *Elusive* because it was quickly fitted and, just as quickly, unfitted for the large range of the epoch's opposing political ideologies. One of the most widely-read books in Europe and North and South America, it was credited as having revealed the cruelty of Mussolini's fascist regime.[8] *Fontamara* was distributed to underground Nazi resistance groups in Germany and allied soldiers were required to carry a copy of *Fontamara* with them as proof of "what we're fighting for" when they invaded the south of Italy in 1943 Italian copies of the book were dropped behind enemy lines occupied by Germans and it was distributed to Italian prisoners of war (Hanne, 133).

Perhaps the most striking fact about *Fontamara* was that it was appreciated by both sides of communism: Stalin-supporters and Stalin-opponents in the Soviet Union. Trotsky, in a letter to Silone on July 17, 1933, writes ". . .in Fontamara la passione si eleva a tale altezza da farne un'autentica opera d'arte . . . Il libro merita d'essere diffuso in millioni d'esemplari" (qtd. in Aliberti 48).[9] Official Soviet approval came from communist politician Karl Radek, who headed the Soviet Writer's Conference of 1934 (Hanne, 133). From another political point of view, John Chamberlain of the New York Times wrote in his 1934 review of the book "Reading *Fontamara,* I love democratic processes more than ever" (Chamberlain). *Fontamara* was, however, banned in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.

Most likely due to the political climate in Europe during the rise and fall of fascism, early interpretations of *Fontamara's* ghosts tended to be *transparently political* or, as Maria Nicolai Paynter says, in some instances, "to present fiction as fact" (75). However, historiography has shown no evidence of *Fontamara's* account of mass rape or the scale of massacre that occurred in Mussolini's Italy (Hanne 136). In the years after World War II, political readings of *Fontamara* focused, once again, on the multiplicity of political ideas at work in the novel, especially in regard to the Cold War. For example, in 1981, Judy Rawson attributes the "Che fare?" the name of the resistance newspaper in *Fontamara,* as a twist on Lenin's 1902 tract, "What is to be done?" (558). *Fontamara*, while a work of literature, became primarily *political dogma* for communists, socialists, and other anti-fascist groups. Fiction, in other words, became an ornament for dogma.

Other post-war critics like Paynter saw more of "a prevailing perception of Silone as a moral, nonpolitical writer" (75). It would seem perhaps that these moral or religious aspects were the real ghosts of *Fontamara,* invisible to the political

exigencies of wartime. One of Silone's biographers and close friends, Luce D'Eramo, confirms that all works on this novel, even those written by those in the following generations, takes into account a moral dilemma faced by those alive during the rise of fascism in the 1930s: how to fight against it? D'Eramo writes "Oggi studiare di *Fontamara* signifca anche capire i problemi per cui gli uomini colti degli anni trenta si agitavano, soffrivano, combettavano, e talvolta morivano" (33).[10] For Geno Pampaloni, *Fontamara* is merely a Christian allegory full of recognizable symbols. Pampaloni remarks that even though Silone claims he "writes without allusions or hidden meaning, that is not in fact what he does . . . given the symbolic charge that such words as "bread" and "wine" carry in Silone's work" (qtd. in Paynter, 76). The lesson that *Fontamara* taught about the 1930s and the early 1940s during fascism became a universal lesson for moral and religious, rather than strictly political, reasons. It is politics, then, that have become, quiet ghosts of the past.

Yet it is Silone's biography that has been perhaps the most important, and most ghostly, element in studies of his novels from 1933 to today. The true ghosts of Silone's literature are his personal experiences. The more that was learned about Silone's life, the easier it became to identify the specters haunting the pages of *Fontamara.* The most commonly discussed event from Silone's biography in relation to *Fontamara* is the arrest, imprisonment, and death of his younger brother, Romolo Tranquilli. For many, the protagonist Berardo Viola was Romolo.

It would appear that Silone's literature is indeed transparent; the political, moral/religious, and biographical elements in *Fontamara* are completely *see through*. At the same time, they are elusive; it is difficult to grasp the true nature of Silone's first literary project and it keeps changing over time. Yet perhaps the greatest enigma

Silone's literature has produced among scholars is not political, moral, or biographical; it is, rather, an enigma about his literature *as literature*.

Despite criticism and ostracization from the PCI, the party that dominated the cultural and political scene in Italy's post-War years, Silone, on one hand, has been consistently praised – at home and internationally- as one of the only Italian writers that not only resisted fascism, but also Stalinism in a time when alliance to one of these regimes was essential for physical or intellectual survival. [11] On the other hand, in a much less-visible way, scholars have consistently put the quality of his literary writing into question. Critics have called his style overly simplistic and unsophisticated compared to other great Italian authors. As Michael Hanne writes "Italian critics had, and in many cases still have, difficulty in coming to terms with Silone's style, in which they saw neither the elegance and finesse of the traditional novelist, nor the striking experimentalism of some younger novelists, like Vittorini"(48). However, Silone's stylistic shortcomings, largely overshadowed by his status as a political and moral hero, are usually dismissed by his admirers. There has existed, then, a persistent gap among Silone's literature as politics, morality, or biography and his literature *as literature.* As Elizabeth Leake observes, "By the late 1950s, there existed more criticism of Silone criticism than actual Silone criticism, all of it politically and/or religiously conditioned. Discussing the problem of how to approach the work eclipsed actual interest in his works" (48).

It was perhaps these gaps among politics, religion, biography, and art that eventually allowed for an irreparable tear in what, faithful readers of all persuasions thought, they had *always known as true* about Ignazio Silone. Or so it seemed.

IV

Silone's Biographical Earthquake

"È una bomba!" Silone's grandnephew's, Romolo Tranquilli Jr's exclamation represents the world's reaction to the revelation that his uncle, an anti-fascist hero, had been both a fascist spy and a communist leader (qtd. in Leake, 162). Although the suspicions began in 1996, it was in 2000 when Italian historians, Dario Biocca and Mauro Canali, published their findings after years of research in Italy's Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome. Perhaps the most shocking find was a letter, written by "Silvestri." Silvestri, Biocca and Canali believe, was Silone's undercover fascist name. In this letter to Questura di Roma operative, Guido Bellone, he renounces his "equivocal" political life (qtd. in Pugliese, 301-302). Those that did not believe Biocca, set about trying to defend Silone. Historian Giuseppe Tamburrano compared the published findings to a case of an Italian Dreyfus affair. The latest work on Silone in English, Stanislao Pugliese's *Bitter Spring, A Life of Ignazio Silone*, offers a more tempered version of Silone's fascist past by presenting arguments for and against the accusations. It appeared the enigmatic ghost in Silone finally emerged even though, according to some critics, it had always been visible.

These revelations immediately produced a turn in the way scholars viewed the relationship between Silone's life and his fiction. Pre-1996 scholars applied Silone's biographical elements to their analyses of his literary work as a means to *enhance* what they saw as demonstrations of political, historical, moral, or social justice masked by a fictional narrative. Post-1996 critics, who believe that Silone was a spy, claim that these same texts work as a means to *prove* a false biography that both *hides and reveals* his true life, a life that was anything but moral. American Italian literature

critic, Alexander Stille, writes "Readers who approached the novels as straightforward denunciations of social justice may have missed the undercurrents of deceit and betrayal that now come into relief" (44). Biocca and American literary critic Elizabeth Leake reconfigure the guilt and remorse that they think *Fontamara* traditionally represents for Silone. Biocca writes

> La storia de Berardo Viola è la storia appena trasfigurata di Romolo Tranquilli. Era anche il tentativo di ricercare, in una vicenda insieme individuale e collettiva, la stessa identità dello scrittore, liberandosi di ricordi e di rimorsi, e forse di riflettere su un futuro che appariva ancora pericoloso e incerto ? (187).[12]

The guilt and remorse no longer stem from Silone's love for his brother; it now comes from the fact that Silone may have been in part responsible for his brother's imprisonment and death.[13] The basic premise, then, of Biocca, Canali, Leake, Stille, and others, is that Silone used his fiction to "reinvent" himself. Leake explains that "Silone succeeded in orchestrating the complete reinvention of his public image around the shift from professional revolutionary to novelist" (3-4). Indeed, it seemed that Silone had artfully hidden the real ghosts of his life within his literature.

Of those scholars that believe Silone is guilty of spying, Leake has been one of the few who has used literary analysis and psychoanalytic trauma theory instead of just historical analysis to unveil the author's secret past. She highlights what Freud explains when he says that the unconscious does not speak in a rational manner, but manifests itself in unexplainable symptoms that science has trouble understanding. For Leake, what is in Silone's unconscious – the burial of his true political experience – appears as incomprehensible or *illegible* in his literary works. On the one hand, she argues that Silone *unconsciously* and *repetitively* reveals this buried past in his early

novels, which are hallmarks of trauma theory's issue of belatedness. On the other hand, Leake also seems to be saying that he was *entirely conscious* of what he was doing; he wanted his readers to think his fiction writing had always been about turning his own political victimhood into moral rectitude. If, as Leake claims, Silone was fully conscious of what he was hiding from the public, this would not represent a truly traumatic experience, which is an experience characterized by an unconscious hiding. Traumatic experience is that which is not assimilated by the conscious while it is happening to the victim. As if erased from the conscious, it lives in the unconscious until unrelated triggers from the outside world bring to it to the surface without the victim having any control over it. Each manifestation of trauma repeats itself exactly and against the will of the survivor as if she or he is possessed by something of which they have no knowledge. [14] Again, Leake brings back Silone's intentions. For her, the archival revelations demand a "radical revision of Silone's public historical position but not of his literary position, since these revelations are nothing but the confirmation of a quiet confession Silone rehearsed throughout his literary career" (14).

Rehearse, reconfigure, reinvent, reveal. These words to describe Silone do not describe unwitting actions which describe trauma; rather, they are verbs of agency, mastery, and control. According to Leake, it was indeed Silone's will to show his hidden past as slowly as possible. In fact, this past has always been visible in his work, but readers never had the right clues to see it. She argues that he coordinated this "confession" by first denouncing both political ideologies. Then, she says, he turns his political experience with communism into acts of self-sacrifice throughout his work, including *Fontamara,* in which Berardo lets himself be killed to save his village. It only took the revelation of historical fact in the archive to illuminate that this political experience also involved fascism, which, she insists, completely reversed

traditional readings (42). Leake suggests that Silone wanted readers, if they ever discovered his ties to fascism, to see it, like communism, as self-sacrifice. For her, self-sacrifice in literature not only covered up guilt about his politics, but would save him from criticism and punishment.

While Leake offers a new reading, it seems that her argument brings us back full circle to what Biocca and others deduce from the archival findings: the answers to enigmatic elements of Silone's fiction are to be resolved by studying the post-1996 biography. The hidden political meaning of pre-1996 is still, albeit the other side of the coin, hidden political meaning after 1996. Yet as a reading of *Hamlet* will show, ghosts do not always come when called. If what Leake argues is true, if Silone purposefully revealed his past, there seems to be nothing specifically belated in his work except for its public reception. Such masterful control of his work's reception and the unveiling of his true political past would demonstrate, in fact, that he was right on time.

For all the newness that the archives bring to Silone studies, it seems that the methods for approaching his fiction have remained the same.[15] There continues to be an insistence on using his biography to interpret his books as to produce a singular conclusion about his politics. Pre-1996 critics said they represented *political* and *personal truth* while post-1996 critics have pronounced both *political* and *personal deceit*. The life story has changed, but what about the way of reading the texts themselves?

The archival documents about Silone's spying demanded, as Biocca and others stated, a "radical revision" of his fiction. They quickly provided a way to close the enigmatic gap that existed in his writing style, politics, morals, and biography. His work could be analyzed in terms of hiding/revealing, seen/unseen, active/passive, and

secrets/truths. Yet these opposing structures, I would suggest, set limits of understanding on Silone, ignoring the call for a "radical" reading. Leake, Biocca, and others are right in identifying the hidden ghosts that haunt Silone's work, but I would argue that these ghosts are about something more than just biographical references, or political betrayal. Leake claims that we can discuss the ghosts in Silone's literature with trauma theory, but I would suggest that this story is not traumatic, but literary. The ghosts are *about literature* and its capacity to tell another kind of story. What if there was a way to read the enigmatic gaps in *Fontamara,* not as political, moral, or biographical, but *as literary?* What if the ghosts do not judge or condemn the author, but increase an understanding of historical catastrophe and the way it is witnessed by its victims? By truly reading the ghosts and the gaps in *Fontamara* literarily for the first time, by opening its unconscious, unknowable, and unreadable elements up to artistic interpretation, I will argue, we can expand the scope to a history of betrayal and loss of not only an individual, but also of a people who have been erased from history. The only history that can be told of the *cafoni* is one of silence, one that *lacks historical references*. A literary reading of extra linguistic, imagistic, and sonorous elements of the text may make this silenced history speak. If a voice emerges, it will not only be an expression of death, but also one of survival. Going beyond political, moral, and biographical dogma, we can complicate the idea that Silone simply "reinvented himself" by *looking at*, not by simply *seeing through,* the ghosts that remain in this author's first novel.

V

Abyss within Abyss: Silone's Exile and the Ghosts of Abruzzo's Cafoni

In 1929, Ignazio Silone found himself in Switzerland.[16] By 1931, he had left the Communist Party after standing up to Stalin in Moscow in 1927 and was eventually expelled. Angelo Tasca left the party before Silone and he said that all militant Communists "carry their fatherland with them wherever they go, the global organization to which they belong." Without this connection, Silone confessed that he suffered "una piccola morta" (qtd. in Holmes, 12).[17] That is to say that Silone still carried this "fatherland" with him, but it was if he was carrying a corpse, or a ghost of this experience. While recovering from this slow, painful loss, he writes 1932 to his Swiss companion and psychoanalyst, Aline Valangin:

> (Que j'ai mauvaise mine, c'est fort possible. J'aurais dû mourir cet hiver, mais je n'ai pas voulu … Alors, quand on survit, on a toujours une mauvaise mine…Mais, de temps en temps, il faut se comporter comme si on aurait oublié; autrement on ne pourrait plus vivre. Or puisque j'ai voulu continuer à vivre…tout de même, il ne faut pas penser toujours à la même chose; il faut travailler, il faut étudier, il faut changer de milieu, de gens, il faut se soigner avec la potion du Temps, avec l'huile de la philosophie, avec le clystère de la politique (qtd. in Holmes, 13).[18]

1930 was the year in which the suspected "Silvestri" had written his last letter, to Italian policeman, Guido Bellone, renouncing his fascist ties. While leaving the Communists provoked a small death, here it is the leaving of politics that will also keep him alive:

> The moral sense which has always been very strong in me now dominates me completely; it doesn't let me sleep, it doesn't let me eat, it doesn't leave me the briefest respite. I find myself at the resolution of my crisis of existence, which only allows one way out: the complete abandonment of militant politics (I will seek any intellectual occupation). Aside from this solution nothing was left but death (qtd. in Pugliese, 301-302).

Whether or not Silone had collaborated with the fascists had little to do with his political status now. With protection from neither the clandestine Communist network nor the fascists, he was indeed situated within a political abyss in relation to his own country. Silone had evaded physical death, but, as an Italian, he was a political cadaver, a ghost.

To remain connected to Italy, I would suggest, he had to develop a link that was not political, but literary. In a letter to Angelo Tasca, dated January 22, 1931, Silone, from his deathbed, talks about writing *Fontamara* from Switzerland:

> Attualemente io lavoro …attorno a un romanzo di vita meridionale. Il romanzo sarebbe già finito se una parte del manoscritto e delle note non fosse rimasta sequestrata a Davos presso la pensione alle quale devo ancora dei quattrini. Su questo romanzo avrei molto da dirti, ma non ne ho tempo. Esso si distingue dagli altri lavori solo nella forma letteraria e lo scrivo perché negli articoli politici non si può dire tutto. Vi è sempre una parte della realtà che sfugge (1:1460).[19]

Writing politically about southern Italian life, Silone seems to say, would not adequately represent it. To capture the elements of reality/truth that escape politics, he turns to literature.

Six years later, during which time Silone completed three novels about Abruzzo and its peasants, he tells Rainer Biemel in a letter that fiction is not just a way to capture what escapes truth; fiction, he writes, is that truth itself:

> La création artistique a été pour moi une lute dans laquelle mon esprit, libéré des angoisses précédentes, éloigné, affranchi, écarté d'un monde confus et équivoque, a tâché de mettre de l'ordre et a créé un monde à soi, un monde simple, clair, évident, un monde fictif, mais *vrai,* en tout cas plus vrai que le monde réel et apparent, dont il reproduit la vérité cachée et défendue (1:1370).[20]

In the complicated web of lies that fascism wove throughout every element of Italian society and that Communism wove throughout Europe in the 1930s and 40s, this "real" and "apparent" world's truth was hidden and its false proclamations defended. Silone believed his fictional world tells the truth so unadorned, it is more "true" than the apparent one. In the next paragraph of his letter to Biemel, he adds

> Le monde apparent est si faux (je veux dire, le monde official, le monde des photographes, des agences d'informations, des journaux illustrés) que c'est un des devoirs essentiels de l'art de re-créer le monde, - de montrer le mécanisme intérieur et essentiel du monde et de le montrer vivant. Le besoin de la sincérité et de vérité m'amène à créer un monde simple, clair, évident…la région où je suis né et que je connais et j'aime comme l'enfant connaît le sein de sa mère; je me sens amené à re-créer ce morceau de notre planète [Abruzzo] tel que je le vois, c'est-à-dire, dans son visage secret qui est vraiment douloureux, fatigué, exténué, opprimé, saignant, sous le fard officiel [official varnish], sous le fard "naturel" [natural varnish] (1:1371).[21]

In 1931 Silone abandoned political writing, a world of "official varnish" to search for truth in literature about his native people, who live in "secret" behind the "varnish."

It would seem that by 1937 Silone had discovered that this obvious, unequivocal *truth of literature* is, in fact, also *a political truth.* In this quotation, it appears that the "official varnish" is that which has erased the fact that is has pained ("douleureux"), tired ("fatigue"), exhausted ("extenué"), oppressed ("opprimé"), and bled the people of Silone's mother's breast. Silone's slightly sardonic use of "naturel" seems to show that the varnish is not only murderous; it has been made to look officially as if it were an inherent part of his people's history. Telling the truth in literature, then, is also debunking a political lie.

It would seem that Silone's fictional world is one of complete transparency. However, a look at the way Silone talks about his writing indicates this world is also a product of secrets. Silone tells Biemel that his literature comes from "un temps de mûrissement secret" (1:1371). To his then-companion Gabriella Seidenfeld, he writes in 1930:

> Ti avevo detto altre volte che il tempo di produrre per me, non era ancora arrivato e che io me consideravo sempre nel periodo della preparazione. Ora credo che il tempo di produrre per me, non era ancora arrivato e che io mi consideravo sempre nel periodo della preparazione. Ora credo che il tempo di produrre è guinto. Qualcosa di nuovo è in me. Non mi preoccupo affatto del giudizio che sarà dato di Fontamara. Non sono mai stato così sicuro di me stesso (1:1460).[22]

Like a ghost, what he writes has haunted him, without his knowledge, for so long that, even though it is new, "la creation artistique…m [l]'apparaît comme une fonction naturelle, spontanée, inévitable, insostituable de moi [soi]-même."[23] At times, these

ghosts even wake him up at night. To Seidenfeld, he admits "Delle notti mi svelgio all'improvviso e devo alzarmi per rendere degli appunti. Altre volte sono in giardino e corro in camera per modificare un passaggio di un capitolo" (1:1460).[24] What has haunted Silone has been painful, but also curative. To Biemel he explains, "*Fontamara, Le pain et le vin,* et d'autres ouvrages qui n'ont pas encore été publiés" were his "guérison" and "Cela a été si difficile et salutaire, comme une nouvelle naissance"(1:1370).[25]

As Silone becomes a political ghost in relation to Italy, it appears he awakens to the literary ghosts that have haunted him secretly for years. And, it is in discovering these ghosts that he finds himself on the inside of his native land and people. By bringing these painful, unexpected surges of memory to paper, he finds a cure for his political death. He, in fact, *survives precisely by writing literature.* The truth that "escaped politics" in his political writing, it seems, is much more than political; it is personal, historical, social, and most important, literary.

. The complicated dynamic of his fiction that he sets up in the correspondence with Biemel, Seidenfeld, and Tasca raises the questions that I will address in the rest of this chapter as I begin a close reading of parts of *Fontamara*: What are, precisely, the elements of "truth" that "escape" politics in this specific moment of history? How do these kinds of truths escape other periods of history and rupture into others? Under what form do they show up in Silone's fictional world? Does his fictional world hide truths too? How is *Fontamara* a "cure", if it is indeed one? A close reading of Silone's forward to this first novel and an analysis of several key scenes will examine the ghosts that haunt the pages of the novel.

VI

Fontamara's Forward: A Dream of the Missing Present

In his essay "The Painful Return" Silone explains that *Fontamara* was about recreating his past: "Ill and in exile in a Swiss mountain village, I believed that I did not have that much longer to live, and so I began to write a story to which I gave the name *Fontamara*. I invented a village, using my bitter memories and my imagination, until I myself began to live in it" (qtd. in Pugliese, 146-147). Silone, it seems, wanted to die among his people, even if they only existed in his imagination. Yet if writing *Fontamara* was to lay him to rest in his native land, why does the book end in the massacre of almost all of the villagers? I would argue that this dramatic act is not anti-totalitarian propaganda, as some critics have suggested, but a way to bear witness to not only *what was erased*, but also to *what has survived.* The three narrators, while they may be ghosts, - Matalè, the mother, Giovà, the father, and the unnamed son – escaped to tell their story. Who they are and why they were spared has remained a neglected subject in Silone studies. A close study of *Fontamara's* forward may shed light on these important, yet almost invisible, characters and how they shape the political, personal, and historical structure of the novel.

A. Fontamara, Forward Part One: Natural and Unnatural Ghosts of Literary and Real History

The first ghosts of the forward are not the apparition of family members, Matalè, Giovà, and their son. I would suggest that it begins with two competing ghosts of history: a silenced history of peasants and the history of political conquest. A literary analysis of *how* Silone structures *Fontamara's* political history in the first part

of the forward, I argue, reveals a political silencing of peasants from the Abruzzo region since the French Revolution.

1.Fontamara's History of Rupture and Erasure

The forward starts with what we first believe has been penned by the exiled author himself in Switzerland as he introduces his home village so that the reader can better contextualize the tale. He begins, "Gli strani fatti che sto per raccontare si svolsero nell'estate dell'anno scorso a Fontamara."[26] He writes "Ho dato questo nome a un antico e oscuro luogo di contadini poveri situato nella Marsica, a settentrione del prosciugato lago di Fucino, nell'interno di una valle, a mezza costa tra le colline e la montagna" (3).[27] Yet this fictional name that he invented could very well be the name of other villages in Abruzzo:

> In seguito ho risaputo che il medesimo nome, in alcuni casi con piccole varianti, apparteneva già ad altri abitati dell'Italia meridionale, e, fatto più grave, ho appurato che gli stessi strain avvenimenti in questo libro con fedeltà raccontati, sono accaduti in più luoghi, seppure non nella stessa epoca e sequenza. A me è sembrato però che queste non fossero ragioni valevoli perché la verità venisse sottaciuta. Anche certi nomi di persone, come Maria Francesco Giovanni Lucia Antonio e tanti altri, sono assai frequenti; e sono comuni a ognuno i fatti veramente importanti della vita: il nascere, l'amare, il soffrire, il morire; ma non per questo gli uomini si stancano di raccontarseli.[28]

Events, names, and villages that Silone first believed came from his imagination turn out to exist in real life afterwards. Yet Silone seems incapable of locating the exact name or place of the real towns in which the events occurred; he only gives exact names for characters that do not appear in the book: "Francesco, Giovanni, Lucia, Antonio." The names, whether real or fictional, connected or separated, fail to

pinpoint the concrete identity of these people or where they really lived. In contrast to most interpretations of the book, which automatically suppose that Fontamara *is* Pescina, Silone's native town, or that the people are from Abruzzo, this lack of fixed references renders it impossible to know the precise location of Fontamara or if the people in it even exist. It is almost as if Silone were a ghost himself; we cannot know where he comes from or who he really is. He, like the other people and places, are ghost-like, haunting the structures of names and towns, but never really inhabiting them.

This ghostliness also appears in how he speaks about political events in the forward. Most Silone scholars address the book's criticism of fascism or Stalinism, but Silone admits that the things he records with "fedeltà" which happened in other places, are out of "sequenza." As such, it seems that he will expand and juxtapose the time frame of the novel, opening it up to other periods of history. These out-of-sequence historical events have no one starting or ending point; they seem to waver between dates and historical periods. In his 1965 essay, "Ripensare il progresso" Silone describes the Abruzzo as overburdened and exhausted by its load of medieval history (2:925).[29] *Fontamara* was the author's attempt to write a story about the "poveri contadini meridionali e cercavo di racontare le vicende dell'urto spesso tragico, e talvolta anche grottesco, tra la loro mentalità ancora e le forme nuove dello sfruttamento e della tirannia" (2:926).[30] He suggests that there is another, longer narrative of tyranny haunting the pages of his first novel, which will "clash" or rupture, with the new narrative of fascism and Stalinism. Therefore, neither of the two "new" forms of totalitarianism nor the old forms of tyranny can stand on their own as specific reference points for the story. The various elements of this tragic and grotesque class will be bound together by Silone's interweaving of place and time.

How, then, is it possible to read clashing historical ghosts and as a story of history or politics? It appears that this history, as it continues to become less referential, is becoming more literary. As the references fall away, we must look elsewhere to find meaning. The literary elements of imagery, style, and structure open themselves up as alternative ways to interpret Silone's writing.

It is precisely a ghostly clashing at the level of style and imagery that gives structure to what Silone will begin to reveal as Fontamara's history. At first it does seem that Silone sets up the story of fascism in Fontamara as a rupture, one that is just as unprecedented as the radical fascist movement that swept the political center stage in Europe during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. He admits "Altro su Fontamara non vi sarebbe da dire, se non fossero accaduti gli strani fatti che sto per raccontare. Ho vissuto in quella contrada i primi vent'anni della mia vita e altro non saprei dirvi" (1:8) [31] Before the "strani fatti" and during these twenty years, he writes,

> Per vent'anni il solito cielo, circoscritto dall anfiteatro delle montagne che serrano il Feudo come una barriera senza uscita: per vent'anni la solita terra, le solite piogge, il solito vento, la solita neve, le solite feste, i soliti cibi, le solite angustie, le solite pene, la solita miseria: la miseria ricevuta dai padri, che l'avevano ereditata dai nonni, e contro la quale il lavoro onesto non è mais servito proprio a niente (1:8-9).[32]

This original version allows for more emphasis on the contrast between the strangeness of the events and the repetitiveness of *Fontamara's* monotony. The Italian repeats the word "solito" meaning "usual" nine times in this same citation, creating a haunting litany out of his experience and making the "strani fatti" appear more interruptive and radical. Fontamara, as Silone knew it during his twenty years there, had been caught in an oppressive cycle of eternal physical and moral struggles with

"no way out." Even "le ingiustizie più crudeli vi erano così antiche da aver aquisisato la stessa naturalezza della pioggia, del vento, della neve (1:9).[33] Indeed, "la vita degli uomini, delle bestie e della terra sembrava così racchiusa morsa delle montagne e dalle vicende del tempo. Saldato in un cherchio naturale, immutabile, come in una specie di ergastolo" (1:9).[34]

Then he talks about the *cafoni*, the "braccianti, i manovali, gli artigiani poveri," the people of Fontamara who have endured the most pain from this "naturale" "immutabile" cycle. [35] The social ladder, he explains, "non conosce a Fontamara che due piuoli," which consist of "la condizione dei cafoni, raso terra, e, un pochino più su, quella dei piccoli proprietari."[36] He adds, "su questi due piuli si spartiscono anche gli artigiani: un pochino più su i meno poveri, quelli che hanno una botteguccia e qualche rudimentale utensile; per strada, gli altri."[37] However, is only the *cafoni* who have "si piegano a sforzi, a privazioni, a sacrifici inauditi per salire quel gradino infimo della scala sociale; ma rarmente vi riescono" (1:9).[38] Fontamara not only seems like a ghostly town that may or may not exist; this place does nothing but regenerate its own ghosts. The same meteorological, economic, and social plights keep reappearing as if they were condemned to haunt continually and inhabit the village and its people, keeping it in a "chiusa morsa" of injustice and abjection.[39]

However, it is strange that both weather conditions, which I call *natural*, and economic, political situations, which I call *unnatural*, have had to be forced or "saldato" into what Silone calls Fontamara's monotonous "cerchio naturale" of never-ending "ergastolo." I use the terms *natural* and *unnatural* in a rudimentary sense. *Natural* refers to events beyond human control, such as excessive rain. *Unnatural* refers perhaps to what Jean Jacques Rousseau would call "civil society:" structures that have been created by humans such as government or social conditions.

Like the history of any place, Fontamara's history has been influenced by the natural, the weather, and class hierarchy, the unnatural. Silone often describes how much more the *cafoni*, due to insufficient housing and lack of food, suffer than the landowners during times of flooding or drought. Yet what Silone calls a monotonous "cerchio naturale" includes both natural *and* unnatural elements. This actually gives variations to the monotony. In the following paragraphs, Silone begins to explain this melding by introducing the story of the Torlognes, an aristocratic family that once owned most of the land in the Marsica.[40]

As Silone tells us, the Torlognes came to the Marsica region at the beginning nineteenth century "al seguito di un reggimento francese" (1:11).[41] In order to create a fertile plain for their estate, the Torlognes oversaw the draining of Lake Fucino. This lake was what kept the air warm enough during the winter to ensure the survival of the Fontamarese way of life. After the draining, the staple crops of grapes and olives withered due to the drop in temperature as a result of the water loss (Pugliese, 26). The Fontamarese might have been paid to work on the plain, which could have compensated for the loss of their vital crops. Except, Silone explains, "fosse stata sottosposta ad un regime coloniale. Le grandi ricchezze che annualmente da essa si ricavano, impinguano un ceto ristretto di indigeni" (1:11).[42]

In this last sentence, Silone gives us the impression that he is about to continue his description of the "regime coloniale." However, in a move that will be mimicked throughout the rest of the book, this political event that happened in the past, and that may help explain the present situation of Fontamara, disappears like a ghost. Then, Silone suddenly announces "Ma questa sarebbe una tutt'altra storia. E forse, dopo aver narrato il triste destino dei Fontamaresi, per consolare I lettori scriverò

un'edificante vita dei Torlognes…La lettura ne saràra più divertente" (1: 11-12).[43] He then resumes the story of Fontamara:

> L'oscura vicenda dei Fontamaresi è una monotana via cruces di cafoni affamati di terra che per generazioni e generazione sudano sangue dall'alba al tramonto per ingrandire un minuscolo sterile pdere, e non ci riescono.[44]

Yet again, the story of the Torlognes, like a ghost itself, reappears almost as quickly as Silone dismissed it: "ma la sorte dei torlognes è stata proprio il contrario. Nessuno die Torlognes ha mai toccato la terra, neppure per svago, e di terra ne posssiedonon adesso estensioni sterminate , un pingue regno di molte diecine di migliaia di ettari."[45] It is as if Silone had to hide, even if it were for a moment, the political story of the Torlgones in order to push forward with the monotonous story of Fontamara and its *cafoni.*

However, holding the Torlogne story back in one sentence seems to open the floodgates when it appears two sentences later. Silone launches into a long, detailed description of the Torlogne's political history, which seems to be nothing but a story of speculation and, ultimately, injustice for the *cafoni.* Apparently, they arrived in Rome from France during the French Revolutionary War, but they only "specularono sulla guerra.."[46] Then, they "specularono sulla pace, quindi specularono sul monopolio del sale, poi specularono sui torbidi del '48, sulla Guerra de '59, sui Borboni del regno di Napoli e sulla loro rovina."[47] Later they speculated on the "sui Savoia, sulla democrazia e sulla dittatura. Così, senza togliersi i guanti, hanno guadagnato miliardi."[48] After 1860, a Torlogne was able to invest in a Franco-Spanish-Neapolitan company that planned to drain the Fucino basin. However, when the Kingdom of Naples collapsed, he supported the weakened Piedmontese. In exchange, Torlogne was given, by the soon-to-be defunct dynasty, the title of duke, then prince and then

granted ownership of the land for perpetuity. In other words, as Silone concludes, "La dinastia piemontese gli regalò insomma una cosa che non le apparteneva" (1:12).[49]

Once again, in the following paragraph, Silone seems to let Torlonia disappear when he compares the prince's story to the story he will tell us in the rest of the book: the story of the fascist invasion: "Però l'anno scorso si produssero una serie di fatti imprevisti e incomprensibili che sconvolsero la vita di Fontamara, stagnante da tempi immemorabili."[50] In fact, what happens is so entirely unexpected; Silone cannot believe it happened at all. Even though he has taken refuge in Switzerland, he admits that " E tuttavia io non cessai alcun giorno dal pensarvi e dal tornare con l'immaginazione."[51] He writes

> Un'assenza di vari anni non impediva a me, che sono di quella contrada e vi sono cresciuto, di diffidare, di pensare che gli episodi attribuiti a Fontamara fossero fantastici, ma accaduti, in ventati di sana pianta, come tanti altri, per motivi discutibili, e attribuiti a quell luogo remoto perché più difficile ne fosse il controllo (1:13).[52]

By branding the events he will discuss with the readers as unprecedented and radical, Silone almost erases the cruel history of the Torlognes and the resulting bloodshed of the Fontaramesi.

Up to this point, the Torlognes and the *cafoni* belong to two separate histories that continue to haunt Silone's narration, each one always interrupting the other. In fact, the *cafoni* tale, which is one that appears completely "natural" appears to exist *outside* of political history altogether. The Torlognes, who would, for the *cafoni*, fall in the "unnatural" category, belong to the ever-evolving history of war, aristocracy, and political power. The *cafoni,* who fall victim to what might be "natural" to the Torlognes, are caught in the monotony of ever seeking land and food. Silone captures

this dynamic perfectly when he tells us how for the Fontamaresi, who were situated on barren, stony hills, everything stayed the same during the lake draining. Down on the plain, things were different, "In pianura, questo si sa, molte cose cambiavano, almeno in apparenza; ma a Fontamara nulla mutava. I Fontamaresi assistevano alle trasformazioni della pianura come ad uno spettacolo che non li riguardasse" (1:8).[53] The Torlognes, who use their political clout to cultivate land *unnaturally* through the artificial draining of the lake, exist far outside the *cafoni*, who toil *naturally* away in the soil, breaking their backs for almost no food.

Yet if these histories are so separate, why *do* they keep interrupting each other? Why do they continue to both haunt the narration? Silone's conclusion of the lake draining episode is telling. He writes that even though the Fontamarese looked on this "spettacolo" from above and considered it to be something new "I Fontamaresi assisterono a questo spettacolo svoltosi nella pianura e, benché nuovo, lo trovarono assai *naturale*, perché in armonia con gli antichi soprusi. Ma in montagnan la vita continuo come prima" (1:12).[54] "Natural" has now taken on a new definition. For the *cafoni,* the "cerchio naturale" is not only the rain, flooding, drought, bad crops, or hard work, but also the abuse of power inflicted upon them by the "unnatural" forces of politics. It is natural that a flood can ruin *cafoni* crops and it is natural that their livelihood, indeed their survival, can be taken away by aristocrats or political figures. If the natural cycle contains within it the unnatural, it remains to be asked why the unnatural is deleted from the name that describes the entire cycle, natural. Or, in other words, why is the destruction caused by politics repeatedly erased from the seemingly monotonous, a-historical history of the *cafoni?* Why do the *cafoni* repeatedly come back like ghosts? And, how does fascism, for Silone, become an exception to this rule, if indeed it is an exception?

2. The Real Peasants of Southern Italy: Another History of Rupture and Erasure

The fact that Silone begins the story of this pattern of ghostly clashing by describing the Torlogne's entrance into Italy via the French Revolution cannot go unnoticed. Neither can the other elements of history he lists in relation to them such as the House of Savoy, the Piedmontese dynasty, the troubles of 1848, or the war of 1859. The literary structure, style, and imagery that Silone uses to tell the story of the Torlognes and the *cafoni*, I would suggest, mimics the pattern of erasure and rupture of the real history of Abruzzo peasants and the politics that betrayed them. As in the forward, the abusive politics of history and the history of peasants take turns interrupting each other. Ultimately, however, politics erases peasants.

Silone writes that the Torlognes arrived in the wake of a French regiment. And, indeed, the first rupture of history Silone mentions is that of the French Revolution. When Napoleon invaded Italy in 1796, Abruzzo peasants working within the feudal system suddenly found themselves at the heart of a political promise coming from two directions. In his goal of abolishing feudalism and assuring peasants of their own land, he called upon them to be soldiers in his army. On the other side, pro-Austrian royalists and clergy hostile to Napoleon, urged a counterrevolutionary revolt by peasants. Napoleonic authorities spent more than three years crushing the opposition and during this time more than 20,000 citizens perished. As the landed bourgeoisie grew in status, the less they wanted to include peasant desires in the making of the new nation-state. Instead, in the more oppressed region of Abruzzo, peasants became a hindrance, relegated to the status of slave laborers who could neither afford property nor have the former feudal rights to common lands. In 1814, at

the end of Napoleon's reign, these peasants seemed to have been erased from the revolution in which they had participated (Grab, 32-44).

After Napoleon was driven out, Silone's next historical pinpoint for the Torlognes is the "monopolio del sale," the "torbidi del '48," the "guerra de '59," the "Borboni del regno di Napoli" and their "rovina." In the South, where Napoleon seemed to bring about more chaos than reform, the authoritarian Bourbon Monarchy eventually regained control. One of the most brutal reigns the region had ever known, the Bourbons enacted harsh, violent measures against opposition and imposed high taxes. Peasants in the area suffered immensely from the privatization of land and from the fact that many of the revolutionary regime's progressive reforms such as universal education were now kept from them. The peasants, like the *cafoni* when they lost their fertile crops, lost all possibility of political status because they had no land and no money to pay taxes to attain land. Forced into starvation, the only way to survive was to accept their oppression and work for whatever meager wages that would extend their lives by only a few days. As if trapped in an abyss, the only certain exit from this miserable life is death. They, like the ghostly *cafoni*, were present, but invisible to the only powers that could change their situation.

For the south, the democratic heroes of the next historical rupture, the Revolution of 1848-1849, were Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, both of whom encouraged peasant uprisings against the monarchy and promised to redistribute wealth and land in order to give peasants property and livelihood. Suddenly, as in Silone's forward, the peasants became visible to history again. Yet the revolutions of 1848-1849 failed and it turned out that the peasants had little to gain after all. The revolutionary movements of Mazzini and Garibaldi that had created republics in Rome, Venice, and Genoa were defeated. Camillo di Cavour, who

became prime minister of Piedmont in 1851, assumed a leading role in what would become the Italian independence movement because of the losses in 1848. Garibaldi, however, returned as a leader for the next historical rupture for southern peasants, the 1859 Second Italian War of Independence. And, once again, he offered land to every southern peasant who would fight for him.

In 1860, most of northern Italy, including the Papal territories, was united with Piedmont while Garibaldi conquered the south. In 1860, however, the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel II, and Garibaldi met in the southern town of Teano where the revolutionary leader signed off on a united Italy. Once again, the southern peasants, who in Garibaldi's eyes, were essential to the formation of a democratic Italy, were betrayed, faced defeat, were punished for their efforts, and left outside what is considered the most important moment in this history of modern-day Italy. In addition, they received no land. They did not accept this unification and Garibaldi's former army dissipated. Unhappy, the reactionary Bourbon monarchy, which had ruled the south, started a civil war, which lasted from 1861 to 1865. The army of the new united Italy, which was really just the Piedmontese in new uniforms, decided to "impose unity" on what Cavour called "the most corrupt and weakest part of Italy" with "moral force, and if this is [was] not enough, with physical force." He wanted to establish "monarchic authority, morality, and good sense in Naples and Sicily" (Riall, 149). Using unchecked violence, the Italian army tried to purge the southern states of opposition with the hopes of getting rid of all forms of "brigandage." The Italian army enacted summary executions and, at times, besieged whole villages, holding families hostage in search of fugitives. Instead of collapsing, the people of the south continued to resist, escaping from prison or conscription duty only to flee to the hills to fight,

guerilla-style (150-151). However, by the end of the civil war in the South, the situation of the Abruzzo peasants was still in shambles.

In the following years, the peasants in the poorest areas of the south continued to lose ground within their new nation. Famine struck as thousands emigrated to North and South America. Many in Italy, including southern politicians, depended on the prolonged weakness of the South in order to build the burgeoning industry in the north. What became known as "the Southern Question" dominated post-unification politics. The south, essentially, had turned against itself. Peasants remained, then, with no land, thus with no political status. It would seem that with each historical event since the French Revolution, they fall into a hole in which they find no way to escape permanently from their misery and persecution. Political promises dig these oppressed peasants ever deeper into an impossible existence in which they have no voice.

