

Kafka and his Recursors: The Process of Post-Holocaust Authors¹

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'Someone must have been spreading rumours about Franz Kafka, for without having done anything wrong, he was proclaimed one fine morning the prophet of the Holocaust.'² Lawrence Langer's fittingly intertextual rebuke of an enduring tendency, not only in extra-academic circles, to respond to Kafka's works as if, 'possessed of a fearful premonition', he had, 'to the point of exact detail', seen 'the horror gathering',³ is irrefutable not least on the grounds that Kafka presumably 'did not have extra-sensory perception' to 'see into the future', a future which, in any case, is mutable and always 'still undecided'.⁴ What such responses testify to, as Ritchie Robertson has shown, is that, 'if Kafka seemed so prescient' about the atrocities of the mid-twentieth century, 'the reason lay not in Kafka's prevision of the future but in his perception of his present': 'He had an extraordinary insight into the mechanisms of power, authority, and violence, mechanisms that are in some measure common to a wide variety of social systems.'⁵ 'Reinterpreting Kafka in the light of later experience' may thus be a 'perfectly legitimate response', and perhaps it is also simply an inevitable one, but 'appropriating' him by reading 'his imaginative world as an anticipation of the deathcamp universe' at once 'risks distorting Kafka's achievement and obscuring the challenge facing the Holocaust writer in search of [their] own authentic inspiration'.⁶ And yet, it is striking not just how many post-Holocaust readers have regarded Kafka as someone 'who proleptically internalized the disaster', but also how many Holocaust writers and, within that category, how many German-Jewish authors who survived the Holocaust, have looked to Kafka's writing in their struggle to develop the 'own authentic inspiration' cited by Langer.⁷ Little has been written about such intertextual resort to Kafka by first-generation post-Holocaust authors writing in German, as indeed little has been written about this collective at all.⁸ Where recourse to the (generally not closely specified) 'Kafkaesque' in the writing of Holocaust survivors more broadly is discussed, it is attributed to thematic correspondences such as those accounted for by Robertson. Yet however evocative Kafka's ability 'to disclose patterns of oppression and subservience, ultimately underpinned by violence' or his 'visions of persecution and accusation and unexplainable feelings of anxiety' may be to post-Holocaust writers attempting to give, and post-

¹ It feels entirely appropriate that this essay should engage with the idea of following in others' footsteps. I am indebted to a range of precursors of my own, with Ritchie Robertson chiefly among them, and while I may not be able to pay back that debt of gratitude, I feel privileged to be carrying some of it forward. The thinking behind this piece is informed by discussions with my own students, in particular this year's takers of the German-Jewish Literature since 1945 Special Subject and of Kafka as a Special Author, and I gratefully acknowledge the input of Katie Baxter (Lincoln), Freddie Cheatle (Merton), Susie Dunn (Jesus), Juliet Gurassa (Lincoln), Jasper Manzini (Oriel), Josh Penollar (Brasenose), and Will Sealy (Wadham).

² Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 109.

³ George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (1967) (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 121.

⁴ Ritchie Robertson, 'Kafka, Goffman, and the Total Institution', in *Kafka for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Stanley Corngold and Ruth Gross (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015), pp. 136-50 (p. 136).

⁵ Robertson, p. 137.

⁶ Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust*, pp. 109; 110.

⁷ Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 40; Langer, p. 110.

⁸ Cf. also Kirstin Gwyer, *Encrypting the Past: The German-Jewish Holocaust Novel of the First Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1-56.

Holocaust writers attempting to gain, access to a reality that ‘turned out to be more grotesque and more surrealistic than even [Kafka’s] fictional nightmares’, it remains that he was not faced with conveying ‘the concrete threat of dehumanized extermination’.⁹ Through an outsider’s post-Holocaust lens, we might read Kafka’s works for their illustrations of ‘a sinister proliferation of bureaucratic institutions, both private and governmental, with their burgeoning technological apparatuses’, or even as ‘literal expressions of the way human life, or perhaps better, “bare life”, can, in certain conditions, only be expressed as some form of animal life’.¹⁰ Yet any thematic resemblance can ultimately only ever be on the surface, and passing allusions to Kafkaesque themes or a Kafkaesque style do not seem satisfactorily able to account for the significance he apparently holds for the first generation of Jewish authors attempting to write after and about the Holocaust. My contention here will be that these authors did not primarily look to Kafka’s writing for its thematic resonance at all. What they encountered in their engagement with his texts is more structural than thematic or, more precisely, it dissolves the divide between the two. Historian Otto Dov Kulka writes in his Holocaust memoir *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* how reading literary or documentary works about the Holocaust makes him feel nothing but ‘alienation’ because ‘I cannot find in them what they seek to convey’: ‘Between the description of a world’ and ‘the presence of the past that is perpetually part of my present’ there lie ‘rivers that cannot be crossed’.¹¹ Failing to find a gateway to the past in descriptive representations of the concentrationary universe, Kulka turns to Kafka, and specifically to Kafka’s parable ‘Vor dem Gesetz’ from *Der Prozess* (1914-15), not as a way in but, on the contrary, ‘as a way of coming to understand how he [Kulka] can arrive at the “gate” of comprehension but not pass through it’.¹² Kulka was emphatically not alone in this. The range of first-generation post-Holocaust authors who draw on Kafka, and especially on *Der Prozess*, in a non-thematic, or secondarily thematic, mode in their effort to capture experiences that seem to defy description is striking. A reading of the structural workings of *Der Prozess* alongside texts by three German-language Jewish authors who survived National Socialist persecution, H. G. Adler (1910-88), Jenny Aloni (1917-93) and Erich Fried (1921-88), will illustrate this with a view to suggesting that what speaks to these authors in Kafka’s writing is not his imaginative worlds or nightmarish vision as such but the aporias in which his protagonists are caught that make these worlds or visions feel inescapable. These aporias are replicated and perpetuated by the structure of Kafka’s writing, much of which, analogous to the model of ‘Vor dem Gesetz’, takes the form of the irresolvably parabolic and, rather than culminate in conclusive resolution, is shaped by a ‘near-nauseating ability to describe infinite regress’.¹³ Thus, while the claim that ‘Kafka’s novels are uncanny premonitions of Auschwitz’ is readily refuted at a thematic level, it will be proposed that J. Hillis Miller may be closer to the truth in his suggestion that ‘Kafka’s work preprograms the form fiction about Auschwitz took’.¹⁴

⁹ Robertson, p. 140; Gershon Shaked, *The Shadows Within: Essays on Modern Jewish Writers* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), p. 17; Lawrence Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 21.

