HISTORICAL TRUTH, ESTRANGEMENT, AND DISBELIEF

HAYDEN WHITE

Blissful is the nonbeliever who hides the future's misfortune beneath the protective covering of the present moment, for now everything is obscured by darkness. No one seeks protection when hope and silence alone mark the passing of time and make it believable.
H. G. Adler, *A Journey*

Geschichte zerfällt in Bildern, nicht in Geschichten.
Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*

In an earlier paper,[1] I presented Saul Friedlander's *Nazi Germany and the Jews* as an example of one way of dealing with the putative "unrepresentability" of the Holocaust. I suggested that the Holocaust was not only a novel event in the history of the West and the history of anti-semitism, it was a new kind of event which effectively brought under question the representational practices and modes of explanation both of modern historiography and the modern human sciences in general.[2] I maintained that the older conventions which presumed that a factually truthful account of events of the past constituted the only valid historical interpretation of them—any other kind of interpretation, such as the meaning of the factualized events, being considered a questionable addition to a properly historical account—had to go by the board when it came to events like the Holocaust.[3] This event, I argued, demanded representational modes, explanatory models, and ethical attitudes which conventional professional historiography, with its fetishism of the facts and nothing but the facts, could not provide. I went on to consider the possibility that as a modernist event, the Holocaust might be treatable by the use of specifically modernist techniques of literary writing which, in my view, provided both a perspective on "history" and a mode of presenting the complex relationships between past and present in modern culture and especially lent themselves to the solution of the kinds of "practical" (by which I meant, "ethical") questions that motivated historians searching for the meaning of the Holocaust in history. And I concluded by arguing that in his *Nazi Germany and the Jews* and especially in Vol. 2, *The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945*, Saul Friedlander had produced something like the kind of modernist historiography which the Holocaust especially, but all other historical events even vaguely resembling it, required—technically as well as ethically.[4]

Today I want to continue my inquiry into the relation between history and literature or, more specifically, historiography and literary writing, to show how Friedlander utilizes literary techniques, devices, tropes, and figures in order to close the gap between truth and meaning in Holocaust historiography without fictionalizing, aestheticizing, or relativizing anything. It will be an exercise in "close reading," the kind of hermeneutic conventionally used in the treatment of sacred, legal, and literary texts rather than historiographical or scientific texts. The aim will be to identify the literary devices, tropes, figures, and techniques used in Friedlander's text to generate ways of mediating between the corpus of facts known about the Holocaust and the various meanings that our ethical interests in this event demand of us. In earlier discussions of this issue, I have drawn upon Michael Oakeshott's distinction between "the historical past" and the "the practical past." The latter kind of past is that which we turn to when our interests are as much ethical as they are cognitive. I think that Friedlander's book—like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*—falls into the latter category.[5] It is less interested in adding new information to the "data bank" of the Holocaust than investigating what of an ethical

nature is still "left over" after we have collected all of the factual information contained in the historical record.

Friedlander has long advocated the need for a "stable integrated narrative" of the Holocaust by which to identify and measure deviations from the truth in the directions of fictionalization, on the one hand, and aestheticization, on the other. Fictionalization is regarded as a threat to belief in the reality of the Holocaust and aestheticization as a threat to belief in its moral or ethical significance. At the same time, he insisted that there was something uncanny about it. In 1992 he spoke of the Holocaust as having some kind of "excess" of the inexpressible left over after all the facts of the matter had been recorded.[6] In Volume 1 of *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, this excess would manifest in the feeling of "estrangement" he hoped to effect in his readers. Then, in Volume 2, whose topic is the program of extermination launched by the Germans against the Jews, he stated that he wished to produce the affect of "disbelievability." I believe he undertakes to gain these effects and affects by the use of literary techniques, devices, figures, and tropes that undermine (deconstruct?) on a figurative level the stability of the narrative unfolding on the literal or proper level of the text.

Let me begin by trying to characterize the general look or appearance of the second volume of Friedlander's *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination*. First, there is a lot of front matter before we get to the narration proper. This alone distinguishishes Friedlander's text from the abrupt opening of a conventional narrative history such as Richard Evans' *The Third Reich in Power*.[7] More about this front matter later. Once we make our way through it, the core narrative looks more like a chronicle than a history. It is made up of 10 chapters (with dates instead of titles for chapters) divided into three parts, each of which has both titles and dates: "Terror (Fall 1939-Summer 1941)," "Mass Murder (Summer 1941-September 1942)," and "Shoah (Summer 1942-Spring 1945)."