It seems that the literary story of the Torlognes and the *cafoni* in its style, structure, and imagery parallels the political history of Abruzzo peasants and the betrayal they endured. Even though Silone claims that the *cafoni* simply existed in this monotonous cycle without protesting, his way of narrating the *cafoni*/Torlogne story says otherwise. The *cafoni* are not, after all, completely a-historical in the same way as they are not completely "natural." Elements of history, just like elements of the *unnatural*, complicate these two categories. As seen through the different moments in Italy's revolutionary history, the peasants are called upon to play a particular political role. For example, both Napoleon and Garibaldi were to grant them land in return for fighting in wars. But just as soon as they have the possibility to gain land and have political status, the wars are lost and they find themselves with nothing.

The pattern of Italy's political history, in fact, does not only seem to mimic *Fontamara's* literary patterns; I would suggest that literature, and its ability to make silence speak in ways that defy verbal expression, has privileged access to the part of history that has been silenced. Leake, Biocca, and Canali seem to have found the reason behind Silone's enigma in the archives. However, the archives cannot include the parts of history that have not been recorded. As the literary example of the disappearance of the *cafoni* in Silone's forward shows, there is no collection of documents that bears witness to their experience. The peasants have no voice in archival history, but we can call up a different way of making history for them in analyzing, for example, literary imagery. The particular image of the *cafoni* watching the Torlognes usurp the land below them in silence, tells a tale, not only about history, but about how history has been erased. For Italians today, the unification of Italy in 1861 is what gives the peninsula its collective identity. In reality, however, this date is what launched the south and the condition of Abruzzo peasants into a turmoil that led to mass famine. Like the literary, this history of erasure repeats and haunts itself. In fact, as a ghost story, this history is not important because of the exact references we find; instead, it is precisely the repetition that makes it so mysterious. I would suggest that Silone is showing us here that there are indeed events, which include the events' very repetition, that escape the notion of an archived history that only contains concrete facts. I argue that this mysterious repetition of non-archived history can only manifest itself in the literary.

B. Fontamara Forward, Part Two: Silone's Ghosts

In the first part of the forward, the structure, style, and imagery that Silone uses to present the history of the *cafoni* and the Torlognes puts into question what the author calls a natural and monotonous cycle for Fontamara. The *cafoni* and the noble family take turns interrupting and then haunting each other, showing that the cycle is neither completely natural, nor completely monotonous. Silone appears to demonstrate that there the story of *Fontamara* is not just about political history, but another way to conceive of political history; through literature, a story of silenced political abuse against Abruzzo peasants takes on a voice.

1. The Ghosts of Dreaming and Waking

In the second part of the forward, the apparition of the family in Switzerland, Silone's own biography comes forth. At the end of his description of the Torlognes and the *cafoni*, he announces that this natural cycle ends by the destruction of Fontamara in a wake of events that he has trouble believing. Like the other events Silone mentions in the first part of the forward, these events bear no name. He writes "Pero l'anno scorso si produssero una serie di fatti imprevisti e incomprensibili che sconvolsero la vita di Fontamara, stagnante da tempi immemorabili." He adds, "Et tuttavia io no cessai alcun giorno dal pensarvi e dal tornare con l'immaginazione in quella contrada a me ben nota, struggendomi dal desiderio di conoscere la sua sorte attuale."

Thus far in the forward, the narration has taken on a documentary-like quality as Silone describes what the village looks like, the people who inhabit it, their history, and the relationship with the Torlognes. It seems logical that the next step would be to

describe the new events in the same fashion. Yet in the next sentence he announces "Finché m'è accadutto un fatto imprevisto". At this point in the forward, we are inside of Silone's imagination as he revisits Fontamara. And suddenly, as if his imagination came to life, he tells us "con mia grande sorpresa ho trovato sull'uscio della mia abitazione, seduti contro la porta e quasi addormentati, tre cafoni, due uomini e una donna, che senza esitazione ho subito riconosciuto per Fontamaresi." [55] Without speaking, like ghosts appearing in a dream, "Al mio arrivo essi si sono alzati e m'han seguìto in casa."[56]

Silone never gives us the names of the family members directly; we only learn them because he mentions them in passing much later on in the book. Their identity, like the other names and places of the Abruzzo, cannot be tied to any fixed reference. The father is Giovà, the mother is Matalè, and the son of the family remains unnamed.

They enter and then begin to talk. They tell him that they were able to escape the final massacre at Fontamara and somehow flee to his house in Switzerland. Yet instead of listening intently, as indicated by his earlier confession that he never stopped thinking about and longing to know what had happened to Fontamara. Silone falls asleep. These three family members, like fictional characters in the author's mind, seem to then speak to him, not from the *outside* of his sleeping state, but from *inside* it. He writes that the wife took up the tale, and while she was talking "temo di essermi addormentato, senza però, fenomeno veramente singolare, ch'io perdessi il filo del suo discorso, quasi che quella voce sorgesse dal più profondo di me."[57] The family seems to occupy both the intimate, internal space of Silone's dreams and the external place of his exile. Their ability to cross the boundaries of his conscious and unconscious life leads us to believe that they are, in fact, real ghosts.

They stay up all night and take turns telling the story of their people's destruction, Silone sleeping all the while. When he wakes, the ghosts are still there talking: "Quando è spuntata l'alba e mi sono svegliato, ha rireso a parlare il vecchio. Quello che han detto, è in questo libro" (1:14).[58] In the space of one night, the apocalyptic story of the village catastrophe will unfold. This story, which we already know will be a historical and political story, will also be a juxtaposing ghost *story told by the ghosts themselves*. That is to say, the possibility of a ghost story shows that there is part of the political history which *precisely escapes political history.*

Yet the question remains; exactly, who are these specters? Thus far in my research, I have found no criticism that directly relates the three fictional family members to Silone's real parents or to Romolo, the brother who died in a fascist prison after *Fontamara* was published. However, I think it would be reasonable to make a link between them. Giovà explicitly says in the book that he is sick with something he caught while working in Argentina, which is how Silone's father died. Matalè, is a weaver, just like Silone's mother was, and the son is dutiful, content, and devoted to his parents, as Silone describes himself and Romolo to be when they lived as a family in Pescina. It is interesting to note that in the forward Silone the narrator becomes Silone the character. And, like these ghosts who lost everything in the massacre of Fontamara, Silone's real family was lost in two kinds of massive catastrophe, one natural, the other political.

2. The 1915 Earthquake and the Betrayal of the Land: A Long, Terrible Night

The family of ghosts reveals the story of Fontamara's destruction by political forces, which happened during one night in Abruzzo, in the space of one night in Switzerland. I would suggest that, in *Fontamara*, a series of long, terrible nights mark

moments of political silencing, which are characterized not only by historical rupture and subsequent erasure of Abruzzo peasants, but also by the rupture and erasure of events in Silone's biography. The idea of one night becoming the focal point for unprecedented destruction and great change in the forward has resonance not only with the story of this imaginary family, but with the story of Silone's real family as well.

I would suggest that the night of Pescina's 1915 earthquake is a night that quietly and invisibly haunts *Fontamara*. In an interview with the French magazine *Le Figaro Littéraire,* Silone says that the earthquake not only killed people, but it also turned them into ghosts: "All of a sudden there was a thick fog…Buildings that didn't exist anymore, streets that had disappeared, the town leveled… There were ghostlike figures in the ruins…We witnessed scenes that overthrew every element of the human condition" (qtd. in Pugliese, 41). Like these ghosts, within the story, the earthquake remains an element that "overthrows" the traditional "elements" of reading Silone and this novel. We cannot read this catastrophe as we would read the politics or the biography of the novel.

Before the earthquake, at the age of fourteen, Silone had lost all of his family except for his mother and his younger brother, Romolo.[59] This earthquake was one of the worst in Italian history that struck the Marsica region of the Abruzzo. Ten thousand people died in the region and Pescina was razed. The village had a population of five thousand on the morning of January 13, 1915. By the afternoon, thirty-five hundred were dead, leaving a population of only one thousand five hundred (Pugliese, 21). The aftershocks, causing even more damage, were felt throughout the entire country of Italy for days. Silone barely escaped from his seminary school. His brother survived, but had been trapped in a hollow under the rubble for five days

during which time Silone never stopped digging to find him. His mother was killed instantly and he had to pull her from the ruins of their house with his bare hands. With all of Italy's resources and manpower engaged in WWI, it took a full day for rescue workers to arrive and the survivors were exposed to the smell of decomposing flesh, the biting cold of a mountain winter night, and had to burn fires to keep the wolves away.

Along with the shock of the earthquake, came a shock to Silone and the way he viewed the world of his childhood. The night after the event, while he pretended to be asleep, Silone heard one of his relatives try to wake him. Another replied "Let him sleep, he's better off dead since he's got no one left" (Darina Silone, 81). Silone continued to be horrified by acts of betrayal committed by family and friends. A wife purposefully failed to notify other people to ensure that her husband perished. Worse, Silone witnessed a relative stealing a wallet from his mother's corpse. In his third novel, *Il Seme Sotto la Neve,* and in his memoir, *Uscita di Sicurezza*, he recasts this scene involving his uncle.[60] In *Uscita di Sicurezza*, he comes to the conclusion". . .if one day the human race is destroyed, it will not be by an earthquake, but afterwards". (qtd. in Origo, 197). Silone not only lost the mother and a way of life he adored, he lost his childhood Christian-inspired belief, instilled in him by his father, that good will ultimately prevail if one is generous, kind, and non-judgmental to all people.[61] After the recreation of the horrific scene in *Pane e vino*, the main character, Pietro Spina declares "To grow up needs a whole life, but to become old one night like that is enough" which echoes Silone's comment to his wife Darina, "I believe it was that night which colored my opinion of money in a veil of deep horror" (qtd. in Origo 197; Pugliese, 22). From this one moment, from this one night, he seems to learn that injustice is the *rule* when it comes to the less fortunate, not the exception. During this

night, Silone began to develop an ethical conscious concerning the divisions among his people.

One way Silone shows the division between the *cafoni* and those more fortunate is by language, a language that mysteriously speaks *through* the earthquake. After the *cafoni* family finishes telling their story, Silone asks himself " in che lingua devo adesso raccontare questa storia?"[62] In his response, he includes, for the first time, himself as one among the *cafoni* when he uses "us." It is at this point when we know that Silone, the narrator, has now become Silone, a character whose identity as a *cafone* confuses the notion of who he really is: "A nessuno venga in mente che i Fontamaresi parlino l'italiano…è per *noi* una lingua straniera, una lingua morta, una lingua il cui dizionario, la cui grammatica si sono formati senza alcun rapporto con *noi"* (1:15).[63] The *cafoni* speak Italian because they use it in school or when they go to town wearing nicer clothes. As Silone explains

> La lingua italiana nel ricevere e formulare i nostri pensieri non può fare a meno di storpiarli, di corromperli, di dare ad essi l'apparenza di una traduzione. Ma, per esprimersi direttamente, l'uomo non dovrebbe tradurre. Se è vero che, per esprimersi bene in una lingua, bisogna prima imparare a pensare in essa, lo sforzo che a noi costa il parlare in questo italiano significa evidentemente che noi sappiamio pensare in esso (che questa cultura italiana è rimasta per noi una cultura di scuola) (1: 15-16).[64]

But, he confesses, "(ed esprimermi per me adesso è un bisogno assoluto), così voglio sforzami di tradurre alla meglio, nella lingua imparata, quello che voglio che tutti sappiano: la verità sui fatti di Fontamara."[65] The fact that *cafoni* language cannot be precisely translated in "school Italian" indicates that there is a part of the story that cannot be told with words only. The urgency to bear witness, he seems to admit, will

make him tell a story that, on a linguistic level, may not be completely accurate. He adds, “tuttavia, se la lingua è presa in prestito, la maniera di raccontare, a me sembra, è nostra.”[66] The art of storytelling, he explains is “questa arte di mettere una parola dopo l’altra, una riga dopo l’altra, una frase dopo l’altra, una figura dopo l’altra, di spiegare una cosa per volta, senza allusioni, senza sottintesi, chiamando pane il pane e il vino il vino.”[67] He concludes the forward with “Ma, abbiamo noi mai cercato di venderli in città? Abbiamo mai chiesto ai cittadini di raccontare i fatti loro a modo nostro? Non l’abbiamo mai chiesto. Si lasci dunque ad ognuno il diritto di raccontare i fatti suoi a modo suo” (1: 16).[68] In other words, the precision will be that it is told in the *cafoni way* although not in the *cafoni* language. The *cafoni* language will join the ranks of the other ghosts – historical, biographical, and political- that haunt the story.

Behind the “school Italian” in which *Fontamara* is told, there remains a mysterious voice which we cannot know through language alone, but, I would argue, through the *literary in the language*. Like in narration of the *cafoni*/Torlogne history at the beginning of Fontamara’s forward, the patterns and imagery in Silone’s narration are also telling in the second part in regards to the earthquake. A look at the language that Silone uses to describe the family, victims of fascism, further indicates a relation with the family that perished in this natural catastrophe. He writes “Però l’anno scorso si produssero una serie di fatti imprevisti e incomprensibili che sconvolsera la vita di Fontamara.” The verb sconvolgere, means to ravage and is often employed when talking about natural catastrophes in Italian. It communicates a sense of causing significant devastation and disruption. Further in the paragraph he says “Finché m’è accaduto un fatto imprevisto”. The verb accaderesi means to happen, but it contains within it the verb, cadere (ac<u>cadere</u>si), to fall. Both sentences combine the noun “fatto/fatti” (fact/facts) with the adjective imprevisto/imprevisti

(unanticipated). Each time the word “fact” appears, it is a fact of unanticipated destruction. Ravaging or falling, not only describe scenes of the earthquake, but also scenes of fascism, both events that destroy an Abruzzo town and an Abruzzo family in the space of one night. There is, it appears, another kind of poetic language that articulates the earthquake trauma haunting both Silone’s and the *cafoni’s* past.

However, I might argue that it is precisely these earthquake images and references that point to yet another, larger trauma located within the framework of Italian political history and Silone’s own history. It could be said that an earthquake is a *betrayal of the land*. Land, which was supposed to sustain the people, cracked and ruined itself. On one hand, this geographical disaster seems to be a totally “natural” event, devoid of political abuse. On the other hand, there *is* a political link to land that dates back to Napoleon’s entry into Italy during the French Revolution. With the abolition of the feudal system by Napoleon, the most oppressed peasants were not only pushed outside of politics and history, they were erased from the land. The Abruzzo peasants were never given the land they were promised and they could never afford their own. In addition, they lost rights to communal land. Ultimately, the peasants’ lifeblood, like the water source at Fontamara, was cut. When politics offered land to peasants, such as Garibaldi had during the Italian Wars of Independence, it was supposed to give them life. When politics took land away, such as when Garibaldi surrendered and the Italian army brutalized the south, it took away survival. When the Torlognes drained Lake Fucino, they improved the production of their own land, but they ruined the *cafoni’s* fertile production of olives and grapes in the hills. Thus when the Torlognes used political power to abuse the land, the land does not betray the Torlonges, but the *cafoni,* who remain always hidden from the Torlognes’ sight. The

abuse of land equals the abuse of power. Land is a political weapon used to erase those who depend on it.

In fact, this betrayal of the land with the earthquake is where Silone acquires a consciousness not of a simple plight of the unfortunate, but, more specifically, a *political consciousness* of them. As seen through *Emergency Exit, Seed Beneath the Snow,* and his wife, Darina's, memories, the earthquake serves as a point of impact not only because of the great loss, but also it was at this precise moment in which he realized that politics was both the cause and possible solution of the plight. In just a few years, he worked to form Abruzzo workers unions and then eventually joined the communist party in order to further support the workers.

For Silone, the 1915 earthquake allowed previously silenced voices to speak. As a character in *Il Seme Sotto la Neve* remarks as he looks at the roofs demolished by the shaking, the earthquake "exposed things that generally remained hidden" (qtd. in Pugliese, 40). In fact, in the 2009 earthquake that struck the area, it was brought to public attention that there were scandals and corruption in construction contracts, which were supposed to ensure earthquake-safe buildings. Silone writes in *Uscita di Sicurezza* that while the earthquake was destructive, it served as a great equalizer because it brought together all the components of his community. Rich or poor, landowners or not, this mass destruction spared no one.

The earthquake, then, and the rupture it imposes on a community, becomes, for Silone, a figure for talking about the rupture of political catastrophe and its subsequent erasure of Abruzzo peasants. In addition, it is a way to fuse the personal trauma of his childhood with the personal and political trauma of his career as a militant politician. And, as the 2009 earthquake called up the one that occurred in 1915, it is clear that these catastrophes and their memory repeat themselves.

VII

After the Forward: A Series of Nights, A Series of Ruptures

After the forward, a series of nights shape the structure of *Fontamara.* Each night, like the night of the *cafoni* family's arrival at Silone's door in Switzerland, makes the earthquake appear within a web of multiple references to biographical and political ruptures.

A. The First Night in Fontamara: When the Lights Went Out and the Spring Disappeared

The first night *calls up* the mysteriousness of the earthquake. The first chapter, narrated by Giovà, of *Fontamara,* begins at night, when he tells how the village lost electricity: "Il primo di giugno dell'anno scorso. Fontamara rimase per la prima volta senza illuminazione elettrica. Il due di giugno, il tre di giugno, il quattro di giugno."[69]

Despite the shock this caused, the *cafoni* seem to recover quickly as if nothing had happened: "Così nei giorni seguenti e nei mesi seguenti, finché Fontamara si riabituò al *regime* del chiaro di luna."[70] It would seem they had fallen back into the "natural, monotonous" cycle. However, as observed in the forward, the "monotonous cycle" seems to have a relation to a violent, more dynamic past. Indeed, the term "regime" here, which is not translated in the English text, suggests a connection to what complicates simple moonlight. Giovà continues to explain that

> Per arrivare dal chiaro di luna alla luce elettrica, Fontamar aveva messo un centinaio di anni, attraverso l'olio di oilva e il petrolio. Per tornare dalla luce elettrica al chiaro di luna *bastò una sera…* Tutte le novità portateci dai

> Piemontesi in settant'anni si riducono insomma a due: la luce elettrica e le sigarette. La luce elettrica se la sono ripresa. Le sigarette? Si possa soffocare chi le ha fumate una sola volta. A noi è sempre bastata la pipa. La luce elettrica era diventata a Fontamar anch'essa una cosa naturale, come il chiaro di luna. Nel senso che nessuno la pagava. E con che cosa avremmo dovuto pagarla? (1:16).[71]

"But one night was sufficient" (*bastò una sera)* echoes the way Silone describes the 1915 Abruzzo earthquake: "To grow up needs a whole life, but to become old one night like that is enough." For Silone, this night meant a rupture of political consciousness as he watched those stealing from the dead. In his autobiography, *Uscita di Sicurezza,* Silone also links his first stirrings of injustice with his father. In this book, he talks about how it was his father who taught him to take pity on the criminals who may be falsely convicted. The fact that Giovà, the ghostly *cafone* who may represent Silone's father, tells this part of the story, reveals another level of Silone's biography that has been unexplored by critics. Like a ghost of the earthquake, the apparition of this reference takes us beyond the present world of the *cafoni* losing their electricity into a part of a political or biographical past that has no real voice in the story. The Piedmontese gave them electric light, but before this regime of electric light, the peasants of Abruzzo lived under the cruel Bourbon monarchy. This may be what Silone means when he mentions the regime of moonlight ("regime del chiaro di luna"). The next "regime" the new Italy, brought mass violence and death during their invasions during and after the war of Italian Unification. The southern peasants, who made up the bulk of Garibaldi's army, were promised land in exchange for their services as soldiers. They did not receive land, but electricity they could not afford. The gift of Italian Unification, then, was unattainable and ultimately betrayed them.

Without light, without land, the peasants seem to fall outside what has become the modern nation of unified Italy. Silone's imagery reflects this isolation:

> A mano a mano che si faceva scuro e vedevamo le luci dei paesi vicini accendersi e Fontamara sbiadirsi, velarsi, annebbiarsi, confondersi con le rocce, con le fratte, con I mucchi di letame, capimmo subito di che si trattava. (Fu e non fu una sorpresa) (1:17).[72]

As this passage suggests, the *cafoni* are rendered politically and historically invisible, as if sliding deep into neglect while surrounded by a region that remains illuminated.

Along with the apparition of the earthquake and references to past examples of political abuse, the peasants also undergo a seismic political shift that seems to change things at first. This same night, a stranger arrives in the village. He was not a tax collector or the electricity man. He was well-dressed and called. Hon. Pelino. He announces "E finito il tempo in cui i cafoni erano ignorati e disprezzati. Ora ci sono delle nuove autorità che hanno un gran rispetto per i cafoni e voglionon conoscere la loro opinione" (1:24).[73] He convinces them all to sign a petition despite the fact that none of them can read.

It becomes clear that the *cafoni* are about to take another turn in the political cycle of betrayal when the villager Michele Zompa tells a story. He begins "Dopo la pace tra il papa e il Governo, come ricordate, il curato ci spiegò dall'altare che cominciava anche per i cafoni" (1:26). [74]Zompa claims that he had a dream the following night in which he sees the Pope talking with Jesus. The pope convinces Jesus to give the *cafoni* a gift to celebrate the peace. Jesus decides to drop lice on them so that they will be too busy scratching themselves to think about asking for more land. Like the gift of electricity by the Piedmontese, the gift of lice betrays them and ultimately erases *cafoni* suffering from public view.

Hon. Pelino, who does not quite understand Zompa's story, believes the peasants are mocking him. He demands that they respect "the hierarchy." The *cafoni* do not understand this word and Pelino has to try several times to explain. Finally Zompa interprets it for them:

> In capo a tutti c'è Dio, padrone del cielo. Questo ognuno lo sa.
>
> Poi viene il principe Torlonia, padrone della terra.
>
> Poi vengono le guardie del principe.
>
> Poi vengono i cani delle guardie del principe.
>
> Poi nulla.
>
> Poi, ancora nulla.
>
> Po vengono i cafoni.
>
> E si può dire ch'è finito.[75]

The stranger then demands where the authorities fit in the hierarchy. Ponzio Pilato, another villager, explains that they come in between the third and fourth categories, according to the pay. Pilato explains that "il quarto posto (quelli dei cani) è immense" (1:29).[76] The stranger leaves, threatening them with vengeance.

The scene of the first chapter functions like a mise-en-abîme of Silone's linguistic project. Michele Zompa's "translation" of the word "hierarchy" reflects the abyssal status of the *cafoni.* As Silone explains in the forward, it is impossible to translate the *cafoni* language into "school Italian."[77] As we see, Zompa's translation of "hierarchy" is not word-for-word; it comes in the form of a song or poem that brings about an image of what Silone perhaps meant when he said in the forward that the *cafoni* exist at "rock bottom." Zompa's three repetitions of "nulla" open up a nihilistic space between the *cafoni*, the Prince, and the even the Prince's guards' dogs. School or official Italian translates into a repetitive, literary language of abuse and

neglect for the *cafoni.* Indeed, the *cafoni* are, compared to the Prince's guards' dogs, a "nulla" that keeps getting buried by three more layers of "nulla." The *cafoni* do not only exist outside of the Prince's political sphere, they also exist outside of what is considered to be human within this sphere. When Silone writes "poi vengono i cafoni" he gives the impression that perhaps the bottom has been reached. However, "ch'è finito" seems to dig their plight deeper into an abyss. This *cafoni* "translation" of fascist claims, despite its fantastical nature, tells the truth about the false political promise. Yet Hon. Pelino, the fascist official, cannot understand this truth. In fact, the truth offends him and he threatens punishment.

While the buried *cafoni* past speaks through literary with haunting language and imagery, there is another part of this scene that is easily identified through just a quick look at Silone's biography. The villagers that meet Hon. Pelino agree to sign for all those who are not present. However, they recognize that there is only one person in the village who might not have put his name on petition: Berardo Viola, the protagonist of the novel. Giovà says "Una discussione vi fu in un solo caso, per Berardo Viola. Cercammo di far capire al cav. Pelino che Berardo non avrebbe firmato a nessun costo, ma fu registrato anche il suo nome."[78] The other villagers decide not to tell him. "Sarà bene però di non raccontarglielo," a Fontamarese named Marietta suggests, "Per prudenza, sarà bene" (1:25).[79] According to Silone, one of the reasons he left the Communist Party was because he refused to sign a document that accused Trotsky of betrayal. The document, which neither he nor any other members of his committee had read, was submitted to Stalin and Trotsky was condemned. Someone had obviously falsified his signature. [80] In the novel, the villagers learn the next morning that their signatures agreed to give away their rights to their only water source just as Silone learned that he had, unknowingly, betrayed an innocent man.

It would seem that this incident and others in this scene are mere illustrations of Silone's biography. Zompa's dream, for example, points to the cooperation between Fascism and the Catholic Church. Put into literary form, as some critics of Silone have argued, the author appears to show us the abuse and betrayal he endured as a member of the communist party and as a victim and/or possible collaborator with the fascists. As demonstrated by the "regime of moonlight" and Zompa's translation of "hierarchy" these examples of fascist or communist betrayal appear within the context of a long past of political erasure of the southern peasants.

However, it is the ghostly presence of the earthquake that interrupts these political and biographical readings. After Hon. Pelino leaves, Giovà makes his way home and notices Berardo Viola smashing the streetlights even though they had ceased to work. After Silone had been orphaned by the earthquake, he is sent to live in the worst part of Pescina, where the people had smashed the streetlights so that the police could not enter and catch widespread criminal acts.[81] The references to the signing, which seemed like such a concrete relation to Silone's communist past, have been taken over by an image of smashed lights from the earthquake. Unlike the communist reference, the earthquake can be read neither as only political nor as only biographical due to the very fact that *it does not speak* like the references to politics or biography. In fact, it does *not speak at all*. The imagistic similarity that this scene has with the earthquake in Silone's other works does not illustrate a clear picture of Silone's past; *it erases it.* And it is precisely this mysterious, invisible element that has been itself *erased* by critics who have ignored it by only looking at obvious elements of biography and politics. Like Zompa's translation, there is no exact way to read this figure of the earthquake, a betrayal of land that irrevocably and mysteriously binds together, through literature, the history of peasant political erasure and Silone's

history of personal and political loss. Like the movement of tectonic plates in an earthquake, we are shifting away from a story that can be told.

B.The Second Night in Fontamara: A Rape and A Show Trial

The second night occurs in chapter five when fascists raid Fontamara. By this time, a fascist entrepreneur, il Impresario, has taken away Fontamara's water and the villagers have been fighting to get it back. Berardo Viola, has been the leader of those resisting, but his temper has gotten in the way of any successful protest.[82]

During this night some Fontamara women sit outside of the church waiting for the men to return home from work when they start to hear vehicles approaching the village. The description of trucks arriving from the plain resembles the sounds of an earthquake.[83] It begins with "un rumore monotono e regolare."[84] At first it was like the sound of a "alveari" and then it became more like a "trebbiatrici" This slight rumbling becomes more distinct and then turns into an "fragore nai udito di un così grande numero di macchine Finally the din erupts into gunfire, "un crepitio di spari secchi, seguito dalla caduta dei vetri del finestrone della chiesa" (110-111).[85] The earthquake is a mass of trucks filled with men, carrying both rifles and daggers, and dressed in black shirts, which is the precise name of Mussolini's paramilitary groups, the *squadristi.*

The mother, Matalè, who is narrating this scene, goes with Elvira, Berardo's sweetheart, to the church tower to ring the bells of warning. From there, they watch the carnage as the men jump from their trucks and begin firing shots, pillaging the houses, and raping all the women. As if they were truly experiencing an earthquake, Matalè describes how "Fu come se tutto il campanile tremasse, tutta la terra tremasse

sotto di noi. Io facevo forzo perché Elvira non cadesse, col pericolo di spronfondare per la scaletta di legno e di richiamare l'attenzion degli uomini armati sul nostro nascondiglio" (1:114).[86] They become the only women of the village who are not raped.

It is not only the sounds that call up the earthquake, it is also the fact that it joins the ranks with the other politically and biographically catastrophic nights which have ruptured the lives of Silone and Abruzzo peasants. Matalè confesses:

> Di quella terribile sera non ricordo altro, all'infuori di quello che adesso ho cercato di raccontare. Delle volte anche mi capita che di tutta la vita non so e non ricordo altro, all'infuori di quello che in quello che in quella sera accadde sotto i miei occhi e che adesso ho raccontato (1:15).[87]

As if echoing Matalè, Puligese, Silone's biographer, writes "The earthquake affected Silone in much the same way that Dostoevsky's mock execution marked the Russian writer; neither man was the same afterward" (21). It seems that for both Matalè and for Silone, the earthquake is not in the past; its shock repeats itself in the present.

Some critics have read this scene as one of the most propagandistic of the novel and have dismissed it as useless to truly understanding Silone in terms of politics or biography. According to historians, although *squadristi* did attack towns at night, it has been difficult to find studies about rape during Mussolini's regime in Italy. On the other hand, the trial that happens that night just after the rape does resemble the real history of Stalin's show trials. A fat man in a tricolor sash rounds up the men as they come home from working in the fields in the midst of the chaos. He asks them all, one by one, the same question, "Chi evviva?""Long live who?".[88] No one has the right answer and the fat man condemns them all. For example, the man who answers "tutti" "everyone", is marked down as "liberale" "liberal". Then he

changes the first question to “Abbasso chi” “Down with who?” A *cafone* named Venerdì says “Abbassi la banca…ce n’è una sola e dà I soldi soldi soltanto all’Impresariothe bank…there’s only one and it gives money only to il Impresario” and he is put down as “communista”. As in these trials, Stalin’s were a twisted process of getting the accused to accuse himself of the crime he did not commit. [89]

I might suggest, however, that deciding whether or not these elements of the story correspond directly to Silone’s past or to political history is a static way of reading *Fontamara.* Instead, it is by *reading the present*, the earthquake that always returns, that opens the novel for a dynamic understanding of not only Silone’s political and biographical past, but also of a past of the political silencing of peasants. The earthquake is what can make Matalè, the narrator, a figure for Silone’s mother who perished in 1915. Berardo’s sweetheart, Elvira, is also the name of Silone’s older sister. Elvira died when she was a child, probably due to widespread famine and disease that swept the region due to political neglect by the Italian government.[90] It is now possible to say that Matalè, Silone’s mother, protects her daughter and Silone’s sister, Elvira, from rape. And, ultimately, it is Silone, the writer of *Fontamara,* who saves his dead mother and sister from both the earthquake *and* the rape in this work of fiction. This is something he could not do in real life. In a letter to Romolo, shortly after the earthquake, Silone describes Pescina to his younger brother:

> I have seen again our house where I witnessed, with eyes exhausted from tears, our pale ravaged mother pulled from the ruins. Now her body is buried and yet it seemed to me that her voice calls out. Perhaps the ghost of our mother now inhabits those ruins unconscious of our fate; it seems as though it calls us to be embraced to her bosom (qtd. in Pugliese, 42).

Not only does he identify his mother as a ghost in the letter, he also gives Elvira a ghostlike appearance in this scene. During the trial, when the villagers see Elvira in the bell tower, they say she looks like a ghost. They see "un fantasma di donna giovane, alta, sottile, con la faccia come la neve e le mani giunte sul petto…La visioine sparì" (1:22).[91] Silone's mother and sister, *as ghosts*, still exist in the present of the novel. It is then Silone's sister who saves the men of Fontamara in this scene. Believing it is their Lady in the tower, the Fontamarese start to call out to her for help. The superstitious black shirts fear that Fontamara's Lady will hurt them fatally, they run to their trucks and speed away without causing further damage.

After the *squadristi* invasion, General Baldissera, the village cobbler, keeps muttering "E una cosa mai vista, mai, mai, mai." The other men find this "straordinario" given the fact that Baldissera "fino allora aveva sempre trovato un raffronto nelle storie del passato. Per la prima volta egli ci confessava di non capire" (1:116).[92] While it seems here that Baldissera and Matalè are unable to remember anything before the night of the rape, the memory of the Piedmontese invasion resurfaces as the beginning of the present catastrophe:

> Le complicazioni e gli inganni cominciarono, a detta dei vecchi, quando vennero i Piemontesi: ogni giorno fecero una nuova legge, ogni giorno crearono un nuovo ufficio; e affinché ognuno potesse raccapezzarvisi furono necessari gli avvocati. A parole, la legge si separò dai proprietari e divenne uguale per tutti, ma per applicarla, per eluderla, per trasformarla in sopruso, crebbe l'importanza deglie avvocati e il loro numero (1:150).[93]

The botched trial that the *squadristi* and the fat man in a tricolor sash try to conduct seems to repeat the way that the Piedmontese play with the law in this example. If laws are so unstable that they change all the time, then the concept of law itself – a

binding principle for a community - disappears. A law cannot be followed if it will be a different law the next day. For the corrupt powers – the Piedmontese and the fascists – the only way to remain a legal power, is precisely to change what law means in the first place. Spontaneously and erratically, the fat man in the tricolor sash and the Piedmontese make laws not to protect and unify a people, but to protect their own position of authority as absolute powers, no matter how unjust. With each new law that gives more authority, the *cafoni* suffering grows. It seems that by looking at a longer history of the *cafoni,* beyond fascism, a "legal" condition of violence and exploitation has been maintained for centuries in order to prevent them from claiming rights to land and to survival. The maintenance involves constantly making false promises to peasants which, due to their permanent state of starvation and destitution, they can never refuse. Yet when it comes time for the *cafoni* to benefit from this promise, new laws are put into place to keep them away from the promise.

Reading this scene as anti-fascist or anti-communist propaganda disregards the complexity of *what is literary* in this scene – the repetition of an enigmatic, ghostly history. What seems forgotten about the past in one scene reappears as crucial to the present in another. In addition, the sounds and images of the earthquake provide an alternative way to talk about this political rape. They evoke the presence of Silone's mother and sister as *survivors* of political abuse and natural catastrophe who, while severely traumatized, are also able to save the lives of others. The voice of the mother, Matalè, tells us not only about politics, but also about the tragedy of other "nights" in her history, including the night of her own death during the earthquake. It is not a literal rape that is so horrifying about this scene, it is the fact that another kind of political rape, one that has been repeated for ages, reveals itself.

C.<u>The Third Night: Che fare?</u>

During the night after the 1915 earthquake, Silone not only gains a political consciousness, he gains a consciousness of his own death. In 1978, just before dying, he confessed to his wife, Darina,

> You know, even outside the ruins many people died in the snow…By day I tried digging with my hands in the rubble, but all I could see were the fallen beams…One night I couldn't face the cold outside and pretended to sleep. I heard one of my uncles saying I must be wakened, then someone else replying, 'Let him sleep, he's better off dead, since he's got no one left' (qtd. in Pugliese, 21-22).

It seems then that Silone's political consciousness is inextricably tied up with an experience of his own death. As his relative said, Silone *should have died* that night and, in some ways, he did – through a series of profound betrayals. At fourteen, he not only lost his mother and a way of life, he prematurely lost his youth as he watched a wife refuse to save her husband, his family wishing his death, and an uncle stealing from his mother's corpse. I would suggest that Silone understood that political injustice is not only about politics abusing the Abruzzo peasants; it is also about how political injustice creates conditions in which the *peasants abuse each other.* As Primo Levi says of the privileged Auschwitz prisoners caught in the "grey zone" they felt forced to work in collaboration with the abusive system in order to survive. Likewise, the peasants are so neglected that they are made to fight constantly for their very survival, which means there will ultimately be betrayal among them as they mimic the system of political betrayal that imprisoned them in the first place. Indeed, there is always the possibility that one will kill the other. Silone called Pescina, "one of the

most inhuman parts of the world…and its contradictions are so ancient they seem natural." It is a place in which the people are "even crude and mean" *and* "capable of exceptional acts of generosity and courage" (qtd. in Pugliese, 23).

I would suggest that the third night in *Fontamara* is Silone's attempt to come to grips with this seemingly inherent contradiction and how it plays out in his political and biographical past. It is this literary world of southern peasants that gives Silone a new birth. As he stated in his letter to Rainer Biemel "*Fontamara, Le pain et le vin,* et d'autres ouvrages qui n'ont pas encore été publiés" were his "guérison" and "Cela a été si difficile et salutaire, comme une nouvelle naissance." It is also this world that almost let him die in the snow next to earthquake ruins.

This scene begins after the rape when Berardo, the protagonist, goes to Rome to find work. The unnamed son of Goivà and Matalè, who narrates this part of the story, accompanies him. In a tavern they meet il Solito Sconosciuto (the Mystery Man), a man hunted by the fascists for inciting group protests around the country. The police arrive and check the papers of everyone in the tavern and find a parcel containing clandestine papers under the coat rack. Berardo, the son, and il Solito Sconsciuto are thrown in to a fascist prison.

While the son goes in and out of sleep in the filthy cell, he hears and Berardo and il Solito Sconsciuto arguing. Up until this point, Berardo and the other villagers have only thought of themselves. In an earlier scene, Giovà explained "Noi eravamo tutti nella stessa piazzetta ed eravamo nati tutti a Fontamara; ecco cosa c'era di comune tra noi cafoni, ma niente altro." "Oltre a questo," he adds, "ognuno pensava al caso suo; ognuno pensava al modo di uscire, lui, dal quadrato degli uomini armati e di lasciarvi magari gli altri" (1:117). [94] Il Solo Sconosciuto tells Berardo that a party in Russia, the communist party, is in Italy to unite all people to fight for the downtrodden

worker. Il Sconosciuto is not one man, but a group of people working all over the country.

When the prison guards come in the cell Berardo tells them that he is il Solito Sconosciuto. The real il Solito Sconosciuto is let free and Berardo stays. The guards and inspectors torture Berardo until he confesses that he is not il Solito Sconosciuto, which they do not believe. However, when a guard shows him a clandestine newspaper from Fontamara called "Che fare?" whose headline reads "Viva Berardo Viola," he changes his mind.[95] In his name, his people have finally started to resist. The son narrates Berardo's last night:

> 'E si io tradisco, tutto è perduto. Se io tradisco…la dannazione di Fontamara sarà eterna. Se io tradisco passeranno ancora centinaia di anni prima che una simile occasione si ripresenti. E se io muoio? Saro il primo cafoni che non muore per sé, ma per gli altri.'Questa era la sua grande scoperta. Questa parola gli fece sbarrare gli occhi, come se una luce abbagliante fosse entrata nella cella…Sarà egli disse 'qualche cose di nuovo. Un esempio nuovo. Il principio di qualche cosa del tutto nuova' (1:187).[96]

In order to save his people, Berardo tells the guards once and for all that he is indeed il Solito Sconosciuto and he is led away for execution while it is announced to the news that it was suicide.

Politically, it could be said that this scene represents for Silone the contradiction of the communist party. Being in the party gave him a chance to change the world of the downtrodden, to help give them life, but it ultimately betrayed him and, as he was already beginning to suspect in 1931, resulted in the deaths of millions. Like the peasants, party members began to kill each other. If the allegations of his fascist past are true, then it would be Silone himself who betrayed. Critics who accuse

Silone of spying might argue that Berardo's final refusal to betray and his self-sacrifice is a testament to how Silone wanted his readers to view him – as a heroic victim, who, in the end could do nothing to save lives no matter what political affiliation he claimed.

Biographically, it could be said this scene symbolizes Silone's own guilt over the possible death of his brother. (Romolo had not yet died during the time Silone was writing *Fontamara*.) Wrongfully accused as a communist, he was thrown in jail. Il Solito Sconosciuto might be Silone himself. He believed it was his fault that Romolo was caught. Instead of killing Silone, the fascists sacrificed his brother. Il Solito Sconosciuto's freedom from prison, however, only resulted in more death of people like his brother.

On the other hand, the presence of the earthquake, the long night of political awakening, opens up another possibility. The son that narrates this scene never gets named in the novel. As the son of Matalè, Silone's mother, and Giovà, Silone's father, this boy could be Romolo *or Silone himself*. Critics have overlooked the part in this scene in which the son signs a false attestation to Berardo's suicide without reading it. The son tells us "Il commissario scrisse qualche cosa su un pezzo di carta ed io firmai senza leggerlo. Avrei firmato qualunque cosa, anche la mia condanna a morte" (1:88).[97] The first scene in the novel reappears, but reconfigured. Among others, Berardo's name was signed by others on a petition that cut off Fontamara's water supply, which resonates with Silone's own experience in Moscow. In this scene, without reading it, the son, in order to survive and escape, directly signs the document even though he knows it tells a lie.

On one hand, Berardo decides to make a selfless, generous act in order to save other lives. On the other hand, the son signs to save only himself. As he said, he

would have signed *anything* to leave prison. Berardo wants to put a stop to the cycle of peasant abusing peasant. He *has the choice* to save his life, but he refused it. The son, *because he has no choice but to save his life*, starts the cycle rolling again. If the son is Silone – not the Silone of Moscow, but a ghost of Silone lying in the snow while others wished his death – he would indeed be learning the ultimate lesson of the earthquake and of politics. At the heart of a system that has repeatedly erased peasants, from the time of Napoleon to the time of Mussolini, lies a mustard seed of political betrayal that has infused every element of society right down to those who live in a political abyss: the peasants and perhaps even Silone himself. This political cycle, as seen through the French Revolution, Italian independence, and fascism, ends in cataclysm. In either case Silone's efforts appear futile; the Fontamarese are massacred in the next scene.