¹⁰ J. Hillis Miller, *The Conflagration of Community: Fiction before and after Auschwitz* (Chicago, Ill. and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 42; 51.

¹¹ Otto Dov Kulka, *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* (London: Penguin, 2020), p. 80. I am grateful to Robert Eaglestone, who comments on this same passage in *The Broken Voice: Reading Post-Holocaust Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 93, for drawing my attention to Kulka’s memoir.

¹² Robert Eaglestone, *The Broken Voice*, p. 93.

¹³ Jason Baker, ‘Introduction’, in Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, transl. by Donna Freed (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003), pp. i-xxxi (p. ii). See also Gerhard Neumann, ‘Umkehrung und Ablenkung: Franz Kafkas “Gleitendes Paradox”’, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 42 (1968), 702-44, for an important earlier assessment of the significance of recursive structures in Kafka.

¹⁴ Miller, pp. 50; 39.

Franz Kafka's *Der Process* (1914-15)

Franz Kafka's *Der Process* starts after an unreconstructable event, a presumed 'Verleumdung', in the aftermath of which the text's protagonist, Josef K., finds himself 'verhaftet'.¹⁵ Though K. feels 'als ob durch die Vorfälle [...] eine große Unordnung [...] verursacht worden sei', he also believes that he will be able to restore order and resume the thread of his existence: 'War aber einmal diese Ordnung hergestellt, dann war jede Spur jener Vorfälle ausgelöscht und alles nahm seinen alten Gang wieder auf' (22). Yet K.'s assumption that he can restore 'Ordnung' is based on a misapprehension of the 'Process' in which he is caught up. His reading of his situation is informed by the belief that he is on trial in a court of law, where the proceedings will establish his guilt or his innocence and he will be handed down a verdict, either an acquittal or a conviction followed by a sentence. In this case, linear progression would be possible, seeing him first admitted to the court, then trialled by the court, and finally dismissed by the court. However, *Der Process* hinges on the ambiguity between K.'s reading and its opposite, in which K. is on trial in some far less linear and concrete sense. In his trial, without due process, the 'Verhandlung' dissolves into endless 'Verhandlungen', in the course of which any 'Urteil' remains provisional opinion, rather than solidifying into a conclusive verdict, leading at best to the illusory reprieve of a 'scheinbare Freisprechung, which, over time, will simply trigger the next arrest and cause the process to repeat itself, or to the indefinite deferral of a verdict in a 'Verschleppung' (139; 145; 207).

The ambiguity of K.'s 'Process' that turns his trial into inescapable tribulation thematically is reproduced structurally by the text, which also fails to advance as a linear narrative with a beginning, middle and end and 'ultimately undoes the concept of linearity altogether'.¹⁶ Its beginning is a non-beginning not only in the sense that it seems to place us *in medias res*, without any clear indication of what the *res* are, but above all because the 'Verleumdung' that is presumed to have led to K.'s 'Verhaftung' is, in fact, indistinguishable from the 'Process' that follows it. Since the court operates on the presumption of guilt and, once a person is 'angeklagt', is 'von der Schuld des Angeklagten überzeugt', thus paradoxically reducing 'wirkliche Freisprechungen' to the improbable stuff of legends, the untraceable 'Verleumdung' merges seamlessly into the indefinitely deferred 'Verurteilung' (136; 141). Indeed, in as much as the terms 'Verleumdung' and 'Verhör' have shared etymological roots in the Indo-European word for 'hören', it could be argued that, through the dual lens of ambiguity, *Der Process* suggests even linguistically that K. has always already been on trial: the distorted perception of 'verleumden' or 'sich verhören' is indistinguishable from the desire to be more clearly informed that nominally underpins a 'Verhör'. This would make K.'s 'Verleumdung' not so much a precipitating event as an ongoing state: a 'Verhaftetsein' as an existential condition that pre-exists the text but also outlasts it, and a life sentence that even death cannot fully remedy. As with the 'Fliegen' that K. pictures in the run-up to his execution 'die mit zerreißen den Beinchen von der Leimrute webstreben', this is not a clean exit: once 'verhaftet', always 'verhaftet', he leaves a sticky residue of 'Scham' behind after he is gone (207). Resolution is deferred, as in a 'Verschleppung'.

Yet the undoing of structural linearity does not stop there. The text's inconclusive ending also enacts the structural approximation of a 'scheinbare Freisprechung' followed by the resumption of the 'Process', by causing the text to loop back on itself to two prior passages in its reference to 'Scham'

¹⁵ Franz Kafka, *Der Proceß* (1925) (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007), p. 7. Further references to this edition will be included in parentheses in the text.

¹⁶ Joshua Kavaloski, 'Fabula interrupta: The Rupture of Narrative and the Arrest of Time in Franz Kafka's *Der Proceß*', *Modern Austrian Literature*, 36 (2003), 39-57 (p. 41).