If we thought of this as a skeleton of a *story* of the Holocaust, the three parts might be identified as acts of a classical drama, in which a central subject (driven by *pathos*) undergoes a trial (*agon*) which results in his destruction (*sparagmos*) on the way to a recognition scene (or *anagnorisis*) in which the mystery motivating the action from the beginning would be cleared up with more or less moral loss or gain to the community to which the hero belongs. But although the events related by Friedlander might be thought of as tragic, there is no central subject undergoing a trial of the spirit, no conception of fate or providence to link the destruction to a cosmic plan, and virtually nothing to suggest the existence of some fundamental nobility of the human spirit in spite of all. The events of the Holocaust are not emplotted in order to suggest a discernible trajectory from beginning to end that would allow some sense of satisfactory moral or ethical closure for the whole. Friedlander's history of the Holocaust is presented in such a way as to frustrate normal narratological expectations, in order to produce the affects of "estrangement," on the one hand, and "disbelief," on the other. How does all this square with Friedlander's repeated assertions of his desire to create a "stable integrated narrative" of the Holocaust?

The choice by any historian to cast his or her work in the mode of a "narrative" is already to move it out of the discourses of science and into the domain of "literature." Although narrative has long been thought of as a "natural" mode of historiographical presentation, its origin in myth, fable, and allegory has long rendered it suspect as a mode of scientific discourse—ever since *logos* was disjoined from *mythos* in philosophy of science.[8] So too, to narrativize real events is often thought of as tantamount to "fictionalizing" them, as in the historical romance. But Friedlander narrates his history of the Holocaust without narrativizing, by which I mean, without using one or another of the classic plot-structures by which Western culture has endowed life with meaning in myth, religion, and literature since its beginnings.

But I would suggest that we must distinguish between narration (a mode of speaking) and narrative (story, the product of this mode of speaking). Friedlander launches his narration from within a justified confidence in his knowledge of his subject-matter, on the one hand, and his adequacy to the understanding of that subject-matter, on the other. But there is nothing stentorian or

even very assertive about his delivery. His mode is, as I argued at Jena, middle-voiced—a manner of speaking or in this case writing in which the speaker deploys neither the active nor the passive voice predominantly but takes up a position from within the act of writing itself, so as to foreclose any possibility of distinguishing between *what* is said or spoken and the *how* of its saying. Thus, in middle-voiced discourse, the gap between the presentation of the referent (the Holocaust) and the meaning being attributed to it is closed or at least narrowed. In this instance, the meaning of the events depicted and their truth—the fact of their occurrence when, where, and as they did—are fully congruent. But this is because, among other reasons, Friedlander narrates without narrativizing, maps a field but does not emplot a single course of events, resists the imposition of stereotypical structures of meaning that would allow any "domestication" of the facts.

It is impossible to forget or ignore the fact that the author of *Years of Extermination* is himself a survivor of that "Holocaust" from within the experience of which he writes. Whence Friedlander's resistance to endowing the Holocaust with the coherence of a conventional story, with a central subject, beginning, middle, and end, and a neat resolution revelatory of a clear and unambiguous meaning. Whence the preference for the chronicle form which tends towards parataxis and anecdotage, rather than for the fleshed out history which explains "what happened" by emplotting it as having the form of a recognizable archetypal structure of meaning (tragic, pastoral, comic, satiric, etc.). Whence too the relatively "weak" line of argument that might seek to explain why the Holocaust happened in order to allow its happening to "speak for itself."

Thus, although narrated with the full authority of the one-supposed-to-know and indeed of one-who-has-experienced the events of which he writes, Friedlander effectively de-narrativizes and de-storifies the series of events he relates. This process of de-narrativization, I submit, puts Friedlander into the category of modernist writers of the ilk of Proust, Woolf, Kafka, Stein, and Joyce. The loose chronological pattern of his elaboration allows him to use the technique of presentation very close to that recommended by Walter Benjamin for modernist historiography: namely, the genre of the constellation and the preference for the verbal image over the concept in the depiction of experiences more "modernist" than "realistic" in kind. This puts us in the domain of a specifically artistic writing which is both different from and consonant with the scientific ideal of objective representation.