VIII

Conclusion: What Survives

As the family flees the gunshots and death cries of the massacre, Pescina, the name of Silone's real village is mentioned for the first time. The use of the pronoun "we" indicates that all three family members speak: "Da lontano sentimmo uno scalpitìo di cavalli venire verso di noi. Potevano essere i carabinieri di Pescina che accorrevano a Fontamara. Ci buttammo percìo in mezzo ai campi" (1:196).[98] The mention of Pescina, the real name of Silone's native village, and the fact that the three members of the family speak simultaneously through Silone's voice perhaps brings the author to a painful home. Yet it is only for a second. "Non possiamo restarvi," they cry out, "Che fare? Dopo tante pene e tanti lutti, tante lacrime e tante piaghe,

tanto odio, tante ingiustizie e tanta disperazione, che fare?"[99] This collective voice announces the last line of the novel.

Although it is questionable whether or not they lived through this massacre, these ghosts, through their voices, *survived it*. In fact, we are *only* left with these voices as *Fontamara* comes to a close with the question "what are we to do?" In addition to surviving this massacre, they survive the French Revolution, the barbaric practices of the Piedmontese in the post-unification south, the betrayal of Garibaldi, the mass famine at the turn of the century, and the 1915 earthquake. Indeed, *Fontamara* is not just an account of a village's history with fascism or communism, but also of its long history of political rupture and erasure. The history continues to this day as the Abruzzo tries to pick up the pieces of its latest earthquake in 2009 while still trapped by the shadow of 1915.

In the forward to *Fontamara*, Silone shows how this history of oppression, which he implied was "unnatural" along with "natural" catastrophes that ruined *cafoni* crops, have been welded together to form what he calls a "natural cycle." By erasing the "unnatural" element and placing it under the umbrella of "natural" political abuse was no different than wind, rain, or drought. At first, he gives the impression that the *cafoni* blindly accept this fate without a fight, but as the narration continues, it becomes apparent that they have undergone a series of devastating political catastrophes, which have been erased from a history unable to archive them.

When Biocca, Canali, and Leake come from the archive with ways to solve an enigma in Silone's life and work, they participate in a similar aggregation of terms; what has been known and what has been unknown about Silone's past comes inextricably bound in the archived documents about his fascist ties. And, it is this archive that becomes their ultimate reference point when talking about Silone's life or

his literature. Leake attempts to nuance the revelation of this author's secret politics by reading the archival discovery through the lens of trauma. However, even a traumatic analysis cannot go beyond the idea of what lies in the archive. It seals off the possibility of another story.

It is the spectral presence of the 1915 earthquake in *Fontamara* and in Silone's other works that shifts us away from a story about political and historical reference. The earthquake represents the accumulation of "natural" and "unnatural" history under the umbrella of "natural" disaster. It was "natural" in the sense that humans had no control over the devastation. It was "unnatural" because it not only provoked a physical shock, but an ethical, emotional shock to Silone's youthful understanding of the world.

In this great "equalizing" moment of indiscriminate destruction, he becomes bound to the *cafoni.* Throughout the history of these destitute peasants, politics for them meant the continual loss of rights to land. The earthquake, a disaster born out of land, is also linked to the political disasters that have kept them from feeding themselves. For Silone, his own personal shock becomes a political, historical shock when linked to the *cafoni.* Yet, these shocks become buried before they are recorded. The history, then, is one of silence. The enigma of this silence prevents archivization, which moves us away from formulating a history full of concrete, biographical references.

The figure of the earthquake and its shock seems to repeat itself when Silone broke with militant politics in the 1930s. His departure and then expulsion from the communist party provoked a rupture in his political identity that almost cost him his life. The letter in which he cut off ties with Bellone reflects this same crisis. In addition, he was threatened with the death of his brother, Romolo, who was in fascist

prison at the time. In this moment of great political and familial loss, he binds, as during the earthquake, with the *cafoni* by writing literature, a literature that contains within it the enigmatic figure of the earthquake. This enigmatic story is told by the most enigmatic of characters, the *cafoni* ghosts who appear in the forward. Within the tale of Fontamara, communism, and fascism, they subtly weave a tale of silence. The literary -images, sounds, and repetition - make it one that is not available to political, biographical, historical, or archival analysis, but one that is only available to literature. Unlike the umbrella terms that seek to give Silone's life and the *cafoni* history a single definition, literature is able to draw out the enigma, giving us more time to listen to the smothered voices of politics that come through one man's personal experience. From Silone's own political abyss between fascism and communism in the 1930s, he was able to gain a better understanding of those who had truly been victimized not only by these two radical ideologies, but by radical political regimes that had preceded them by centuries.

Fontamara is a story about political erasure, but it is ultimately about survival. Matalè, Giovà, and the son, an anonymous peasant family who could be Silone's own family, have not been erased and neither has Silone himself. Together, their very survival testifies to something that political silencing and erasure can neither silence nor erase; there will always be a voice left to tell the story. Memory and voice, even lost, cannot disappear completely. In a political world of ideology that rejected him, Silone, by bearing witness to these voices in his literature makes a contribution to another kind of politics: the politics of historical memory As a writer, Silone, his family, and his ideas refuse to be erased. As literary specters, they claim their survival.

Chapter Two

Albert Camus and La Peste: Allegory in Ruins

"C'est du pain, du blé, du secours, une main fraternelle qu'il faut tendre. Le reste est littérature." [100]

- Albert Camus, "La Grèce en haillons"[101]

I

Introduction: La Grèce en haillons

As a journalist and a literary writer, Albert Camus had to confront silence in different ways. *As a journalist* in both Algeria and France, he found words to fill political silence. While other colonialist media sources in Algeria refused to publicize information about the horrible living conditions of the indigenous people, *autochtones,* Camus opposed this silence by writing articles in protest for the newspaper *Alger républicain*.[102, 103] His 1939 reportage, *La misère de la Kabylie*, exposed the extreme suffering of the people in this region of Algeria when colonialists hailed it as a place of tourist folklore. He did the same for the neglected victims of concentration camps in France during the Second World War in the once-clandestine journal, *Combat*.[104] As the French press fell silent after the initial shock following camp liberation, Camus urged the Allies to repatriate quickly and give proper medical care to survivors who remained. A member of the French Resistance himself, Camus was motivated by fears

that the efforts of his courageous comrades would be forgotten. *As writer of literature*, it could be said that he gave another kind of voice to political silence and human neglect – through allegory. In *La Peste,* first published in 1947, Camus, according to most critics, uses allegory to tell the story of Nazism, the Holocaust, and the French Resistance. Instead of writing about Europe, Hitler, the Jews, or Jean Moulin directly, he creates the metaphorical world of Oran, Algeria in which a handful of brave inhabitants combat rats and the bubonic plague. [105]

On one hand, it may seem that allegory itself silences real historical events, which was an argument that Roland Barthes made against *La Peste* in 1955. Barthes claimed that Camus' use of symbolism muted rather than exposed the catastrophic reality of the Holocaust (540). On the other hand, by *not* speaking directly about the real events of the Holocaust or the Resistance, allegory also allows for a more universal meaning about authoritarianism and political resistance. Indeed, since 1947, *La Peste* has been called upon to talk about such events as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the war in Iraq, Russia's war with Chechnya, and 9/11 (Lupo, 221; Teulat, 235). Looking at allegory in this sense, it might be argued that it would make a bridge between Camus' journalism and his literature. Allegory in *La Peste* could address not only what Camus witnessed specifically as a journalist in France during the war, but also in colonial Algeria.

What if there is a way of reading *La Peste's* allegory and Camus' journalism *together* that makes the novel neither completely universal, nor completely event-specific? What if the relationship between journalism and literature in *La Peste* is not just about making a bridge between the two forms of writing? What if allegory in *La Peste* has another function other than a metaphorical one? In this chapter, I will argue that Camus' 1939 reportage "La Grèce en haillons" and the articles he wrote for

Combat on May 17-19, 1945 contain a silence about collective suffering in both France and Algeria that he struggles to express. By silence, I do not simply mean a lack of sound or words. This lack, in fact, is marked; where it is clear that something could be talked about, there is silence. For example, specifically when discussing the *physical condition* of both the Kabyle people and the concentration camp survivors, Camus seems to lose his words as he tries to describe the deteriorated human bodies that have been neglected by the French. In "La Grèce en haillons" he implies that these horrors – and their silence - may be addressed in literature. Through its use of allegory, I would suggest that *La Peste,* Camus' first novel about collective suffering, deals not only with the silences of the French government, but also with his own journalistic silence about suffering bodies. However, the allegory of Oran and the plague do not appear to serve as just a *metaphorical silence* for the physical condition of the *autochtones* in Kabylie or concentration camp survivors in France. That is to say, the fictional events of *La Peste* do not simply stand in for the non-fictional events in his journalism. Rather, it seems that the allegory sets up a complex conflict between the silences both in journalism and in literature when each mode of writing attempts to address human rights abuses. As such, allegory no longer refers to concrete events, but instead prevents these references from occurring at all.

I will suggest in this chapter, that, in fact, it seems to be a *collapse of La Peste's allegory as a metaphor* that allows Camus to bring together both his journalistic and literary concerns about human rights abuses committed not only by the Nazis, but also by communists and French colonialists in Algeria. In linking these two genres of Camus' writing *as a break*, a complexity about silence in both forms of writing emerges. Indeed, *La Peste* is not an *allegorical bridge* that lets Camus go from a journalistic concern about silence to a literary one. It is this *allegorical bridge in*

ruins and, I might argue, it is only literature and its ability to embrace silence that exposes what politics has left out of official history. This collapse is precisely at the heart of allegory's power to testify to history in a new way that changes the meaning of literature and of allegory itself. By reading what continually *defies* reference in *La Peste* through the lens of Camus' personal and political struggles with the radical ideologies of Stalinism and fascism, we may better understand the conflicting absences and silences present in his literature and his journalism.

II

The History of Allegory in La Peste: Silence as Witness and Omission

La Peste tells the story of a bubonic plague outbreak that strikes the French-Algerian town of Oran, decimating the population. It begins with sick rats coming out to die in the streets. When the rats disappear, the disease moves on to infect humans. At first, most of the inhabitants, with the exception of Dr. Bernard Rieux, refuse to believe that the disease is dangerous. Rieux, the narrator, who only reveals his identity at the end of the book, chronicles the events through the lens of his private journal. Rieux works tirelessly not only to save sick victims, but also to mobilize a resistance movement against the plague by calling others to help fight the disease. Tarrou, Grand, le Père Paneloux, Rambert, Castel, and Othon are among the characters who risk their lives to find a cure for the unrelenting epidemic. The plague finally subsides, but Rieux recognizes that the bacillus will lie dormant in the city. He refuses to call the outcome a complete victory because he knows it will resurface in the future.

The epigraph to the novel, a passage from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, seems to invite immediately a referential reading of the plague and the rats: "Il est aussi raisonnable de représenter une espèce d'emprisonnement par une autre que de représenter n'importe quelle chose qui existe réellement par quelque chose qui n'existe pas" (33).[106] Much like Silone's *Fontamara*, first interpretations of *La Peste* argue that the fictional story symbolizes fascism and resistance, while criticism in the decades following the war point to a universal, moral experience of spreading evil and the human capacity to fight against it. During the Algerian War and its aftermath, postcolonial critics began commenting on what Camus' allegory omits rather than what it references. Among others, Connor Cruise O'Brien and Edward Said state that *La Peste's* failure is that it leaves out the presence of *autochtones*. However, in recent years, there has been a deeper analysis of Camus' silence about the *autochtones* in *La Peste.* In *Albert Camus the Algerian*, David Carroll claims that the absent *autochtones* fit into the novel's larger theme of absence. He notes that other persecuted ethnic groups, which populated Algeria, such as the Jews and the Spanish, are equally missing. For Carroll, Camus tried to create a neutral space from which a resistance against all forms of political abuse could be staged. As such, saving human lives, indigenous or not, becomes the main focus (Vulor, 133).

While Shoshana Felman does not speak directly about the missing *autochtones* in *La Peste*, her analysis of Camus' allegory through the lens of the Holocaust seems applicable. In particular, Felman discusses what is said to be the most direct reference to Nazi death camps in the novel when the Oranais systematically burn the bodies of the dead plague victims in crematory ovens. Allegory, by not objectively relating the factual elements of the Holocaust the way history should, allows for a "vanishing of the event" (103). History, for Felman, is similar to what I called archival history in the

chapter on Ignazio Silone: it is a history whose references have been officially documented and filed by the state. "Vanishing of the event" in history would mean that a real event was left unrecorded. As such, "vanishing" does not mean that the event has totally disappeared. Felman argues that it represents the actual disappearance of history itself. While the Holocaust was a real occurrence, few, with the exception of the victims, were willing to bear witness to the event. Jews were annihilated in concentration camps with no intervention from other governments or religions. Guilty countries were allowed forget the human catastrophe by ignoring the voices of victims. Literary silence in this case is, for Felman, a means of expressing the fact that these parts of history and their victims have been willingly erased. The silencing of an event in literature, which an allegory can produce, is, Felman states "an act, a political behavior that is both a symptom of, and a crucial factor in, historical developments" (183). Silence in literature, in fact, bears witness to the "vanishing" of an event from history.

If, as Carroll claims, the allegory of *La Peste* provides neutral ground for expressing all political abuse and negligence, it would seem that Felman's silence as "act" could also apply to the "vanishing" of *autochtones* from the history of colonial Algeria. Indeed, after the end of WWII, Camus wrote in opposition to the massacres at Sétif and Guelma, the usurpation of common land causing widespread death by famine and disease, and the lack of civil rights for Arabs, despite their sacrifice for the French army during both world wars. The fact that the French colonial government chose to ignore these abuses makes them "vanishing acts of history.[107] *La Peste*, then, could be not only an allegory of vanishing for the Holocaust, but also for the abuses of *autochtones* inflicted by the French colonialist government.

Yet even with this kind of innovative reading, there still seems to be a return to the circular argument that the allegory of the plague can stand for any kind of authoritarianism. I would suggest that the argument might be complicated by examining not what the allegory does or does not represent, but rather, as Felman maintains, how it serves as a "testimonial *bridge*" between a repressed history and its narrative, a bridge that can bear witness to political silences of history through literature (181). What if, in an attempt to configure other abusive political regimes into the allegory, such as colonialism and Stalinism, this bridge appears not *between history and literature, but between Camus' journalism and his literature?*

Indeed, despite the differences in these multiple readings of the missing *autochtones*, Camus' critics depend on his journalism to bolster their arguments. In Camus' defense, Carroll cites a article from *Combat* in which Camus condemns France's colonialist practices against Algerian *autochtones.* He writes, in reference to critics like O'Brien and Said, "The charge that" Camus and his friends "did not find colonial racism and oppression repugnant and that he did not denounce them and see a link between colonial racism and violence simply does not hold up to scrutiny" (53). Even Felman equates Camus' journalism with writing history (105). In each case, Camus' journalism serves as an important bridge between what does or does *not* appear in his literature. However, I would argue, this kind of bridge seems to be only an *illustration* of how one form of Camus' writing, literature, reflects the other, journalism. What would happen if we reexamined this relationship, not of journalism as history or illustration, but between literature and Camus' journalism as such? And, what if this bridge does not unite or reflect, but crumbles under the weight of a broken relation between the two forms? What will this mean for literature and allegory as ways to bear witness to history, a history that has not been archived?

III

Bread, Literature, and Silence

The conflict between journalism and literature that appears in *La Peste,* I will argue, is not one that only occurs during WWII, the French Resistance, and the Holocaust, which were Camus' most intensive periods of journalistic writing. Instead, it happens at the site of Algeria in 1939, in what was for Camus, a *surprise* encounter with colonialism *and* communism.

A. Camus, the Communist

In 1935 Camus joined the Communist Party of Algeria (PCA).[108] Along with his responsibilities as a cultural spokesperson and journalist for party media, he was in charge of establishing a Franco-Muslim union between *autochtone* and French members.[109] When the Blum-Viollette Law, a law that would extend citizenship and rights to 21,000 Muslims in Algeria, was dropped in 1936 because leaders decided it was more important to focus their attention on combating fascism, Camus joined sides with his *autochtone* comrades in protest. The communists wanted *autochtone* support, but ultimately betrayed the original promise of promoting anticolonialism and equal rights. At the request of his Muslim comrades, Camus made it known to the Algerian communist party officials that he disagreed with their neglectful treatment of the

dissenters. The communists put Camus on trial during which he spoke on behalf of the masses of *autochtones* and workers who had supported the European French party, who represented a minority. He declared he would defend the former before the latter. Just before joining the party in 1935 he seemed to have predicted this confrontation: "En somme, [dans] une volonté de se dérober aux pseudo-idéalismes, aux optimismes de commande….dans l'expérience (loyale) que je tenterai, je me refuserai toujours à mettre entre la vie et l'homme un volume du *Capital*" (qtd. in Todd, 90).[110] A letter is sent to Moscow about his activities and Camus is expelled from the party in 1937 even though he had already left voluntarily some time before. *Autochtone* needs fell silent as all sides turned away from them, focusing instead on freeing the mother-continent from fascism.

B. Seeing After the Fact: Camus, Kabylie, and Silence

Most scholars of Camus tend to dismiss his early participation in the communist party as a vagary of youthful enthusiasm for revolution. However, I would suggest, this very experience established views about politics and art that will resurface in both his literature and journalism. Most notably, he came to the conclusion that politics should have nothing to do with artistic creation, an idea which countered the communist doctrine that art was to promote politics. As Camus' biographer Olivier Todd confirms, "Jeune ancien combattant du PC, Albert Camus refuse de sacrifier ceux qu'il appelle "les Arabes" …aux exigences d'un parti qui fait passer le contenu politique d'une œuvre avant toute autre considération, surtout artistique" (90).[111]

It remains to be answered *how and even if* such a break operated between Camus' two forms of writing at the time: journalism, which exemplifies the author's

commitment to political engagement with contemporary politics, and literature, a domain free of such engagement. The truly radical break, I argue, came one year before France' defeat to Hitler's army and the Vichy regime's collaboration with the Nazis. In 1939 Camus ventured to Kabylie. While he had written about the *autochtones* and their terrible condition, he had never *seen first-hand* the conditions in the rural areas of Algeria where poverty was at its worst.

From October 1938 to October 1939, Camus wrote for the newspaper *Alger républicain*. It was during these years that, as Jeanyves Guérin states, "Camus cut his teeth" as a journalist ("Camus, the Journalist" 79). For *Alger républicain*, one of the only liberal newspapers in the country, his assignment in 1939 was to report on the Kabyle people and their living conditions. [112] There had been recent uprisings in Kabylie, a region known for its fierce desire for independence. As a consequence, it had been the target of information campaigns by the French government that tried to erase political questions about the abject economic and social situation of the *autochtones* living there. These questions, which might ultimately justify an Algeria free of colonial rule, were countered in the campaigns by a celebration of folkloric values and natural beauty of the region. While other attempts to integrate *autochtones* had largely failed, the colonialists maintained that Kabylie, with its famed wood carvings and basketry, was not only an exception, but a natural tourist destination. It was their example of how *autochtones* could live with the French colonizers while their own native culture flourished. The uprisings were explained away as rogue acts, which only further justified the civilizing presence of the French in the region.

What Camus found in Kabylie was a far cry from the government's description. In his articles, he details the lack of food due to colonialist usurpation of

land and grain reserves, children playing in sewers, schools with one room, the lack of clean water, the skeleton-like appearance of the people, the fact that there had not been a doctor in some villages for fifteen years, and the appalling statistic that fifty out of hundred inhabitants die from disease or starvation. As if his eyes had been assaulted, he writes “Je suis allé en Kabylie avec l’intention délibérée de parler de ce qui était bien…Mais je n’ai rien vu. Cette misère, tout de suite, m’a bouché les yeux” (1:654).[113] Camus seems to echo first the press campaigns when he claims that from afar, Kabylie resembles ancient Greece with its olive trees, figs, men draped in white robes, and spectacular landscape. Yet once inside he loses his words, calling what he sees ″une détresse indicible” (1:653).[114] It is not the beautiful landscape that urgently pushes him to write, but the rag-covered, suffering bodies of the people. He says “la Grèce évoque irrésistiblement une certaine gloire du corps et ses prestiges. Et dans aucun pays que je connais, le corps ne m’a paru plus humilié que dans la Kabylie. Il faut l’écrire sans tarder: la misère de ce pays est effroyable” (1:654).[115] As if they were the walking dead, he describes “ce cortège d’aveugles et d’infirmes, de joues creuses et de loques qui, pendant tous ces jours, m’a suivi en silence.”[116]

It would be easy to say that Camus simply confirms that he was right in defending the *autochtones* against the communists and colonialists. The outcome of this neglect suddenly became palpable in this scene. Criticizing other journalists for neglecting the “spectacle plus désespérant” he asks[117]

> Qu’avons-nous fait pour elle? Qu’avons-nous fait pour que ce pays reprenne son vrai visage? Qu’avons-nous fait, nous tous qui écrivons, qui parlons ou qui légiférons et qui, rentrés chez nous, oublions la misère des autres. Dire qu’on aime ce pays ne suffit pas.[118]

He concludes the paragraph by stating that love, charity, and speeches are of no use.

Yet the fact that he is almost blinded by the sight of *what he thought he already knew* about the neglect of communism and colonialism appears to take his writing in a strange direction:

> *"c'est du pain, du blé, du secours, une main fraternelle qu'il faut tendre. Le reste est littérature"* (1:655). [119]

What might Camus mean when he says "le reste est littérature?" and how does it fit in with bread and care for desperate people? What does it have to do with journalism and facts? There seem to be two ways of understanding literature here. On one hand, I would suggest, literature has to do with other reports on Kabylie by representatives of the French colonial government who lack information. "Le scandale"as Camus states, "ce n'est pas de cacher la vérité, mais de ne pas la dire tout entière" (1:656).[120] Kabylie needs food and first aid in order for the people to survive. The idea that it needs tourism or Europeans to purchase folkloric souvenirs is make-believe. Thus, literature in this sense functions as an ornament, as mere fiction.

On the other hand, as seen through the different readings of Camus' allegory since *La Peste's* publication, it is impossible to give one referential reality to literature. However, most of the time, we expect that journalism, like history, should give us the reality of traceable facts. Can literature, a language of multiple interpretations, give us facts in the way that journalism can?

This idea requires a closer look at what Camus says about the suffering of the bodies and their silence. The Kabylie reportage was not the first time Camus wrote about collective "détresse" and literature. In fact, it was in one of his very first

attempts at literature in 1935 when he addressed the poverty of petit-blancs living in the slums of Alger, where he was raised. [121] As we will see, Camus carefully makes a distinction between poverty and misery. In the collection of essays, *L'Envers et l'Endroit,* he describes le "quartier pauvre" and his family's life within it. He does mention bodies that are hungry, sick, disabled, and paralyzed, but ultimately the "quartier pauvre" has an edifying element for Camus. In a May 1935 *Carnets* entry he confesses

> L'œuvre est un aveu, il me faut témoigner. Je n'ai qu'une chose à dire, à bien voir. C'est dans cette vie de pauvreté, parmi ces gens humbles et vaniteux, que j'ai le plus sûrement touché ce qui me paraît le sens vrai de la vie. Les œuvres d'art n'y suffiront jamais. L'art n'est pas tout pour moi. Que du moins ce soit un moyen (2:795).[122]

As Jaqueline Levi-Valensi and Samantha Novello observe, Camus, like Silone, expresses the idea that art is a means of bearing witness to the "le vrai sens de la vie" which he finds in the life of "le quartier pauvre" (1:1212-1219). It is these people, forced to live from day to day, who truly confront the ineluctability of their deaths. For Camus, they are like "bread" in that they provide him with an element essential for his writing. He even observed the same phenomenon in Silone's second novel, *Pane e vino*, which he reviewed in 1935, four years before going to Kabylie:

> Revenir au pain et au vin de la simplicité, c'est l'itinéraire d'Ignazio Silone et la leçon du roman. Et ce n'est pas sa moindre grandeur que de nous inciter, nous aussi, à retrouver à travers les haines de l'heure le visage d'un peuple fier et humain, qui demeure notre seul espoir de paix (1:138).[123]

Yet like *Fontamara's* massacre and rape scenes, which mirror Silone's account of the Pescina earthquake of 1916, the Kabylie trip brings Camus face to face with a reality that defies poverty and the "bread" that inspires his craft: a mass physical suffering caused by political abuse, in which bodies, young and old, hover between life and death among filth and disease. This is not poverty; this is "misère." As such, in Kabylie, the body takes on significance that goes beyond the essential "bread" of writing. It begins to look like more like "littérature" in the phrases "c'est du pain, du blé, du secours, une main fraternelle qu'il faut tendre." "Littérature" is neither a life-giving element like bread, nor mere fiction. Indeed, while the relationship with death in the "quartier pauvre" is instructive for Camus and will continue to inform and inspire his future literary and journalistic writings, this confrontation with *misery* in Kabylie shuts down his ability to write altogether at this point in the reportage. The journalistic writing stops when Camus enigmatically announces "le reste est littérature." The misery of Kabylie is new precisely because it seems to be *essentially* about extreme physical suffering.

In his other works, Camus links the suffering body to the malfunctioning of Western ideas. In one of his first philosophical works, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe,* Camus has something akin to the Cartesian moment. He asks "De qui et de quoi en effet puis-je dire: 'Je connais cela !' "[124] In response to his own question, he states that he can be sure of his body and of what he touches: " Ce coeur en moi, je puis l'éprouver et je juge qu'il existe. Ce monde, je puis le toucher et je juge encore qu'il existe" (1:232).[125] Body, not the Cartesian formula of thinking, is, for Camus, our first truth. In fact, the "absurd" which was Camus' founding philosophical principle, is what he calls a "révolte de la chair" (1:228).[126] The absurd comes to light when a human realizes that her/his search for meaning is futile because the world is unintelligible and

devoid of God. Death of the body is inevitable. In sum, the physical body knows it has been reduced to an inhuman, mechanical existence and wishes to free itself. "L'horreur" he writes, "vient en réalité du côté mathématique de l'événement" (1:229).[127] However, the solution to this horrifying revelation is neither suicide, nor blind faith. The only way to live a free life is to embrace the contradiction between our desires and the real possibility of carrying them out in the world. There is no transcendence, as other philosophers have argued, but only the *physical* reality of the present moment. Western culture and the ideas that have shaped it are what Camus calls "abstractions" of the truth. These have taken precedent and the literal body too has been reduced to an abstraction of humanity, making it an easy subject to abuse and tyranny throughout the ages. "Aucune morale" he declares, "ni aucun effort ne sont *a priori* justifiables devant les sanglantes mathématiques qui ordonnent notre condition" (1:230).[128] In an essay entitled "Prométhée aux enfers" Camus writes "Je doute parfois qu'il soit permis de sauver l'homme d'aujourd'hui. Mais il est encore possible de sauver les enfants de cet homme dans leur corps et dans leur esprit…toute mutilation de l'homme ne peut-être que provisoire" (3: 591).[129] For Camus then, the survival of humans is not only a question of mind, but also of body. The survival of the body in Western culture means the survival of the concrete, an actual human body, and not only of the abstract, an idea of what a human should be.[130]

In his next major philosophical work, *L'homme révolté,* published in 1951, Camus speaks about the abstraction of the body through a study of Communism. In a *Carnets* entry written during the time he was taking notes for *La Peste* and for *L'homme révolté*, he states:

> Origines de la folie moderne. C'est le christianisme qui a détourné l'homme du monde. Il l'a réduit à lui-même et à son histoire. Le communisme est une suite logique du christianisme. C'est une histoire de chrétiens. Id. Au bout de deux mille ans de christianisme, la révolte du corps. Il a fallu deux mille ans pour qu'on puisse à nouveau l'exposer nu sur les plages. D'où excès. Et il a retrouvé sa place dans l'usage. Il reste à la lui redonner dans la philosophie et la métaphysique. C'est l'un des sens de la convulsion moderne (2:1042).[131]

Communism, as Camus will repeat in numerous essays is worse than Christianity because it has no physical body, Christ's sacrificed body at the center of its ideology. In *L'homme révolté*, he criticizes Marxism for having abstract rather than concrete goals: "La doctrine était restrictive et la réduction de toute valeur à la seule histoire autorisait les plus extrêmes conséquences. Marx a cru que les fins de l'histoire, au moins, se révéleraient morales et rationnelles. C'est là son utopie." The desired end for humanity in a communist world is not one of survival or flesh, but only of the mind. In order to achieve such goals, Marxism had to reinvent the values of society to its own benefit. Camus explains that "La revendication de justice aboutit à l'injustice si elle n'est pas fondée d'abord sur une justification éthique de la justice. Faute de quoi, le crime aussi, un jour, devient devoir." When good and evil reinvent themselves and are "confondus avec les événements, rien n'est plus bon ou mauvais, mais seulement prématuré ou périmé. Qui décidera de l'opportunité, sinon l'opportuniste ? Plus tard, les disciples disent, vous jugerez." Yet Camus argues, "Mais les victimes ne seront plus là pour juger. Pour la victime, le présent est la seule valeur, la révolte la seule action" (3: 246).[132] The disappearance of these human bodies means the disappearance of the truth and the impossibility for political or social change. This is why, I would suggest, Camus cannot see beyond the bodies in Kabylie; as an

abstraction of humanity, they could live forever under the ideologies of communism or colonialism. As real humans with real bodies, their very survival is in *imminent* danger. Their death would mean the disappearance of the violent truth of authoritarian regimes.

It is precisely the neglect and abstraction of these miserable bodes in Kabylie that I call “political erasure.” “Political erasure” as outlined in the introduction, occurs when a political regime covers up, or *erases*, the fact that it has been the cause of *erasing people* by imposing mass death and destruction under the guise of ideology. Political erasure, as also discussed in the first chapter, is a consequence of what I call a “political abyss.” The abyss is created when a person or persons have no political status in a world in which one’s survival and livelihood depend on it. In addition, they have no way of climbing out of this abyss. That is to say that these bodies, Camus’ bearer of truth, have no access to the political world. Political erasure and abyss are akin to Felman’s “vanishing points” of history; they represent events that a traditional, seemingly-objective notion of history of authoritarian regimes cannot absorb into their narratives. Before Camus went to Kabylie, his knowledge of the suffering was *political*. That is to say, he did not truly *see* the suffering. In the communist party in Algiers, he had worked with other members to procure rights for *autochtones*, but he did not venture into the most destitute places to experience it first-hand. In the Kabylie reportage, Camus defines colonialist politics as *not seeing* and *not speaking* when he writes “le scandale…ce n’est pas de cacher la vérité, mais de ne pas la dire tout entière.” Once in Kabylie, his discovery of the suffering was *journalistic*. He *does see* and he *wants* to reveal the *entire* truth about political neglect by writing in a detailed, objective way. Yet there is something about his attempt to write about it that appears to be *literary.* “Le reste est literature” points to an enigmatic silence produced by

what Camus *sees*. However, what he *sees* - the suffering bodies vital to truth telling - seems unable to make entirely its way into his journalistic writing. How, then, can this truth be told?

IV.

Between Two Silences

If journalism were to give a referent to this suffering that seems to defy words, it would only be silence. That is to say, no words means no signification. On the other hand, if the referent is silence, it *can* take on a literary form. Literature *can* speak through silence through such devices as allegory and metaphor.

Yet it is precisely the impossibility of this kind of literary silence in the Kabylie reportage that stops Camus from writing journalism at "le reste est literature." Upon arriving in Kabylie, the terrible sights clog his eyes ("a bouché les yeux"), making it impossible to see anything else. Despite this visual monopoly, he seems unable to articulate the full extent of an inexpressible distress ("une détresse indicible"). At the same time, he attests to an urgent need to write about the inexpressible distress of the horrifying spectacle of infirm bodies.

The contradiction between the need to tell and the silence involved in the telling complicates the journalist's job, whose very task is to *find words* in order to write a complete and truthful report about events. Thus it seems that the telling of the bodies itself has *inscribed within it* a silence, which underscores the need for another form of writing that is not simply about making concrete references. The bodies – the truth – contain a form of silence. The fact that the silence of the bodies is essential to the truth about Kayblie reveals an essential failure of Camus' journalism. "Le reste

est littérature" does not point to factual errors about Kabylie in journalism or an impossibility of expressing the horror; it points to a silence *only literature can* embrace.

Indeed, I might argue, this is precisely what is happening with "littérature" in the reportage. Camus is perhaps talking directly through the literary in this enigmatic phrase. It is most likely a reference to the last line of Paul Verlaine's "Art poétique," which reads "Et tout le reste est littérature." [133] The poem presents Verlaine's rejection of a certain kind of poetry that is too rational, sentimental, lyrical, or eloquent. Instead, he argues for a poetry of nuance, music, impressions, inconsistency, and amorphism[134]. Poetry is about suggestion rather than declaration, about description rather than interpretation, and about music rather than words. It could be said what is essential for Verlaine's poetry is an extra-linguistic language that allows for an expression of silence and absence. In music, silences are not just stopping points; they are essential parts of the composition. With impressions, it is the absence of detail that can give way to the essential sensations for an entire image or scene. When he says that "tout le reste est littérature," he means that his conception of poetry does not belong to what other poets have previously called literature. It is only this language of silence and absence that can truly communicate the essential.

Via Verlaine, there is another possible reference to literary silence in Camus' phrase "tout le reste est littérature." During the time Verlaine was in prison, he read all of Shakespeare in English.[135] V.P. Underwood, among other critics, finds references to both *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet* in "Art poétique," especially in relation to music. It seems plausible, then, that Verlaine's "Et tout le reste est littérature "is a

take on Prince Hamlet's dying line, "the rest is silence." Surprisingly, what replaces silence in Verlaine's phrase is, quite literally, literature.

It appears that Verlaine was not trying to get rid of literature, but to break with it in order to create a new kind of literary language that emerges from and expresses silence. In the journalistic reading of "le reste est littérature" in "La Grèce en haillons," literature seems to be about the rational, precise nature of the poetry that Verlaine criticizes for failing to capture what is essential. It refers to the other journalists, who most likely wrote in a rational, objective style about the thriving region of a fictional Kabylie. Rather than writing about silence and suffering, they *silenced* the misery by erasing it from the beautiful landscape. As such, they created the invisibility of a people. The literary reading of Camus' "le reste est littérature," is close to what Verlaine meant by his new conception of poetry, which is of silence, absence, impressions, and description. The difference between the two writers is that Verlaine is able to inscribe his ideas about poetry in the very poem that describes them by deviating from traditional rhyme patterns and evoking impressionistic images. However, to express the silence of the suffering bodies in journalism, Camus appears to have nowhere to go.

In fact, until his last autobiographical novel, *Le Premier homme*, which has been criticized for being overly conscientious about mentioning *autochtones*, Camus will address the problems of Algerian *autochtones* almost exclusively in journalism. He was writing numerous essays and articles on the relationship between the French colonizers and the *autochtones* during the entire time he was writing plays, short stories, and novels. For example, while writing *La Peste,* articles appeared about *autochtones* who took to the streets in the eastern Algerian cities of Sétif and Guelma to protest the prolonging of French colonial rule after many had served as soldiers for

the French army in WWII. Over a matter of a few days, an estimated one-hundred Europeans had died, which contrasts sharply with the 45,000 Arabs dead according to the Algerians and 15,000-20,000 dead according to the French. Unlike “La Grèce en haillons,” Camus expresses almost no outrage following this massacre. Instead, he writes a series of articles which methodically outline the reasons for the *autochtone’s* protest. He explains

> Les massacres de Guelma et de Sétif ont provoqué chez les Français d’Algérie un ressentiment profond et indigné. La répression qui a suivi a développé dans les masses arabes un sentiment de crainte et d’hostilité. Dans ce climat, une action politique qui serait à la fois ferme et démocratique voit diminuer ses chances de succès (4 :1212-1219).[136]

The rest of the article takes on the same exacting tone. Camus continues to denounce the colonialists’ violence, but also defends the rights of French sovereignty in Algeria. He does not say that the French are superior; he says that France must exercise its status as a democratic Republic in order to give citizen rights to all people that fall under French rule. The inexpressive, literary-like silence that contains “the truth” about the *autochtones* seems to have evaporated from his journalism.

In 1945, however, the *autochtones* do seem to enter his journalism in a literary way – through silence. Camus seems to express a literary silence about concentration camp victims that is similar to the one he demonstrated in “La Grèce en haillons” about the *autochtones*. As with the Kabylie case, Camus had written profusely in *Combat* about the French Resistance and the evils of Hitler *before seeing* victims of Nazi concentration camps in May 1945. It was the shock of allied liberators’ photos and videos that made him came face to face with the bodies of the camps.

In one article following the release of such images, he quotes from a letter written by a déporté to his family.[137] This man details the lack of food, the disease, the filth, the way the Jews were treated in Dachau, and how déportés were being neglected at their return to France. Camus declares "Nous savions depuis longtemps, et le monde commence à se lasser de tant d'atrocités. Les délicats y trouvent de la monotonie et nous reprocheront d'en parler encore" (2 : 417).[138] This public silencing about atrocities seems to resonate with Camus' 1939 reportage on Kabylie. In "La Grèce en haillons," he asks himself "Et comment l'oublierai-je puisque je me sentais une mauvaise conscience que je n'aurais pas dû être le seul à avoir." [139] He concludes that "Ces spectacles ne s'oublient que lorsqu'on veut les oublier" (1 :654). Even though other journalists saw the misery of Kabylie, there was a willingness to keep silent about it for the sake of maintaining both the colonial order and the communist cause of fighting fascism.

Historians of WWII France have shown that there was little public talk about Holocaust victims because the French government refused to accept their responsibility for sending their own people to concentration camps. Even though the French public, at this point in 1945, does not yet have full proof of what happened in the camps, they wanted to shut down this story in favor of exposing the story of the Resistance.[140]

As he did in the Kabylie reportage, Camus urges immediate action:

> Beaucoup d'informations nous laissaient croire qu'il en était ainsi, en effet, de nos camarades déportés. Mais nous nous retentions d'en parler dans l'attente d'informations plus sûres. Aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus possible. Le premier

> message qui nous parvient de là-bas est décisif et nous devons crier notre indignation et notre colère. Il y a là une honte qui doit cesser (2:417).[141]

When he states in “La Grèce en haillons” that “Dire qu’on aime ce pays ne suffit pas…c’est du pain, du blé, du secours, une main fraternelle qu’il faut tendre. Le reste est littérature,” he reveals his principle concern as a journalist: to save the dying bodies by providing proper, basic care. He echoes in *Combat* “Nous n’avons qu’une chose en vue: sauver les plus précieuses des vies françaises. Ni la politique, ni les susceptibilités nationales n’ont plus rien à faire au milieu de cette angoisse … Il faut agir vite” (2:419).[142]

In his criticism of communism, Camus faults Marx for encouraging the sacrifice of human bodies to ideas. In his Kabylie article, he shows how the projected ideals of colonialism cost the bodies of *autochtones.* In regards to Nazism, he argues in *L’homme révolté,* the abstracted idea was the human body itself. Humans were nothing but a cog in the wheel of the state’s machine. If the body, which meant all bodies but Aryan or collaborating bodies, was a threat to Hitler’s regime, it was eliminated not *as a human*, but as a dangerous foreign species. Camus quotes Hitler: “Quand la race est en danger d’être opprimée…la question de légalité ne joue plus qu’n rôle secondaire.” Ernst Jünger, Camus notes, echoing his views on Marxist utopia, captures the spirit of Hitler’s pure race project: “Devenir…vaut mieux que vivre.” In the effort to eliminate humans who fall outside strict Aryan prescription – for example, Jews, dissidents, communists, homosexuals, Jehova’s Witnesses, the mentally ill -, Camus sees the survivors and their bodies as not only a testament to the true face of the fascist regime, but also of the French and the Allies who played a role

in abetting it. It is essential, then, to save these "precious" bodies and to make them speak.

It might appear that literature has no place in these writings on the camp victims. If literature were placed next to this article, there would be a clear opposition between the two forms of writing. Camus' journalism here is like the bread ("pain") in the Kabylie article; it gives solid facts and a way to ease suffering quickly. However, just as in the Kabylie reportage, Camus' journalistic concern for saving bodies doubles as a literary concern with silence when he begins talking about the bodies themselves. He writes "Il faut qu'on sache qu'un seul des cheveux de ces hommes a plus d'importance pour la France et pour l'univers entier qu'une vingtaine de ces hommes politiques dont des nuées de photographes enregistrent les sourires."[143] This "hair" makes the survivors, without speaking, the *only* "gardiens de l'honneur et les témoins du courage"[144] It seems that the hair, just one part of the suffering body, is able to testify to the horrors of fascism in ways that words cannot. In "La Grèce en haillons" he admits it was the "procession of the blind and the infirm with sunken cheeks" which followed him "in silence" that spoke the deepest truth about what had been suppressed about Kabylie by other journalists, the colonial government, and the communists who wanted to ignore the *autochtone* cause.