and its invocation of the 'Hund'. Though there might arguably have been plenty of occasion for K. to experience shame, the only prior reference to it in the text occurs in 'Advokat, Fabrikant, Maler' when he, in a miniature replica of his trial and the novel as a whole, tries but fails to write the definitive petition to submit to the court that might ensure his acquittal, a petition designed to give a conclusive and comprehensive account of his entire life viewed from all aspects. Here, we are told how, even just a week earlier, the thought of submitting such a petition had filled K. with shame, but today, fully immersed in his trial, 'wußte K. nichts mehr von Scham' (115-16).¹⁷ Not only does this textual doubling back on itself mark K.'s death out as a mere 'scheinbare Freisprechung', but it also connects to another prior passage, in 'Kaufmann Block, Kündigung des Advokaten'. K.'s observation in his final moments that he is dying like a dog develops his earlier observation of Block pleading with the lawyer in the presence of Leni. In this passage, Block, apparently more fully entangled in the 'Process' than K. himself at this stage, had, in K.'s eyes, humiliated himself so much that he had become the dog of the court in a way that 'fast den Zuseher entwürdigte' (178). The simple realisation that K. is here the next dog in sequence but, through the looping back of the text, also that he was deceiving himself in his earlier belief that he was any less faithfully subservient to the court than Block, obviously disrupts the horizontal linear plot progression of the narrative. However, the novel goes further in its undoing of linearity by at the same time extending the sense of having no traceable origin and no reachable end to the text's vertical plane. The use of non-specific masculine nouns and pronouns in the section just cited already points to a confusion of identities that culminates, at least provisionally, at the end of the text in our observation of K.'s canine debasement in death, a debasement which, by analogy to the Block passage, contaminates us, K.'s 'Zuseher' at the close, suggesting that we, too, are in fact always already immersed too deeply to extricate ourselves, even as we hold on to the illusion (as K. does in his use of the term 'fast') that we are still safely separate from the 'Process' of the text.¹⁸ This not only telescopes the text horizontally but vertically, by deconstructing the diegetic ceiling to suggest that, in witnessing K.'s fate, we are already implicated 'wie ein Hund' (and raising the spectre of who, then, may be observing us). The 'Scham' apparently does indeed outlive K. (211). Like him, we find ourselves traduced and arrested.

To the text's rooflessness corresponds a bottomless pit at its heart. Nested at the point where K. feels (and so we feel) he may be on the verge of gaining an insight into his predicament we find not a hearing and verdict but a miniature replica of the text as a whole: the parable 'Vor dem Gesetz'. Reproducing the encounter between K. seeking admittance and the 'Geistlicher' deferring admittance to the court, the parable gives us the 'Mann vom Lande' seeking admittance and the 'unterster Türhüter' deferring it (196-98). As if in an infinity mirror, the doorkeeper is merely the first in a series of receding doorkeepers, while the man from the country is in turn just one of countless supplicants. Neither has access to the scripture of the law. There will always be another supplicant, and there will always be another gate, and the process of seeking admittance in between that non-beginning and that non-end is one of endless deferral, with the object of deferral inaccessible both to the uninitiated, who do not know this, and to the somewhat initiated, who do.

The *mise en abyme* in the text of a replica of its own bottomless structure at once illustrates and perpetuates the indefinitely deferred and recursive structure of the 'Process', and of the text that seeks to capture it. As well as reproducing this structure, the stand-off between supplicant and gatekeeper at its abysmal heart is also a replica of the perspectival struggle within the text, and

¹⁷ Joshua Kavaloski picks up on this prior invocation of 'Scham' also, though his interpretation from the passage differs from mine. See Kavaloski, pp. 50-51.

¹⁸ For instance: 'Das war kein Klient mehr, das war der Hund des Advokaten. Hätte ihm dieser befohlen, unter das Bett wie in eine Hundehütte zu kriechen und von dort aus zu bellen, er hätte es mit Lust getan' (178).

perhaps even, on some unacknowledged level, within K. himself. The encounter between the man who does not know that his admittance to the law is indefinitely deferred and the man who knows this throws into conflict (literally parabolizes) two irreconcilably opposed readings that inform *Der Process* and K.'s more or less conscious understanding of his 'Process'. From the subjunctive of its first line ('ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte (7)) to the subjunctive of its last ('es war, as sollte die Scham ihn überleben' (211)), and from the ambiguity of the titular 'Process' to the 'not-yet' / 'nevermore' stand-off at its heart, the novel remains suspended between conflicting perspectives and irreconcilable narrative structures.

In *Der Process*, it is hard to decide to what extent K. allows himself to become aware of the self-deception and suspension of disbelief required of him to read his story as a linear progression towards the restoration of order, even if this restoration of order comes at the cost of removing himself from it. Shortly after the chaplain has recounted the parable, K. senses that 'die einfache Geschichte war unförmlich geworden', though like the 'Schein des Silbers' reflected off the statue of a saint in the cathedral, flashing up fleetingly in the dark without an external source of light to cause this, it is unclear whether this is a glimmer of genuine insight or merely the illusion of illumination (204). In any case, K. immediately experiences the urge to leave these 'ungewohnte Gedankengänge' behind and to 'von sich abschütteln' the disorderly narrative, and moments before his execution, he still wonders where the 'hohes Gericht' must be to which he never penetrated (204; 210-11).

The 'ungewohnte Gedankengänge' into which the parable has led K. reflect, and are reflected in, his labyrinthine surroundings, which in turn act as both emblem and perpetuation of the internal-external confusion produced by the labyrinthine court as a whole and by the text that conveys it (204). They are a model of his world and mind and a blueprint for the text. As with the parable, the key (or non-key) is not in the absent content but in the present structure.

For the first-generation post-Holocaust authors looking to Kafka for a template it is precisely the irremediability of the disruption of an 'einfache Geschichte' by an 'unförmliche' one that appears to have resonated, for its ability to take us to the gate of comprehension but refuse to admit us.

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H. G. Adler, *Die unsichtbare Wand* (1954-61)¹⁹

H. G. Adler's *Die unsichtbare Wand* starts after an unreconstructable event, an unspecified 'Verfolgung' and 'Unglück', in the aftermath of which the text's protagonist, Artur Landau, finds himself 'verworfen' and his life put on hold.²⁰ After emigrating from his hometown of Prague to London, Landau believes that he will be able to resume the thread of his existence and take it forward into a better future: 'Fast untergegangen war ich; das galt es wettzumachen. Nun wollte ich mich entfalten' (196; 10). In order to do this, he tells himself that the death blow dealt him by the 'Unglück' is surmountable: 'Die Todeswunde, von der ich nicht genesen war, verleugnete ich oder hielt sie für geheilt' (10). However, something unbroachable and unbreachable lies interspersed 'zwischen der Zeit, da ich war, und der Zeit, da dies nicht mehr zutrifft', and it 'sträubt sich, ein Sagbares zu bilden, verwehrt sich, setzt Grenzen, die nicht überfahren werden dürfen' (54). When the unspeakable 'es'

¹⁹ The following three examples were chosen because their intertextual connection to Kafka is also evident at a thematic level, but they were drawn from a broad range of first-generation German-Jewish texts with demonstrable ties to Kafka and notably similar narrative strategies, including Ilse Aichinger, Elisabeth Augustin, Wolfgang Hildesheimer and Gertrud Kolmar.