Near the end of the first article on the camps, Camus seems to shut himself down in the same way he does when he writes "le reste est littérature3 He speaks first about the disappointment the survivors felt on their day of liberation:

> Le voilà donc, ce jour ! Et il faut cependant qu'il les trouve au milieu des cadavres et des puanteurs, arrêtés dans leur élan par des barbelés, interdits

> devant un monde que, dans leurs plus noires idées, ils n'avaient pu imaginer à ce point stupide et inconscient.[145]

What the survivors experience on the day of liberation goes *beyond* their imagination. That is to say, there is no possible referent, not even an imaginary one.

It is at this point when Camus declares "Nous nous arrêterons là" (2:418).[146] The rest of the paragraph continues to demand help for the survivors. As if this attempt to describe the survivors and the unthinkable fact of their bodies through journalism were futile, Camus has to stop himself, just as he does when he writes "Le reste est littérature." Yet as he says with the hair, it is this neglected body alone – the hair, a piece of that body - that expresses the essential catastrophe of war and political abuse – mass death and suffering. [147] For Camus, the journalist, this body, in both Kabylie and in post-war France, marks a rupture of speech. In 1945, there is no place in which Camus talks simultaneously about the victims of camps and the plight of the *autochtones* . However, as seen through a comparison between the 1939 Kabylie reportage and the 1945 *Combat* articles, there is a similar block for Camus when he writes about collective suffering in relation to seeing the victims' bodies.

Literature may seem to be different from journalism, which we called the "bread," but in both the Kabylie reportage and the *Combat* articles, Camus makes reference to a silence that he cannot articulate. Literature appears to have found its way into journalism through silence. As such, it would seem a complete break between these two forms of writing is impossible. I suggest that Camus calls for a literary mode of telling about the event in which the journalistic silence is inscribed.

Perhaps this is why, like Verlaine, Camus turned to a new conception of literature. *La Peste,* a story about a plague that decimates the Algerian town of Oran, is Camus' first piece of literature that deals with suffering on a collective level. Yet it is too easy to say that the rats, which first appear to suffer from the plague, and the epidemic itself are only an allegory of Nazism and the French Resistance. This interpretation quickly dismisses one of the essential functions of allegory for Camus as I read it; allegory is not about referring, it is also about bearing witness to a political erasure and silence that has its origins not in Nazism and communism, but in colonial Algeria. In addition, Camus' novel is a new approach to writing literature, a literature that puts into question its ability to not only to bear witness to political silence, but to also communicate silence in its own way. In "La Grèce en haillons" it seems like the journalist's silence is unavoidable. He must turn to literature. However, the novel, as a work of fiction, has the ability to *create* the kind of silence that journalism seems to confront involuntarily. How do the two forms of writing come together or come apart in *La Peste?* I would suggest that within the novel's allegory is inscribed the very question of this possible break, when it comes to the collective suffering of the human body, between two silences: the silence of journalism, a political silence, and the silence of literature, a crafted, artistic silence.

V

La Peste: Staging the Two Silences in Journalism and in Literature

La Peste, I would argue, is precisely about the complicated relationship between these two silences. In fact, this contradiction of silences is inscribed at the

very beginning of the novel. At the start of the outbreak when no one dares make reference to its catastrophic potential, Raymond Rambert, a journalist visiting from Paris, comes to see Dr. Bernard Rieux in his office. Rambert, writing for a major Parisian newspaper, wants to interview the doctor about the living conditions and state of health of Arabs living in Oran. Rieux tells Rambert that things are not well, but before going deeper into detail, he wants to know if Rambert can tell the truth. "Certes," responds Rambert. Rieux pushes the question, asking if the journalist would be able to "porter condemnation totale."[148] Rambert admits "Totale, non, il faut bien le dire. Mais je suppose que cette condamnation serait sans fondement."[149] Rieux tells Rambert that "en effet une pareille condamnation serait sans fondement, mais qu'en posant cette question, il cherchait seulement à savoir si le témoignage de Rambert pouvait ou non être sans réserves." [150] Rieux says "Je n'admets que les témoignages sans réserves. Je ne soutiendrai donc pas le vôtre de mes renseignements" (2:41).[151] As Raymond leaves, Rieux tells him that "il y aurait un curieux reportage à faire sur la quantité de rats morts qu'on trouvait dans la ville en ce moment."[152] Raymond exclaims "Ah !...cela m'intéresse" (2:42).[153] The story of dead rats will be more appealing to Parisians than dead Arabs.

As some interpretations have argued, this scene could represent Camus' unwillingness to address the plight of the *autochtones*. I maintain, however, that this scene represents two fictional characters playing out Camus' dilemma as a journalist and as a writer of literature. Rambert is not asking for Rieux to give him generalities about Arabs; he is asking an exact question about their *physical* condition. Yet Rieux seems to understand right away that journalism can never tell the complete truth of these conditions. It is not only that these conditions are bad beyond words; it is also that colonialists have created them. Instead of discussing the situation further, the

doctor chooses silence as a way to shut down the journalist, just as Camus himself was shut down by the sight of suffering bodies in Kabylie and by the images of concentration camp survivors.

Rieux tells Rambert to write about the rats instead, which mirrors what Camus may be attempting to do by writing *La Peste.* By using allegory, is Camus, the novelist, trying to put the silence of Camus, the journalist, in literary form? From Plato to Paul Ricoeur, there has been a multitude of ways to interpret allegory. [154] Yet in its most general sense, it has basically been agreed that an allegory tells one story by telling it through another story. As such, we suppose that somehow the "real" meanings, the ones that correspond to fixed referents and not to the abstract ones, have been hidden. Through literary interpretation, *what* these referents are may be revealed. In this scene Rieux plays the role of the truth teller, but the "total" truth of *autochtone misère*, or the immense suffering of these human bodies, has no place in Rambert's journalism. The bloody images of rats that have come out to the street in droves to die violently from the plague have never been witnessed by the sleepy city of Oran. In addition, public officials in *La Peste* tell the citizens to ignore the severity of the rats' apparition. When Rieux tells Rambert to write about the rats, he may be indicating that the horrible condition of the rodents resembles the *autochtone* conditions more than a semi-true journalistic article would. In Rambert's journalism, then, replacing rats for humans may best express the governmental silencing of *autochtone* suffering. This replacement would not just function as allegory as metaphor, but would also demonstrate how allegory has its own way of creating a silence that points to political erasure. Rats do not stand in for humans. Rats erase the real humans who suffer at the hands of a negligent colonial government. As such, literature falls silent too. Appearing at the beginning of the book, this scene is the first and last direct mention

of the miserable conditions of “Arabes” in colonial Algeria. The rest will be silence. How then will this second silence, this “reste,” be “littérature” for the remainder of the novel?

What this encounter and this question set up for the story is not, then, a symbiotic relationship between journalism and literature, but a broken one. In addition, it is also about a broken relationship between collective human catastrophe and the possibility of bearing witness to it. Indeed, this scene seems to show that this problem of silence for Camus does not come only from Nazism and the French Resistance, but also resonates with Algeria and communism at the site of the suffering body in Kabylie.

VI

Return of Literature, Return of the “Arabes”: L’Etranger

Dr. Rieux banishes “Arabs” from Rambert’s journalism, but they return to *La Peste through literature*. One day, Joseph Grand, a struggling writer and civil servant who eventually joins Rieux in the resistance, goes with Cottard, a man who attempted suicide in the beginning of the book and now has turned to thieving, to a tobacco store. The tobacco salesman tells them a story about an Arab killed on a beach in Algiers by a salesman. Grand explains “Au milieu d’une conversation animée, celle-ci [the tobacco seller] avait parlé d’une arrestation récente qui avait fait du bruit à Alger. Il s’agissait d’un jeune employé de commerce qui avait tué un Arabe sur une plage.”[155] The tobacco seller concludes that “Si l’on mettait toute cette racaille en prison…les honnêtes gens pourraient respirer.”[156] She is referring to the major event in one of Camus’ first novels, *L’Etranger,* when Mersault, the main character, kills an

Arab on the beach while taking a walk. Mersault is arrested, tried, and eventually put to death. However, one of the most ironic aspects of the novel is that Mersault is finally condemned, not because he killed an Arab, but because he did not conform to behavioral norms of the white, colonialist society by refusing to cry at his mother's funeral. When the tobacco seller says the "racaille" should go to prison, there is no way to tell whether or not she is referring to the Arab criminal or simply to the French-Algerian criminals. She mentions both the Arabs and Mersault, the Frenchman, in the preceding sentence. Before the seller can be precise about the "racaille," she is interrupted by "l'agitation subite de Cottard qui s'était jeté hors de la boutique, sans un mot d'excuse" (2:71).[157]

The return of literature in the form of *L'Etranger*, I would suggest, is the return of the murdered body of the Arab, who was rendered invisible and absent in Mersault's trial, and the justice he never received. Thus, it would seem that literature, through a reference to absent victims within literature itself, is what pulls voices from a political abyss in which those who have been silenced or "erased" by colonial politics dwell. And, he not only pulls out the voices, but also the fact that these voices have been silenced. Like the ghosts in Silone, Camus' references to the erased are fleeting, literary moments that are marked by a reference to political silencing and the abyss it creates for the victims. The "truth" of the murdered body is brought to the present by literature rather than by journalism.

VII

The Numbers of Silence: The Year 1871 and the Allegory of Erased History

The example from *L'Etranger* makes reference to an absent, murdered *autochtone* body. If allegory's task is to refer to something that exists elsewhere, does it really answer when the reference is to silence? What happens when the silence appears not for one event, but for a multitude of historical occurrences of political erasure? It might seem that journalism, which depends on facts and figures to boost its credibility, would be the ideal way to trace the history of the bubonic plague in the world. Rieux asks Rambert to write about the rats, which is, in the book, hard evidence of the catastrophic proportions the disease was going to take. Yet Rambert, would rather write a falsified story about the health conditions of *autochtones*. The history of the plague will have to be told, then, in another way.

There are several instances in *La Peste* that reveal the complex relation among allegory, history, silence, and erased bodies at the site of both Algeria and France. One of the most interesting occurs at the mention of the year 1871. During the early stages of the epidemic, Rieux, as Camus did when he was researching this novel, calls to mind other historical plagues. For Rieux, "des chiffres flottaient dans sa mémoire et il se disait que la trentaine de grandes pestes que l'histoire a connu avait fait près de cent millions de morts" (2 :59-60).[158] The first is "la peste de Constantinople qui, selon Propcope, avait fait dix mille victimes en un jour."[159] Then, there is the one in "Canton", where "il y avait soixante-dix ans, quarante mille rats étaient morts de la peste avant que le fléau s'intéressât aux habitants."[160] The further he goes back into history, the less available the facts and figures become. Finally, the third plague reference is to an unnamed one in 1871, during which "on n'avait pas le moyen de

compter les rats. On faisait son calcul approximativement, en gros, avec des chances évidentes d'erreur."[161] He adds "Pourtant, si un rat a trente centimetres de long, quarante mille rats mis à bout feraient…" (2 :60).[162]

While the first two references to the plague were, in reality, devastating and wide-spread epidemics, the nameless third reference seems to have no real corresponding outbreak. The enigma of this third reference and the ellipses that Camus adds at the end of the phrase, "Pourtant, si un rat a trente centimeters de long, quarante mille rats mis à bout feraient…" may reveal a double, ambiguous gap in which allegory seems unable to speak: the first exists between the narrator's historical knowledge of the plague and his *ability* to recall events with precision.; the second is between his historical knowledge and his *decision* to *not* name certain events.

While 1871 may *not* have been a plague year in the scheme of the world, it was a year of death and violence for the French and the Algerians. They lost the Franco-Prussian war, which helped lead the Germans to the unification that would encourage them to start two world wars. It was also the year of the uprising of the short-lived Paris Commune, which was hailed as an example of "dictatorship of the proletariat" by Karl Marx, father of communism, the same communism that expelled Camus in the 1930s and then ostracized him again in the 1950s. The Commune was repressed, resulting in a blood bath of thousands one year later. In *L'homme révolté*, Camus asserts that Communists took advantage of this bloodshed to dominate or even "décapiter" the revolutionary party in France. He writes

> …le Marxisme a dominé facilement le mouvement ouvrier à partir de 1872, à cause sans doute de sa grandeur propre, mais aussi parce que la seule tradition socialiste qui pouvait lui tenir tête a été a noyé dans le sang; il n'y avait pratiquement pas de marxistes parmi les insurgés de 1871. Cette épuration

> automatique de la révolution s'est poursuivie, par les soins des Etats policiers, jusqu'à nos jours. De plus en plus, la révolution s'est trouvée livrée à ses bureaucrates et à ses doctrines…(3 :246).[163]

But perhaps this year was the most fatal for Algerian Muslims. The worst *autochtone* uprising in the history of colonial Algeria broke out in Kabylie and spread quickly, like the plague, to other regions in Algeria.[164] The French quelled the uprisings, but increased their harsh measures against the Muslims. They created the Code d'Ingénat, which augmented land usurpation, imposed heavy taxes, and left crimes like land scorching and torture unpunished.

The narrator's silence about this 1871 "plague year" operates on several levels. A national or political myth that minimizes violence and death accompanies each example of 1871 history. The French defeat that ended the Franco-Prussian war in September of 1870 was such a great source of shame that the French seemed to almost will it away.[165] An invented "victory" countered the memory of defeat. It was their leader, Napoleon III, not the people of France who had lost the battle. Yet in the end it was a true defeat for France, mostly because they lost their territories of Alsace and Lorraine to Bismark, which only fed their desire for revenge against Germany. The cultural mitigation of this real defeat eventually resulted in the blind nationalism that led both France and Germany into war in 1914, the war in which Camus' father was killed.

On the other level, 1871 represents the silencing of angry Arab voices, which ultimately led to another shameful defeat for the French in 1962, when it lost its colony during the Algerian War. Although Camus did not know about this war at the time of writing *La Peste,* he certainly understood the way that Arabs and other

autochtones had been treated. He had been avidly writing about this silencing and the way to express it since his Kabylie reportage of 1939.

Tracking the 1871 reference leads back to the first plague reference Rieux thinks about, which is easily identifiable as the plague of Justinian in Constantinople, located in the ancient Roman Empire. Constantine, named for the same first Christian emperor, is also one of the largest provinces in Algeria. It was in this region where the massacres of Sétif and Guelma occurred on May 8, 1945. As described earlier, the Arabs and other *autochtones* were outraged that their rights still had not been extended even after playing a large role in fighting for France during the war. In *Actuelles III. Chroniques Algériennes* in 1958, he recalls the massacres of 1945:

> Les événements de 1945 auraient dû être un signal d'alerte: l'impitoyable répression du Constantinois a accentué au contraire le mouvement antifrançais. Les autorités françaises ont estimé que cette répression mettait un point final à la rébellion. En fait, ils lui donnaient un signal de depart (4:388).[166]

In addition, 1945 was the moment in which Camus was writing most actively in *Combat* about concentration camps and treatment of the Jews. It is difficult to ignore, then, that Emperor Constantine, the first Christian leader strictly limited the rights of Jews in ancient Rome, plunging them further into a cycle of persecution. And it has been well-documented by historians that the Catholic Church refused to condemn the Shoah even though it has been shown they had knowledge about it.[167] Yet as Camus explained in his articles, some French people wished to silence the victims of the Shoah as they shocked the world with their physical appearance and stories. As for the Sétif massacre, France would never concede that they killed more Arabs than they announced, despite angry protests from Algeria.

The coming together of this French example and this Algerian example of political silencing and political murder seems to be at the crux of Camus' struggle to bring journalism and literature together in the same text. The anonymous date of 1871 is almost like an allegory to itself; it opens a history, but when we delve in, it becomes one of silence and erasure about violent death. Ultimately, it seems that all of these elements fall into silence, when he says "Pourtant, si un rat a trente centimètres de long, quarante mille rats mis à bout feraient…" The ellipses at the end of the sentence silences the total number killed, possibly because it was impossible to count them all. Just as it is difficult to measure the final number of rats killed in a plague where no one had real means to count them all, Camus is perhaps also signaling the immeasurability of dead or suffering bodies. It seems there is not only an absence in the history of both events, but, apart from marking a literary silence with ellipses, an absence of a precise, journalistic way to express or measure them. The impossibility of journalism also becomes the impossibility of literary allegory to find where and when the bodies disappeared over the course of history.

VIII

Quartier Nègre, Place aux Armes: The Lesson Against Abstraction

What if it were journalism, instead of literature, which could embody the truth of political erasure? The impossibility of telling a complete, true journalistic story of the *autochtones*, the indigenous people of Algeria, reappears in the second meeting between the doctor, Rieux, and the journalist, Rambert. This time, however, it will seem that it is the journalist who gives the doctor a lesson in truth about the suffering body.

Three weeks after Oran has been quarantined from the rest of the world because of the plague, Rambert waits for Rieux at a hospital exit. He is not seeking information from the doctor about Arabs or about the epidemic, but he wants help in escaping the city so he can rejoin his girlfriend in Paris. Rambert, as if he has finally understood the impossibility of writing the truth of *autochtone* physical suffering, has shut his journalistic pursuits down. Even so, Rieux still refuses to yield to Rambert's demands, but before he finally says no, the two take a walk through the city.

They first "descendirent les ruelles du quartier nègre" the Arab district of Oran, which is, oddly, one of the most animated of the city today.[168] The quartier nègre, like the date 1871, serves as a site of complexity for colonialism. When France took control of Algeria in 1831, they grouped the mass of *autotchones* living in this particular area of Oran under military jurisdiction.[169] Many of these people served as slaves for the Arabs. In 1848, the French authorities sought to ban slavery in Algeria since it was illegal in France. Yet this measure caused agitation among the Arabs since they claimed it was their religious and social right to own slaves.[170] The French publicly cried that they were for abolition, but in private they discussed ways to get around it in order to appease the Arabs and pursue their own ambitions. The colonialists' ultimate goal was to import slaves for both themselves and for Arabs from elsewhere so that all slaves would be loyal to the French. As such, they could drive the troublemakers that opposed them out of the country (Brower, 809).

The quartier nègre, then, symbolizes a double enslavement: The colonialists, in some respects, want to enslave the Arab slave owners by replacing the Arabs' slaves with colonial slaves from elsewhere. It is the site of the French constitutional ideal of universal freedom that is declared publicly, but is privately compromised for colonial gain. Not only do Arabs keep slaves, they become slaves themselves.

As Rieux and Rambert descend into the quartier nègre, it is anything but animated. The narrator describes the city that appears

> …curieusement solitaire. Quelques sonneries de clairon, dans le ciel encore doré témoignent seulement que les militaires se donnaient l'air de faire leur métier. Pendant ce temps, le long des rues abruptes, entre les murs bleus, ocre et violets des maisons mauresques (2 :90).[171]

The silence of the quartier nègre, the silence of the Arabs and the other *autochtones* in their own neighborhood, may be indicative of the French silence over the corruption of their own constitution. It also mirrors the complexity of Rambert's silence at the beginning of *La Peste*. *Autochtones* and their tragic history are present, but inexpressible for the French journalist. The only audible element of this scene is the military bugler. It is perhaps this symbol of French authority and conquest that has silenced the other *autochtone* voices in the quartier nègre.

The site they encounter is the Places des Armes with its Statue de la République, which is "poudreuse et sale" (2:92). [172],[173] At this point, Rambert has asked Rieux for a medical certificate that would permit him to leave Oran. As they stand in the shadow of the dirty Statue de la République, Rieux tells Rambert that he cannot risk infecting more people outside Oran by allowing the journalist to go. He cannot only think about one person. For Rieux, it is a problem they must solve in Oran first; if not, the plague could spread into the world. It is difficult not to hear the echoes of what Camus says about the importance of the French Resistance and those that died for it in the *Combat* articles. It was "faire savoir au monde quel est le sort que les démocraties victorieuses réservent aux témoins qui se sont laissée égorger pour que les principes qu'elles défendent aient au moins une apparence de vérité" (2 :418).[174]

Yet this possible reference that Camus makes about French Republican ideals occurs under a symbol of the French Republic that is soiled by Algerian dust.

The real monument, erected in 1898 at Oran's Place des Armes, is commemorating the Battle of Sidi-Brahim. The statue in 1945 represented French bravery, but in today's Algeria it is a symbol of *autochtone* resistance against the French.[175] In this battle leader Abd-el-Kader led groups of armed men to drive the French out of an area of Algeria over which he had claimed sovereignty. For years, his army managed to resist the French, but he finally surrendered and was sent into exile. The French erroneously tried to brand him as the *autochtone* hero who supported French colonization.

The fact that Rieux , under the dirty statue, seems to sincerely uphold the French republican ideal of universal freedom in refusing an exception to Rambert adds another dimension to Camus' journalistic and literary silence about the physical suffering on both sides of the Mediterranean. On the one hand, he is proud of the French Resistance. For him, it represented the France at her best. On the other hand, he was also familiar with France at her worst, which was not only the Nazi collaboration, but the abuses of colonialism. Before, during, and after WWII, Camus maintained, albeit naively, that French and Algerian *autochtones* could live under French sovereignty if only France would exercise "liberté, egalité, fraternité" to everyone living on French territory. In his 1943 *Carnets*, just one year before his entries about the Nazi concentration camps, Camus admits "Algérie. Je ne sais pas si je me fais comprendre. Mais j'ai le même sentiment à revenir vers l'Algérie qu'à regarder le visage d'un enfant. Et pourtant, je sais que tout n'est pas pur" (2:1010).[176] After the French Resistance, Camus found himself wanting to defend France *and* Algeria journalistically, but ultimately, one of these battles had to suffer in silence. In

1947, the publication year of *La Peste*, Camus could not fight both. Yet he manages to give "voice" to them through silences, absence, historical references, and images in literature with the novel. For Camus, under the silences, France was indeed dusty and dirty.

When Rieux refuses his request, Rambert accuses him of living the plague in "abstraction" and runs away leaving the doctor alone under the Statue de la République (2:93).[177] While he believes what he has done has been morally upstanding, he realizes that Rambert had been right. The plague and its everyday horrors had become for him such an abstraction, he had ignored the emotional havoc, of individual people who had been separated from loved ones, whether by plague death or quarantine.[178] In a *Carnets* entry of 1947, Camus criticizes Christians for blindly condemning people without doubting their guilt. He writes: "C'est qu'ils sortent de l'abstraction et qu'ils se mettent en face de la figure ensanglantée qu'a prise l'histoire d'aujourd'hui" (2 :472).[179] For Rieux, the bloody faces and bodies of the plague have become nothing but facts and figures. Facts and figures, as with the 1871 example, are what have silenced voices and lives of those who have been oppressed by Nazism, communism, and colonialism.

Just before leaving the statue, Rieux express his wish: to be "conscient seulement de la difficile indifférence qui commençait à l'emplir, regardant toujours la porte d'hôtel où Rambert avait disparu" (2 :95).[180] Abd-el-Kader, the leader of the Algerian resistance and wrongly labeled hero of pro-French colonialism, wrote a book in exile that was translated into French in 1858 as *Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifférent.* Kader famously warned against indifference in political situations that call for action. Under the sullied statue representing the glory of French ideals that silences France's abuses of *autochtones* and turns them falsely into heroes after

defeating them, the voice of Kader speaks the truth. Indifference and abstraction on the part of the colonialists is what has hidden the bodies of *autochtones* under the dusty stones of the monument. As the plague worsens, Rieux confides to his friend Tarrou "Simplement, je suis toujours pas habitué à voir mourir. Je ne sais rien de plus. Mais après tout…' (2:121).[181]

The journalist's silence about *autochtones* and now about the plague epidemic altogether would seem to shut journalism down as a means of telling the complete story of political abuse and neglect. Yet Rambert's refusal to "abstract" leaves Rieux speechless. Rieux, who had appeared to be leading the noblest cause in the beginning, discovers, through the journalist, that he has also fallen into the worst trap of ideologies like communism, fascism, and colonialism: what begins as a desire to help humans becomes the same ideal that endangers the very survival of humans when it becomes abstraction. When allegory shows this silence as political erasure, it is Rieux's abstraction that becomes punishable. As the images of repressed history pass through this scene as references to silenced political abuse, Rieux is no longer in abstraction; even as a doctor, each individual dead body is much more than another number. Rather, it is once again, as suggested by the ellipses in "Mais après tout…", a political silence. In this scene, journalism and literature seem to work together, but eventually break apart. The journalist points out a truth at first about abstraction, it is the literary references to political erasure of human bodies that speaks a more complete truth about the silenced history. If the fictitious plague of 1871 is an allegory, then it is one of an indefinable, multifold absence.

IX

Le Monument aux Morts and les Camps pour les Indigènes

What would it take for journalism to tell a story of silence? Since his first meeting with Rieux, Rambert has come to an impasse in his journalistic writing because he is unable to tell a complete, true story. When the city is quarantined and it becomes impossible for information to cross borders, he claims to want to leave Oran because he misses his Parisian girlfriend.

Yet there is another way of looking at the journalist's need for escape. If he did write about the *autochtones*, his reports would only be read by those trapped inside the walls of the plague-stricken city. That is to say that if he was not telling the complete truth about health conditions, everyone would be able to refute him from within. If Paris read it, the inhabitants of the mother-country's capitol would believe him as a reliable eyewitness to an event that happened away from Europe. As if he had completely lost his ability to express himself and to be heard, he must attempt to flee Oran by breaking the law.

However, he would be committing an act of betrayal, not only against Algeria, but also against Camus' ideal of France; For Camus, Algeria *was* France in the sense that he believed that all people living in the colony should benefit from the rights of French citizenship, which never was the case. Later, during the beginning of the Algerian War, he defended himself against his pro-independence critics that Algeria should remain a part of France with the condition that the French extend full rights to *autochtones.* In a further effort to defend himself, he published all of his journalistic writing on Algeria in *Chroniques Algériennes 1939-1958* in 1958. Even more interesting, the article "La Grèce en haillons" in which he announces "le reste est

littérature" does not appear in this collection. As such, I would suggest that he defended himself with the journalism that only reports facts, the journalism that does not take account of the literary silence of suffering bodies. At the time of its publication it won him few supporters and, this time, it was Camus himself who was silenced by the politics of French communists and fellow-travelers, like Sartre, both who strongly backed Algerian independence. The resistance hero who had risked his life during a war with fascism had now fallen once again victim to communism. What would literature have been able tell his opponents that journalism could not?

Since Rieux will not help Rambert, the lovesick journalist turns to a Spanish clandestine network to get him out of Oran. He organizes a meeting with a certain "Gonzalès" at "Le monument aux morts d'Oran" which "se trouve sur le seul endroit où l'on peut apercevoir la mer, une sorte de promenade longeant, sur une assez courte distance, les falaises qui dominent le port."[182] Rambert is the first to arrive and while waiting for Gonzalès he "lisait avec attention la liste des morts au champ d'honneur" (2:139).[183]

Oran's real monument aux morts was dedicated to 12,500 soldiers from the region who lost their lives during World War I. Unlike the monument to the Battle of Sidi-Brahim, which was revised after Algerian independence, the monument aux morts was removed altogether and repatriated to Lyon in 1966 at the request of Pieds-Noirs who had fled back to France during the Algerian war. Today, on top of the monument aux morts pedestal, there is a ceramic structure that was offered by the King of Morocco, which is dedicated to the strength and union of independent North African countries. The fact that the WWI statue is no longer in Algeria would possibly mean that it bore no names of *autochtone* soldiers. It would seem to the French, erroneously, that no *autochtones* died during WWI, which may explain why they were

able to remove it. This monument transfer is also a movement towards hides a political reality. Historian Benjamin Stora reports the reality of that history: 25,000 Muslims died between 1914 and 1918 versus 22,000 Pied-Noirs.[184]

On a personal level for Camus, this monument could represent the absence of his father who died during WWI before his son could get a chance to know him. In the chapter entitled "Recherche du père," which appears in *Le Premier homme,* Camus' last novel, the narrator describes the trip that Jacques Cormery, the main character, takes a trip to the war cemetery where his father is buried in France:

> Pourtant ce qu'il avait cherché avidement à savoir à travers les livres et les êtres, il lui semblait maintenant que ce secret avait partie liée avec ce mort ce père cadet, avec ce qu'il avait été et ce qu'il était devenu, et que lui-même avait cherché bien loin ce qui était près de lui dans le temps et dans le sang. A vrai dire, il n'avait pas été aidé. Une famille où l'on parlait peu, où l'on lisait ni n'écrivait, une mère malheureuse et distraite, qui l'aurait renseigné sur ce jeune et pitoyable père ? Personne ne l'avait connu que sa mère qui l'avait oublié. Il en était sûr. Et il était mort inconnu sur cette terre où il était passé fugitivement, comme un inconnu (4 :755).[185]

Camus' father, a French- Algerian, proved loyal to his pure Frenchness by defending European France against the Germans. When Camus went to France to join the Resistance in WWII, it could be suggested that Camus attempted to repeat his absent father's call to duty. Yet it was impossible for Camus to separate himself from what constituted his homeland: a place, he always believed, where both the French *and* the *autochtones,* should have equal rights.

Before the massacres at Sétif and Guelma took place in 1945, Camus was conscious of the *autochtone* participation in French wars and the French willingness to

forget about it. In a *Combat* article of November 28, 1944, he writes about “le malaise produit chez les militaires algériens par l’ignorance et l’incompréhension qu’ils rencontrent dans le Métropole.”[186] This malaise, Camus believes, “semble venir du fait que les Français croient avoir affaire à une armée de métier et que certains d’entre eux se laissent quelquefois aller jusqu’à prononcer le mot de mercenaires.”[187] It is important that “Le sort de ces Africains du Nord, qu’ils soient français ou musulmans, mérite qu’on s’y attache“ because “Les troupes levées en Afrique du Nord n’ont pas cessé, pendant ces *deux guerres* et à des milliers de kilomètres de leur pays, de prendre la plus large part au combat commun. Et l’Algérie a toujours eu un juste sentiment de ce que la France lui devait sur ce point.”[188] The French in metropolitan France “seraient bien inspirées de se souvenir de cet état d’esprit” and should “les acceuillir comme ils le méritent avec une idée précise de ce qu’ils ont fait et de ce qu’ils font encore” (2 :572).[189] Finally Camus states that the French Resistance, the only force during WWII that is truly worthy of praise, would have no trouble recognizing these brave men:

> Aucun militant de la Résistance ne s’aviserait de traiter ces hommes avec légèreté. C’est que la Résistance a aujourd’hui l’expérience du courage et du sacrifice. Elle sait les reconnaître là où ils sont. Et nous pouvons témoigner que, s’il est un lieu où ils ont toujours été, c’est dans cette armée d’Afrique dont aucun Français ne doit ignorer le vrai visage (2 :573).[190]

French Resistance participants, the French who have the courage to uphold French republican ideals which have been “dirtied” by colonialism and collaboration, are the only ones who can truly understand the courage of North African soldiers in both the first and second world wars. One France, that of the Resistance and that of Camus himself, can see them. The other, the corrupt France, represented by Rambert’s brand

of unsatisfactory journalism, cannot. Camus, as a Resistance member in WWII, grasps not only his father's sacrifice, but also that of the *autochtone* soldiers.

Le monument aux morts is the only place in Oran where there is a full view of the sea, which is the Mediterranean, the sea that separates France from Algeria. This monument and its representation of bravery may be what join the motherland and her colony. The fact that Rambert reads the names of the dead while making a deal that would endanger the "resistance" against the plague that Rieux is forming makes his crime all the more reprehensible for Camus. Betraying the Algerians, both French and *autochtones*, by leaving for France would ultimately betray France and its resistance ideas as well.

After Rambert's meeting with Gonzalès, he joins Rieux at a bar. As in the other meetings between the doctor and the journalist, Rieux's presence challenges Rambert's impluse to be deceitful. "A une des tables qui occupaient le reste du local étroit où ils se tenaient," there was "un officier de marine, une femme à chaque bras," who "racontait à un gros interlocuteur congestionné une épidémie de typhus au Caire."[191] The officer tells a story of an epidemic in Cairo:

> Des camps, disait-il, on avait fait des camps pour les indigènes, avec des tentes pour les malades et, tout autour, un cordon de sentinelles qui tiraient sur la famille quand elle essayait d'apporter en fraude des remèdes de bonne femme. C'était dur, mais c'était juste (2:141).[192]

It is interesting to note that these indigène abuses do not happen within Algeria, but in Egypt. Yet isolation camps *do* exist in Oran and the description of them bears close resemblance to Nazi concentration camps. The narrator reports:

> Il y avait ainsi, dans la ville, plusieurs autres camps dont le narrateur, par scrupule et par manqué d'information directe, ne peut dire plus. Mais ce qu'il

> peut dire, c'est que l'existence de ces camps, l'odeur d'hommes qui en venait, les énormes voix des haut parleurs dans le crépuscule, le mystère des murs et la crainte de ces lieux réprouvés, pesaient lourdement sur le moral de nos concitoyens et ajoutaient encore au désarroi et au malaise de tous (2 :202).[193]

Perhaps it was also this same military officer who fought alongside *autochtones* in French wars and was willing to annihilate them once victory was achieved.

The officer's statement is a repetition of the blindness to the *autochtone* sacrifice within French-Algeria that the Monument aux morts erases. In addition, it repeats Rambert's own willing blindness as a journalist to the truth about the horrible health conditions of Arabs in Oran. Shortly after witnessing this scene, Rambert decides to join Rieux in his fight against the plague. He fights, not as a journalist, but as one whose job it is to literally save human bodies. If Camus' fight against political ideology is for the survival of the human body, then all journalism can do is fall silent in *La Peste.* Journalism functions like a betrayal of what Camus believes to be France at her best, a France that includes *autochtones.* To read *La Peste* as an allegory to one reference would repeat this same betrayal. For example, as Camus points out in "La Grèce en haillons" France wanted to project an image of the gentle colonizer in its press. However, it is impossible to see this image monolithically. When Camus investigates the living conditions in the celebrated Kablyie, he sees that what lies behind the image hardly corresponds. He shows us that the idea of "France" has multiple references.

X

The Body That Remains: The Silence of "Salut" in Stalinism versus "Santé" of Le Père Paneloux and Jean Tarrou

If literature can make audible the silence and silencing of erased victims in a way that journalism cannot, how can it give them a body? Thus far the allegorical references I have used have dealt with a memory of the erased dead. There is a vision of the death, but not a clear one of the bodies themselves. I would suggest that a further reading into the way communism enters into the allegory of the plague shows how the erased body survives – by simply living. Along with colonialism, Stalin's version of communism is one of the forgotten elements in the interpretations of the novel. Those who do make a mention of Camus' communism usually lump it together with an overarching theme of anti-totalitarianism that can be generally applied. Yet there are points in the book in which it is clear that communism could be the absent plague of the novel. It must be remembered that Camus was expelled from the party in 1937 precisely because he protested neglect of *autochtone* rights. Two exchanges – one between Rieux and Paneloux and the other between Rieux and Tarrou – reveal a fundamental element at the base of Camus' journalistic and literary concern about the suffering body.

A.Le Père Paneloux and His Silenced Prayer

In the fourth part of *La Peste,* Rieux, Tarrou, Le Père Paneloux, Grand, Castel, and Rambert witness the death of a child. This is one of the only instances in the book in which the narrator articulates, as if in slow motion and under a microscope, the way a plagued body dies. Thousands have died and disappeared in the statistics, but this scene works to give a face and a body to all of them.

The description of the child's death offers a counter-argument to Paneloux's view of the plague. Since the beginning of the epidemic, this militant Jesuit priest has blamed the plague on the sins of Oran's people. Like Rieux, when contemplating the then-mysterious disease that had begun to strike Oran, Paneloux goes through the history of the plague in his first sermon. He begins with biblical history: "La première fois que ce fléau apparaît dans l'histoire, c'est pour frapper les ennemis de Dieu. Pharaon s'oppose aux desseins éternels et la peste le fait alors tomber à genoux. Depuis le début de toute l'histoire, le fléau de Dieu met à ses pieds les orgueilleux et les aveugles" (2 :98).[194] He continues to cite the plagues in medieval Italy and in Abyssinia. Each example supports his conclusion that the plague brings salvation or "salut" in French. "Le temps n'est plus," he declares, "où des conseils, une main fraternelle étaient les moyens de vous pousser vers le bien. "[195] He concludes "C'est ici, mes frères, que se manifeste enfin la miséricorde divine qui a mis en toute chose le bien et le mal, la colère et la pitié, la peste et le salut. Ce fléau même qui vous meurtrit, il vous élève et vous montre la voie" (2 :100).[196] The plague means that human sacrifices will atone the city's sins.

When Paneloux mentions that it is no longer time for "une main fraternelle," he announces the exact opposite of what Camus says in his article on Kabylie. He

writes “C’est du pain, du blé, une main fraternelle qu’il faut tendre.” What must not be offered is the empty rhetoric of the colonialist press that claims that the French were helping the Kabyle people become better artisans or farmers. The Kabyle people needed food and medical care, not a false idea of themselves offered by the French. What is important to communicate to the outside world is the silence of their suffering bodies. Rieux believes the plague has nothing to do with salvation or “salut,” but with “santé,” or health. After battling the disease for months, the doctor concludes “non, la peste n’avait rien à voir avec les grandes images exaltantes qui avaient poursuivi le docteur Rieux au début de l’épidémie” (2 :158).[197] Rieux is no longer in abstraction; he has come to understand that, aside from the physical suffering of the body, the great cause of pain was that bodies were separated from other bodies that they loved. Physical separation was indeed “la grande souffrance de l’époque, la plus générale comme la plus profonde, était la séparation.”[198] He adds “Il serait plus exact de dire qu’au moral comme au physique, ils souffraient de décharnement” (2 :159).[199] Mentally and physically, they suffer from wasted flesh.

For Camus, Christianity and communism were both doctrines of injustice because they demand the sacrifice of the human body. And, it is this very idea in radical politics that makes individual bodies disappear. Already in 1935, while still in the party, he said that communism lacked a religious sense.[200] He felt there was no hope for a better future in the overly deterministic Marxist doctrine. Even though Christianity still demanded sacrifice, at least it still offered a glimmer of hope. In a speech to Dominican priests in 1948, after the publication of *La Peste* and when his condemnation of Stalinsim continued to escalate, he explains “Les chrétiens et les communistes me diront que leur optimisme est à plus longue portée, qu’il est supérieur à tout le reste et que Dieu ou l’histoire, selon le cas, sont les aboutissants

satisfaisants de leur dialectique."[201] He argues that "Si le christianisme est pessimiste quant à l'homme, il est optimiste quant à la destinée humaine, je suis optimiste quant à l'homme" (2:473).[202] In *L'Homme révolté*, his ultimate condemnation of Stalinism, for which Camus paid a great personal and professional price, he comes to the same conclusion: Christianity is only slightly better than Communism. At the time of writing *La Peste* in 1945, he writes in the *Carnets* "Le communisme est une suite logique du christianisme. C'est une histoire de chrétiens. Id. Au bout de deux mille ans de christianisme, la révolte du corps… Il reste à la lui redonner dans la philosophie et la métaphysique" (2 : 1042)[203]

I would suggest that the allegory of the plague is revolting against the erasure of the human body in Christianity, communism, as well as in Nazism and fascism. With these doctrines, the unnatural death of a body is not a catastrophe, but a necessity. Perhaps this is why Rieux needs to remind Rambert that "L'homme n'est pas une idée" (2:147).[204]

The child dying in the hospital debunks the abstraction of the human body not only in the case of the Oranian plague, but through all of history. The description of the child seems to compare him to clay, as in a monument that commemorates a historical event. The child's face is "figé dans une argile grise" as he opens his mouth and "il en sortit un seul cri continu, que la respiration nuançait à peine, et qui emplit soudain la salle d'une protestation monotone, discorde, et si peu humaine qu'elle semblait venir de tous les hommes à la fois"[205] Le Père Paneloux begins to pray as he "regarda cette bouche enfantine, souillée par la maladie, pleine de ce cri de tous les ages."[206] The child's cry appears to come from all humans who have suffered and died from something that priests or politicians have seen as necessary. With his cry, the child appears to awaken and give sound to these forgotten voices, voices that

silence Paneloux: “à l’autre bout de la pièce, précipita le rythme de sa plainte jusqu’à en faire, lui aussi, un vrai cri pendant que les autres gémissaient de plus en plus fort. Une marée de sanglots déferla dans la salle, couvrant la prière de Paneloux.” [207] The cries stop and then pick up again as the child breathes his last breath: “Autour de lui, les plaintes reprenaient, mais sourdement, et comme un écho lointain de cette lutte qui venait de s’achèver” (2 :183).[208] Paneloux’s prayer for “salvation” is drowned by the cries of suffering humans who have been perhaps silenced by Christianity, Communism, Nazism, and colonialism.

Rieux, unable to stand the scene any longer, goes outside of the hospital and sits on a bench. Paneloux comes out to join him. The priest tells Rieux that “peut-être devons-nous aimer ce que nous ne pouvons pas comprendre. ”[209] Rieux responds “Non, mon père…Je me fais une autre idée de l’amour. Et je refuserai jusqu’à la mort d’aimer cette création où des enfants sont torturés.” [210]Paneloux says that he thinks he understands what “grace” now means, but Rieux refuses to enter into religious language: “Je ne veux pas discuter cela avec vous. Nous travaillons ensemble pour quelque chose qui nous réunit au-délà des blapshèmes et des prières. Cela seul est important” (2 : 184).[211] Paneloux, again fails to understand. He affirms “Oui, dit-il, oui, vous aussi vous travaillez pour le salut de l’homme.”[212] Rieux corrects him once more “Le salut de l’homme est un trop grand mot pour moi. Je ne vais pas si loin. C’est sa santé qui m’intéresse, sa santé d’abord” (2 :185).[213] Paneloux’s prayer for salvation for victims is silenced by the victims’ cry to save their health, to save their lives by saving their bodies. They want to live, but the priest sees them as already dead.

Rieux echoes Camus in both his Kabylie article and his articles he writes in *Combat* about the concentration camps. These suffering people do not need to be

saved morally or politically; they need to be saved with the very basic tools of human survival: food and care given by a fraternal hand. It is through journalism that Camus stresses the importance of saving lives instead of saving ideology. It is through literature that the silenced victims of ideology speak through silence. Thus allegory is not only about erased death, it is also about revealing survival

B. Tarrou and the Silence of the Hibou Roux

Among the characters of the novel, the one that most closely resembles Rieux is Tarrou. Their complicity is sealed when they have a conversation in the fourth part of *La Peste* after Tarrou goes with Rieux to see an old Spanish asthmatic. During their discussion, Tarrou makes a confession. He tells Rieux that he has suffered from "la peste" long before this epidemic. "Mais," he says, "il y a des gens qui ne le savent pas, ou qui se trouvent bien dans cet état…Moi, j'ai toujours voulu en sortir" (2 : 204).[214] He describes a day he attended a trial with his father, a lawyer, of a guilty man whom he calls the "hibou roux," or the "red owl." He was horrified as he learned that his father argued for the death of the hibou roux and could not forget the guilty man's face. His father, who dons a long red robe at trial, looks like an evil Catholic cleric and Tarrou could no longer face him. Eventually he had to run away from home.

He continues to tell Rieux about his life after leaving his parents. Much like Camus, Tarrou is very poor, has worked many small jobs to keep himself fed and housed, and participated in politics. He chose this life because he did not want to become a "pestiféré," or someone who lets suffering overtake him because he does not take action against injustice. All the while, his project was to fight against the death penalty or "la condemnation à mort." However, in his travels as a revolutionary

throughout Europe, as Silone and Sperber did for the communists, he was told by leaders that “quelques morts étaient necessaries pour amener un monde où l’on ne tuerait plus personne.” [215] He hesitated, but in the end went along with the party line even though he could never forget the hibou roux. It was the day he witnessed an execution in Hungary when “le même vertige qui avait saisi l’enfant que j’étais a obscurci mes yeux d’homme” (2:207).[216]

Like the narrator with the dying child, Tarrou proceeds to tell, step by step, the details of a public execution:

> Savez-vous que le peloton des fusilleurs se place au contraire à un mètre cinquante du condamné ? Savez-vous que si le condamné faisait deux pas en avant, il heurterait les fusils avec sa poitrine ? Savez-vous qu’à cette courte distance, les fusilleurs concentrent leur tir sur la région du cœur et qu’à eux tous, avec leurs grosses balles, ils y font un trou où l’on pourrait mettre le poing ? Non, vous ne le savez pas parce que ce sont là des détails dont on ne parle pas. Le sommeil des hommes est plus sacré que la vie pour les péstiférés.[217]

Tarrou thought he had been fighting againt being a pestiféré, but he realizes he had “indirectement souscrit à la mort de milliers d’hommes” and that he had “même provoqué cette mort en trouvant bons les actions et les principes qui l’avaient fatalement entraîné.” [218] When he expressed this concern to other members of the party, they give him “impressive” reasons why some must be killed. He says “Ils me faisaient remarquer que la bonne manière de donner raison aux robes rouges était de leur laisser l’exclusivité de la condamnation.”[219] It is difficult to ignore both the Catholic and the communist aspect of his father’s red robe in light of the fact that, for Camus, Christianity and Communism always seem to go together. Tarrou sums up

the way they have abused logic: “Il me semble que l’histoire m’a donné raison, aujourd’hui c’est à qui tuera le plus. Ils sont tous dans la fureur du meurtre, et ils ne peuvent pas faire autrement.”[220]

Just as Camus seems to know that the objective style of journalism is incapable of expressing political truth during colonialism and Nazism, Tarrou knows logic no longer remains an option for his own arguments. The narrator explains:

> Mais il vient toujours une heure d’histoire où celui qui ose dire que deux et deux font quatre est puni de mort. Et la question n’est pas de savoir quelle est la récompense ou la punition qui attend ce raisonnement. La question est de savoir si deux et deux, oui ou non, font quatre. Pour ceux de nos concitoyens qui risquaient alors leur vie, ils avaient à décider si, oui ou non, ils étaient dans la peste et si, oui ou non, il fallait lutter contre elle (2 :208).[221]

With the plague, along with totalitarian governments such as Stalinism and Nazism, the definition of “fact ” changes. With Stalin and Hitler, it became logical to kill anyone one who was rumored to be against the regime. Just as Camus points to a literature of silence when writing about political crimes journalistically, Tarrou suggests, that, in order to get at the truth of political murder, reasoning must be done otherwise. He says “Mon affaire à moi, en tout cas, ce n’était pas le raisonnement. C’était le hibou roux…le trou rouge dans la poitrine.” [222] The hibou roux and the hole in the chest are not part of a chain in a logical, political argument. They are evocative, *literary* descriptions which contain the silence of an erased fact of murder. He must keep the two *physical* elements – the hole in the chest and the hibou roux - alive in his memory in order to ensure that they are not forgotten. In fact, Tarrou survives the murderous ideology precisely because he has kept these two literary memories of the suffering human body alive in his mind. The hibou roux and the hole are the reasons

why he left militant politics. Near the end of his confession, echoing Camus in his journalistic article, “La Grèce en haillons,” he confirms “Le reste, la santé, l’intégrité, la pureté, si vous voulez, c’est un effet de la volonté et d’une volonté qui ne doit jamais s’arrêter” (2:209).[223] If we replaced “reste” in this quotation with “literature” it would be included, as Tarrou suggests, among some of the basic needs for the survival and care of victims of political violence. For Tarrou, holding on to what is literary of his political experience, helped him put humans before ideas.

XI.

Conclusion: Allegory in Ruins

Je crois à la justice, mais je défendrai ma mère avant la justice.

-Albert Camus

Albert Camus won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. While in Sweden, he gave a lecture to a group of students at a University in Stockholm. The Algerian conflict was well underway. While his international reputation has been sealed, he was becoming more and more isolated from France. As Heme van der Poel comments, “neither his anti-communism nor his refusal to back the cause for Algerian nationalism made him unpopular with those that set the tone in Parisian intellectual circles at that time” (22). When a young Algerian nationalist challenged him on his position on Algeria, he famouly responded: “Je crois à la justice, mais je défendrai ma mère avant la justice” (4 :).[224] He would save his mother’s life, *her body,* before an ideal that advocated necessary violence.

It is precisely Camus' mother's body which best represents the way that allegory works in *La Peste* and in his journalism. Camus' struggle against fascism and communism put him, at different points in his life, in something like the political abyss for victims of these ideologies. While he certainly did not undergo the misery of the *autochtones* or the Jews, his status as political outsider at a time when politics dominated all aspects of intellectual and cultural life, made him suffer. It is from his in-between place of having no political place that Camus was able to gain a better understanding of those who were truly victimized by authoritarian regimes and erased from the political world. This understanding was not of the abstract consequences, but of concrete ones – the abuse and death of human bodies. What he says about his mother highlights Camus' own personal, complicated engagement with politics. Like journalism, he states a fact - he does not want to lose the ones he loves for any cause. However, looking at his mother and her body as a political allegory brings us back to the question of literature. By bringing his mother into the public, political space in Sweden, she becomes a voice of innocent bloodshed to no identifiable political cause, neither French, nor Algerian. Madame Camus, who had come to Algeria as a child, lived in extreme poverty and was a deaf-mute. Never having ventured outside of her neighborhood in Algiers and probably never having inflicted abuse on anyone, she too would become a victim of war.

Indeed, it would appear that the only way to speak simultaneously of French abuses in Algeria and in France during the periods of fascist and communist influence for Camus was through allegory. As seen through the examples of 1871 or l'hibou roux, *La Peste* is not only an allegory to the French Resistance and its fight against Nazism; it is an allegory of what was left out in the French official narrative of this fight: the abusive history of *autochtones* in Algeria, France's rejection of its déportés,

and the dangers of Stalinism. If *La Peste* is an allegory, it is an allegory of two relations to silence – journalistic and literary - and the impossibility of making a bridge between them. It first appears that literature would be this bridge that provides the way to express what cannot be said in journalism. Yet *La Peste* is not an allegorical bridge that lets Camus go from a journalistic concern to a literary one. The human suffering Camus witnessed in Kabylie presented a block for the journalist. He claimed these people simply needed care and a fraternal hand, but other reports on the region seemed incapable of rendering this simple truth. He understood that he needed another way to capture the inexpressibility of physical misery – through literature. However, this literary need never materialized until 1944, but it was, once again, in the form of journalism. The way he wrote about the déportés returning from the camps closely resembled the way he discussed *autochtones* five years prior. In both cases, he was outraged at the public and political neglect of what he saw as the most glaring element of these political crimes – the dying and suffering bodies. As he explained, the state of the returning bodies was enough to shock witnesses into disbelieving silence. Yet it is the double silence – the victims' inability to talk because of a weakened physical state and the political silencing of these victims – that appears to be for Camus the most essential element of bearing witness to these catastrophes. However, it is an element that journalism cannot embrace.

It might seem, then, that allegory would be the best way to put this inexpressible truth into an almost-tangible story. Rats and the plague epidemic would make this horrible event of history more comprehensible, especially in trying to convey physical suffering. Yet this allegory does not quite lead to a more rational, intellectual understanding of why and how this suffering occurred. Rather, the

allegory doubles back on itself; the physicality of the rats and plague victims brings us back to the universal physicality of human suffering. It brings us back to silence.

This conception of allegory is like an allegory to journalism's failure for Camus. His attempt to perhaps rewrite what he observed in Kabylie in *Combat* ended up at the same stopping point. If this allegory was truly a bridge between journalism and literature, there may be new insights into the workings of abusive politics, especially in regard to how mass murder becomes an essential political tool. What Camus perhaps demonstrates is, as Tarrou says, that there is no possibility for intellectual or rational understanding. In *La Peste,* at each mention of a seemingly concrete historical event, or of a monument that commemorates it, the reference breaks down and more dead, suffering bodies emerge. Yet there is also an emergence of life. The fact that these silences exist testify to the fact that something remains of these victims. Their voices are captured literarily by characters like Tarrou and Rieux, through imagery, and through enigmatic references to history. Dr. Rieux's attempt to save lives is at the same time Camus' effort to give at least a voice to people who have died silently in similar circumstances.

In fact, this silenced history *survives* through another conception of history altogether. As with Silone, Camus provides access to what the archival history, the history of official documents, has silenced, a silence in which political abuses should have been recorded. Camus adds, however, another mode of recording this same kind of archival history with journalism and with literature. The failure of journalism to account for this silence is also a failure of a notion of literature that wants to assign reference to silence. In *La Peste,* the relationship between these two forms of referential writing does not result in a bridge, but a break. It would seem that if journalism fails, then this kind of referential literature fails too. Yet it is precisely

because another kind of literature *does not fail* in *La Peste* that allegory to a precise reference collapses. The allegorical bridge between journalism and a referential literature may appear to be in ruins, but it is important to understand that *La Peste* has carefully preserved these ruins so we can see crumbling holes when confronting the political past. These holes, or silences, contain the voices that have suffered in silence while the ideals of absolute power have tried to construct a story of national identity around them. They do not speak with words, but through images and enigmas. Camus' collapse of allegory does not just bear witness to hidden events or victims, but, through this particular destruction of allegory as metaphor, it also allows both *a fragility* and *a strength* to appear when events are faced with their own erasure. Victims, even if they have been abused, can still have the strength of a voice. As such, he makes the case that there is a special political truth only available through literature. Neither history nor journalism or literature is confined to concrete, archived references. By reading silence as bodies that *could speak,* even in the face of their own annihilation, we have, precisely, an access to their voices, which, without literature, will remain inaudible to history.

Chapter Three

Manès Sperber and the End of Austrian Galicia. The Messianic Collapse of Memoir and Literature

I

Introduction: A Tear Torn from the Ocean

Manès Sperber's trilogy, *Wie eine Träne im Ozean*, is a journey into the darkest moments of twentieth century Europe. Its three volumes, *Der verbrannte Dornbusch, Tierfer als der Abgrund,* and *Die verlorene Bucht* spare nothing as they course through the events, places, and ideas that marked the years 1931-1945 in Europe.[225] Sperber, like Camus and Silone, has a specific relation to a complex political history that interweaves the two totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, Stalinism and Nazism. He could not exist as a communist when he learned of the barbaric practices of Stalin in 1937. When he went to France to escape Hitler, he was targeted for being a Jew and an ex-communist as the Nazis took over the northern part of the country and the Vichy Regime established its rule in the south. Instead of facing deportation to the Nazi death camps in the east, he was able, with the help of his good friend André Malraux, to spend the rest of the war in the Swiss refugee camp, Gierenbad. With little to eat and suffering from untreated, bleeding stomach ulcers, Sperber seemed to exist in an abyss between fascism and Stalinism. It was from this abyss that he began writing the trilogy, *Wie eine Träne im Ozean*. It was the first time in his life that he had written literature.

Sperber recorded his experience as a victim of betryal by political regimes not as a memoir, but as fiction. The trilogy's cast of over fifty characters constantly faces various kinds of danger, political ideology, murder, imprisonment, deportation,

betrayal, and torture over the course of fifteen years of history. The many examples include the Night of the Long Knives, Red Vienna, the Moscow Show Trials, the 1938 Munich Pact, the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, the annexation of Austria, the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, the invasion of Poland, the outbreak of WWII, the Spanish Civil War, the defeat of France in 1940, the Vichy Regime, Mussolini's Italy, Tito's Yugoslavia, Auschwitz, the exodus of Jews to Palestine and North America, Marxism, fascism, and Zionism. Perhaps what is most striking about this book is the source of its information: the author himself. Sperber needed to do no extra research to write this massive work about this history because he had experienced it – all of it – by the age of thirty-five. When the final volume was published in France in 1953, Arthur Koestler praised the monumental autobiographical and historical scope of what critics like Robert Kemp called "une Iliade communiste" (qtd. in Manoni, 245).[226] In *Le Figaro littéraire,* Koestler writes

> Voilà qu'une nouvelle voix s'ajoute à la nôtre, forte, intelligente et pure…La qualité unique de ce livre dérive du fait que son auteur est européen de l'Est par origine, psychanalyste par protection, qu'il a été communiste pendant dix ans par passion et conviction, et virtuose de la dialectique funambulesque hégélo-marxiste…Bref, c'est le roman-saga du Komintern, et le premier. Donc, un événement capital (244).[227]

It would seem that the most important quality of the trilogy is indeed its remarkable bringing together of so many diverse personal and historical experiences of betrayal in only one work. This is why it appears odd that Sperber wanted to publish a portion of the trilogy as a separate novella altogether. In 1952, "…qu'une larme dans l'océan," which is the French title of the penultimate section of the third volume, *Die verlorene Bucht* was published in France with an introduction by André

Malraux. What seems so strange about this particular portion is that, in a work that has been called an "Iliade communiste," it does not make one mention of communism. Instead, it is the story of a Jewish shtetl called Wolyna, modeled after Sperber's own native shtetl in Galicia, Zablotow, which is destroyed by the Nazis. One of the main characters of the trilogy, Viennese biologist Edi Rubin, goes to Wolyna and leads the Jews in a failed resistance attempt against the Nazis. While there, he meets a young miracle-worker, rabbi Bynie, who inspires him to leave for Palestine and begin a new life. In his introduction to "…qu'une larme dans l'océan," Malraux calls it "un des hauts récits d'Israël" (35).[228] "…Qu'une larme dans l'océan" was the high point of Sperber's literary career. Lauded because it was one of "the most artistically successful parts," of the trilogy according to Allan Reid, the novella was even turned into a film by French director Henri Glaeser in 1973. The trilogy as a whole gave him fame as *a witness to politics and history,* but it seems that by separating this particular story from the trilogy he earned more fame as a *writer of literature.*

When asked by a French journalist why he had decided to separate "…Qu'une larme l'océan," he answers:

> C'est Malraux qui a eu l'idée de la publier à part et d'ajourner d'un an la parution de la Baie perdue dont …Qu'une larme dans l'océan fait partie. J'ai accepté pour trois raisons. D'abord parce que Malraux suggéra de le publier à part avec une préface qu'il écrirait…Malraux est mon plus ancien ami en France… Ensuite, il me semblait alors important, six ans après la fin de la guerre et du génocide, de mettre en avant le destin des miens. Et je pense encore aujourd'hui que cela peut intéresser tout ce qui se penche sur la plus grande catastrophe morale: le génocide perpétré au cœur d'une Europe de haute civilisation. Enfin, troisième raison, ce récit a un caractère différent du

> reste de la trilogie…Les héros ne sont pas des philosophes de l'histoire pratiquants, ils sont des hommes pour qui le destin du monde, celui de chaque individu…est déterminé par une volonté divine ("…Qu'une larme," 13-14).[229]

While he is praised for the literary, artistic quality of the novella, Sperber's own reasons, as indicated in the above citation, for this separation are much different. He does not seem interested in the literary or artistic merit of "…Q'une larme dans l'océan," but in its ability to show something about a friendship between writers. It was not his own idea, but that of his good friend Malraux. In addition, he wants to show his solidarity with the tragedy of his own Jewish people by highlighting the only part of the trilogy in which the subject is the Jewish religion instead of politics.

What would have happened if Malraux had never suggested that Sperber publish "…Qu'une larme dans l'océan" as its own novella? What if this separation actually *further separated* Sperber from telling the story of his own people? I should like to postulate that it was never Sperber's intention to create a novella from part of his trilogy; it was Malraux's idea. Compared to Malraux, Sperber was a little-known writer in France, his adopted home country after the war. By publishing a work with an introduction by internationally-known Malraux, I suggest, Sperber was assured of recognition in Paris, a city whose cultural community was dominated by communist and communist-sympathizers in the early 1950s. By removing the anti-communist parts of the trilogy and illuminating the non-political, religious part, Sperber's identity was no longer linked to anti-communism, but to the cause of the anti-Nazis. In a France recovering from WWII, this classification connected him to those who were important voices on the cultural scene.

In this same interview, Sperber makes references to an event in his life that he says, he has always been unable to separate from his writing: the destruction of his

shtetl, Zablotow, in Austrian Galicia, during WWI. Interestingly, WWI is always linked to Sperber's Judaism in the rest of the trilogy. He confesses, "Mais, pour en revenir à la guerre, je voudrais insister sur le rôle fondamental qu'elle a joué dans ma vie. J'ai vécu la guerre dans l'immédiat en confrontant cette expérience à l'enseignement biblique " (8).[230] WWI, one of the most fundamental influences on Sperber's life and one that ties him to relgion, does not appear in " …qu'une larme dans l'océan."

On one level, it seems that Sperber's reason for publishing this portion apart from the rest of his trilogy are completely clear. On another level, however, there appears to be a more complex reason. By taking out "…qu'une larme dans l'océan," he removes not only the painful memory of WWI, but also the painful double betrayal - by both communism and fascism- that makes his trilogy so unique. If the other parts of *Wie eine Träne im Ozean* had not been published, his criticism of communism would have gone unnoticed. The critical acclaim he received as a literary writer with "…qu'une larme dans l'océan" comes from the fact the communist parts of the trilogy have been left out. What is extracted from the trilogy is its ability to bear witness to the numerous aspects of a history, including the Holocaust, that Sperber could not express through other non-fictional modes of writing. Before writing the trilogy, he had already published several articles and essays about his mistrust of both forms of totalitarianism, but this story seemed to demand another medium.

I would suggest that highlighting only one portion of his trilogy, "…qu'une larme dans l'océan," does not, as Malraux says, capture "le son le plus profond de son âme" (35).[231] Instead, it cancels out what I see as the essential function of his trilogy as a whole: to bring together all the elements of Sperber's life in order to show a complete picture of how history and politics have betrayed him at each level of his

existence, from a Jewish childhood ripped away by WWI to the Holocaust. The trilogy, as an expression of living in a political abyss between communism and fascism, is not only the site for talking about politics, but also for talking about Judaism.

In this chapter, I will argue that in the first volume of Sperber's autobiographal trilogy, *All das Vergangene, Die Wasserträger Gottes,* published in 1974, and in his fictional trilogy, *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* WWI and the Holocaust represent betrayals that, in two works that are almost exclusively dedicated to political betrayal, serve as a break from politics. I will suggest, specifically, that the portrayal of two events, WWI and the Holocaust, involve a *collapse of parameters* in both the literary and autobiographical narratives.[232] In *Die Wasserträger Gottes* the intrusion of literary language constitutes a *collapse of style* in Sperber's autobiographical writing. In writing "…wie eine Träne im Ozean," the penultimate section of *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* Sperber allows a religious story to intrude and collapses the parameters of the rest of the fictional trilogy, which is a story with a political message. The presence of these sections that are different from the rest might allow us to understand what lies at the core of living within a political abyss between Stalinism and fascism. They are also central to a new kind of Jewish messianism, a messiansim of *radical inclusion*.

II

Tolerance and Violence: A Brief History of Austrian Galicia and the Shtetls

A brief history of Galicia is necessary to understand Sperber's engagement with history in his work. Just as the author evokes his shtetl in various forms throughout his writing, Galicia has had to reinvent itself politically, culturally, and

geographically several times over the course of its history. Sperber grew up in Austrian Galicia, which made up part the Hapsburg Monarchy between 1772 and 1918. However, it did not begin with this inclusion. Galicia came into being in 980 as part of Kievan Rus' and identified itself with Orthodox or Eastern Christian culture. This started to change in the 1340s when it was invaded by Poland, Hungary, and Lithuania. In 1387 Poland annexed it and the region adopted the Polish language, its culture, and Roman Catholicism (Magosci, 3).

By the time Austria took over the province, Galicia's towns were populated by a diversity of religious and ethnic groups living side by side, including Armenians, Germans, Hungarians, Russians, Poles, Ruthenians/Ukrainians, Greek and Roman Catholics, and Jews. Numerically, the Poles, the Ruthenians, and the Jews were the most important groups[233]. The monarchy sought to assimilate all of these under its rule while still allowing them to remain culturally and religiously independent. Sperber explains the Jews' relationship with the Ruthenians in *Die Wasserträger Gottes*:

> Doch auβerdem und trotz allem gab es viele, wenn auch nicht immer leicht erkennbare Bande, die die Juden des Städtchens und die Ruthenen verbanden. So unähnlich sie einander auch waren, die Armut der einen wie der anderen unde die technishce Zurückgebliebenheit, die ihnen gemeinsam war, und schlieβlich der zwar verschiednene, aber gleichermaβen tiefe, alles durchdringende Gottesglaube brachte si einander näher, als der Fremd es je vermuten konnte (72).[234]

As historian Larry Wolff writes, "Hapsburg imperial rule in Galicia, as in other provinces of the Monarchy, sought the transcendence of national differences, and the provincial idea of Galicia remained fundamentally non-national" (6).

While some Jews transformed themselves into Hapsburg subjects and could participate fully in society, Hasidism rejected assimilation. Shtetls were small towns mainly composed of Orthodox Jews that flourished despite repeated invasions and battles taking place around them. As Omer Bartov writes, "Shabateanism, …Hasidism, Haskala (Englightenment) and, finally, Zionism flourished there among the Jews…Galicia was the …the land of great rabbis and yeshivot (religious colleges), of miraculous tales and vibrant community life" (6). During this period, the number of Galicia's Jews increased by more than sixfold, which was in part due to a steady influx of refugees fleeing Imperial Russia, where pogroms began in the 1880s. They were dominant in most of the Galician cities, which had allowed them to take over large sectors of the economy, in particular trade and small-scale retail sales, and maintained an extraordinarily creative religious and cultural life (Magosci, 11).

However, Wolff also argues that this idea of the "non-national" "was just as much of an ideological construct as the national – alternative perspectives in conceptual tension with one another" (7). Despite the prominence of some, most of the Galician Jews were extremely poor, but this did not prevent the Polish and Ruthenian/Ukrainian populations from blaming them for the bulk of their own severe economic problems (Mogsci, 11). Sperber says

> Die Ruthenen haβten die polnischen Grafen und Barone und die österreichische Beamtenschaft, die in Ostgalizien fast ausschieβlich polnisch war, und sie verabscheuten die Juden, die Jesum Christum gekreuzigt hatten, und haβten sie, weil si sich von ihnen auf den Wochenmärkten listig übervorteilt glaubten…Nein, die Beziehung zwischen ihnen und uns war keineswegs einfach. Wir vermuteten, daβ sie, wären sie im Zarenreich, bei Pogromen eifrigst mitmachen würden, dennoch brachten wir für sie veil mehr

> Sympathie auf als für die Polen, die in der Verwaltung und der Justiz eine monopolistische Position innehatten.[235]

Tensions between these three "nations" escalated. In fact, Austrian Galicia became the launching pad towards self-determination for both the Ruthenians and the Poles as the Empire allowed them a great deal of autonomy. In Galicia, the Poles were divided into two groups: members of the nobility and the rest, a mass of starving peasants. To close this gap, Polish nationalist movements arose and the Monarchy encouraged the Galician Poles, who were Roman Catholics, to work toward a new Polish State. Meanwhile, the Hapsburg Empire also became concerned with growing Polish demands for more control. As a result, the Empire, paradoxically, also began to support the Ruthenians, Greek Catholics, and to recognize them as their own nationalities. Hence, during WWI, Galicia served as a battlefield not only for competing empires, but also for the Poles and Ruthenians. A few Jews joined the Austrian army, but most died as a result of the war that was fought around them. Throughout the history of Galicia, most Jews wanted to stay where they were and joined socialist and labor groups to try to create social change for all of the unfortunate. Others thought the only solution was to move to Palestine (Mogsci, 11).

Austrian Galicia collapsed at the end of the war in 1918 along with the Hapsburg Monarchy, and Galicia was eventually turned over to Polish hands.[236] Under Polish rule, Jews and Ruthenians were allowed to play no part in the reunited Polish nation and were continually persecuted and repressed. In 1939, when Germany and the Soviet Union invaded and destroyed Poland, Galicia was annexed to Germany until 1944 when the Soviets took over power. From this point on, until the break-up of the Soviet Union, the province was ruled by an oppressive Moscow-led communist regime (5). By 1989, there were hardly any Jews left. They had either been

exterminated during the Holocaust or had fled to the United States and Israel. Galicia, as a unique multicultural region, had disappeared. The region once known by that name lies between the modern states of Poland and Ukraine. Today, Zablotow is part of Ukraine, now Zabolotiv.

It is against this historical backdrop of compromised identities, political betrayal, and ethnic persecution that Sperber tells and retells his story of his childhood home. An ambivalent bond with Zablotow permeates the fictional and autobiographical narratives of political betrayal. I will argue that it is precisely the retelling that points not only to the complexity of Zablotow's destruction, but also that of Sperber's literary project.

III

Variations on Violence: Three Tellings

The story of Zablotow's destruction appears at least three different times over the course of Sperber's trilogy and autobiography. In order to situate the stories within the history of Galicia, I will give a brief plot summary of each.

The first appearance of the Wolyna/Zablatow story comes near the end of the first tome of the trilogy, *Der verbrannte Dornbusch.* Edi Rubin, a famous Austrian "Jewish atheist" biologist, is marching from Vienna in a group of thirty soldiers. As socialists, they have just lost the fight for Red Vienna during the February uprising of 1934.[237] One of the men, a Ruthenian peasant named Hans, has been severely injured and he urges the rest to continue on without him to save their own lives. He gives his shoes to Edi and asks him to go to Prague to give papers to a woman on which he has written notes about the battle. He lies down in a foxhole and prepares to die. As promised, Edi goes to Prague and visits the woman who turns out to be Hans' ex-wife,

to tell her that he died. However, this does not seem to be the only reason that he makes the voyage. Edi, who felt close to Hans, also feels compelled to ask the woman to tell him the story of his dead comrade's life. Hans' real Ruthenian name is Hawrylo and he and his ex-wife had been childhood sweethearts while growing up in a village located in Austrian Galicia. Due to the injustices he witnessed in the village, Hawrylo decided to become a militant communist, traveling all over the world to fight for partisans. However, he returned to the village many times, even witnessing its partial destruction during WWI. Finally, he left the party and then later joined the Socialists fighting for Red Vienna. At the end, Hawrylo/Hans' ex-wife admits that his politics had torn her life into "Fragmenten" (285).[238]

The second telling of the story occurs in the penultimate section of the trilogy's third volume, *Die verlorene Bucht.* It takes place during WWII when Zabolotow/Wolyna is under German occupation. It begins with Roman Skarbek, a catholic Polish count, who returns to his castle in Poland to help rid his country of the Germans. Unexpectedly, Edi Rubin appears on a horse and Skarbek sees him heading for Wolyna, the Jewish shtetl nearby. Just having witnessed the mass extermination of Jews, including his wife and children, at a camp, Edi begs the rabbi, Zaddik, to incite his people to resist the fast approach of the Germans. The obviously over-fed rabbi, who lives in the only heated house in the village, refuses, telling Edi that they will wait patiently for God's decision about their fate, even if they are killed. Meanwhile, they will do everything they can to cooperate with the Germans and the anti-Semitic Polish peasants living next door. However, Bynie, the rabbi's teenage son, who disagrees with his father's religious, deterministic view of history. He believes in Hegel's dialectic and even sleeps with the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* under his pillow. By joining forces with Edi and twenty-eight other Jews at Skarbek's

castle where they will help the peasants in fighting the Germans, Bynie enacts a Hegelian antithesis to his father's passivity. They defeat the Germans, but the peasants decide to kill the remaining armed Jews for fear that they might be attacked. Edi and Bynie survive the massacre, but are badly wounded. Skarbek takes them to his aunt's monastery and Edi heals, but Bynie starts to die. During the twenty-three days before his death, Bynie seems to arrive at a Hegelian synthesis. He proclaims himself the new rabbi of Wolyna starts performing miracles for the peasants. When Bynie dies, it indeed seems that he has transformed history in a small way. The monastery nuns and the anti-Semitic Poles and Ruthenians want to turn Bynie's funeral into a great celebration of the young rabbi. The Hegelian dialectic plays out in a very Jewish way. Edi, however, opposes this ceremonious burial and leaves after the funeral only to experience more destructive violence against the Jews. He travels to Warsaw and witnesses the final suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. From there, he goes on to Palestine. It is suggested that he may have started to believe in God.

In his autobiographical *Die Wasserträger Gottes,* Sperber describes his childhood growing up in his shtetl, his family's flight from it, and the first few years in Vienna. One night in 1915 during WWI, both Austrian and Russian forces bombard the village. All of the inhabitants have to go down to their basements with little food or water, and they stay there for days. One morning, Sperber secretly follows his teacher, who leaves the basement to find food and medicine. When he finally catches up with him in a Jewish cemetery, a battle begins and they have to hide behind tombstones to escape heavy shelling. As a Russian soldier is crossing the cemetery on his horse, he is hit by cannon fire. He and his horse are torn to shreds, and bits of intestines, flesh, and blood rain down on Sperber. He and his teacher run through the battle and finally make it back to the basement. On the way, he witnesses soldiers and

their horses being killed with rifles, bayonets, and grenades. Sperber claims he was never the same again and that it was from this point on that he could only see the world through “Stückwerk”.[239] After this episode and his arrival in Vienna, he attempts to put the pieces of his life together by joining the radical youth Zionist movement, Haschomer Hazair, and then moving on to communism.

These three tellings, as seen through two literary examples and an autobiographical one, revolve around a figure of violence and raise the question of why this figure keeps on appearing throughout the different genres of Sperber’s writing.

IV

Folding and Unfolding: Mysterious Characters and Rehearsed Stories

In *Die Wasserträger Gottes,* Sperber writes “Alles, was ist, mag lange bestehen oder schnell zugrundegehen; aber manches von dem, was ist, bedeutet weit mehr, als es zu sein scheint, weil es zusammengerollt oder verfältelt ist” (92).[240] As the author indicates when talking about his real town’s long tradition of carpet weaving, there is a story circulating throughout the trilogy about a wounding experience that cannot be completely inscribed within the literary trilogy. It would appear that this story is about human downfall and destruction caused by militant communist politics or Nazism. In *Die Wasserträger Gottes,* it might be easy to say that Sperber, who we may want to assume *is* Edi Rubin, gives us the real references to the fictional experiences about war and politics. However, the way in which Sperber presents the episodes of the various destructions of a Galician village during WWI and the Holocaust, reveals that in his autobiography and in fiction, neither genre seems able to give a precise reference point for the three tellings of the story. Within

Sperber's works we repeatedly encounter characters who fall outside the parameters of autobiographical writing and of fiction that is essentially about politics. With each appearance of these characters and the events, another element *unfolds* about them so that they undergo a gradual transformation over the course of Sperber's writing. I suggest that the way *the story folds and unfolds* – fictionally and autobiographically - takes both narratives beyond simple autobiography or political description.

<u>A. Mysterious Characters</u>

Throughout the entire trilogy there are only a few main characters, such as Edi Rubin and Doino Faber, who make it through to the end of the last volume, *Die verlorene Bucht.* When *Der verbrannte Dornbusch* begins, Edi, an atheist and a Socialist, "konnte also gedulgig sein, warten" (30).[241] Instead of interrupting, he always sits in silence because "Er hatte es in der Gewohnheit, Experimente bis zum Ende zu verfolgen," (31).[242] However, as the story progresses, Edi becomes more engaged with politics, clandestinely traveling between European countries to join resistance movements against fascism. By the end of *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* he has become a fierce fighter and decides to move to Palestine after he loses his wife, who was not Jewish, and his children in an extermination camp.

Most of the other at least fifty characters do not reflect Edi's evolution. Like extras in a film, they materialize briefly and then either die a violent death or completely disappear from the story with no explanation. When they do appear, Sperber gives a quick description of them so that we have no questions about their motives. However, they vanish from the story and may not surface again for several chapters or we may not even see them until the next volume of the trilogy. While some critics, such as Robert Kemp, praise this technique, others, like Roger Stéphane

criticize it. In the literary journal, *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, Kemps calls the trilogy "un livre extraordinaire" and affirms that "les personnages du drame ont un relief admirable" (qtd. in Manoni, 244). [243] Roger Stéphane, in *La Nef,* writes "M. Sperber a dû beaucoup hésiter avant de choisir sa technique. Mais, l'ayant choisie, il l'a réalisée avec application. [Il] ne nous fait grâce de rien. Dès qu'un personnage apparaît dans son livre, il nous raconte toute sa vie" (246). [244] Perhaps part of Stéphane's frustration comes from how difficult it is to keep track of all the characters because many, like Hans/Hawrylo, in order to protect their identity as communists, other militants, or Jews, have to go by more than one name. Yet Stéphane seems to ignore the appropriateness of Sperber's technique. At times it seems that it *is* only the characters' names that vanish; characters with similar traits and beliefs, but with different names, always surface again. It could be said that this phenomenon mirrors the party's practice of seeing its members as puppets living only in service of Stalinist ideology. Caught up in the party's annihilation machine, they are just as expendable as they are reproducible. In *Der verbrannte Dornbusch,* Sperber explains, "Doch man lebte, also lebte die Partei. Und die starb nicht mit denen, in denen sie lebte. Denn es gab immer neue. Herbert Sönneckes Aufgabe war es, dafür daβ es sie gab" (177).[245]

Indeed, it is clear to see that each appearance of these minor characters serves a specific function. For example, Voyko Brancovic and Miroslav Slipic exist for three pages and their task is to take part in a communist show trial. Bruno Liner and Comrade Flamm take part in a planned uprising and then are killed. Classen and Stoerte are party mouthpieces and after they say a few words, they disappear. However, while they are fleeting, they do not disrupt the narrative. In fact, they only add to the epic-like quality of the two texts. As in *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, there seems to be no end to battles, death, and creation of characters. As Kemp observed, it

is “le chant désespéré de ceux dont toutes les attentes ont été trompées, et qui ne veulent pas adorer les cendres du buisson de vie…Disons une sorte de poème épique; une Iliade communiste” (qtd. in Manoni, 244-245).[246]

However, both Hans/Hawrylo and Bynie are minor characters whose functions are much more difficult to explain. In fact, they take on mysterious qualities as soon as Edi comes into contact with them. Even though he has not met either Bynie or Hans, he is overcome by the feeling that he knows them well. He fights alongside Hans for a short time and becomes devastated by his comrade’s death. It seems to him “Edi schien es, noch nie wäre ihm ein Mann so nahe gewesen, so wichtig wie dieser. Er hatte ihn umarmen mögen” (*Der verbrannte Dornbusch,* 265).[247] When he goes to Prague to speak with Hans’ ex-wife, he is startled because

> Als sie aufblickte und ihn ansah – er getraute sich nicht, ihr zu sagen, daβ Hans tot war -, schien es ihm, daβ er diese Frau schon oft gesehen hatte. Er konnte sie nicht verwechseln, dieses Geicht unter allen auf dieser Welt gab es nur einmal. Doch konnte er sich nicht besinnen, wo er ihr begegnet sein mochte (278).[248]

Her story about Hans is “einen Text, den sie auswendig gelernt haben mochte, mühsam in ein Deutsch übersetzte, das sie jedesmal vorbedachte und korigierte, ehe si einen langen Satz aussprach.” Despite the fact that he seems to know the story, “Doch stand er in ihrem Bann, bedrängt von einem verwirrenden Gefühl, intensiv und unordentlich wie in einem Traum.” He concludes that he “Er war dieser Frau häufig begegnet, si war ihm wichtig gewesen, doch wuβte er nur, daβ er alles vergessen hatte” (280-281).[249]

When Edi goes to Wolyna and sees Bynie, Rabbi Zaddik’s son, he has a similar impression:

> Zum zweitenmal in seinem Leben überwältigte ihn der Eindruck, in einem Unbekannten einem Vergessenen zu begegnen. Das erstmal geschah es ihm, als er in einer elenden Prager Stube einer Frau gegenübersaβ, der die Nachricht brachte, daβ, ihr Mann im Bürgerkrieg gefallen war. Wie damals fühlte er auch jetzt in bedrängender Weise, daβ er ein zweites Gedächtnis haben mochte, darin das Geheimnis, aber night seine Lösung aufbewahrt war (888).[250]

Just as Edi evoked the seemingly rehearsed story about Hans, Bynie's presence pushes Edi to tell his own "rehearsed " story instead of just giving the "essential facts" about the gas chambers:

> Vielleicht war es die Art, wie der Knabe ihm lauschte, das Bedürfnis, sich endlich aufzuschlieβen und die Klage laut werden zu lassen, die er seit Monaten stumm in sich trug – alles muβte er nun sagen, wie er es sich selbst wiederholt hatte in den vielen Tagen und Nächten seiner Wanderung, seiner kühnen Unternehmungen, deren keine gelang" (890). [251]

B. Rehearsed, Unwritten Stories

What is particularly interesting about these stories is not that they are untold, but that they are *unwritten.* At the beginning of the chapter "…wie eine Träne im Ozean," Sperber writes "Die lange Geschicte des alten jüdischen Städtchens Wolyna blieb ungeschrieben, sie wurde von Geschlecht zu Geschlect mündlich überliefert" (880).[252] In the first telling, it is Hans' ex-wife who gives the story to Edi in a conversation about the dead comrade. In the second telling, Rabbi Zaddik instructs the Jewish atheistby giving him a Jewish oral history:

> Alles, was Sie erzählt haben, wissen wir, Dr. Rubin. Durch Jahrhunderte haben Scheiterhaufen gebrannt in Europa. Dann hat man für eine kurze Zeit

> aufgehört, und ihr Aufgeklärten, ihr habt gemeint, es ist aus, eine neue Zeit ist gekommen. Juden brauchen nicht mehr Messias, brauchen night mehr Gott. Wir aber haben immer gewuβt, zwischen einer kurzen Pause und dem Ende zu unterschieden. Wir lebten stets in Furcht und in Erwartung, und so leben wir heute (892). [253]

On one hand, this oral transmission of history would seem to capture adequately the major various events which had, as the rabbi says, remained contemporary: "Von Kriegen, Aufständen, Pogromen, Epidemien, vernichtenden Bränden waren Spuren zurückgeblieben, die niemand verwischen wollte" (881).[254] On the other hand, hardly any villager "kannte einer die genauen Daten" (880-881).[255] There were tombstones in the center of town at "genau an der Stelle auf dem Markte, an der Glaubensmärtyrer ihren Tod gefunden hatten, Männer, Frauen und Kinder" (881). However, "es gab einen ganz alten Friedhof auf dem westlichen Hügel, die Grabsteine waren tief in die Erde eingesunken, die Inschriften auf ihnen schwer entzifferbar" (881).[256]

This forgetting would not be so out of the ordinary if it were not for the fact that Sperber makes a specific point to talk about the written tradition in his own Jewish shtetl, Zablotow. In *Die Wasserträger Gottes*, he describes the almost oppressive culture of learning and remembering. A Jewish child "muβte schon mit drei Jahren lessen lernene, viele Stunden des Tages unter der Fuchtel der strengen Cheder-Lehrer mit Buchstabieren un bald auch mit Übersetzen schwerer hebräischer Texte zubringen" (63).[257] In fact, learning and memorizing precise information was even how the poorest survived. The impoverished shtetl men that Sperber admired how "zitierte man auch häufig weise, tiefe und besonders scharfsinnige Aussprüche…Oder es handelte sich um Zitate aus Büchern und Artikeln zumeist hebräischer Autoren oder um apokryphe Äuβerungen, die man dem oder jenem

"scharfen Kopf" zucshrieb" (30-31).[258] Not forgetting was so important that Sperber claims it was in early childhood that he learned the word "remember" in three languages: Yiddish, German, and Hebrew: "Gedenk! Erinnere dich! Thizkor!" Specifically, he was told "Was deinen Ahnen irgendeinmal an Unrecht geschehen ist, vergiβ es nie; was sie andern Böses angetan haben, denke daran und an die Gerechtigkeit der Strafe, die sie erlitten haben" (69).[259]

Despite his vivid description of this learned culture, the story of Zablotow's destruction seems difficult for him to write down. On the very first pages of his autobiography, *Die Wasserträger Gottes,* he admits "Vor einiger Zeit – ich hatte eben das sechzigste Lebenjahr erreicht – wurde es mir zur Gewiβheit, daβ ich das Gesicht, dem ich zumindest einmal täglich im Spiegel begegne, als fremd empfinde."[260] Just before he launches into the part about his Zablotow childhood, he says "im Verlaufe eines Vorgangs, der Jahre gedauert haben mag, muβ ich mich ihm entfremdet haben – ohen irgendeine dramatische Verwandlung und ohne das Gefülh, dadurch einen Verlust erlitten zu haben."[261] Sperber, the cosmopolitan Parisian intellectual, seems to suggest that he has become so estranged from Sperber, the Jew from the shtetl, that he no longer recognizes himself. In fact, it is precisely this disconnect with himself that pushed him to write his memoirs:

> Während der Tage, die auf diese zugleich banale und ungewönliche Entdeckung folgten, erwog ich zum ersten Mal ernsthaft, ob ich nicht meine Erinnerungen schrieben sollte…Nicht nur diese partielle *Desidentifikation*, diese erstaunlich nüchterne, fast gefühllose Distanzierung vom eigenen Gesicht lieβ in mir den Gedanken aufkommen, meine Erinnerungen zu schreiben (17-18).[262]

Another reason, Sperber explains, why he wanted to write his memoirs was his "Begierde nach Erinnerungen" (18).[263] This realization occurred to him one afternoon in Provence when he had made a long but useless effort to find Albert Camus' grave in the cemetery of Loumarin. Unable to find the grave of the writer he admired most, he blacked out and fell to the ground, which had never happened to him before. This did not change his life, but here he seems to undergo a disconnect from himself that is more important than that from his image in the mirror: a disconnect with his own life at his death. He writes "Leute meinesgleichen hatten während langer Jahre, zu lange in der Gewiβheit gelebt, daβ sie 'Tote auf Urlaub' seien …ich fortan nicht mehr im Lichte, sondern im Schatten eben dieser Gewiβheit weiterleben würde."[264] At that moment of understanding the proximity of his death, he starts to remember the Provencal town of Cagnès-sur-Mer, where he was sheltered by André Malraux during the war. He confesses that this place appeared before him "als betrachtete ich es von auβen, mit der jede Einzelheit registrierenden Aufmerksamkeit dessen, der sich entfernt und immer wieder zurückblickt, weil er weiβ, daβ er niemals wiederkehren wird" (19).[265]

Why does Sperber need to write his memoirs? Almost thirty years prior to his blacking out in Provence, he has already entrusted his memories to fiction with *Wie eine Träne im Ozean.* He has identified himself with his characters and the catastrophes they face. However, this massive, fictional trilogy, in which almost every event and character is autobiographical, seems to have left something out. At age sixty, he sees his life in a way that makes him want write about it as if it were the first time he had put words to his real memories. Indeed, it would seem that he needs to rework parts of his life, which he did not adequately address in the trilogy. However, as we will see in the next sections of this chapter, there are still places

where his memory collapses. In these instances, which have to do with either WWI or the Holocaust destruction of his shtetl, he will pull the painful memory out of his fiction as a way to plug a hole in the autobiography.