²⁰ H. G. Adler, *Die unsichtbare Wand* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 1989), pp. 54; 268. Further references to this edition will be included in parentheses in the text.

manifests itself in Landau's existence, it is not as past memory but as present-day re-experience, in the form of arbitrarily surfacing, uncontrollable flashes of traumatic reliving that assault Landau out of the blue: 'Ich weiß, daß ich die Verfolgung nicht los werde. Das Ungeheuer springt einem immer auf den Nacken. Aber diese Erfahrung und die Erinnerung sind nicht dasselbe' (196). Because such 'Erfahrung' is inaccessible to willed, conscious recall, Landau is left feeling as if he faces an invisible wall that prevents him from accessing his past and resists any effort to breach it 'bis ich vor ihr ermattede und geschlagen von meinem Vordringen ablasse' (45). Unable to access what lies beyond the wall, Landau cannot restore his past to the order of narrative, which leaves him lastingly unable to overcome the interruption of his existence and restore a sense of linear progression to his life story. Built just for him, the 'unsichtbare Wand' precludes him from having 'Teil an einem Kontinuum', including that of human community, leaving him on his own before his wall: 'Die Wand ist nicht mein Eigentum, aber mir allein ist sie zugehörig, für keinen anderen ist sie erschaffen [...]' (45). The wording points to Kafka's 'Vor dem Gesetz', and like the 'Mann vom Lande', Landau, who even resembles him in appellation, cannot move beyond the wall but nor can he walk away from it.

The intertextual connection to Kafka is also signalled by other thematic means, most notably in the fact that, repeatedly over the course of the text, two men arrive with a coffin and orders to take Landau away to a crematorium for his dead remains to be 'verbrannt' while onlookers from the building opposite are watching the protagonist from their windows (129; 131). On another occasion, the protagonist tries to escape his 'menschliche Gestalt' with its 'leidgeschundenenes Dasein, das nicht zu ertragen war' by means of a 'Verwandlung in eine Raupe', only to find that he cannot ever shed his human existence entirely, however depleted it has become (30-31).

At least as much as the thematic analogies, however, it is the structural correspondences in which these are embedded that recall Kafka. Like *Der Process*, *Die unsichtbare Wand* ends on the structural approximation of a 'scheinbare Freisprechung', in a direct address to the protagonist's children, expressing the hope that 'euer Dasein [wird] euch zu einem gewaltigen Fund' (644). It is a hope deferred, projected into the future, and its wording implies that Landau's own 'Dasein', by contrast, has become one of 'Verlust', at once filled with loss and a thing of which he has been deprived, suggesting that his 'Todeswunde' remains unhealed at the close. This impression is further underscored by the fact that the projected hope is framed by the – in a post-Holocaust context inevitably suggestive – image of a 'schwarze Rauchfahne' rising skywards, which is also the image on which the text began (644; 7). As with the 'scheinbare Freisprechung' in Kafka, the lack of true acquittal triggers repetition and causes the narrative to double back on itself.

The same tension between a narrative attempting to establish teleological progression and a counter-narrative working against this and undoing linearity manifests itself repeatedly throughout the text. Whenever Landau is most acutely aware of the wall, when flashbacks to his unreconstitutable past stop him in his tracks and subvert his attempts to write a linear narrative, the text's narrative progression is also arrested. As in Kafka, this disrupts linearity on a vertical, as well as a horizontal, plane. One striking example of this, which, analogous to Kafka's 'Vor dem Gesetz', reads like a miniature replica of Landau's 'Dasein' since the 'Unglück', and of the text's structure as a whole, nested within it, unfolds over a good fifteen pages near the start of the novel (15-32). At the beginning of the passage we are with Landau in his garden in London when the (personified) past catches up with him, reminding him, in direct address, that he has not escaped its clutches, and threatening fresh persecution. This triggers the memory of an earlier incident when Landau, already in exile, had received a summons to report to the immigration authorities. About this memory we are then told the following: on receiving the summons, Landau is terrified that the past is repeating itself and decides to flee the country to return to Prague. On his arrival there, in a sequence of events again

reminiscent of Kafka, Landau is denounced, arrested, interrogated, and imprisoned, though as in K.'s trial, this is no linear due process, and in response to Landau's question 'Bin ich angeklagt?', he is told: 'Noch nicht. Erst müssen Sie gestehen' (27). He is imprisoned and, as the cell walls begin to close in on him, there follows the sequence where Landau tries to dig his way out, of the cell in the past and the memory flashback in the present, by metamorphosing into a caterpillar. Just as his captors come for him, he abruptly finds himself, covered in soil, back in his garden in London. The entire sequence, which was presented as reminiscence, is retroactively revealed to have been a nightmare. Yet on reading the next sentence, we realise that the garden in which Landau has 'woken up' is not the garden he had left in his flashback or nightmare: 'Mit Entsetzen merkte ich, daß ich zu bald triumphiert hatte, Haus und Garten waren von Polizei umstellt, Gewehre im Anschlag gegen mich gerichtet. Da schrie ich unmenschlich auf, und Johanna schüttelte mich aus dem Traum' (32). At this point, at the very latest, we expect the narrative to pick up back where it left off when it slid into the flashback / nightmare sequence. However, instead of returning to what we assumed was the primary diegetic level of the first garden scene, the narrative returns only to the beginning of the flashback / nightmare sequence. In consequence, we not only lose sight of where recollection ends and nightmare begins, especially since, in terms of their content, the two are indistinguishable, but we lose track of the main diegetic level entirely and, having ended up a level 'down' from where we began, find ourselves drawn into the vortex of the past, and of narrative self-reflexivity, rather than safely separate from it. We cannot be certain if what we have just read was a nightmare within a flashback within the 'reality' of exile, or whether what we read as nightmare is 'reality', which would make the initial escape to the idyll of the garden no less a dream than the second one. As in Kafka, the slippage between diegetic levels causes us to lose our bearings and feel 'verhaftet' too.

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Jenny Aloni, *Korridore oder das Gebäude mit der weißen Maus* (1966-69)

Jenny Aloni's novel *Korridore oder das Gebäude mit der weißen Maus* starts after an unreconstructable event, a 'Vorher' described as a 'verbotenes Gelände' and 'mit Minen besätes Feld', in the aftermath of which the text's protagonist, X., finds himself 'verwundbarer', with his life put on hold.²¹ Having believed himself to have left his native country behind, X. is recalled to his former hometown to carry out a cryptic 'Auftrag' that requires him to gain access to a labyrinthine building with the purpose of achieving an unspecified goal in the interest of avenging the past. On his aimless roaming through the many nonsensical and mutable corridors and rooms that constitute the building, X. comes across a court room, where he stops off to observe a trial and what he perceives as a miscarriage of justice, and he has destabilizing encounters with, among others, a woman and an artist. Only ever advancing 'vorläufig zum Ziel', X. loses faith in the objective and achievability of his mission and decides to leave without having accomplished it, but the unsettlingly protean nature of the building draws him further in instead of releasing him (30).

As in *Der Process* and *Die unsichtbare Wand*, the structure of *Korridore* reflects its content. It, too, is modelled on, and incorporates in miniature, structural approximations of both 'scheinbare Freisprechung' and 'Verschleppung', continuously doubling back on itself and indefinitely deferring any resolution. In addition to this horizontal disruption of linearity, we find nested within the narrative miniature replicas of the textual edifice as a whole, which in turn recall the structure of X.'s building, and that of the 'Gedankengänge' of his mind. Where Kafka's K. comes up against the gate of the Law

²¹ Jenny Aloni, *Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. by Friedrich Kienecker and Hartmut Steinecke, 10 vols (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1990-97), VIII: *Korridore oder das Gebäude mit der weißen Maus* (1996), pp. 60-61; 13. Further references to this edition will be included in parentheses in the text.

and Adler's Landau against his wall, X. encounters, at the abyssal heart of the building and of the novel, a room with a 'Leinwand' (70). Like Landau's 'Wand', X.'s 'Leinwand' turns out to be a gateway to the past, marking at once the closest possible proximity to it and a barrier precluding access. As X. enters the room, a film sequence unfolds on the screen showing the inside of a man's head and, within that, another man who resembles the first one, clad in a black-and-white striped uniform. We are then told that 'he' must have fallen asleep, but what we take to be a reference to X. turns out to be to a boy about whom we cannot initially be sure if he is X. himself as a child, and so it is unclear whether the next section of the text, a sequence of recollections, unfolds on the 'Leinwand' or in X.'s mind, or if there even is a distinction between the two. As in the other novels, we are drawn into the recollective sequence by the blurring of diegetic levels that prevents us from knowing where we as observers are positioned and whether we are separate from the action, seeing what X. is seeing on the 'Leinwand', or whether a slippage has occurred and we have adopted X.'s initial position relative to the man onscreen and are seeing directly into the man's mind, as X. was at the outset of the screen sequence. Embedded in this sequence is a further memory strand, this one belonging to a friend of the boy's, which takes us right up to the impenetrable wall within the 'Leinwand', with a recollection set in a concentration camp that refers to a 'Vollzugskommando', reportedly made up of 'Juden, deren Aufgabe darin besteht, andere Juden nach Vergasung zu verbrennen', before abruptly drawing back out and ending on the idea of seeking vengeance for the past (88). At this point, the initial film sequence terminates, but the projection cuts to a different film sequence, this one of an encounter between a man and a woman, and an instance of failed revenge that reflects X.'s own aborted mission. The 'Leinwand' section finally breaks off in a synopsis of its structure that doubles up as a summary of the text as a whole: 'Hier endete der Film. Nicht endete, brach ab. Er hatte auch den Titel dieses Filmes verpaßt' (91). Unable to gain access to a past known fully only to 'andere Juden', who have not lived to tell the tale, X. is also left without any sense of purpose or direction, unable to progress into the future: 'Er hatte sein Ziel vergessen. Nicht vergessen. Es gab kein Ziel mehr. Es war sinnlos geworden, noch weiterzugehen. Er hätte genauso gut stehen bleiben können' (102). At this moment, the building seemingly releases him, albeit through an 'illegaler Ausgang' (105), and he finds himself outside again. However, the release turns out to be a 'scheinbare Freisprechung' only, and the text ends on another encounter between X. and the woman whom he had met earlier, causing the narrative to double back to the plotline inside the building, and to drop down its own rabbit hole by also recalling the encounter between a man and a woman that had concluded the film sequence at its abyssal heart, and so calling into question whether the protagonist has left, or can ever really leave, the 'Gebäude' of his 'Gedankengänge' at all (116).

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Erich Fried, *Ein Soldat und ein Mädchen* (1946-60)

Erich Fried's *Ein Soldat und ein Mädchen* starts after an unreconstructable event, an 'Urteilsverkündung' without an 'Urteilstvollstreckung', in the aftermath of which the text's protagonist, the 'Soldat', finds himself 'verloren' and his life put on hold.²² The titular encounter between the 'girl', a German concentration camp guard on death row after the Belsen trial, and the soldier, a German-Jewish émigré to the US, who has returned to Germany with the US occupying forces and is one of her guards, ends in a one-night stand between them, followed by the girl's execution the next morning, in the wake of which the soldier suffers a mental breakdown and is admitted to a psychiatric hospital. While at the hospital, the soldier is encouraged to write about what has happened in order to work

²² Erich Fried, *Ein Soldat und ein Mädchen* (1960) (Düsseldorf: Claassen, 1982), pp. 218; 28. Further references to this edition will be included in parentheses in the text.