If we take Edi Rubin to be his alter ego, however, this is certainly not the first time that Sperber, in his writing, has encountered *a collapse of memory* in the face of a familiar past. In the fictional trilogy the peculiar sense of a *lack of writing*, *lack of rigorous inscription* and the characters' *inability to remember* signifies, I would like to argue, *a collapse of memory,* is expressed in a *collapse in Sperber's literary narrative*. The two instances in the trilogy mentioned above – the death of Hans and his ex-wife's story about Wolyna along with Edi's own experience there - mark a break in the narration. The three massive volumes of *Wie eine Träne im Ozean*, this "communist Iliad," deal almost exclusively with *Sperber's political past*. The story of Hans/Hawrylo, Edi, and Wolyna appear, however, as strange insertions of *non-political* moments within a fictional world dominated by politics. In the case of Hans/Hawrylo, there, through the missing shoes, is a painful association with WWI's devastation of the shtetl at the moment when Sperber and his teacher witness a soldier's death during a battle. The story Wolyna is a religious story of the Nazi destruction of the shtetl that becomes almost completely detached from the politics of *Wie eine Träne in Ozean.* The insertions cause a collapse in this political world, forcing it to include what cannot be captured in a political framework.

Perhaps what is most striking about Sperber's memoirs is that he *depends* upon these non-political insertions from *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* a work of literature, to tell about his real experiences in his memoir. In *Die Wasserträger Gottes*, literature, not his life, becomes his ultimate reference when talking about the WWI destruction of his shtetl. He inserts the literary tellings of the story from the trilogy

into the memoir as if he needs them to have access to his own past that he cannot express in a non-fictional way. Literature, in fact, becomes his memory. This seeming inability to write autobiographically in parts of his own memoir, I will argue, is analogous to an inability to confine his literary writing to just the political genre.

I will continue this chapter by studying the specific parallel elements in the three tellings of the shtetl's destruction in both *Die Wasserträger Gottes* and *Wie eine Träne im Ozean* and how they work together to reconstruct a story that continues to be erased in the wake of political events.

V

Limits of Expression: Literary Intrusions

Before going to Prague to visit Hans'/Hawrylo's ex-wife, Edi admits that he is strangely overwhelmed by the memory of Hans, who had taken off his shoes before his death in the foxhole. He wants to return to the scene to collect his corpse, but his commander, Hofer, tells him "Später, als Sieger, würden sie ihre vielen Toten zu Grabe bringen, inzwischen muβten sie es dulden, daβ der vorübergehend siegreiche Feind sie verscharrte."[266] Regardless, "Doch bewegte ihn unablässig die Erinnerung an Hans, wie er ihn allein mit seinem Maschinenegewehr zurückgelassen hatte."[267] Hans' death "erregte ihn in einer Weise, für eine verlorene Sache, erregte ihn einer Weise, für die er vergebens nach Worten suchte…Hier zum erstenmal wiederfuhr es ihn, daβ der Tod ihn an einen band. Und diesen einen, dem er sich unsagbar nahe fühlte, hatte er kaum gekannt" (278).[268]

Yet it is not Hans' death that brings Edi to the limits of expression, but his life and the strange connection between them. When Edi goes to see the ex-wife, he is not only bringing a message of death; he is primarily looking to bring Hans to life, which

is perhaps why he is never allowed to view his dead comrade's corpse. He implores her "Ich möchte, daβ Sie mir alles von ih, erzählen. Verzeihen Sie, est ist vielleicht unbescheiden, aber –" (279).[269] She begins, not with Hans'/Hawrylos's revolutionary political career, but with a detailed image of their native village, some "letzen, verkommensten Dorf irgendwo in Ostgalizien" (280).[270] However, it is not a shtetl, but a Ruthenian and Polish village. She describes the landscape:

> In unserem Dorf die Häuser…sind Hütten, die Wände und der Boden sind aus Lehm, die Dächer sind mit Stroh dedeckt. Auf dem Hügle über dem Dorf liegt das Schloβ des polnischen Grafen. Man sieht es von überall her. Auch bei uns gibt es Jahreszeiten. Aber unsere Landschaft gehört dem Herbst, mit jeder Jahreszeit kommt, heimlich der Herbst wieder. Am schönsten Maitage bedeckt sich der Himmel mit schwarzen Wolken und fällt auf die Hütten. Dächer und Wände aus Regen verhüllen alles, aber das Schloβ des polnischen Grafen sieht man überall her. Die weiβen Birken halten davor Wache. Der reife Sommer nistet in den vollen Ähren auf den Feldern des Grafen, die den Horizont verdecken, aber auf dem steinigen Boden des Bauern ist es Herbst, auch wenn die Kartoffel, die da wächst, noch nicht ausgegraben ist.[271]

When the peasants sing they feel relief: "Nur wenn wir sie singen, verstummen die Krähen. Nur wenn wir singen, verbirgt sich das Schloβ des Grafen hinter den weiβen Birken, dann sieht es nicht mehr auf uns herab, und wir vergessen es."[272] Yet Hawrylo " vergaβ das Schloβ niemals" that oppressed the peasants, which was one of the reasons why, she explains, he became a communist revolutionary (280).[273] He believed that "daβ das Schloβ nicht uneinnehmbar und unser Leben in Dorf nicht auf einem ewigen, unnantastbaren Recht gebaut war" (282).[274]

It would seem that the description of the village and its unjust economy simply demonstrates why many Galicians, like Hawrylo, – Ruthenians, Poles, and Jews – formed radical revolutionary and nationalist movements. However, two passages from *God's Water Carriers,* his memoir, calls this political and historical explanatory function into question. During the first few weeks of WWI, it has become clear that Zablotow, Sperber's shtetl, would be in the line of fire for the advancing Russians. His father decides to take them to Tracz, a village that "war wahrscheinlich das entlegenste von ganz Galizien" where they live peacefully for a few months.[275] Tracz looks like Hawrylo's village. Tracz has a Polish "ein Rittergut," which contrasts with the thatched huts scattered widely through the countryside.[276] While writing his memoir, Sperber realizes that Tracz "in meiner desaktualisierten Erinnerung eine unverhältnismäβig groβe Bedeutung bewahrt hat…Wann immer ich Trost im Tagtrum vom wunschlos stillen Leben…Erinnerung an Tracz ein."[277] Yet in a contradictory statement, he announces "So oft ich im Warten auf einen geliebten Menschen, der sich aus mir unbekannten Gründen zu sehr verspätet hat, von Schreckvorstellungen überwältigt werde, denke ich an Tracz." [278] Next, he briefly retells the story of Hans in *Der verbrannte Dornbusch,* but does not mention him by name. Then, in the memoir, Sperber inserts a long, direct quote, spoken by Hawrylo's wife in the novel, about the thatched houses and the autumnal climate. There are slight variations due to a different translator, but it refers to the same text in German. The ellipses are not mine. They are the same in Sperber's text:

> *Die Häuser in unserm Dorfe sind Hütten, die Wände und der Boden sind aus Lehm, die Dächer sind mit Stroh gedeckt…Auch bei uns gibt es Jahreszeiten, aber unsere Landschaft gehört dem Herbst, mit jeder Jahreszeit kommt heimlich der Herbst wieder…Überall in unserm Dorfe nisten die Krähen. In*

> *ihrem Kra-kra spricht der Herbst auch an jenen Tagen, da das Land ihn vergessen könnte…*(134).[279]

Instead of using his memory, which calls up "Schreckvorstellungen," he uses literature, which speaks about another person. He neither explains why he inserts the quote, nor does he give us any context or tell us what literary text he is citing. As such, the quote is bound to the memoir and essential to our understanding of how Sperber tells the story of his life. The quotes from literature are the only way we get certain information about him. At the same time, they seem detached from the memoir since they differ in style and introduce unknown characters, which complicates the way we read it. The question remains: why does literature take the place of autobiography within Sperber's autobiography? This replacement seems to suggest that literature and autobiography are part of what he calls his "disactualized" memory.

It might be argued that, as a trained psychologist, Sperber was aware of the way memories evolve over time. Directly after inserting the above quote about the description of the village, he says "Scheinbar…denn nichts widersteht der Fragmentierung so stetig wie die Zeit in ihrem unaufhaltsamen Fluβ. Wir aben erleben sie in fortgesetzt veränderlicher Gliederung." He also argues "Das Zeiterlebnis wird in der Erinnerung auch deshalb nicht chaotisch, weil der Erinnernde sich selbst das unabänderliche, unerschütterliche Zentrum bleibt, weil er als Damm und Schleuse den Zeitstrom immerfort reguliert oder zu regulieren glaubt" (136).[280] However, the insertion of the Hawrylo story and the quote from the novel does not appear to be a part of memory's flow. In addition, it seems to be more than just a changing articulation of memory. Instead, in the face of "Schreckvorstellungen" it is more like a *collapse of memory,* which occurs in tandem with a *collapse of the autobiographical narrative.* Literature is not a tool that helps him remember his past in his memoir. In

fact, it seems more like a sign that he forgets. He neither uses literature as an example to illustrate something real in his life nor does he use elements from his real life to explain something he wrote in his literature. The autobiographical writing stops altogether and literature takes over. Literature becomes the voice of Sperber's real memories.

Although this literary memory seems to be stronger than real memory, another passage in *Die Wasserträger Gottes* shows that literary memory too has its own collapses. In this long, direct quote from the fictional trilogy about Hawrylo's town that I discussed in the preceding paragraphs, through the insertion of the ellipses, Sperber marks that he *leaves out* the references to the birches that stand between the thatched-hut village and the Polish count's castle, which does appear in the original literary text. A comparison between the two quotes shows that, in the memoir quote, he places ellipses in the exact spot where the description of the birch trees stood in the literary quote.

However, it is interesting to note that, earlier in the memoir, he devotes a section to birches, which seems to have nothing to do with the literary quote. He writes "Dieser baum erscheint häufig in den Tagträumen von Westeuropäern, die aus dem Osten des Kontinents stamen."[281] Then he talks about the London Congress of the Pan-Russian Social Democrats, where

> Lenin ausnahmsweise eine Majorität um sich scharen konnte – daher der Name Bolschewiki – schrieb der Dreiunddreiβigjährige wie gewöhnlich fieberhaft Zettel nach Zettel und notierte auf einem Heftblatt Programmpunkte und Forderungen, die er erheben wollte. Doch zwischendurch schrieb er, die Schriftart immer variierend, ein Wort, stets das gleiche: *Brjosa* – Birke. Das Heimweh diktierte dem Emigranten dieses Wort, denn was sollte sonst die

> Birke mittendrin? Tausende von Seiten habe ich geschrieben, – und wahrscheinlich werde ich schreiben, solange ich lebe – doch werde ich in der Gewiβheit sterben, daβ es mir, hätte ich es versucht, nie gelungen wäre, in zwei oder in hunderten von Sätzen auszudrücken, was Bäume, nicht nur Birken…mir bedeuten (71).[282]

Sperber spent a substantial portion of his life fighting for the political ideologies of Lenin and Marx. Yet here he brings out, not what is most political about Lenin, but *what is most literary*. I would suggest that, for Lenin and for Sperber, birch trees express more than just homesickness. I claim that they stand for a breakdown in political expression; there are no fixed words or references to describe the depth of the birch's meaning. The birch is not a part of political writing because it is connotative. Political writing, a language of statistics, theory, and facts, is denotative. When Sperber asks "denn was sollte sonst die Birke mittendrin?" he also indicates that there is no set timing for the trees' appearance. Lenin appears to scatter his political pages erratically with this word. The very mention of the birches, as Sperber says, could provoke hundreds of pages that could never express the full range of the birches' meaning. As Stéphane Mallarmé says about the individual word in poetry, it brings about not just one flower, but the absence of all bouquets of flowers.[283]

Why then does Sperber leave out the birch trees in the above quotation from literature? Sperber uses literature in this instance to call up the memory of "Schreckvorstellungen" that seems perhaps too painful to express in his memoir through autobiographical writing. However, in the literary quote, which is supposed to push the pain aside, he leaves out the most literary part of the passage, the birch trees. This leaving out of the birch trees in this passage takes away the one element that adds a non-political, unrealistic dimension to the landscape. Without them there is no

symbolism or emotional attachment to the shtetl. In a region known for its birches, these trees certainly existed in Zablotow. Due to the inexpressible quality of birch trees, however, they would only convolute a precise description.

I would suggest it is precisely the *leaving out* of the birch trees that brings us to an understanding of what literature *can and cannot* do in both his memoir and in the fictional trilogy. The fact that Sperber resists this literary element in his memoir seems to bear witness not only to a collapse in memory, but to a collapse of literature itself. Literature has reached a limit. It cannot completely explain or historicize autobiographical facts in the memoir when Sperber wants to tell about a painful memory. When Sperber tries to plug one form of writing into another, it does not completely succeed because, ultimately, there is an element missing from each. His memoir lacks a factual description of his shtetl, but when he inserts literature, literature seems reluctant to include what makes it essentially literature: symbol and metaphor. That is to say, there is, in the telling of the political events that Sperber endured, an element, that that *escapes politics*, but *needs literature*. Literature, however, cannot completely do the job for autobiography in every situation, as seen through the leaving out of the birches. In the next section, by looking at the figure of a reoccurring plundered corpse in relation to WWI, I will examine the nature of this element.

VI

Literature, War, and the Repetition of a Plundered Corpse

Throughout the trilogy and the memoir the figure of a plundered corpse emerges amidst a backdrop of WWI. Sophocles' classic tragedy, *Antigone*, perhaps speaks to the significance of the desecrated dead body in Sperber's work. Antigone,

the heroine, seeks to bury her brother, Polynices, who has been murdered by his brother, Eteocles. By throwing handfuls of dirt over Polynices, Antigone will prevent him from desecration, thereby opposing Creon's proclamation that the corpse remain unburied. He forbids the city to dignify him with burial or mourn him at all. I hold that Sperber may be echoing Antigone's dilemma each time a plundered corpse appears in the literary trilogy and the memoir. As in Sophocles' play, when a corpse is desecrated in Sperber's work, it resists burial in a figurative way because, like a memory that never goes away, it refuses to be definitively interred within the texts. The corpse's meaning is transformed each time it reoccurs in both the literary trilogy and in the memoir.

A. First Plundered Corpse: The "Cadet"

The first plundered corpse in Sperber's fiction is that of "der Fähnrich" who is left behind by WWI soldiers in Hawrylo's story told by his ex-wife.[284] She says to Edi "In jenen Sommertagen, da der Krieg noch so jung war, daβ er einem ungewissen Versprechen nicht unähnlicher war als einer Drohung, in jenen Tagen schien das Dorf zum erstenmal vom Herbst vergessen zu sein."[285] Yet they knew that Austria had been defeated because the retreating soldiers came and occupied the village homes. The peasants were forced to give them all the food they had and to offer them beds.

When the Austrians finally depart, they leave behind "der Fähnrich," who has been badly wounded. The soldiers tell the villagers to look after him. They threaten that they will return and will either punish or reward them for the way that they have treated the cadet. The villagers protect the cadet from the Russians that come through the area, but they soon become jealous because he looks rich: "Dahin mochte er wohl auch gehören, denn er muβt reich sein, er hatte Geld, die Wäsche auf seinem gar zu

zarten Körper war feiner als die der reichsten Braut. Er hatte eine goldene Zigarettendose, sein Kamm sogar, sagte man, war aux Silber" (283).[286] The cadet's riches seem to augment the tensions between the Ruthenians and the Poles in the village, where extreme poverty created a sense of violent jealousy between the groups. The villagers finally decide he is too dangerous to keep alive and agree to strangle him in his sleep. Afterwards, they plunder his corpse and fight over their newfound treasures.

The plundering of the cadet's corpse demonstrates the extreme violence with which the villagers acted. By killing an innocent man only because he wore nice clothes and then violating his corpse, the act becomes all the more repugnant. It is not difficult to understand Hawrylo's rage at his people. However, it also reveals something more disturbing: the state to which these people have been reduced because of harsh economic conditions, which they can do nothing to change. The fact that a man has to be killed to acquire what he is wearing testifies to a social and economic situation in which human lives lose their value.

B. The Second Plundered Corpse: Hawrylo

It is the cadet's plundered corpse that makes Hawrylo leave his people to join the communists. He travels throughout Europe and into China, finally breaking with the party and returning to the village. Yet "sie steckte in ihm tiefer als die Erinnerung an eine gedemütigte Liebe, quälender als das Bewuβstein eines Verbrechens, das man sich nicht verzeihen kann, weil man sich seinethalb verachten muβ, so daβ man oft aus dem Schlaf auffährt, um darüber zu erröten."[287] He cannot accept this ending and soon leaves the village again to, as his wife says, "to put an end to his dying, for he had been dying since he left the party" (254).[288] She is finally able to write in her

notebooks that "Hawrylo starb in einem fremden Land, wietab von unserem Dorf." Then she adds "Nur darum sah er sterbend nicht das Schloβ. Es steht noch immer. Im Wind verneigen sich die Wipfel der weiβen Birken vor dem Schloβ" (286).[289] Hawrylo, who seemed finally to have put the memory of radical politics to death, is able to kill off the castle in his mind. However, as his wife indicates, Hawrylo's fight was useless. The castle is still there and the silver birches seem to have never disappeared.

As the soldiers are retreating from the battlefield, Edi wants to stay with Hawrylo. Hawrylo, however, urges Edi to move on with the rest because of the advancing enemy soldiers. Before the soldiers leave him, Hawrylo gives Edi his shoes and lies down in a foxhole. This gesture implies not only a final act of sacrifice, but also an act of self-preservation. In preventing the enemy soldiers from removing his shoes and plundering his corpse, he preserves his dignity. It is as if Hawrylo gives himself a proper burial in his foxhole. As he saw it, Hawrylo spent his life as a militant revolutionary because he thought it was necessary to save the likes of the Galician people, who would never see a fair political system, by sacrificing himself. Even when he officially left militant politics, he could not keep himself from pursuing the goals, most notably crusading for the downtrodden. Leaving the party nevertheless made him ashamed, he could not help seeking after opportunities to fight for justice. The only way that he could stop was to sacrifice himself through his own death on the battlefield. It was the violent injustice of plundering the cadet's corpse that pushed Hawrylo to make his sacrifice to politics. The fact that he gives his shoes to Edi before he dies prevents his corpse from being plundered by the oncoming soldiers. It will *look plundered* and the soldiers will have no use for it. In such a small way, a part of Hawrylo's dignity will survive even after he perishes.

According to Hawrylo's wife, there is another element of his life that survives: the birch trees. The castle is still there, but the birch trees remain. They refuse to be buried. This inexpressible, literary element of the birches that, paradoxically, expresses what Sperber says means the most to him in his memoir, survives along with the dignity of sacrifice of the fictional revolutionary.

C. The Third Plundered Corpse: A Real Corpse

The third plundered corpse appears in the WWI battle that took place in Zablotow in *Die Wasserträger Gottes.* As in the case of Hawrylo's ex-wife's description of the Ruthenian landscape, Sperber pulls a quote from the literary trilogy to tell part of the autobiographical WWI story in the memoir. After the battle that he witnesses with his teacher is over, the young Sperber emerges from the basements where the whole village had taken shelter. Without explanation or contextualization, Sperber inserts a direct quote from his fictional trilogy into the text of the memoir. It is not Edi Rubin speaking, but Doino Faber, the other main protagonist of the trilogy:

> Alle strömten in die Gassen, man ging zum Fluβ, da lagen noch die Gefallenen. Jeder da, wo ihn die tödliche Kugel hingestreckt hatte. In der Nähe der gesprengten Brücke lag ein junger Soldat. Man mochte glauben, daβ er schlief und im Schlaf geweint hatte. Keine Wunde war an ihm zu sehen, kein Blut. Man umstand ihn, eine alte Bäuerin weinte. Als Dojno sich nach einigen Minuten wieder der Leiche näherte, bemerkte er, daβ die Schuhe des Toten verschwunden waren und das armselige Portefeuille, das in der obern Auβentasche gesteckt hatte. Und da erst weinte er auch – nicht aus Trauer un den jungen Soldaten, sondern aus Wut über die Lebenden, aus tiefer Scham.[290]

Doino is talking about the corpse of the soldier who was killed, along with his horse, in front of him during a battle in the trilogy. This scene is significant because it is the first one in which Doino Faber cries, something he has been trying to do since the first pages of the trilogy. Here, Doino breaks down, just as the narrative of Sperber's memoir breaks apart by the insertion of this literary quote with no explanation.

This interruption of the memoir by literature is what spurs Sperber to talk about his own autobiographical break not only with his village, but his religious faith. Directly after the inserted literary quote he writes "In jenen Tagen und Nächten, besonders aber während der wenigen Stunden auf dem Friedhof und danach, im Anblick des Sturmangriffs, trat ein Bruch ein, dessen Wirkung dauerhaft geblieben ist." [291] His universe was no longer a totality that was "ein Ganzes gesehen, dessen leuchtendes Bild in zwei einander gegenüberliegenden Spiegeln endlos wiederholt wird." Now, he admits, "Nun waren die Spiegel aufgesplittert und teilweise erblindet – sie zeigten nichts Ganzes mehr, sondern nur Stückwerk" (153).[292] He realized that "Ich erkannte in tiefer Erschütterung, daβ es keinen schützenden Himmel über den Menschen gab, daβ es für sie, für uns alle nur die Erde, die grezenlos gleichgültige, unachtsame Erde gibt" (153-154).[293] From the rubble of Zablotow, literature alone has survived to capture the extreme violence of the shtetl's destruction by the war: the dead body that continues to be violated and refuses to be buried. What survives also bears witness to Sperber's silence about the event; he is not able to discuss it autobiographically even though he tells us that it was this corpse that led him, like Hawrylo, to break with his own people by losing his faith. Survival seems to also represent, like the birch trees, that which can be neither fully expressed nor completely buried.

Thus far, these three plundered corpses, including Hawrylo's, which only looks plundered, signify excessive violence, abject social and economic situations that call for revolutionary politics, sacrifice, dignity, and loss of religious faith. Despite the multiplicity of these significations, the plundered corpse also seems to signify an inability to express oneself that comes with survival of violent events.

VI

The Shame of Identifying the Bodies: The Real Lives of Sperber's Literary Corpses

The plundered corpses, up to this point, all belong to Sperber's literature despite the fact that they also exist in the autobiographical memoir: the cadet, Hawrylo, and the corpse of the WWI soldier. Each appearance sparks a break in one of the characters. In *Der verbrannte Dornbusch*, it is the plundered corpse of the cadet that sparks fictional Hawrylo's break with Galicia, which moves him into the world of politics. Hawrylo's seemingly plundered corpse takes Edi from the political world of the Austrian socialists into, as we will see later, the world of the shtetl. In *God's Water Carriers*, the plundered corpse of the soldier breaks Sperber from his faith and from his childhood.

The literary corpses, however, do seem to correspond to real human lives within Sperber's memoir. Each appearance of these lives in *Die Wassterträger Gottes* brings about a sense of great guilt and shame for Sperber. Studying them in his memoir may give us clues to understanding the mysterious correspondence – or lack of correspondence - between his literature and his autobiography.

A. The Cadet and the Well-Dressed Jew

Well before the description of the WWI battle in the memoir, Sperber tells the story of a man he and his shtetl friends saw during Passover who was "klein und zierlich, trug einen hochsommerlichen Panamahut, einen hellen Anzug und gelbe Schuhe. In der Rechten hielt er einen Spazierstock…in der Linken aber – und das war etwas Entsetzliches – hielt er eine Semmel" (67).[294] The man was a non-observant Jew and the boys were jealous of the luxury he afforded himself during their most sacred holiday. The boys begin throwing stones at him until his sister arrived to protect him. She yells at the boys "Bis ans Lebensende, ja bis zu eurem Tode werdet ihr euch schämen, daβ ihr meinem kranken Bruder so Schlechtes angetan habt…Wieder schluchzte sie auf, dann nannte sich mich bei meinem Kosenamen" (68).[295] Overcome with guilt, Sperber admits "daβ von den zahlreichen *Awejres*, den schlecten Taten, die ich begangen hatte, diese die übelste war. Ich glaubte, das sie unsühnbar war; iche glaube es auch heute noch" (68).[296] The well-dressed Austrian cadet in the light linen suit in Sperber's literary trilogy, whom Hawrylo knew, seems related to the non-practicing Jew of Sperber's childhood. Like the plundered corpse of the cadet, who is killed and then violated again, this secular Jew, already condemned to die by illness, is further assaulted by perhaps jealous orthodox Jews.

B. Hawrylo's Neck

Another possible reference to this plundered corpse is Hawrylo himself – not the fictional Hawrylo, but someone in Sperber's autobiography by that name. Soon after he talks about the man in the light, linen suit, Sperber tells the story of Hawrylo, a school friend. The real Hawrylo was also Ruthenian and lived in a village far away from Zabolotow. However, his father wanted him to attend the Polish school there

because he would have a better education. Since he had to walk several hours to school and back, he would sleep during recess. One day, several Polish boys formed a ring around him while he was napping and "piβt ihm auf den Necken" (73).[297] Sperber "mag sein, daβ ich nur deshalb so heftig und übrigens ganz nutzlos für den isolierten, gedemütigten Hawrylo eingetreten bin und mich für ihn gesschlagen habe, weil ich anderthalb Jahre vorher einer von dened gewesen war die einen harmlosen Kranken, der nicht wuβte, was er tat, angegriffen hatten."[298] Through this experience, he confesses his shame: "Doch diesmal erfuhr ich genau, was Demütigung ist und wie grausam und verächtlich jene sind, die sie an Wehrlosen verüben" (74).[299] In *Der verbrannte Dornbusche,* it is a gun wound, like the piss, to the back of Hawrylo, the soldier's, neck that kills him. Like the helpless young Sperber, Edi Rubin can do nothing to save him.

The fact that these people from Sperber's real life come into his fiction as a repetitive figure of a plundered corpse may suggest something about the role they play in his literature. These memories, in fact, have survived precisely because they replay themselves in Sperber's writing. Like plundered corpses themselves, these memories are transformed by a kind of continual plundering of Sperber's memory. There appears to be a connection between plundering and survival, not only for the fictional characters, but also with respect to Sperber's painful past experiences.

VIII

The Literary and the Autobiographical Come Together

The sense of guilt and shame associated with real humans in Sperber's autobiography, who correspond to characters in the fictional trilogy, adds yet another dimension to the signification of literary corpses for those who come into contact with

them. In the memoir, Sperber feels that he has harmed the well-dressed, secular Jew and Hawrylo because he threw rocks and felt powerless against the bullies. Yet in his literature, he re-experiences the shame: the well-dressed cadet dies a violent death as does Hawrylo. However, Hawrylo's death is more of a conscious, sacrificial act. The cadet's death, it seems, is just a murder.

The fictional Hawrylo is a revolutionary who, despite leaving the communist party, fights for the cause of peasants and workers around the world until his death. By removing his shoes, he prevents the shame of having his corpse plundered by enemy soldiers. Not only is the cadet a victim of an injury he received during WWI, he is also an innocent victim of a squabble between Ruthenians and Poles who want his riches. After he is murdered, he is shamed by the further violation of his body. However, the real Sperber, who was both a revolutionary and a childhood victim of WWI, lives on. As in cases of survivor guilt, Sperber *survives* these shameful experiences, but it does not seem that he has rid himself of the guilt associated with them.

The plundered corpse functions like Lenin's *bryosa,* birch tree, in that it presents a break with politics in the fictional story and in the memoir. As we have already mentioned, in the trilogy the cadet marks Hawrylo's break with his town to join the communists and Hawrylo's corpse marks a break with Edi's political commitment to the Austrian socialists. The fictional plundered corpse that appears in the memoir provokes Sperber's break with Judaism and marks a move towards militant politics. However, the plundered corpse, like the birch tree, also becomes not just a break, but a locus for a multiplicity of meanings, ranging from shame, betrayal, or excessive violence. These elements exist outside of what dogmatic political writing, such as Lenin's, might capture. At the same time, also like the birch tree for Sperber,

there is something that remains determinately mysterious about this all-inclusive figure: its repetition. Why does this figure continue to emerge in his trilogy? And, perhaps more importantly, why does it appear in his memoir when he encounters the plundered body of the dead soldier?

I would suggest that Sperber's challenge in his memoirs and his literature is not to show simply the evils of war, racism, nationalism, totalitarianism, or revolutionary politics, but to find a way to speak about his own difficult survival of political betrayal through a plundered corpse. This survival, I will argue, is ultimately located in his literature through Sperber's unique notion of messianism in which survival is no longer just about the act of plundering, but also about an act of hoping.

IX

Sperber's Messiahs: The Burning Cinder

Sperber's complicated survival has to do with the concept of a messiah who keeps returning. He believes he first began to lose his Jewish faith when he witnessed a fire destroying the village synagogue as a young child. His skepticism continued as he watched his people die from illnesses related to malnutrition and filth. He writes "iche hatte früh, seit dem 13. Lebensjahr, mit dem Glauben gebrochen, war zur revolutionären Bewegung gestoβen und hatte aus Treue zu ihr vieles auf mich genommen…Aber die Zuversicht, mit der ich den Messias erwartet hatte, war die gleiche geblieben" (38).[300] As he stated, Sperber never stopped searching for political, social, or historical messiahs after breaking with the religious one.

Pierre Bouretz confirms that, in the fictional trilogy, Sperber "…commence par renier le Dieu de ses pères pour vivre la passion de l'histoire où l'on subit ensuite le mortel conflit qui oppose la nécessité aveugle de ce nouveau dieu à la conscience

morale" (188).[301] Bouretz says that each time Sperber finds a new messiah, such as communism, he has to figure out why the former one did not succeed for him. He engages with history when joining the communists, but the biblical "buisson …brûlera toujours," as he descends "au plus profound de l'abîme" where, "alors le buisson devint cendre," and the new messianic cause once again becomes but "une larme dans l'océan".[302] What is so special about Sperber, Bouretz admits, is that he refuses "renoncer et de céder au découragement," no matter how many times this messianic cycle repeats itself (188).[303]

Bouretz not only identifies an essential function of Sperber's messiahs, but also of his abysses, both religious and political. When Sperber lost his faith, the only way out of the abyssal place of having no hope in God, was to find another messiah, which he identifies as communism. For Sperber then, a new messiah becomes a condition of abyss. Being in the abyss is not only about betrayal, but also about hope. The cinders from the burning bush will always reignite. At the same time, however, he carries with him the weight of all of the failed messiahs that he has left behind. Bouretz would perhaps say that his bag of cinders is heavy. When the newest messiah fails, Sperber is plunged back into the abyss and experiences the same wound of betrayal all over again.

As Bouretz points out, this system of returning messiahs is an odd form of hope for Sperber. Never discouraged, he never ceases to confront the wound once more. In the second volume of his memoir, *Die vergebliche Warnung,* he discusses the relation between abyss and hope:

> Zu den Gleichnissen, die sich seit Jahrzehnten am häufigsten in Romanen, Essays und Vorträgen benutzt habe, gehört eines, in dem es sich um eine Bruücke handelt, die nicht existiert, sondern sich Stück um Stück unter dem

> Schritte dessen ausbreitet, der den Mut aufbringt, seinen fuβ über den Abgrund zu setzen. So mag die Brücke nicht das andere Ufer erreichnen, das übrgens wohl gar nicht existiert. Der werdende, doch nie vollendete Mensch auf der Brücke, die nur so weit reicht wie sein Mut, somit nie weit genug, is der Held und Unheld all meiner Bücher geworden (264).[304]

In world ravaged by totalitarian regimes, war, and genocide, Sperber chooses optimism for his characters. Humans must continue to step into the abyss to fight injustice, no matter how many times they injure themselves and fall. If they let themselves die, then all possibility for hope is gone. Hope for the future is bottomless, but this optimism comes with a high price of an eternal wound.

The plundered corpse, seems to represent the more painful side of what characterizes Sperber's messianic hope. The death of the cadet and Hawrylo in the trilogy and the soldier's death in the memoir provoke a release from what seemed to be an oppressive, unchangeable situation. Hawrylo felt trapped by social and economic tensions that caused crimes in his village and it was the cadet that let him escape. As a child Sperber felt constrained by oppressive orthodox laws that could not prevent suffering and it was the soldier that sparked his loss of faith. However, the fact that these corpses are plundered signifies, I might argue, the deeper violence that such a release entails. The release comes with a profound wound; the letting go of one way of living is also the betrayal of this way of living. For Sperber, it is God and for Hawrylo, it is his own people. Therefore, when the plundered corpse reappears it carries within it two meanings: death as a release into something new and death, the plundering, as the violent opening of an old wound. Both the death *and* the plundering survive as they continue to emerge throughout Sperber's texts.

In the trilogy, it would be possible to say that the appearance and death of the cadet is like the presence of the burning bush of Sperber's old Jewish Messiah. By using this figure of the plundered corpse, Sperber is turning the biblical image of the bush that burns forever into ashes. And from these ashes emerges the new messiah. Hawrylo makes a break with the village to turn to communism, another messiah. For the autobiographical Sperber, it is the insertion of the literary plundered corpse in his memoir that causes him to talk about the final break with his faith and his village. Afterwards, he and his family move to Vienna where he joins the revolutionary secular Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hashir, yet another messiah to be met before turning to communism.

However, the plundered corpse, as seen through its mysterious appearance in Sperber's memoir, also retains the quality of the birch tree – that which can never be fully expressed in writing, but continues to surface with no explanation. This is why, I would suggest, the trilogy is about more than inserting examples of messiahs represented by plundered corpses in its story. It is the question of why they repeat themselves that resists interpretation. When Sperber left the communist party in 1937, he told his wife Jenka that he lived like a "walking corpse" for years. As Hawrylo did when he left the party, he searched for a new messiah. Following this break, Sperber joined the Foreign Legion in 1940 and fought to save France from the Nazis. When the French army was defeated, he was not honored as a soldier, but became a victim of France's anti-Jewish laws set in place by Hitler and the Vichy Regime. This "walking corpse" was about to be plundered once more by radical politics. Seen by the communist party as a renegade, he could not benefit from the protection of their clandestine network. It was no longer possible to fight Hitler with Stalin. To avoid being deported to a death camp in the east, Sperber, with the help of André Malraux,

was sent to the Swiss holding camp for refugees, Gierenbad. During this time, he began writing the first volume of his trilogy.

From this political abyss, from this corpse-like state, I would suggest that literature becomes a new kind of messiah that actually brings him closer to the Judaism that he had renounced as a child; one that not only helps him survive, but one that survives all of the other messiahs left behind.

X

Collapse of the Trilogy and the Memoir: Wolyna and "…Wie eine Träne im Ozean"

Of the plundered corpses, including the insertion of the literary dead, shoeless soldier's corpse in Sperber's autobiography, there are none that die in real life. Hawrylo, the cadet, and the dead soldier represent the death of certain radical ideas more than that of real people: Hasidism, Zionism, nationalism, and communism. The third telling of Zablotow's destruction, however, involves the real deaths of Sperber's autobiography. The penultimate section of his trilogy, also entitled "…wie eine Träne im Ozean," deals with the Jews from his shtetl that perished in the Holocaust. Different from the case of the relationship between *Der verbrannte Dornbusch* and *Die Wasserträger Gottes,* there is no analogy between the actual events of the Holocaust and "…wie eine Träne im Ozean" for Sperber. Sperber's immediate family escaped deportation to death camps because they had managed to escape Vienna shortly after Hitler came to power. After France lost the war against Germany in 1940, Sperber was in danger of being deported, but he and his pregnant wife, Jenka, were saved by Malraux.[305] Sperber finally agreed to go to a Swiss holding camp, Gierenbad. While there was extreme filth and the food was bad, Gierenbad was neither a slave-labor camp nor a death camp. In fact, while interned there he managed

to teach psychology courses to other inmates and it was during this time that he began one of his first attempts at literature, *Der verbrannte Dornbusch.* Meanwhile, everyone in Zablotow and in the rest of the Galician *shtetls* was exterminated while the Ukrainians and the Poles not only cheered the Nazis on, but helped them with the liquidation in exchange for obtaining the dead Jews' valuables.