through it. However, his attempt at narrative processing produces a proliferation of non-sequential and disconnected text fragments that compulsively revolve around aspects of his experiences but fail to come together to form the linear narrative that might enable him to resolve the question posed in the final fragment of how to 'mein Weiterleben berechnen, das nach einer Hinrichtung eine Richtung sucht' (223). Though the text does not spell this out, the implication is that the soldier cannot achieve this calculation and resume the thread of his life story because, in incessantly revisiting his encounter with Helga under the shadow of the 'über ihr hängenden Todesurteil', he is in fact not returning to the true source of his trauma but merely to a screen memory covering the much more pernicious original German-Jewish encounter with a fatal outcome that was the Holocaust (42). Claiming his entire family but sparing him, it is his own death sentence, the pronouncement of which is followed by the indefinite deferral of its execution, that has left him feeling unable to find 'einen neuen *modus vivendi*' (231; 176). But because this original experience of having to navigate a 'Weiterleben nach Eintritt einer Katastrophe' is inaccessible to the soldier's conscious and deliberate recall, it remains unnarrativized and he, like the protagonists of so many of his text fragments, remains 'im Schatten des Urteils' (180; 218). Rather than as an 'unsichtbare Wand', or a 'Leinwand', the gateway taking the soldier close to, but not into, the past is figured as a 'toter Winkel', the blind spot at the parapet of a trench that cannot be seen, or penetrated by one's own projectiles, even as it stands in immediate proximity to the armaments and their deadly fire (e.g. 39). The image illustrates at once the soldier's existence under the gaze of death and his inability to access the full truth of what has happened by representing the unbreachable barrier 'wenn einer schon ganz nah ist' bei seiner eigenen Wahrheit, aber er will nicht oder er kann nicht und sagt dafür was anderes!' (13).

Like Adler's and Aloni's, Fried's novel contains numerous thematic intertextual references to Kafka, including allusions to the desperate mouse in an impasse of Kafka's 'Kleine Fabel' and a reworking of, among others, his short story 'Die Wahrheit über Sancho Pansa'. However, as the narrator acknowledges with reference to the structure of one of the soldier's narrative fragments, though the comment could just as easily be applied to the text as a whole, it is also the case that: 'Die Form ist sichtlich von Kafka beeinflusst' (170). Fried's novel is reported by two voices, the soldier's own and that of a third-person narrator who is tasked with putting the soldier's disjointed fragments into some sort of order and offering a running commentary and exegesis of sorts. Yet from the outset, the narrator not only actively resists imposing narrative order but deliberately paraphrases the soldier's already periphrastic fragments further still to make them more impenetrable, openly acknowledging his inability 'aus einer wirklichen Begebenheit eine wahre Geschichte zu machen' and concluding that there will be 'keinen Weg durch das Geschehene hindurch' and that the soldier is therefore unlikely to be able to 'verwinden' what has happened (7; 64; 231).

The struggle to liberate oneself through narrative is also picked up in the soldier's fragment that offers an intertextual response to Kafka's 'Die Wahrheit über Sancho Pansa' (171-73). In Kafka's version, Sancho Panza is able to banish his demon, Don Quixote, by having his exploits turned into the stuff of fiction and thus neutralized. In Fried's version, however, the soldier's narrative fragment that counters Kafka with the 'Wahrheit über Don Quijote' sees Don Quixote try to administer the same treatment to his shadow, which follows him around like one of the horsemen of the Apocalypse, but Fried's harbinger of death resists being exorcized, and his Don Quixote's attempt to banish his sidekick through narrative fails to rid him of the pall hanging over him. Like Fried's Don Quixote and his shadow, and like Kafka's 'Mann vom Lande' and his 'Türhüter', the soldier and his narrator remain locked in a stand-off. Unable to gain admittance to the 'toter Winkel' of the past but also unable to move away, they, figuratively speaking, stay at their post like 'zwei Spiegel im Londoner Nebel, einander gegenübergestellt, und eine unendliche Reihe wechselseitiger Bespiegelungen, während sie langsam erblinden' (14).

This stand-off is also enacted structurally across the text, as well as repeatedly reproduced in miniature in its fragments. Perhaps the most striking example of such *mise en abyme* occurs at the heart of the work, at the point where the narrator takes us up to the moment of Helga's execution and breaks off to insert the soldier's own aborted account thereof, in a passage which reads like a further structural approximation of 'Vor dem Gesetz' and an icon of the soldier's suspended existence in the wake of the Holocaust and, by extension, of Fried's novel as a whole (54). Like the narrator's account, the soldier's embedded description of Helga's last morning proceeds in linear fashion up to the point of the execution but then breaks off and is reversed like a 'Film beim Aufspulen' (73). Just as the progressive account that preceded it stopped short of describing the actual execution, the retrogressive sequence stops short of the pronouncement of the death sentence. By failing both to trace its steps back to the original life-suspending trauma and to reach its completion in death, the passage initiates an in theory perpetually mobile process of toing and froing like the pendulum of a clock (55). At the same time, the disruption of the text's linear progression is extended to the vertical plane. The diegetic levels of the text are already blurred and rendered seemingly open-ended in an upwardly mobile sense by the serial embedding of the film scene within the soldier's account, within the narrator's account, within a multiply layered authorial frame consisting of a prologue and glossed intertextual epigraph and an annotated double epilogue. Meanwhile, the oscillating film sequence makes the core of the text appear as a bottomless pit, in that where we would expect to encounter the moment of execution, we find instead a reference to an unspecified 'man' observing the scene through binoculars, holding them first the right way round, then in reverse. However, the 'man' is then also used to refer to what the binoculars observe. This use of the impersonal pronoun for both the holder of the binoculars and the object they behold enacts a blurring of diegetic levels at the novel's heart by obscuring whether the reader is the subject or the object of the gaze and suggesting that deeper levels of the text will only ever produce further observers without ever homing in on the object of observation itself. The novel as a whole reads like a 'toter Winkel' that can never be fully accessed and from which there can be no emerging.

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H. G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft* (1945-48)

In each of the post-Holocaust primary texts examined here, we have encountered notably similar structural features that recall crucial recurring elements of Kafka's writing, as modelled by the irresolvably parabolic form of 'Vor dem Gesetz' (and of *Der Prozess* as a whole). Two contending voices (one implying the possibility of resolution, the other indefinitely deferring it) are placed into conflict and cause the text to be suspended between different readings of its own process: the teleological reading in which resolution and closure would be conceivable, and the non-linear, non-progressive one that, in looping back on itself and sliding up and down diegetic levels, precludes linear progression in any sense and direction and indefinitely defers its conclusion. Yet none of these formal echoes of Kafka lead straightforwardly back to the Kafkaesque qualities conventionally invoked in the context of his purportedly prophetic capacity, his vision of institutions or mechanisms of power and violence contemporary or future. So what do authors in this first generation of Jewish post-Holocaust literature gain from their intertextual recourse to Kafka's writing beyond an overlap in content, however present such thematic resonances may also be? By way of an answer, I shall close with a final example of a text constructed around the same irresolvable structural conflict that informs 'Vor dem Gesetz' and the other post-Holocaust works already discussed. In this concluding analysis of an author cribbing Kafka, I am returning to the beginning of this piece, to H. G. Adler, this time not as a writer of fiction but as the author of what to this day remains the most comprehensive academic study of any single concentration camp: his *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft*, an

academic monograph on the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto and a sociological and psychological analysis of the camp.²³

Theresienstadt 1941-1945 was written in the aftermath of the 'abgründiges Unglück' of the Holocaust (xxi). Its author, Adler, describes himself as 'vorangetrieben im Auftrag' (685), and the explicit aim of the study is, as one would expect of a project of this nature, to offer a 'precise depiction of historical reality', as Adler's son, Jeremy Adler, summarizes in his afterword to the English translation.²⁴ Adler himself stresses the breadth, depth, and comprehensiveness to which his 'weit ausholende Monographie' aspires (xiv). Even just on the first page of his preface for the revised edition, Adler's use of terms such as 'Materialsammlung', 'Übersicht', 'Darstellung', 'geklärt', 'beleuchtet' or 'Dokumentation' clearly gestures towards the potential ideal of a near-encyclopaedic account in which the 'innere Geschichte des Lagers' will become 'in fast mikroskopischer Betrachtung vieler Einzelheiten darstellbar', and Adler's stated intention is for this 'Betrachtung' to be as 'lückenlos' as possible (xi; xiii). For broad stretches of the text, this aim is achieved to a remarkable degree. However, there is a moment in even this most encompassing and scientifically rigorous of reports where the linear progression of the report is disrupted and the entire work briefly hovers on the brink of its own deconstruction. When Adler reaches the indescribable heart of his study, in a chapter titled 'Verfall und Auflösung', which concludes the section detailing the camp's history and attempts to convey the dissolution of all structure and points of reference in the final weeks of Theresienstadt in April of 1945, the attempt to communicate the full extent of the 'Zernichtung' [sic], the 'Ende als Untergang', the 'Nichts' sees Adler's narrative voice split in two as the scientific rigour of his project comes up against the brickwall of its limitations (213, 212):

Wer [...] durch diese letzte Verzweiflung, durch die Nacht der Nächte, durch den namenlosen Untergang geschritten ist, ihn überdauert hat [...], der soll seine Stimme erheben und sagen, wie es wirklich war. Er soll die Wirklichkeit verkünden [...], jenseits von allem theatralischen Grauen noch lebender Verwesung und toter Knochenberge, die nichts von der inneren Wahrheit enthüllen, da sie nur Schandmaler sind, aber nicht die Wahrheit selbst. Nein, die Wirklichkeit gilt es zu nennen [...], die Wirklichkeit des *Nichts*, die weder denkbar noch nachföhlbar ist, denn nicht zu denken und nicht zu föhlen ist das Nichts, nur ungeschaffen ist es [...] zu leiden. (212-13)

One voice continues to endorse the possibility of emerging from the 'Untergang' to give a full and truthful account of it ('die Wirklichkeit verkünden') (213). The other, always still 'umringt' by the 'unversöhnlicher Abgrund', recognizes what is at stake ('die Wirklichkeit gilt es zu nennen') but dismisses this as a possibility by invoking the essentially unknowable formless void of the 'Nichts' whose inner truth cannot be communicated, conceptualized, or empathetically accessed ('die Wirklichkeit, die weder denkbar noch nachföhlbar ist') but only experienced as raw, unformed suffering ('nur ungeschaffen ist es [...] zu leiden') (212; 213). The contention of narrative voices marks another stand-off akin to that between Kafka's Josef K., seeking access to something that lies beyond an invisible barrier, and his gatekeeper, who obstructs K.'s passage even as he seems to acknowledge his claim. The text's linearity is disrupted and it ceases to progress as it reaches an aporia that cannot be resolved, merely sidestepped, as Adler the historian briefly falls silent and hands over his narrative, in the form of citation, to a third-party eye-witness account, and only resumes his own account in the

²³ H. G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft (Geschichte, Soziologie, Psychologie)* (1955; rev. edn, 1960) (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005). Further references to this edition will be included in parentheses in the text.

²⁴ Jeremy Adler, 'Afterword', in H. G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-45: The Face of a Coerced Community*, trans. by Belinda Cooper (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 803-28 (p. 812).

study's next section (213-14). Though nothing in the excerpt itself points explicitly to a formal correspondence to Kafka, Adler refers to the work as a whole as a 'Kafka Roman mit umgekehrten Vorzeichen', so an account that has been 'der Wirklichkeit nachgeschrieben' and whose facts are worse than fiction, not the other way round, reproducing, rather than anticipating, a reality more unspeakable than anything conjured up by the imagination.²⁵ Moreover, the monograph's historical section, which concludes with the chapter containing the excerpt, is prefaced with an epigraph drawn from Kafka's 'Ein Landarzt': 'Betrogen! Betrogen! Einmal dem Fehlläuten der Nachtglocke gefolgt – es ist niemals gutzumachen' (1). The use of the Kafka quotation at the outset raises a spectral counterpart to Adler the witness and historian who feels 'vorangetrieben im Auftrag' (685). It seems to acknowledge the otherwise unspoken fear that the part of Adler that hopes for 'Rettung' may just be deluding itself, and that the country doctor's concluding assessment of his own situation, though not cited, may be closer to the truth where Adler himself and his undertaking are concerned also: 'Niemand komme ich so nach Hause [...]. Nackt, dem Froste dieses unglücklichsten Zeitalters ausgesetzt [...], treibe ich mich alter Mann umher'.²⁶