In an interview with Sperber, the French journalist asks if Sperber considers himself to be an "écrivain juif." He responds:

> Si on m'avait pose cette question avant Hitler, j'aurais répondu: "Je suis un juif, mais je ne suis pas un écrivain juif"; dans le siècle de Hitler, une question posée dans ce sens demande une autre réponse…Mais évidemment le fait d'être devenu – comment dire ?- orphelin d'un peuple assassiné a eu des conséquences. Je ne pense pas avoir passé, depuis le génocide, un seul jour sans que cela effleure mon esprit, comme je ne me suis pas endormi pendant de nombreuses années sans penser à Hitler et à Staline. Si le thème judaïque est un thème important à mes yeux, on ne le rencontre guère plus souvent que dans quelque cinq pour cent de tous mes écrits. Mais si l'on considère l'esprit judaïque dans son sens messianique – aussi bien dans le doute, dans l'espoir, que dans l'exigence – alors je suis judaïque (21-22).[306]

Sperber suggests the he renewed his Jewish identity as a result of the Holocaust. Sharing this sentiment with other secular Jews of the time, the Holocaust made him more Jewish. As he states, he becomes a Jewish writer, not because he believes in God or the strict teachings of the Torah, but because he likes what he characterizes as messianic about the religion: an insistence on hope in the face of doubt and suffering. For Sperber, this kind of tragic hope is the only way victims of catastrophe, especially the Jews, can survive in a post-Holocaust, post-WWII world. Yet it is important to

specify that Sperber is not advocating passivity. Rather, as he explains in *Die vergebliche Warnung,* it is only by stepping into the abyss, by resisting injustice, no matter what the cost, that hope can be maintained for those who have suffered.

The fact that "…wie eine Träne im Ozean," is the only part of the trilogy not based, at least in some part, on Sperber's autobiographical experience makes it stand out from the rest. In addition, it is the only instance in which religion, instead of history or politics, takes center stage in the story. "…wie eine Träne im Ozean," also encapsulates Sperber's newfound ideas about post-Holocaust Jewish identity, especially in the character of Edi Rubin. Rubin goes to Wolyna, leads the Jews in resistance, watches them all be killed, and leaves hoping for peace in Palestine, having acquired a glimmer of faith. It does seem logical that the differences between "…wie eine Träne im Ozean," and the rest of the trilogy could make it stand out as its own separate novella.

However, by comparing "…wie eine Träne im Ozean," to the fictional and autobiographical scenes of Hawrylo, the cadet, and the soldier, I would argue that the story of Wolyna's destruction by the Nazis *cannot be extracted* from the rest of the trilogy. "…Wie eine Träne im Ozean" affects the trilogy just as the literary quotation about the plundered soldier's corpse affects Sperber's memoir; it is a collapse of the political parameters of the trilogy, which abruptly introduces a religious story. In the latter case, the memoir seems unable to speak autobiographically about Zablotow's destruction during WWI. It is as if Sperber's memory has failed him and it is only literature that can fill in the gaps. Due to the fact that the quote appears without contextualization, it at first appears as an intrusion. However, the quote is essential for understanding the inexpressible wound that Sperber carries because of this experience, a wound, like the birch tree, that his memoir cannot capture. As such, it is like a

collapse of autobiographical writing. The plundered corpse of the soldier serves as a release for Sperber, but also marks another gash in the deeper wound of a reoccurring political betrayal.

The leaving out of the birch trees when Sperber inserts the literary quote from Hawrylo's wife into his memoir to explain the "Schreckvorstellung" of Zablotow's WWI destruction produces a similar collapse. Paradoxically, it is not a collapse in autobiographical writing, like the soldier, but a collapse of literature itself. By replacing the birch trees with ellipses, Sperber leaves out what he calls his most important literary symbol, a symbol that represents an inexhaustible source of expression. As such, he seems to suggest that even literature can reach its limits when he talks about his break with the war-torn shtetl. The fact that an autobiographical lacuna is plugged by a literary quote corresponds to the literary text by leaving a lacuna.

The penultimate section of the trilogy, "…wie eine Träne im Ozean,"presents a collapse in both Sperber's literary and autobiographical narrative. It is a *necessary collapse* not only for telling the story of Zablotow's WWI destruction, but also for telling the story of the destruction of Galicia's shtetl Jews during the Holocaust.

A. A Collapse of Politics and History: The Fantastical and the Imaginary

The way that the story of Wolyna appears at the end of the third volume indicates that it is indeed its own island within the political and historical themes of the trilogy. It is surrounded not only by mystery, but the fantastical. The last time Edi Rubin and Roman Skarbek, the Polish count who lives in the castle, appear, they are in Paris and have been disgusted with the ineffectiveness of politics. There, they were

betrayed by politics and decide the only way to really resist is to go directly to the people without political intermediaries. They go their separate ways. The first scene of "…wie eine Träne im Ozean" shows Skarbek sleeping with a Polish woman. When he gets out of bed, he sees Edi Rubin going towards Wolyna, the Jewish shtetl, on a horse in the middle of the night.

It is not until the end of "…wie eine Träne im Ozean" that Edi realizes why he has ended up here:

> Und seine Erinnerung ging zurück zu den Februartagen des Wiener Aufstandes. Neun Jahre waren seither vergangen. Der Rückzug über das Marchfeld, der Ukrainer Hans. Hinter disem Wald muβte irgendwo das Dorf liegen, aus dem er gekommen war – auf weiten Umwegen, um für die Arbeiter von Wien zu sterben (919).[307]

Yet Rubin's connection with Harvrilo remains a mystery. As discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter, Rubin has a similar reaction when he meets Bynie; he does not know why, but he has an intimate connection with him although Bynie is very different from Hawrylo. In addition, Wolyna is the only shtetl in Galicia that has not been attacked by the Nazis, as if it were indeed its own fantasy island. Finally, when Bynie is about to die from his gun wounds, he begins to work miracles on different Ukrainian and Polish villagers. In three volumes that attempt to unveil the reality behind the lies of communism and fascism, this section is the only one that slips into a fantastical vision.

B. The Plundered Corpse

When Rubin finally gets the chance to speak with Wolyna's Rabbi Zaddik, he is humiliated by the shtetl's religious leader. Zaddik lives in the only heated home in the village and he appears over-fed, in contrast to the emaciated bodies that surround him. Rubin urges him to believe that the Germans are coming to exterminate the Jews and that they must resist, but Zaddik responds, revealing Sperber's black humor:

Wo ist die Verunft in deinen Worten, Jechiel?…Solange die Katze noch spielen will,

> ist die Maus nicht verloren. Wenn leben dulden ist, wer darf die Geduld verlieren? Aber die Katze hat Angst vor dem groβeren Tier. Wer weiβ, vielleicht will auch dieses spielen. So muβ man dem höheren Kommandanten in der Bezirkshauptstadt, diesem Frevler Kutschera, zu verstehen geben, daβ er schnell reich werden kann mit dem Werk eurer Hände, die du Narr abhacken willst. Gott vergebe dir die Sünde (885).[308]

By submitting themselves as slaves to the Nazis, the rabbi thinks that the Jews can survive. After all, this is how they have managed to live peacefully among the Poles and the Ruthenians for centuries; they have always been able to convince the enemy that they have something the enemy can use. The rabbi continues to insult Rubin: "Der Tor start in den Brunnen hinunter, den Himmel und die Gestirne selbst, nicht aber ihren Widerschein glaubt er darin zu entdecken. Du, nimm einen Kieselstein und wirf ihn ins Wasser – und des Toren Himmel wird auseinanderspritzen…Es ist Zeit, daβ ich den Stein werfe" (886).[309] Zaddik leaves and Rubin talks with Bynie, the rabbi's son. Bynie, convinced by reading Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* that

history is built on a dialectic, gives Rubin his word that he will help resist, thereby deciding to engage with his antithesis to his father's religious determinism.

In the next scene, the Germans, with the help of the Poles, come into the shtetl and kill all of the Jews that have not escaped to Skarbek's castle to resist. As in Sperber's autobiographical account of the WWI battle in Zablotow, the Jews hide in the basements and the German soldiers, like the Russian and Austrian soldiers, occupy their houses. Among the dead is the rabbi. Like the rich cadet that inspired Hawrylo to leave his village, and like the well-dressed Jew whom Sperber and his friends abused, the rabbi wears luxurious silk robes and gold jewelry, which are plundered by the Germans, Ruthenians, and Poles:

> Zwei stritten um den schwarzen seidenen Kaftan, während sie ihn dem Toten abnahmen. Sie zertren heftig an ihm und zerrissen das Gewand. Der Alte wollte nur die Schuhe haben, er schnürte si auf, da stürzte sich ein Halbwüchsiger auf ihn und stieβ ihn mit den Füβen, bis er ausgestreckt im Schnee lag. Nun waren sie ein Dutzend über dem Rabbi. Einer schrie ununterbrochen: 'Nackt muβ man ihn ausziehen, nackt, denn uns gehört alles, alles uns!' (904-905).[310]

Rabbi Zaddik, the only Jew in the shtetl who was worthy of heat and adequate food is now treated like all of the Jewish corpses lying in the snow. Dead and plundered, Rabbi Zaddik's words to Edi appear all the more foolish.

It would be easy to say that, through this violent scene, Sperber harshly condemns what this rabbi represents: a belief that Jews are superior because they accept their suffering instead of fighting against it, a belief that he so detested in his youth while in rabbinical school. After all, his own brand of messianism specifically advocates resistance even in the face of defeat.

However, it cannot go unnoticed that Zaddik bears a resemblance to the cadet and to the man at whom the young Sperber threw stones during Passover. Both of these characters stood out from the rest of the villagers because of their fine clothes.

Perhaps most striking, however, is the rabbi's resemblance to the plundered corpse of the dead soldier in Sperber's memoir, whose shoes had been removed. In contrast to the fictional Hawrylo, who had removed his shoes before dying in order to preserve his dignity, the soldier's and the rabbi's shoeless feet add to the shamefulness of their death. And like these other corpses, the plundered corpse of the rabbi serves a dual function. First, it causes a break, which leads to the search for a new kind of messiah. The rabbi's son, Bynie, decides to break with his father's insistence on passivity and join the armed resistance led by Edi Rubin. He confesses to Edi "Ich suche einen Weg, den des Trostes. Vielleicht wird mir eure Verzweiflung helfen, ihn zu finden" (894).[311]

Also, due to the resemblance of the rabbi's corpse to the corpse of the soldier, I would suggest that a deeper wound emerges, a wound, which binds together a real traumatic event in Sperber's life, Zablotow's WWI destruction, and one that only exists in fiction, the destruction of Wolyna and its Jews. I would suggest that binding these two events together by the figure of the plundered corpse gives Sperber a chance to understand the horrors of the Holocaust, an event, which he did not experience, but, as he indicates in the interview with the journalist, weighs heavy on his conscience and he decides to dedicate. As a close friend to concentration camp survivors, including Elie Wiesel, it seems likely that Sperber questioned why he had survived while the Jews of his town had not. Fiction, I might argue, became the only way Sperber could live through this event. He could only compare the destruction of Zablotow with what he had experienced there during WWI. As such, the WWI destruction becomes a base for the fictional story of Wolyna's destruction by the Nazis.

Since Sperber cannot know exactly what took place in the last days of Nazi-controlled Zablotow, there is no fixed autobiographical reference as there is with Hawrylo or the cadet. However, in the case of the soldier's corpse that was plundered after Sperber witnessed the WWI battle with his teacher, the only reference that exists is not one from autobiography, but from Sperber's literature. He unexpectedly uses an extract from the trilogy to tell the story of plundering in his memoir, which provoked the break from his childhood and his religion. Then, he uses a plundered corpse that closely resembles the soldier's in "…wie eine Träne im Ozean" as away to connect the destruction of the Jews in Wolyna to Zablotow's WWI destruction. This example opens up the possibility of a purely literary memory, one that is not anchored in political history. Albeit in a different form, literature, it seems, has the ability to talk about a painful history when history is not completely available to Sperber.

I would suggest that Sperber needed to *create this memory* almost as if it were autobiographical in order to bond with not only the Jews of the shtetl, but also with all the Jews who had been victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Sperber says he becomes a Jewish writer only after he learns about the Holocaust. Zaddik joins ranks with the fictional dead solider, who becomes part of Sperber's *autobiographical history* in the memoir when he inserts literature to tell about the destruction of Zabolotow. I might argue that the plundered corpse of Zaddick could serve the same function if it had been used in Sperber's memoir. Sperber could have inserted Zaddik's corpse as a means to discuss the pain that the Holocaust caused him for the rest of his life, even though he did not experience it personally. For, although Sperber would not have agreed with Zaddik's passivity, this rabbi ultimately becomes a symbol of the indiscriminate nature of the Nazi's killing techniques; rich or poor, important in the community or not, all Jews were targets of Hitler's final solution.

XI

Conclusion: The Cadet, Hawrylo, Bynie, and the Parable of Inclusion

Bynie's character gives us clues about Sperber's reconnection with Judaism. In the first scene of Hawrylo's village's destruction during WWI, the Austrian army leaves the cadet behind, who becomes a moral compass for the Ruthenians. The soldiers warn them that they will be judged by the way they treat this man who is so different from themselves. Jealous of his obvious wealth, the Ruthenians strangle him to death and plunder his corpse. Disgusted with the behavior of his people, Hawrylo flees from his town, which is next to Wolyna, and joins the communist party. When Hawrylo dies and is left behind by the socialist soldiers, Rubin is transformed. It is important to note, however, that his corpse is not plundered with the violence of the cadet's or of Zaddik's because he gives his shoes to Edi before he dies precisely because he does not want it to be plundered. Due to the dignity with which Hawrylo died , Edi feels morally obliged to go and see Hawrylo's ex-wife. He is not seeking another political messiah, it seems, but only wants to hear the story of Hawrylo's life. Hawrylo's life, which he dedicated to saving the people of Galicia, becomes Edi's next messianic cause. We can only assume that his mysterious appearance in Wolyna is to vindicate both Hawrylo's memory and his goal of making Galicia a better place for all that live there, which is not just a political goal, but a simple human goal to help them survive without killing each other. Edi believes that understanding Hawrylo's entire life, instead of just his political commitments to communism or socialism, will bring him hope to continue living after he has sacrificed many years to broken political causes.

Bynie seems to take the baton from the fictional Hawrylo's unplundered corpse and becomes Edi's next moral compass, a compass that is not political, but concerned with the survival of human beings, like Albert Camus' Dr. Rieux in *La Peste*. Bynie is one of the only Jews left from Wolyna after resistance to the German invasion. For Rubin and for the Polish count, Skarbek, who joined the resistance with the Jews, saving Bynie's life becomes the last mission they decide to accomplish. Skarbek cries out "Ich will retten, was noch zu retten ist" (938).[312] They must save Bynie's life because there will be no other shetl Jews who will be able to tell the story of Nazi destruction. Bynie then says to Rubin

> Weil der Tod leer ist, kann man ihn miβachten. Und deshalb ist auch das Töten eine Handlung ohne Sinn. Ich habe das so gut gemerkt bei dieser Schlacht im Wald und dann im Stollen. Ihr könnte es auch selbst beweisen, Dr. Rubin. Versucht einmal, eine Schlacht zu beschreiben, und Ihr werdet merken, daβ alle diese Taten zusammen so wenig bedeuten und so gestaltlos sind wie eine Träne im Ozean (947).[313]

To preserve Bynie from becoming just another tear in the sea is Edi's next messianic project. Even thought Edi Rubin disagrees, when Bynie dies, his corpse is not plundered, but given a ceremony and a sacred burial in the monastery. They give him a proper funeral and give him the title of last rabbi of Wolyna. After Bynie's burial, Edi, just as he did after Hawrylo's death, sets off in search of a new messiah, one he hopes to find in Palestine. However, it is not a political messiah he hopes to find. He confesses that Bynie's corpse brings about the same feeling as Hawrylo's: "Er wollte nicht Leichen gegen Leichen stellen. Alles war unsagbar traurig und erniedrigend zugleich. War es faβbar, daβ es solches Leiden gab ohne Schuld?" (957).[314] With Hawrylo, Edi wants to *hear a story*, but with Bynie, he wants *to tell a story*:

> Etwa eine Woche spatter verlieβ Edi das Land. Er reiste zusammen mit einem jungen Mann, einem der Boten, die die Kämpfer des Warschauer Ghettos nach Palästina sandten, nicht damit sie um Hilfe bäten – denn alle Hoffnung war dahin – sondern damit sie den Überlebenden berichteten, was geschehen war (963).[315]

Telling the story, in fact, becomes the new messiah, the new hope for eternal peace. As Rubin leaves Wolyna he has a comforting vision in which he sees a peaceful sky where there are no stars. He admits "Seit Bynies Tod erst sehnte er sich nach dem Frieden – ohne Hoffnung, ihn zu finden, denn er wuβte nicht einmal, was es war, wonach er wirklich suchte…Vielleicht war es diese Vorstellung, die ihn davon abhielt, sich sofort zu töten" (961).[316] Then, he recites the Kaddish for the first time in his life and afterwards the sky is filled with stars. The Jewish prayer has added another layer of hope, the stars in the sky, for his future in Palestine and the story he will tell there. Judaism after all, like the politics of the past, can be a source of hope. In reciting the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead, which is one of the most sacred prayers in the Jewish faith, Edi understands something about the role of Judaism in the story he must tell about the multiplicity of political betrayals he has experienced throughout the trilogy.

What Edi learns is that the story he must tell, a story that began in Vienna years before the Nazi take over and ended in the extermination of Europe's Jews, is one that *cannot be exclusive* in *any way.* Not only is it a story of the Jewish passivity to their Nazi aggressors, it is also a story of a resistance that would have always been outnumbered by the many enemies that the Jews had accumulated over the course of history, such as the Christian Poles and the Ruthenians. When Edi Rubin stands before Zaddik and pleads his case for resisting the Nazis, the rabbi responds to him using

parables. For example, he tells a story about Jews and Christians in medieval Vienna. During a pogrom, the Jews were ordered out of Vienna. No one knew what to do with them or where to send them. They were put on boats to starve in the center of the city and the Christians were awaiting permission to kill them. One Sunday, while the Christians were taking walks by the Danube, they threw stale bread at the Jews. As if the bread were stones, it killed most of the Jews immediately. Even if the Christians were trying to help the Jews, they could never cross the abyss of understanding that separated the two religions. The parable reflects Edi's own sense of failure and betrayal for the unsuccessful resistance he led in Wolyna. The lesson is that when outsiders, like Edi Rubin, try to help, they only do harm. Zaddik is basically telling Edi to find a messiah who is not political, but religious.

When he compares the words "suffer and endure," he describes the way parables should be told:

> Und der Rabbi zitierte viele heilige Sprüche, um zu beweisen, daβ das Wort "bleiben" eine tiefe Bedeutung hatte, die wie die Wurzeln eines alten Baumes weithin reichte: bis zur Gerechtigkeit und bis zur Gnade im Leiden. Nur scheinbar schweifte er ab, wenn er im erhabenen Spiel mit Worten und mit dem Ziffernwert der Buchstaben, aus denen sie zusammengesetzt waren, sich bis zur trostreichen Deutung verlor, daβ Leiden und Blieben zusammengehörten, daβ sich aus ihrer Differenz wieder ein anderes Wort bilden lieβ, das war: Gnade (884).[317]

Rubin argues that he is not interested in parables and he believes that they will ultimately kill the Jews if they do not resist the Nazis. The horrible irony of the story is that Edi's resistance movement does contribute to the killing of the Jews. When the rabbi leaves, Bynie, Zaddik's son, confirms Rubin's mistrust of parables: "Um das

verwirrende Handeln der Menschen zu verstehen, braucht man vielleicht Dialektic, die Taten Gottes aber sollten einfach sein, ohne Gleichnis. Er soll uns keine Rätsel aufgeben!" (888).[318] Sperber, who had made a break from Judaism into the world of militant politics, the new messiah that also betrayed him, would seem to have wanted to write the anti-parable both in literature and his autobiography. And, indeed, through the tragic lives of the characters in the trilogy, he dispels the belief that communism or any other kind of militant politics could save the world. As if to further verify this idea, he writes an autobiography forty years later that is basically the non-fiction version of his fictional trilogy.

However, the story of Wolyna is the part of the trilogy that comes closest to resembling a parable. Completely fictional, it pulls its references from literary and autobiographical events. And, a closer look at the events in the trilogy shows that they have served as precursors to the parable of Wolyna. Sperber uses the plundered corpse as a moral compass, who takes the form of a well-dressed outsider, to talk about a break with Judaism, communism, and with an Austria that falls into the hands of the Nazis despite its efforts to fight against it.

In fact, at the end of "…wie eine Träne in Ozean" Rubin makes peace with parables. He tells Skarbek:

> Ich denke nicht mehr daran. Man muβ den tieferen Sinn verstehen, das Eregnis als Gleichnis, wie der Rabbi aus Wolyna es getan hat. Ich trage Ihnen nichts mehr nach, Skarbek, nichts, denn ich überschätze nicht mehr das Geschehen. Es gehört dem schnell dahinschwindenden Augenblick und ist, allein betrachtet, so gestaltlos wie eine Träne im Ozean – das hat Bynie gesagt" (964).[319]

The parable, it seems, can embrace everything about an event, even the fleeting moments of resistance movements that fail. As such, it serves as the greatest resistance to all political and religious systems that are based on exclusion such as totalitarianism, militant politics, and orthodox religions. I would suggest that it is not only the story of Wolyna that serves as a parable, but that Sperber's trilogy and his autobiography as a whole together form a parable of Sperber's unique messianic conception of survival. As the rabbi said, this parable has a deep meaning which reaches far down, like the roots of aged trees and, as Bouretz observed, it is like the burned bush, which repeatedly reignites itself from its own cinders. Each narrative root or cinder appears fleeting, but always returns in another form. By creating a messiah who always recreates, despite the wounds that he may open, the totalitarian system of exclusion is eliminated. *Wie eine Träne im Ozean* and *Die Wasserträger Gottes* are not only about telling abusive political stories of communism or fascism. These two works are also about paradoxically surviving in the abyss among a multiplicity of horrendous events in the twentieth century that condemn us to hope if we want to keep on living. Ironically, at the bottom of this abyss is hope and survival. In understanding this tragic state of his existence as a survivor of communism and other political betrayals, Sperber was able to gain a better understanding of what it meant for his Jewish people to survive, not just after the Holocaust, but in the face of the history of radical nationalism that spiraled into the massive destruction of WWII. Removing "…wie eine Träne im Ozean" as a separate story from the trilogy amputates Sperber's notion of survival. Survival is not just living through one event, but is about being able to tell a story that has the potential to endure all human catastrophes to come.

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all translation in the dissertation are mine. It is vain and pathetic to ask us for justification and engagement. Engaged, we are, albeit involuntarily. And, to finish, it is not the combat that makes artists out of us, but art that forces us to be combatants. By his very function, the artist is the witness to liberty, and this is a justification for which he pays dearly. By his very function he is engaged in the most inextricable layer of history, the one where the very flesh of man is suffocated. The world, being the way it is, we are engaged in it whatever we may have and we are by nature the enemies of abstract idols. ..This is what prevents us from pronouncing absolute judgment …In the world of the death sentences that is ours, the artists bear witness for what refuses to die in man.
[2] They are on the side of life, not of death. They are witnesses of the flesh, not of the law. By their vocation, they are condemned the understanding of even that which is their enemy. The italics are mine.
[3] And also these others who believe they can work for totalitarian ideology by means of their art break propaganda apart, call out for the unity for which they are real servants.
[4] Unless otherwise indicate, all references to communism will be to the Stalinist period, 1924-1953.
[5]There is no revolutionary work without artistic quality…*Bread and Wine* responds to this demand…And it is not its smallest grandeur that through the hatred of the hour, the face of a proud and human people remains our only hope of peace.
[6] It is one of the books of this time : beautiful, dark and necessary. I have liked above all what some of the greatest books of this time actually lack : compassion and a certain trembling of humanity, which it seems to me I would be able to recognize from hell.
[7] *Fontamara* was first published by Verlag Oprecht und Helbing1. In 1934, it was republished by the Universum Bucherei di Basilea and was diffused in Germany by underground resistance groups. Nettie Sutro provided the first German translation. Sutro was one of the only Swiss women who had received her Ph.D. However, she eventually left her career as writer and translator when she founded and headed the Schweizer Hilfswerk fur Emigrantenkinder (SHEK), a non-denominational Swiss women's organization that cared for refugee children, both Jewish and non-Jewish, in Paris and in Switzerland. For more on Sutro and the process of translation, see Maloney.
[8] Until this point, this dictator had been known mostly as the man who made "the trains run on time" in Italy. In fact, with the construction of new stations in Italy, Mussolini did improve the efficiency of trains. However, this statement contains within in what I would call "political erasure." The trains run on time, not only because they are efficient; they also run on time if Mussolini's followers decided to kill or threaten the passengers or the conductor, which is basically how he ran his regime. It is the equivalent to Hitler saying "there are no Jews in Germany." There are no Jews in Germany because he killed them. For more on Mussolini, see Bosworth.
[9]."... in *Fontamara* passion rises to such a height that it becomes an authentic work of art. A million copies of the book deserves to be diffused."
[10] Each study of *Fontamara* also signifies understanding the problems for which men of the thirties toiled, suffered, combated, and sometimes died. Luce d'Eramo was supportive of Italian fascism during her university studies. Before finishing, she volunteered to go and work in a labor camp in Germany. By this time, Mussolini's regime had fallen and D'Eramo, a fascist, wanted to verify if Germany was really treating Italian prisoners cruelly. She volunteered to go to Germany where she quickly understood the reality of Nazism. She was finally deported to Dachau, but managed to escape and lived near the camp until the end of the war when her spine was crushed by the collapse of a war bombardment, which paralyzed her legs. Returning to Italy, she joined the Italian communist party, but continued to develop her own version of "Christian Marxism." The publication of her novel, *Deviazione*, in 1951 had a similar, albeit much milder, effect that the revelations about Silone's past had on the Italian people.
[11] Recent studies on Alberto Moravia have shown that he had in some ways supported the Italian Fascists. For more on intellectuals during Italy's Fascist period, see Ben-Ghiat.
[12] The story of Berardo Viola is the story barely transfigured of Romolo Tranquilli. It was also an attempt to seek, in both an individual and collective event, the same identity of the writer, freeing himself from memories and remorse, and perhaps to reflect upon a future that still appeared dangerous and uncertain?
[13] There is evidence, Leake and Biocca report, that shows Romolo had been an active party member long before the arrest. In addition, they claim that there were long periods in the imprisonment during which Silone neglected a heartbroken Romolo. In the Silone archives at Pescina, there are letters from an imprisoned Romolo to a cousin explaining that he had no word of his brother. See Biocca and Canali's chapter "Fonte Mara" for details on how they show that this phenomenon proves that Silone's motive for fascist collaboration was not to free his brother. They also assert that Silone felt guilty because, as neither a high-ranking communist official, nor a fascist, was he able to arrange for his

brother's release. This is, one of the reasons why, Leake argues, it was essential for Silone to promote the image of his brother as a martyr through characters like Berardo Viola, the protagonist of *Fontamara*. More importantly, as Biocco indicates in this passage, Silone needed to identify with Berardo/Romolo as a way to project his own martyrization to the reading public.

[14] Trauma theorist Cathy Caruth, whom Leake uses to back up her own theory of Silone, writes about how "the experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and *against his very will*". She adds, "In some cases, Freud points out, these repetitions are particularly striking because *they seem not to be initiated by the individual's own acts* but rather appear as the possession of some people by a sort of fate, a series of painful events to which they are subjected, and *which seem to be entirely outside their wish or control"*

[15] For an interesting study on psychoanalysis and the way the archive can repress information, see Derrida.

[16] For an excellent history and analysis of Silone's fifteen years of exile in Switzerland, see Holmes.

[17] A small death.

[18]"More than likely I'm looking pretty bad. I should have died this winter, but I didn't want to…Survivors generally look pretty bad…Nevertheless, from time to time, you have to behave as if you've forgotten, otherwise you wouldn't be able to carry on living…, I can't think about the same thing all the time. I have to work, to study, to change milieu, people treat myself with the potion of Time, the oil of philosophy and the enema of politics" (Translation by Holmes, 13).

[19]I am currently working …on a novel about southern [Italian] life. The novel would already be finished if a part of the manuscript and some notes hadn't remained sequestered in Davos at the boarding house to which I still owe cash. I want to tell you a lot about this novel, but I don't have the time. It's different from other works in its literary form and I'm writing it because I can't say everything in political articles. There is always a part of truth that escapes.

[20] Artistic creation has been for me a struggle in which my mind, liberated from prior anxieties, distant, free, separated from a confused and equivocal world, tries to put things in order and create a world by itself, a simple, clear, obvious world, a fictive world, but a true one, in any case, more true that the real and apparent world, which reproduces the truth, hidden and forbidden.

[21] The apparent world is so false (I mean the official world, the world of photographers, information agencies, illustrated newspapers) that one of the essential duties of art is to recreate the world, - to reveal its interior and essential mecanism and to reveal it as alive. The need for sincerity and for truth led me to create a simple, clear, obvious world…the region where I was born and that I know and love like a child knows the breast of his mother; I feel led to recreate this piece of our planet [Abruzzo] such as I see it. That is to say, in its secret face which is truly painful, tired, exhausted, oppressed, bleeding, beneath the official varnish, beneath the "natural" varnish.

[22] I have told you on other occasions that the time to produce for me had not yet arrived and that I always considered myself in a period of preparation. Now I believe the time to produce has arrived. There is something new in me. I am not worried about what judgment will be rendered on *Fontamara*. I have never been so sure of myself.

[23] Artistic creation…appears to me as a natural, spontaneous, inevitable, irreplacable function from myself.

[24] Some nights I spontaneously wake up and have to get up to take notes. Other times I am in the garden and I have to run to my room to modify a passage or a chapter.

[25] *Fontamara*, *Bread and Wine*, and other works not yet published [were his] cure [and that] this was so difficult and healthy, like a new birth.

[26] The strange events I am about to describe took place in the course of a summer at Fontamara" (5). All English translations of Fontamara are by Eric Mosbacher.

[27] "Fontamara…that was the name that I gave to an old and obscure village in the Marsica, north of the reclaimed Fucino in a valley halfway up between the hills and the mountains" (5).

[28]Later I discovered that other places in southern Italy were already known by that name, sometimes with minor variations, and what was more serious, that the strange things that I faithfully record in this book also happened at a number of other places, though not at the same time or in the same sequence. But that did not seem to me to be a good reason for keeping quiet about them. There are plenty of names – Maria, Francesco, Giovanni, Lucia, Antonio, and many others – that are common enough, and the really important things in life, birth, love, pain, and death, are common to everyone, but people do not stop talking about them for that reason" (5).

[29] "Rethinking Progress."

[30] He talks about the poor Abruzzo peasants in which he tried to recount the vicissitudes of the clash, at once tragic and grotesque, between their as yet semi- feudal mentality and the new forms of exploitation and tyranny to which they were being subjected.
[31] "But for the strange events that I am about to describe, there would be no more to say about Fontamara. I spent the first twenty years of my life there, and that is all that I should have to say about it" (6).
[32] "…I knew the monotony of that sky, circumscribed by the amphitheater of mountains that surround the area like a barrier with no way out; for twenty years I knew the monotony of the earth, the rain, the wind, the snow, the saints' days, the food, the worries, the troubles, and the poverty – the everlasting poverty handed down by fathers who inherited it from their grandfathers, in the face of which honest toil had never been of any use" (6-7).
[33] "The harshest injustices were of such long standing that they had acquired the naturalness of the rain, the wind, and the snow"(7).
[34] "The life of men, of the beasts of the field, and of the earth itself seemed enclosed in an immoveable ring, held in a viselike grip of the mountains and the changes of the season, welded into an unchanging, natural cycle as in a kind of never-ending imprisonment" (7).
[35] "unskilled workers, the day laborers, the poor tradesmen" (7).
[36] "At Fontamara there are only two rungs on the social ladder:the lowest, that of the *cafoni,* which is at ground level, and that of the small landowners, which is just a little higher" (7).
[37] "The trades men are divided between the two: the less impoverished, who have a small shop or a few tools, are a little way up; the rest are at rock bottom" (7).
[38] "suffered incredible privations and sacrifices trying to climb that lowest step of the social ladder, but only rarely have they succeeded" (7).
[39] "viselike grip"(7).
[40] The Marsica is a region located within Abruzzo. It includes Avezzano, Aquila, and Pescina.
[41]" in the wake of a French regiment" (9). The Torlognes most likely came from France as ambassadors for the revolutionary government that Napoleon was trying to form and remained as local lords there after the war.
[42] "for the fact that the Fucino basin was subjected to a colonial regime. The great wealth it yields annually enriches a privileged minority of local people" (9).
[43] "But that is another story, and to cheer the reader after this description of the sad fate of Fontamara, one day perhaps I shall write an edifying life of the Torlogne family…which will certainly make much more of an entertaining reading" (9).
[44] "The obscure history of Fontamara is that of a monotonous cavalry of land-hungry *cafoni* who for generation after generation have sweated blood from dawn to dusk to increase the size of a small plot of barren land and have not succeeded in doing so" (9).
[45] "the fate of the Torlognes was the precise opposite. None of them have ever touched the soil, even for pleasure, but their holdings have extended into a lucrative realm of many tens of thousands of acres" (9).
[46] "speculated on the war" (9).
[47] "speculated on the salt monopoly, the troubles of 1848, the war of 1859, the Bourbons of the Kingdom of Naples and their downfall" (9).
[48] "House of Savoy, then on the democratic regime, and then on the dictatorship. Thus they gained thousands of millions of lire without taking off their gloves" (9-10).
[49] "The Piedmontese dynasty gave him something that he did not possess" (9-10).
[50] "But the last year the life of Fontamara, which had been stagnant since time immemorial, was shaken to its foundations by a series of unexpected and incomprehensible events" (10).
[51] "not a single day passed on which I did not return to it in my imagination" (11).
[52] "I was born and bred in the area and had been away for many years, but that did not prevent me from disbelieving these tales, from regarding the things that were alleged to have happened in Fontamara as imaginary and utterly fantastic, invented out of thin air for questionable motives, like so many other stories, and attributed to that remote spot because that made them more difficult to check" (10-11).
[53] "Down on the plain of course, many things changed, of course – at any rate, in appearance… The villagers watched the changes taking place below as if it were a play that had nothing to do with them" (8).
[54] "They found it *natural* enough, since it was in harmony with traditional abuses of power. But in the mountains, life continued as before" (10). The italics are mine.
[55]"to my great surprise I found three cafoni, two men and a woman sitting outside my front door, leaning against it and almost asleep. I recognized them at once as coming from Fontamara"(11).

[56] "they rose and followed me into the house" (13).
[57] "I fell asleep – and this was the most extraordinary phenomenon – without losing the thread of what she was saying, as if her voice came from the deepest depths of my being" (11).
[58]"When dawn broke and I awoke, the man was talking again. What they said is in this book" (11).
[59] His father had died from a disease he caught in Argentina. Like many southern Italians at this time period, he went to South America to find work in order to support his family at home. A series of earthquakes, drought, and a terrible economic depression had left arable land in ruins. Four of Silone's five brothers and sisters had died from various health problems.
[60] Origo, 197 – get full reference
[61] The first two chapters of his memoirs, " Visit to a Prison" and "Judith's Hair" are pre-earthquake stories that explain his father's teachings. Put page numbers and examples
[62]"In what language ought I tell this story?" (12).
[63]"Do not imagine for one moment that the inhabitants of Fontamara talk Italian . . . To *us* it is a foreign language . . .a dead language whose vocabulary and grammar development without any connection to *us*"(12). The italics are mine.
[64] "The Italian language cripples and deforms our thoughts, and cannot help giving them the flavor of a translation. But to express himself, a man should not have to translate. If it is true that to be able to express yourself well in school Italian you have first to learn to think in it, the effort that it costs us to talk that kind of Italian obviously means that we can't think in it. In other words, to us that kind of Italian culture is still school culture" (12).
[65] "(expressing myself is now an absolute necessity to me), I shall make the best job I can of translating, into the language that we learned at school, what I want everyone to know: the truth about what happened at Fontamara" (13).
[66] "Even though we tell the story in a borrowed tongue, the way of telling it will, I think, be our own"(12).
[67] "the art of putting one word after another, one line after another, one sentence after another, explaining one thing at a time, without allusions or reservations, calling bread bread and wine wine" (13).
[68] "Have we ever asked townspeople to tell their story in our way? No, we have not. Let everyone, then, have the right to tell his story in his own way" (13).
[69] Mosbacher 17, Get Italian translation.
[70] "So it went on for days and months. In the end, we just got used to moonlight again" (16).
[71] "A century had elapsed between the moonlight era and the electric era, a century that included the olive oil age and the paraffin age, *but one night was sufficient* to plunge us back from electric light to the light of the moon. . . All the innovations the Piedmontese brought us southern peasants in the space of seventy years boil down to two: electric light and cigarettes. They took the light away again, and as for cigarettes, those who've smoked them may choke for all we care. A pipe has always been good enough for us. Electric light had come to be accepted as a natural phenomenon at Fontamara, just like the moonlight. In the sense that nobody paid for it. Nobody had paid it for months. What were we to pay it with?" (16). The italics are mine.
[72] As darkness fell and lights went on in the neighboring villages and Fontamara remained in darkness, getting lost in shadow and mist and becoming indistinguishable from the rocks and thickets and dunghills, we immediately realized what had happened. It was a surprise and yet it wasn't." (17).
[73] "The time when *cafoni* were ignored and despised is gone forever. There are new authorities in office now, who hold the peasants in high esteem and wish to give consideration to their view"(21).
[74] "You remember that after the peace was made between the Pope and the government the priest explained to us from the altar that a new age was beginning for the *cafoni* too" (23).
[75] At the head of everything is God, the Lord of Heaven. Everyone knows that. Then comes Prince of Torlonia, lord of the earth.

> "Then come Prince Torlonia'a guards.
> "The come Prince Torlonia's guard's dogs.
> "Then, nothing at all.
> "Then nothing at all.
> "Then nothing at all"
> "Then come the *cafoni*. And that's all" (26).

[76] "The fourth category of the dogs was immense" (26).
[77] What Silone calls "school Italian" or standard Italian is based on Tuscan, especially the Florentine language.