Thus the spectre of a survivor adrift, unable to navigate his life or his text in any straightforward sense that would allow him to return to the past to master it and achieve 'Rettung', haunts the historical section of the monograph from before its beginning to beyond its therefore impossible closure in the self-undermining contention between the voice that demands 'Wirklichkeit' and seeks progress and that which disputes its very possibility. In the context of Holocaust representation, these vying voices between them evoke what Raymond Federman has referred to as the simultaneous 'necessity' and 'impossibility' of speaking or writing about the Shoah: 'It is necessary to speak, to write [...] about the Jewish Holocaust during the Nazi period even if words cannot express this monstrous event. It is impossible to speak or write about the Holocaust because words cannot express this monstrous event.'²⁷ Lawrence Langer has identified this contention between a voice of continuity – which seeks to embed what has happened in a sequence of cause and effect – and a voice of disruption – which undermines any chronology and causality and disputes all rhyme or reason – as a fundamental recurring characteristic of oral Holocaust witness testimonies, though it is a feature that may affect any attempt in any genre to give a chronological, factual account of the events and effects of the Holocaust.²⁸ Between them, the vying voices give the impression of the witness inhabiting two worlds at once: a life after the abyss, and one in which the 'Abgrund' is still and always all around. Unable to return to the origin of the trauma, and therefore unable to work through and emerge at the other end of it, the narrators in and of the abyss remain caught in a repeated doubling back over old ground with no closure in sight. Without either ingress or egress, there remains only infinite regress.

This, it seems, is the self-deconstructing structure for which Kafka's irresolvable parabolic models, informed by irreconcilably opposed perspectives and composed of interminable 'scheinbare Freisprechungen' and 'Verschleppung', have provided a template. As another of Kafka's recursors, Jacques Derrida, recognized, and demonstrated in his own reading of Kafka's 'Vor dem Gesetz' as a 'living illustration of *différance*', Kafka's parable can be read as an instantiation of the spatial difference and temporal deferral that indicates the unreachability of the signified, which in the case of the authors discussed here is the Holocaust and their own singular experience, or non-experience,

²⁵ Cited in Jeremy Adler, 'Afterword', p. 906.

²⁶ Franz Kafka, 'Ein Landarzt', in Kafka, *Erzählungen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), pp. 168-74 (p. 174).

²⁷ Raymond Federman, 'The Necessity and Impossibility of Being a Jewish Writer' (2001), <<http://www.federman.com/rfsr0.htm>> (para. 1 of 30). [accessed 19 March 2021].

²⁸ See for instance Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

of it.²⁹ As it did for Derrida, the model of 'Vor dem Gesetz' appears to have provided his Jewish post-Holocaust emulators with a way of thinking and performing this unreachability, and so of thinking and performing their own aporia, through indefinite recursion, as the closest possible approach to communicating the abyss of the past without falling in or falling silent. To return to Robert Eaglestone's assessment of Otto Dov Kulka's interest in Kafka, it presents them with a model for how they might 'arrive at the "gate" of comprehension but not pass through it'.³⁰

Reading these post-Holocaust authors for the structural correspondences between their work and Kafka's helps unlock a body of writing the key to whose understanding resides not in its anyway only partially speakable content but in its self-deconstructing forms. Yet at the same time, such a reading also illustrates the extent to which, as Jorge Luis Borges playfully proposes, again with reference to Kafka, authors (and readers) create their own precursors.³¹ Observing Kafka's post-Holocaust recursors from this perspective, especially when we do so through the lens of gatekeepers preceding us such as Derrida, may therefore also shine a more differentiated light on what makes Kafka feel so 'Kafkaesque' to us in the 'Froste' of an 'unglücklichsten Zeitalters' which he himself only narrowly avoided witnessing. In this post-Holocaust age, perceptions of Kafkaesqueness may have less to do with what he wrote about than with the ways in which he wrote it in more general terms. The sense of coming 'after', but never really after, an irretrievable but therefore also insurmountable breach can be argued to have informed, more or less consciously, every work of cultural theory or critical analysis responding directly or indirectly to the traumatic upheavals of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and particularly the Holocaust, from deconstruction to trauma theory to all recent forms of individual or collective memory theory. All seem founded on the perception of a 'common pattern' in which 'a disaster occurs of overwhelming, disorienting magnitude, and yet the world continues', but existing structures of thought and language have been shattered in ways that 'effect their own erasures from memory' and can only be 'reconstructed by means of their traces, remains, survivors, and ghosts: their symptoms'.³² Even works of cultural theory that appear to deal with epistemological or economic developments rather than social or political trauma may exhibit these features, as James Berger has proposed with regard to 'theories of the modern by Foucault and of the postmodern by Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Jameson', all of which 'take as their starting point some cataclysmic and irrevocable shattering or flattening or decentering that infiltrates and rearticulates all areas of culture', moving them to 'diagnose a post-apocalyptic condition'.³³ Against this backdrop of an in any sense of the word unrecoverable apocalypse, a reading of Kafka as a preprogrammer of form, rather than a predictor of content, appears to have more general validity. To both his post-Holocaust recursors and to their recursors in turn he offers the anti-model of the 'unförmliche Geschichte' as the

²⁹ Geoffrey L. Brackett, 'Franz Kafka's "Before the Law": A Parable', *Pace Law Review*, 35.4 (2015), 1107-1123 (1108).

³⁰ Eaglestone, p. 93.

³¹ Borges, *Labyrinths*, trans. by Donald Yates and James Irby (1962) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), p. 236.

³² James Berger, *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 6; 19. For further compelling explorations of the relationship between the Holocaust and the postmodern, see also Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

³³ Berger, p. 31.

least inadequate approach to thinking and writing 'after' the 'Nichts' that is 'nur ungeschaffen [...] zu leiden'.³⁴

³⁴ Kafka, *Der Proceß*, p. 204; Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p. 213.