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[78]"There was a lively argument in one case only, that of Berardo Viola. We tried to explain to the Hon. Pelino that Berardo wouldn't have signed on any account, but his name was put down too" (22).
[79] "We'd better not tell him" "It'll be far wiser to tell him nothing whatever about it"(22).
[80] In May of 1927, Silone and his communist colleague, Palmiro Togliatti traveled to Moscow for the meeting the Executive Committee of the Communist International. They arrived in the midst of a discussion denouncing Trotsky because he had criticized the situation in China. The members had drafted a resolution to expel him. When it was Silone's turn to sign, he asked to read the document first. However, he was not allowed and then became astonished when he learned that no one on the Executive Committee had read it either. When Silone refused to condemn Trotsky on the basis of a document that he had not read, the meet was adjourned until the following day. That evening, a Bulgarian member, Vasil Kolarov, of the committee came to Silone's hotel to try to convince the Italian to sign it. Kolarov admitted that he had read the document but had signed it all the same because, as he claimed, "Documents have nothing to do with it." Silone still refused to sign. Apparently, Stalin, without Silone's signature removed the mention from the vote. However, on the train home, Silone read in a newspaper that the Executive Committee of the Communist International had "unanimously" condemned Trotsky for betrayal. From that day, Silone's commitment to the communist party began to wane (Pugliese, 91-92).
[81] Qtd. in Pugliese, 43.
[82] "Berardo" is the name of the patron saint of Silone's home town, Pescina. Saint Berardo was a pastor in the Abruzzese town of Teramo in the 1100's and is known for helping make peace among the warring factions in the area. (Check this – from Wikipedia, but look elsewhere later)
[83] Eyewitnesses to other Italian earthquakes have reported that they too first feel and hear a slight rumbling, like a threshing machine or thunder, which then culminates in what sounds like gunfire explosion. An eyewitness account from the Messina and Reggio Calabria earthquake in 1908 writes that she, at first heard "a low, growling sound like thunder." Another witness says that after the rumbling, there was " a great terrifying roar or series of subterranean thunder claps." For more on earthquakes see,
[84] "monotonous, regular hum" (97).
[85] "beehive," "threshing machine," "unprecedented din made by such a large number of vehicles," "a sharp crackle of shots, followed by the falling of glass from the big window of the church" (96-97).
[86] "The bell tower and the whole earth beneath us [them] were trembling. I held her [Elvira] tight to prevent her from falling, from tumbling down the wooden stairs and attracting the attention of the armed men to our hiding place" (100-101).
[87] "I remember nothing of that terrible night except what I have just tried to tell you. Sometimes it seems to me that I know nothing and remember nothing of the whole of my life except what happened before my eyes that night," (101).
[88] Mosbacher 104 get Italian
[89] "Long live who?…everyone…liberal…Down with who?…the bank…there's only one and it gives money only to il Impresario…communist" (106-107).
[90] Quote this in Pugliese
[91] "The ghost of a tall, young, slim woman, with a face as white as snow and her hands clasped to her bosom….then it vanished" (107).
[92] "It's absolutely unheard of…extraordinary… in the past, even when confronted with the most terrible events, he had always been able to quote previous examples in history. For the first time in his life he admitted that something had happened beyond his comprehension" (102).
[93] "Complications and swindles began, according to the old, when the Piedmontese arrived. Every day they made a new law and set up a new office, and to enable people to find their way about in all these lawyers became necessary. Nominally the law was made independent of the landowners and was supposed to be the same for everyone, but to apply it, dodge it, turn it to your own advantage, the importance of lawyers and their numbers grew"(131).
[94] "We were all born at Fontamara, and here we were all together in the villages square: that was what we had in common, and that was all…Apart from that everyone thought of himself, of the best way of extricating himself form that square of armed men, never mind what might happen to those left behind" (103).
[95] "Long Live Berardo Viola" (162).
[96] "If I turn traitor, everything will be lost. Fontamara will be damned forever. If I betray, centuries will pass before another such opportunity arises. And if I die? It will be the first time that a *cafone* dies, not for himself, but for others." That was his great discovery. That was the discovery that opened his eyes,

as if a blinding light had flashed in the cell…"It will be something new…Something completely new, and an example. The beginning of something entirely new" (163-164).
[97] "The inspector wrote something on a sheet of paper and I signed it without reading it. I would have signed anything, even my own death sentence" (164).
[98] "In the distance we heard the clatter of horses' hooves approaching. It might have been *caribinieri* from Pescina, so we fled into the fields" (172).
[99] "We can't stay here…What are we to do? After so much anguish and so much mourning, so many tears and so many tricks, so much hate and injustice and despair, what are we to do?"(173).
[100] It's bread, wheat, care, a fraternal hand that must be extended. The rest is literature
[101] The title"La Grèce en haillons" (Greece in rags), comes from Camus' observation that the landscape of Kabylie looks like Greece from afar. On closer inspection, he realizes that the landscape hides misery. It was published on June 5, 1939 in the newspaper *Alger républicain* in a series of articles he did on the region between this date and June 15, 1939. These were accompanied by photographs that revealed the misery and poverty that characterized the region. In 1958, Camus compiled articles and essays he had written on Algeria since 1939 in a collection called *Actuelles III Chroniques Algériennes (*Current Events III, Algerian Chronicles) His 1939 articles on Kabylie were synthesized and grouped under the title "Misère de la Kabylie" (Misery in Kabylie). While much of the information from the Kabylie texts remains in "Misère en Kabyle" of 1958, the lines quoted in the epigraph were omitted.
[102] *Indigènes* was the term the French term used to classify people indigenous to the countries that France colonized. In Algeria, *indigènes* refered to the Berbers, the ethnic Arabs, and the native Jews. Today, the word *autochtone* is the most accepted term as it does not imply only one indigenous group.
[103] *Alger républicain* was a daily newspaper that began on October 6, 1938 and ended on September 15, 1939. Camus stayed on as a journalist when, on this day, the newspaper changed its title to *Le Soir républicain*, which was suspended on January 10, 1940. It was one of the only newspapers representing the Algerian left. It supported the Front Populaire government, which sought a collaboration of all left-wing parties such as the Communists and Socialists, to fight the encroachment of fascism in Europe. At its outset, the newspaper attracted support from Algerian Muslims because it condemned their unequal status in the colonized nation. However, it lost this support when it became clear that the fight was against fascism, rather than against colonialism, had taken center stage in the newspaper.
[104] Camus was editor-in-chief and editorial writer for *Combat*, which began as a French Resistance newspaper, from 1944-1947.
[105] Jean Moulin is a French Resistance hero whose remains lie in the Panthéon in Paris, France.
[106] It is just as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another as it is to represent anything that really exists by something that does not exist.
[107] The little-remembered massacres of Sétif and Guelma occurred in and around these two Alegerian towns on May 8, 1945, the same as VE day in Europe. They were France's reprisal to a massive uprising by Muslims, which had resulted in around 100 murders of Europeans. Both sides disagree on the number of Muslims killed. The French official report reads around 1,000. However, most historians say around 10,000. Algerians today still maintain that close to 45,000 lost their lives. Rachid Bouchedra has recently dramatized this controversy in his film *Hors la loi.* At its screening during the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, veterans protested its claims.
[108] The PCA was not an annex of the Communist Party of France. Camus joined not because he was particularly enthusiastic about the Soviet Union or the writings of Karl Marx, but because he believed it was the one of the only political parties willing to fight against the oppressions of both fascism and colonialism. His high school teacher and life-long mentor Jean Grénier, a philosopher, urged him to participate because, as he believed, someone Camus' age should realize that politics are necessary to do philosophy. Grénier thought Communism would be the perfect launching pad for what he saw at the time as Camus' important future in politics. Growing up poor and fatherless in a family of hard workers made it easy for Camus to identify with the PCA's members and their maxim that the proletariat is the vector of history. For more information about Camus' time as a communist, see Todd, *Camus.*
[109] While in the party, Camus helped created the "Théâtre du Travail". The project of the Théâtre du Travail was to make a theater that was for the workers. It tried to group together young revolutionary intellectuals, academics, students, artists, painters, sculptors, architects, workers, and petit-bourgeois who were influenced by Marxism. The idea was that art could come down from its ivory tower and could be made from everyday people. Camus adapted André Malraux's novel *Temps du mépris*, which played at the theater in 1936. For more about the "Théâtre du Travail" see Guérin.
[110] Basically, [in] a wish to stay away from pseudo-idealisms, from optimisms on command…in the (loyal) experience I will attempt, I will always refuse to put between life and man a volume of *Capital.*

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[111]Young ex-combatant of the CP, Albert Camus refuses to sacrifice what he calls “the Arabs” or his artistic conception to the demands of a party that passes off political content as the most important part of any work, especially artistic work.

[112] Camus’ investigation took place at an important moment for the future of colonial Algeria. In 1936, the Blum-Viollette bill, which called for 21,000 Muslims to immediately have the same rights as the Europeans, was dropped. In 1938-1939, more Muslims supported the P.P.A., the radical anti-colonialist independence party led by Messali Hadj, and rebellion was on the horizon. Camus saw this as a last chance to make the French aware of the misery of the region and as a way to show the Muslims that the *Alger républicain* supported them.

[113] I went to Kabylie with the deliberate intention to talk about what was good…But I saw nothing. This misery clogged up my eyes.

[114] An inexpressible distress.

[115] Greece irresistibly evokes a certain glory of the body and its prestiges. And in no country that I know, the body has never seemed to me more humiliated than in Kabylie. It must be written without delay: the misery of this country is frightening.

[116] This procession of blind and infirm people with sunken cheeks and rags which, through these days, followed me in silence.

[117] most hopeless spectacle.

[118]What have we done for it? What have we done so that this region might recover its true face? What have we done, all of us who write, who talk or who legislate and who, returning to our homes, forget the misery of others? To say that we love this people is not enough.

[119]It’s bread, wheat, care, a fraternal hand that must be extended. The rest is literature. The italics are mine.

[120] The scandal is not to hide the truth, but to not tell it in its entirety.

[121] “Petits-blancs” was the term used to describe the poor, white underclass of Algeria.

[122] The work is a confession, I have to bear witness. I only have one thing to say, to really see; it’s in this life of poverty, among these humble and proud, that I have surely touched what seems to me to be the true sense of life. Works of art will never be enough. Art is not everything for me. At the least, it is a means.

[123] To come back to the bread and wine of simplicity, this is Ignazio Silone’s itinerary and the novel’s lesson. And it is not the least of its greatness that it incites us, us too, to find through the hates of the hour the face of proud and human people, who remain our only hope for peace.

[124] Of whom and of what can let me say “I know that!”

[125] This heart in me, I can feel it and I judge that it exists. This world, I can touch it and I still judge that it exists.

[126] Revolt of the flesh.

[127] The horror comes, in reality, from the mathematical aspect of the event.

[128] No morale, no effort is *a priori* justifiable in the face of the bloody mathematics that controls our condition.

[129] I sometimes doubt it is permitted to save men of today. But it is still possible to save the children of this man, in their body and in their mind…all mutilation of man can only be temporary.

[130] For an extensive study on Camus and the philosophical and religious implications of the body in his works, see Myrglod.

[131]Origins of modern madness. It’s Christianity that has turned man away from the world. It has reduced him to himself and to his history. The communism is the logical follow up to Christianity. It’s a history of Christians.Id. At the end of two thousand years of Christianity, the rebellion of the body. Two thousand years were needed so that we could expose ourselves naked on the beaches. From there excess. And it found its place in custom/use. The body just needs to be returned to philosophy and metaphysics. It’s one of the meanings of modern convulsion.

[132] The doctrine was restrictive and the reduction of all value to only one history authorized the most extreme consequences. Marx believed that the ends of history, at least, would reveal themselves as rational and moral.That was his utopia…The revendication of justice ends in injustice if it is not founded first on an ethical justification of justice. Without this, crime too, one day, becomes a duty…[When good and evil are] confused with events, nothing more is good or evil, but only premature or out of date. Who will decide from this opportunity if not the opportunist ? Later; the disciples say, you will judge…But the victims will no longer bere to judge. For the victim, the present is the only value, revolt the only action.

[133] “Art poétique” was composed in 1874 when Verlaine was in prison at Mons. It was first published in 1882 in *Paris-Moderne* on November 10, 1881.

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[134] See lines 1-3, 5-6, 8 -10, 16, 19,29-30, 33-34
[135] V.P. Underwood 's book, *Verlaine et l'Angleterre* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1956), outlines the immense influence that England, the English language, and English writers, most notably Shakespeare, had on the poet.
[136]The massacres of Guelma and Sétif provoked a profound and indignant for the Algerian French. The repression that followed developed in the Arab masses a feeling of fear and hostility. In this climate, a political action that would be at the same time firm and democratic would diminish chances of success.
[137] "Deporté" is the French term for someone deported to concentration camps.
[138] We've known for a long time and the world is beginning to grow tired of so many atrocities. Delicate people find it monotonous and reproach us for still talking about it.
[139]And how could I forget because I felt a bad conscious that I could not have been the only one to have.
[140] For a discussion on post-war reception of the Holocaust, see, Rousso, Jackson, and Wierwiorka.
[141]A lot of information made us believe that it was indeed life this for our deported comrades. But we held back from talking about it while waiting for more concrete information. Today, this is not possible. The first message that comes to us from over there is decisive and we must scream our indignation and our anger. There, there is a shame that must stop.
[142]We only have thing in sight to save the most precious French lives. Neither politics nor the national susceptibilities have nothing more to do in the middle of this anguish…We have to act fast.
[143]It is necessary that we realize that only one hair from these men has more importance for France and for the entire universe than twenty-some political men of which swarms of photographers capture their smiles.
[144]guardians of honor and witnesses to courage.
[145] This day at last! Yet and it [the day] still finds them [the survivors] in the middle of corpses and the stenches, stopped in their élan by barbed wire, forbidden to a world that, in their darkest ideas, they could have never imagined so stupid and unconscious.
[146] We will stop ourselves here.
[147] Robert Antelme, a French prisoner of war interned in Buchenwald, confirms this double silence of the suffering body in his memoir of 1946 about his return: "Nous voulions parler, être entendus enfin. On nous dit que notre apparence physique était assez éloquente à elle seule" (9). Antelme's statement seems to underscore Camus' reaction to the suffering body. For Camus, the journalist, this body, in both Kabylie and in post-war France, marks a rupture of speech. For more about Antelme's return, see Antelme.
[148] Certainly…Make a total condemnation.
[149]Total, no, it must be said. But I suppose that this condemnation would be unfounded.
[150] In effect, such a condemnation would be unfounded, but in asking this question, he only wanted to know if Rambert's testimony could be with or without reserves.
[151]I only give testimonies without reserves. I wouldn't support yours with my information.
[152]There might a curious report to do on the quantity of dead rats that we're finding in the city right now.
[153] Ah, that interests me.
[154] For a guide to a history of allegory, see Copeland. *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, edited by Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
[155] In the middle of an animated conversation, the tobacco salesman spoke about a recent arrest that made the news in Algiers. It was about a young salesman who had killed an Arab on the beach.
[156] If we put all that riff raff in prison…honest people could breathe.
[157] Cottard' sudden agitation made him leave the store without excusing himself.
[158]He was trying to assemble in his mind what he knew about the disease. Figures floated in his memory and he said to himself that the thirty-some great plagues of history have caused almost 100,000 deaths,
[159]The plague of Constantinople that, according to Procopius, had ten thousand victims in one day.
[160] Seventy years ago, forty thousand rats died of the plague before the scourge was interested in the inhabitants.
[161]There was no way to count the rats. The approximate calculation was made, roughly speaking, with obvious chance of error.
[162]However, if a rat of thirty centimeters long, forty thousand rats standing up would make….
[163] Marxism easily dominated the worker movement from 1872 due to, without a doubt, its own grandeur, but also because the only socialist tradition that could hold it up was drowned in blood ; there were practically no marxists among the insurgents of 1871. This automatic purge of the revolution has

continued, by the care of politice states, until today. More and more, the revolution found itself delivered to its bureaucrats and its doctirnes…
[164] In 1871, French authorities revoked their promises made earlier to tribal leaders to replenish the grain supply for their people. In addition, the colonizers further extended their ownership of tribal land, leaving Muslims with nothing to do but work for miserable wages in French fields.
[165] German writer Wolfgang Schivelbusch makes this claim in his book *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery,*
[166] The events of 1945 should have been an alert signal: the ruthless repression of the Constantine people accentuated, on the contrary, the anti-French movement. The French authorities estimated that this repression put a final point on the rebellion. In fact, they gave it a starting point.
[167] For more on the Catholics and the Holocaust, see Caroll.
[168] descended the alleyways of the quartier nègre. For more on Oran, see Gardini. Gardini reports that it is supposed that one of the reasons it was called the "village nègre" comes from the dark-skinned *autochtones,* mostly "Moores" that inhabited the area.
[169] The cause was military strategy. They needed fortify this part of Oran.
[170] For more on the question of slaves in Africa, See Brower.
[171]curiously solitary. A few sounds of a bugle, in the sky still golden only witness that servicemen were giving the impression they were doing their job. During this time, along the abrupt streets, between the blue walls, the ochre and purples of the Moorish houses/
[172] Today the Places des Armes is called La Place Foch.
[173] Dusty and dirty,.
[174]If this cry is not heard, if immediate measures are not announced by allied organisms, we will repeat this call, we will exhaust all the means with which we dispose in order cry beyond all the borders, and to let the world know the lot which victorious democracies reserve for the witnesses who let their throats get cut so that the principles they defend at least gave an appearance of truth.
[175] The part of the statue that celebrated French victory was removed after the war and brought back to France.
[176] Algeria. I do not know if I make myself understood. But I have the same feeling come to me about Algeria as when I look at a child's face. Yet I know that everything is not pure.
[177] 93
[178] Rieux had also been separated from his wife. He had sent her to a sanatorium so that she could receive care for tuberculosis.
[179]It's that they come out of abstractions and they put themselves face to face with the bloody face that makes history today.
[180]only conscious of the difficult indifference that started to fill him still looking at the hotel door behind which Rambert had disappeared.
[181] Simply, I am still not used to seeing death. I don't know anything more. But after all…
[182] …is found at the only place where the sea is visible a kind of promenade running along, a short distance, the cliffs that dominated the port.
[183] …read attentively the list of those who died in the fields of honor.
[184] Stora, Benjamin. *Histoire de L'Algérie Coloniale (1830-1954).* Paris: Editions de la Découverte, 1991, 44.
[185] Carrying what he had avidly sought to know through books and beings, it seemed to him know that this secret had a part linked with this death of his younger father, with what he had been and what he had become, and that what he, himself, had looked far, what was close to him in time and in blood. To tell the truth, he had not been helped. A family which did not speak much, which did not read or write, an unhappy and distracted mother, who could have told him about this young and pitiful father? No one knew about him except his mother and she had forgotten. He was sure of it. And he had died unknown on this land where he had passed fugitively like an unknown.
[186] …the uneasiness felt by military servicemen due to the ignorance and incomprehension that they find in Metropolitan France.
[187] …seems to come from the fact that the French believe they are dealing with a regular army and certain among them sometimes to go so far as to pronounce the word mercenaries.
[188] The troops raised in North Africa haven't stopped, during these two wars and from thousands of kilometers from their country, taking the largest part in the common combat. And Algeria has always had the right feeling about what France owed her on this point. (
[189] The lot of these North Africain, whether they are French or Muslim, deserves our attention [because]… The troops raised in North Africa haven't stopped, during these two wars and from thousands of kilometers from their country, taking the largest part in the common combat. And Algeria

has always had the right feeling about what France owed her on this point…[Metropolitan France] should really be inspired by this memory and this state of mine and should welcome them as they deserve with a precise idea of what they have done and what they will do again.
[190] No militant of the Resistance should be advised to treat these men lightly. It's that the Resistance has today the experience of courage and sacrifice. It knows how to recognize them where they are. And we can witness that, if it is a place where they have always been, it's in this African army in which no French person should ignore the true face.
[191] At one of the tables that filled the rest of the narrow joint where they were was an Navy officer, a woman on each art who was telling a congested big/fat talker about a epidemic of typhus in Cairo.
[192] Camps, he said, camps were made for the indigenous people, with tents for the sick and, all around, a row of sentinels that shot at the family when they fraudulently tried to bring old witch remedies. It was hard, but it was right.
[193] There were thus, in the city, several other camps of which the narrator, from scruples and from a lack of direct information, can say no more. But what he can say, is that the existence of these camps, the odor of men when they came back from them, the enormous voices coming from the loud speakers at dusk, the mystery of the walls and the fear of these condemned places, weighed heavily on the morale of our citizens and added even more to the distress and the malaise of everyone.
[194]The first time that the scourge appeared in history, it was to punish God's enemies. Pharaoh was opposed to eternal designs and the plague made him now fall to his knees. Since the beginning of all history, the scourge of God put at his feet the blind and the deaf.
[195]The is no longer when advice, a fraternal hand were the means to push you towards good.
[196]It's here, my brothers, that divine mercy finally manifests itself, mercy that put good and evil in everything, anger and pity, the plague and salvation. Even this scourge that kills you, it raises you up and shows you the way.
[197]No, the plague had nothing to do with the great exalting images that had followed Dr. Rieux since the beginning of the epidemic.
[198] 159
[199]It would be more accurate to say that morally and physically, they suffered from emaciation.
[200] It is true that Camus does, for a brief moment after the war, appreciate the communists' efforts in the Resistance, but for most of his life after his brief encounter with the party in Algeria that ended in 1936, he is critical.
[201]Christians and communists will tell me that optimism is at a longer range, that it is superior to all the rest and that God or history, whichever the case, are the final satisfaction of their dialectic.
[202]If Christianity is pessimistic when it comes to man, it is optimistic when it comes to human destiny. I am optimistic when it comes to man.
[203]Origins of modern madness. It's Christianity that has turned man away from the world. It has reduced him to himself and to his history. The communism is the logical follow up to Christianity. It's a history of Christians.Id. At the end of two thousand years of Christianity, the rebellion of the body. Two thousand years were needed so that we could expose ourselves naked on the beaches. From there excess. And it found its place in custom/use. The body just needs to be returned to philosophy and metaphysics. It's one of the meanings of modern convulsion.
[204] Man is not an idea.
[205] Stuck in grey clay…Almost immediately, a lone, continuous cry came out, that slightly modified his respiration and that suddenly filled the room with a monotonous protest, discord, and so little human that it seemed to come from all men at the same time.
[206] looked at this infantile mouth, dirtied by the disease, full of cries from all ages.
[207] At the other end of the room, the rhythm of his moan hurried out until it made a true cry while the others whimpered more and more.
[208] Around him, the moans started again, but deafly, and like a faraway echo of this struggle that just finished.
[209]Perhaps we should love what we can't understand.
[210]No, my father…I have another idea of love. And I will refuse until my death to love this creation in which children are tortured.
[211]I do not want to discuss this with you. We are working together for something reunites us beyond blasphemies and prayers. This alone is important.
[212]Yes, he says, yes you also work for the salvation of man.
[213]The salvation of man is too big a word for me. I am not going so far. It is his health that interests me, his health first.

[214]But, there are people who don't know it, or who do well in this state, and people who know that who would like to escape. Me, I have always wanted to escape.
[215]Several deaths were necessary to make a world in which we kill no one.
[216] The same dizziness that seized the child I was obscured my eyes of a man.
[217]Do you know that the firing squad puts itself at one and half meters of the condemned? Do you know that if the condemned made two steps forward, they would batter his chest with their rifles? Do you know that at this short distance, the shooters concentrate their aim on the region of the heart and that all of them, with their big bullets, they make a hold where one could put their fist? No, you don't know because these are the details they don't talk about. Man's sleepiness is more sacred than the life for péstiférés.
[218]indirectly subscribed to the death of thousands of men, that I have even provoked this death in finding good the actions and principles that they mortally believed in.
[219]They made me think of the good way of giving reason to red robes was to give the exclusivity of condemnation.
[220]It seems to me that history has made me right, today it's who kills the most. They are all in the fury of murder, and they can't do otherwise.
[221] But there always comes an hour of history where those who dare say that two and two make four is punished by death. And the question is not knowing what is the recompense or the punishment that waits for this reasoning. The question is to know if two and two, yes or no, make four. For those of our co-citizens who thus risk their lives, they have to decide whether, yes or no, they were in the plague and whether, yes or no, they need to struggle against it.
[222]My affair, in any case, it was not reasoning. It was the red owl…my affair, it was the red hole in his chest.
[223]The rest, health, integrity, purity, if you wish, it's an effect of will and a will that should never stop.
[224] I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice, (get tome and page number)
[225] The English translation,by Constantine Fitzegibbon, of the three volumes is as follows : *Der verbrannte Dornbusch* is *The Burned Bramble, Tiefer als der Abgrund* is *The Abyss,* and *Die verlorene Buch is Journey Without End.*
[226] A communist Iliade.
[227] Here is a new voice that adds itself to ours, strong, intelligent, and pure…The unique quality of this book comes from the fact that its author is eastern European by origin, psychoanalyst by protection, he was a communist for ten years by passion and conviction, and a virtuoso of the grotesque Hegelian-Marxist dialectic…In brief, it's the novel-saga of the Kominterm, and the first one. Therefore, a capital event.
[228] One of the greatest narratives of Israel.
[229] It was Malraux's idea to publish it apart and to wait one year before publishing *Journey Without End,* of which *…qu'une larme dans l'océan* is a part. I accepted for three reasons. First because Malraux suggested to publish it apart with a preface that he would write…Malraux is my oldest friend in France…Next, it seemed to me important that, six years after the end of the war and the genocide, I wanted to highlight the destiny of my people. And I still think today that it can interest all of those who still consider it the greatest moral catastrophe : the genocide perpetrated at the heart of a Europe of high civilization. Finally, for the third reason, this narrative is of a different character from the rest of the trilogy…The heroes are not practicing philosophers of history, they are men for whom the world's destinty, the one of each individual…is determined by divine will.
[230] But to come back to the war, I would like to insist on the fundamental role that it has played in my life. I lived through the war in its immediacy by confonting this experience with biblical teachings.
[231] The most profound sound of his soul.
[232] The English translations of his autobiographical trilogy, *All das Vergangene, (All of Our Yesterdays)* are the follwing: *Die Wasserträger Gottes* is *God's Water Carriers,* translated by Joachim Neugroschel; *Die vergebliche Warnung* is *The Unheeded Warning,* translated by Harry Zohn; *Bis man mir Scherben auf die Augen* is *Until My Eyes are Closed With Shards*, translated by Harry Zohn.
[233] Ruthenian was the term used to describe the Ukrainians.
[234] "Yet, despite everything, there were many, if not always recognizable bonds between the Jews of the shtetl and the Ruthenians. Dissimilar as they were, they shared poverty, their common technological backwardness, and finally the very different yet equally profound all-permeating faith in God brought them closer than any outsider could have guessed" (*God's Water Carriers,* 38).
[235] "The Ruthenians hated the Polish counts and barons and the imperial officials, who were almost exclusively Poles in Eastern Galicia; they also despised Jews, who had crucified Jesus Christ and who (the Ruthenians felt), outfoxed them at the weekly markets…No, the relationship between them and us

was not simple. We sensed that if they had been living in the Tsarist Empire, they would have eagerly joined the pogroms. Nevertheless, we preferred them to the Poles, who monopolized the administrative and judicial systems" (38).

[236] At the end of the war a small part of eastern Galicia was claimed by Ukrainians, which caused tensions with the Poles and led to several conflicts. However, Poland eventually reclaimed the territory.

[237] Red Vienna was the term for Austria's capitol's period of 1918 to 1934. During this time, the city was ruled by a mostly-socialist administration, who helped construct public housing. Intellectuals and artists such as Freud, Karl Kraus, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Adolf Loos, and Arthur Schnitzler were among the great minds of Red Vienna. For more about Red Vienna and its architecture see, Blau.

[238] "Fragments." (T*he Burned Bramble,* 254).

[239] "Fragments" *(God's Water Carriers,* 90).

[240] "Anything that exists may survive for a long time or perish quickly; but much of what exists signifies much more than it appears to be, because it is *rolled up or folded up"* (50). The italics are mine.

[241] "He had plenty of patience and he was prepared to wait" (*The Burned Bramble,* 20).

[242] "It was his custom to follow every experience through to the end" (22).

[243] An extraordinary book…the characters of this drama present admirable dimensions.

[244] Mr. Sperber must have hesitated a lot before choosing his technique. But having chosen it, he implemented it with application. He spares us nothing. As soon as a character appears in his book, he tells us their entire life.

[245] "Yet you lived, and the Party lived too. It didn't die with the death of those men in whom it lived. For there were always fresh ones. It was Herbert Soennecke's job to see to it that there were always replacements ready" (The Burned Bramble,153). Herbet Soennecke is the leader of the underground German communist party, who bears a resemblance to Willi Münzenberg. Münzenberg was the first propaganda leader of the party, who, after the leaving it, went on to lead the anti-fascist, anti-Stalin groups in Paris. For more information on Münzenberg., see Badia *Les Bannis d'Hitler. Accueil et lutte des exilés allemands en France, 1933-1939.*

[246] A desperate song of those for whom all their expectations were wrong, and who didn't want to adore the cinders of a bush of life….Let's say it is a kind of epic poem; a communist Illiad.

[247] "that never before had a man been so close to him, so important to him. He would have liked to embrace him" (*The Burned Bramble,* 247).

[248] "When she raised her eyes and looked at him – he didn't trust himself to tell her that Hans was dead - it seemed to him that he had seen this woman often before. He couldn't be confusing her with someone else, for there could only be one such face in the world. Yet he couldn't think where he might have seen her" (247).

[249] "a long text that she had apparently learned by heart, preparing and arranging each involved sentence as she came to it…he remained beneath her spell, oppressed by a confused sensation, confused and illogical as a dream…he had often met this woman – at one time she had been important to him – but all he knew about her was that he had forgotten everything. Her face told him that they shared a secret, but it didn't tell him what that secret was" (250).

[250] "For the second time in his life he was overwhelmed by the feeling that a stranger was not really a stranger but was someone whom he had forgotten. The first occasion on which this had happened to him was in a squalid room in Prague where he had sat opposite a woman to whom he had brought the news that her husband had been killed in the Austrian Civil War. As then, so now he felt most insistently that he might possess a second memory in which a secret, but not its solution, was preserved" (*Journey Without End,* 177).

[251] "Perhaps it was the way the boy listened, or the need to unburden him at last, to give utterance to the lament which for months had been locked silently in his breast – at any rate he now found he had to tell it all, even as he had rehearsed it to himself during the days and nights of his travels" (177).

[252] "The long history of the little old Jewish town of Wolyna remained unwritten; it was handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation" (168).

[253] "Everything that you have told us we know, Dr. Rubin. For centuries the fires of the stake burned throughout Europe. Then for a short time they were extinguished and you, enlightened people you said it was all over you said a new age had come in which the Jews no longer needed the Messiah, no longer needed God. But we have always known the difference between a brief pause and an ending. We lived constantly in fear and expectation, and we live thus now" (179).

[254] "traces, which no one wished to obliterate, endured of wars, uprisings, pogroms, epidemics, great fires" (168-169).

[255] "could…quote a single precise date" (168).

[256] "on the exact spot where martyrs had once been killed for their faith, men, women and children…on the western hillside, where the stones had sunk deep into the earth… the inscriptions were hard to decipher" because "time had rubbed [them] away until they became illegible" (168-169).
[257]"had to learn at the age of three, spending many hours of the day under the thumb of the strict heder reader, learning to spell and, soon afterward starting to translate difficult Hebrew texts" (*God's Water Carriers*, 32).
[258] "These men often quoted wise, deep, and very astute statements…Or else they quoted books and articles, mostly by Hebrew writers, or apocryphal utterances attributed to one "sharp mind" or another" (12).
[259] "Never forget any injustice done to any of your forebears. Remember the wicked things they did to others and the just punishment they suffered" (36).
[260] "Some time ago, right after my sixtieth birthday, I realized that the face I saw in the mirror at least once a day looked completely unfamiliar" (3).
[261] "Something had been happening to me – probably for years- and somehow, without any dramatic metamorphosis or sense of loss, my face and I had become strangers" (3).
[262] "In the days that followed this ordinary and extraordinary discovery, I seriously considered writing my memoirs…it was …this partial *disidentification,* this amazingly sober, almost unfeeling dissociation from my own face – enabling me just as soberly to distance myself from my own past that inspired me to write my memoirs" (3-4).
[263]"Yearning for memories" (4).
[264] "People like me had gone on much too long, certain they were 'living on borrowed time'…henceforth I would live in the shadow rather than in the light of that certainty" (4).
[265] "It appeared to me as if I were an outside observer, registering every detail as attentively as someone who goes away and keeps looking back, knowing he will never return" (4).
[266] Later, after they'd won, they would bury their many dead; for the time being, they must let the enemy, who was temporarily victorious, dispose of the corpses as he saw fit" (*The Burned Bramble,* 247).
[267] "Regardless, the memory of Hans was continually before his [Edi's] eyes; he saw him as he had left him, standing almost upright in the little trench beside the machine gun" (247).
[268] "The vision of the man who died, at a lost post and for a lost cause, moved him in a manner he could not have put into words…Now for the first time, he felt that death had bound him to another man. And this man, to whom he felt so inexpressibly close, was a man he had scarcely known" (247).
[269] "I wish you'd tell me all about him. Forgive me, it's probably tactless, but -" (248).
[270] "Some ultimate, most dreadful village in eastern Galicia" (249).
[271] "In our village…the huts, the walls, and the floors are made of rubble, and the roofs are thatched with straw. On the hill above the village stands the castle of the Polish count. Wherever you are in the village you can see it. We have four seasons like anybody else, but our countryside is autumnal and with each new season something of the autumn mysteriously returns. On the finest day the sky will be covered with heavy black clouds that reach down to the cottage chimneys. Everything is hidden behind walls of rain, except the castle of the Polish count: wherever you may be you can still see that. The silver birches stand guard in front of it. It may be full summer when the heavy corn sways on the count's fields that stretch to the far horizon; in the stony plots of the peasant it is already autumn, though the potatoes that grow there have not yet been dug up" (248-249).
[272] "It is only when we sing our songs that the rooks fall silent. It is only when we sing that the castle of the count is hidden behind its silver birch trees: then it no longer looks down on us and we can forget it" (249).
[273] "never forgot the castle" (249).
[274] "He believed village life was not based on an eternal, inalienable right" that said that the peasants should not have a decent life" (251).
[275] "was probably the most out-of-the-way spot in Galicia," (*God's Water Carriers,* 72).
[276]"Manor" (72).
[277] "has assumed unusual importance in my "disactualized" memory… Whenever I have sought comfort by daydreaming about a quiet, perfectly happy life…I have …recalled Tracz" (78).
[278] "Whenever someone I care for is inexplicably late, I get all sorts of terrifying images – and I think of Tracz" (78).
[279] "The houses in our village are huts, the walls and floors are clay, the roofs are thatched…We have seasons too, but our countryside belongs to the fall, with every season, the fall secretly returns…The crows nest everywhere in our village. In their croaking, the autumn speaks even on days when the land might forget it…" (78).

[280] "Nothing resists fragmentation so violently as time in its inexorable flow. However, we experience it in a continuously changing articulation…One reason the experience of time does not become chaotic in memory is that the person remains the unchangeable, unshakable center" (79).
[281] "This tree frequently grows in the daydreams of West Europeans who originally came from Eastern Europe" (37).
[282] "Lenin for once managed to rally a majority…the thirty-three-year-old politician as usual feverishly scrawled note after note, using a notebook page to jot down issues and demands that he hoped to bring up. But in between, he kept writing one word, always the same, through varying the script: *bryosa*, birch. It was the homesickness that dictated this word to the émigré, for why else the birch right then and there? I have penned thousands of pages, and I will probably keep on writing as long as I live. Yet I will die in the knowledge that even if I tried, in two sentences or in hundreds of sentences, I would never be able to express what trees (not just birches)…mean to me" (37).
[283] "Je dis: une fleur! Et, hors de l'oubli où ma voix relègue aucun contour, en tant que quelque chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se lève, idée meme et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets" (Mallarmé, 368).
[284] "Cadet" (*The Burned Bramble,* 251).
[285] "In those summer days, when the war was still so new that it seemed more like a vague promise than a threat, the village seemed for the first time to have been forgotten by autumn" (251).
[286] "He had money, and the linen on his delicate body was finer than the finest that our young brides wore. He had a gold cigarette case and they even said that his comb was made of silver" (252).
[287] "He had left the party, but the party remained deep within him, deeper than the memory of some shameful love, more painful than the knowledge of a crime for which one cannot forgive oneself and because of which one wakes up in the night blushing" (253).
[288] This quotation has not been included in the newest edition of *Wie eine Träne im Ozean,* which is the only copy I have been able to find in German. It does exist in the English translation by Constantine Fitzgibbon.
[289] "Only thus did he manage not to see the castle as he [Hawrylo] died. It is still standing. The branches of the silver birches in front of the castle wave in the wind" (253-254).
[290] Everyone poured into the streets. They went to the river; fallen soldiers were still lying there, each one where a deadly bullet had struck him down. A young soldier lay near the blown-up bridge. He looked as if he were asleep and had wept in his sleep. No wound was visible on him, no blood. People stood around him, and an old peasant woman wept. A few minutes later, when Doino approached the corpse again, he noticed that the dead man's shoes were gone as was the wretched portfolio [wallet] that had been in his top outside pocket. And it was only now that Doino wept too – not from grief for the young soldier, but from the rage at the living, from deep shame" (*God's Water Carriers,* 90).
[291] "During those days and nights, especially during the few hours in the cemetery and then during the charge, I went through *a break,* and its effect was permanent" (90). The italics are mine.
[292] "whose shining image was endlessly reflected in two facing mirrors…the mirrors had splintered and partly dimmed – they showed nothing whole anymore, only fragments" (90).
[293] "there was no protective heaven over human beings, all they have, all we have is the earth, the boundlessly indifferent, oblivious world." (91).
[294] "A peculiarly dressed man…he was small and delicate and he wore a Panama hat, a light-colored suit, and yellow shoes. In his right hand, he held a cane…but in his Left hand - and this was horrible – he held a roll" (35).
[295] "Until the end of your lives, until your dying day, you will be ashamed that you have done this terrible thing to my sick brother…She sobbed again, then called me by my nickname" (35). Sperber's nickname was "Munjo."
[296] "of all the countless aveyres, sins, that I had committed, this was the worst. I believed it couldn't be atoned. I still believe this today" (36).
[297] "pissed on the back of his neck" (39).
[298] Sperber sides "so vehemently (and quite uselessly) with the isolated, humiliated Hawrylo, and fought for him, only because a year and a half earlier I had been one of the boys who had attacked a harmless sick man" (39).
[299] "I found out exactly what humiliation is and how cruel and despicable the people are who humiliate the defenseless" (39).
[300] "I left the faith at an early age, thirteen, joining the revolutionary movement and taking on a great deal in my political devotion…But my faith in the Messiah was still as powerful as ever. Our Messianic equivalent was revolutionary activity" (16-17).

[301] …starts by renouncing the God of his fathers to live the passion of history, where one then undergoes the moral conflict that opposes the blind necessity of this new god to the moral conscience.
[302] The bush will still be burning. He descends deeper than the abyss where the bush becomes a cinder and the cause becomes but a tear in the ocean.
[303] He refuses to renounce or to yield to discouragement.
[304] "One of the symbols that I have used most frequently in my novels, essays, and lectures over a period of decades is a bridge that does not exist but materializes bit by bit under the feet of someone who musters the courage to step over the abyss**.** The bridge may never reach the other shore, and that far shore probably does not exist. The evolving but never complete person on the bridge that extends only as far as his courage does, and thus never far enough has become the hero and antihero of all my books" (*The Unheeded Warning*, 6).
[305] Malraux let them stay in his home in Cagnes-sur-mer. From there Sperber was deported to a Swiss holding camp.
[306] If I had been asked this question before Hitler, I would have responded: "I am a Jew, but I am not a Jewish writer"; In the century of Hitler, this question demands another response…But obviously that fact to have become _ how to say it? – an orphan of an assassinated people has had its consequences. I don't think that a day has passed since the genocide without thinking about this, just like I couldn't get to sleep for many years without thinking about Hitler and Stalin. If the Jewish theme is important in my eyes, you would only encounter it in about five percent of my writing. But if we consider that the Jewish spirit in the messianic sense – in doubt and in hope as much as in exigence -, I am Jewish then.
[307] "And his memory took him back to those February days, the time of the Vienna uprising. Nine years had passed since then. The retreat across the marchfield, the Ukrainian Hans. Somewhere behind this forest must lie the village from which he had come – a long, roundabout journey in order that he might die for the Viennese workers" (*Journey Without End*, 206).
[308] "What is the sense in your words, Jechial?...So long as the cat [the Nazi] will play, the mouse [the Jew] is not lost. While life is allowed to continue, who dare lose patience? But the cat is frightened of a greater beast. Who knows, perhaps it too would like to play? So the higher commandant in the district headquarters, the evildoer Kutschera [the Nazi leader who is coordinating the attack on Wolyna], must be made to understand that he can quickly grow rich from the work of our hands, of those hands which you in your folly would chop off. God forgive you your sins" (173).
[309] "The fool who stares into the stream believes that he has seen the heavens and the stars themselves, not their reflection. You must take a pebble and throw it in the water, for thus the fool's heaven is broken asunder…It is time that I threw that pebble" (174).
[310] "Two men were already fighting for the silk caftan as they stripped it from the corpse. They tugged it and ripped it in half. The older man only wanted the shoes. He was unlacing them when an adolescent boy ran at him and kicked him so that he fell over backwards in the snow. Now there were more than a dozen of them fighting over the rabbi. One man kept screaming without pause:'Strip him naked! Strip him naked! It all belongs to us! It's all ours!'"(192).
[311] "I am searching for my own way, that of consolation. Perhaps your despair will help me find it" (182).
[312]"I'll save what can still be saved" (224).
[313]"Since death is a void it can be disregarded. And that is why killing is a meaningless act. I saw that so clearly during the battle in the forest and again in the gallery. You can prove this to yourself, Dr. Rubin. Try, just once, to describe a battle and you will find that all those actions taken together are smaller and more shapeless that a tear in the sea" (243).
[314] "He had no wishes to trump corpses with corpses. It was all so unutterably sad and, at the same time, so humiliating. Was it conceivable that there could be such suffering without guilt?" (244).
[315] "About a week later Edi left the country. He traveled with a young man, one of the messengers sent by the fighting men in the ghetto [the Warsaw ghetto] to Palestine. The object was not to seek help – for all hope had been abandoned – but to tell those who would live what had happened" (249).
[316] "Since Bynies's death he had longed for peace – without any hope that he might ever find it for he did not even know what is was that he was really looking for…Perhaps it was this vision which kept him from killing himself at once"(248).
[317] "And he quoted many holy saying to prove that the word endure has a deep meaning which reaches far down, like the roots of aged trees: down to righteousness and to grace in suffering. He was only digressing in appearance when, by means of a sublime play on words and a skillful interpretation of the numerical values of the component letters, he went on to enunciate the consoling proof that the words "suffer" and "endure" are paired and that from the difference between them there may be built another word – grace" (172).

[318] "In order to understand the confused behavior of men much dialectic is needed: the actions of God should be simple, without parables!" (174).
[319] "I've stopped thinking about that. One must grasp the deeper meaning, one must understand events as parables the way the Wolyna rabbi did. I have no resentments against you, Skarbek not for anything you did, for I no longer overestimate the importance of what happens. It belongs to the fleeing moment, and when seen in isolation is smaller and more shapeless than a tear in the sea. That's what Bynie said" (250).