Let me explain what I mean by citation of a few characteristic passages in Friedlander's work to show how Friedlander's distinctive interpretative effects are earned more by literary than by scientific discursive means.

A literary narration is a verbal whole which asserts more or says other through figuration than what is literally asserted in its parts taken distributively. This is the case with all literary devices, genres, figures, and tropes, as against the devices and turns of scientific discourses which, by the use of technical and quantitative terminology, can hope to avoid the kind of parapractical irruptions which indicate the presence of an "unconscious" in the text that the literal level of expression is intended to cover up and repress. The difference, of course, between artistic parapraxis and the kind found in everyday ordinary speech is that the former is consciously exploited as a way of endowing the discourse with depth as well as extension.

So, how to represent the history of an event which destroyed a wide variety of kinds of Jewish communities (as well as other kinds of communities, races, groups) more or less unconnected with one another in space, time, and culture and in different kinds of relationships with the host countries in which they had come to reside, and their reactions and responses to a machine designed primarily for the purpose of exterminating them? Here Friedlander's problem was to provide a coherent but non-linear account of the facts and their meaning without emphasizing argument or explanation at the expense of concreteness and particularity of detail. But since a written discourse is necessarily consumed as a linear process, he had to find a way of shifting attention from the "before and after" axis of the diegesis to a "surface-depth" axis where "meaning" is deposited at each "turn" of the discourse. Although Friedlander's text comes to us loosely organized on the temporal axis, the temporal units do not have the same function and meaning that they conventionally have when used

to parse organic or biological processes (birth, youth, maturity, old age, etc.). After all, each of the two volumes of *Nazi Germany and the Jews* covers only six years, and as at least one reviewer noted, does not provide any significant temporal "contextualization" of the events covered in the text. There is a general thematic continuity, produced by repetition, reduction and nominalization of the notion of "extermination," but a thematization is not an argument. It is a literary (or rhetorical) strategy by which a series of events can, by varied kinds of redescription, be endowed with "substance."

However, thematization requires discourse time and what some critics call "phrasing" or segmentation by which to transform series into sequence, a process of layering in which what appears on a literal (or proper) plane is shown on a figurative or allegorical plane to have meaning that is at once revealed and concealed as such. These effects—disemplotment, middle voiced narration, thematization, sequentiation, and the like—are produced by identifiable literary or rhetorical devices, techniques, genrification, and tropes.

* * *

Thus, *Years of Extermination* (Vol. 2 of Friedlander's *Nazi Germany and the Jews*) opens with a cascade of literary devices. This is the front matter I referred to in my opening remarks. Its begins with an *epigraph* that is a quotation from a diary written by a victim of the Holocaust. This is followed by an "Introduction" which itself begins with an *ekphrastic* analysis of a photograph of a ceremony, David Moffie's graduation from the University of Amsterdam School of Medicine on September 18, 1942. Next, Part I of *Years of Extermination* begins with an *epigraph* taken from the diary of Victor Klemperer, while Chapter 1 (of Part I) is followed by an *anecdote* recounting Victor Klemperer's response to the news that Germany had invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. The Klemperer anecdote, which consists of two paragraphs, is followed by three more anecdotes relating the ways in which certain Jews in Warsaw and Łódź responded to the same news. The last of these anecdotes tells of the original enthusiasm of Adam Czerniaków for his new post as Chairman of the Jewish Citizen's Committee for the defense of Warsaw. It ends with the *ironic* remark of the narrator: "Four days later Poland surrendered." (I say narrator and not author, because in fact one does not know who speaks these words.)

I would like now to point out that the passages I have cited are all literary genres or devices: epigraph, ekphrasis, anecdote, commentary, and figure. Which means, to me at least, that all of these passages by (the substance of) their forms alone and quite apart from any factual "information" they may be thought to contain, emit messages of a particularly poetic, by which I mean symbolizing kind.

Thus, for example, every epigraph not only has to be written but, by its placement and structure, also refers primarily to the writing it introduces or prefigures, rather than to something outside the text. An epigraph is placed on the border of the text it introduces, but its function is intratextualizing, to link the thematic content of the work to follow with the title of that work.

So, it is not by chance that the first epigraph in Friedlander's book, the epigraph which introduces the whole volume, is explicitly about writing and, moreover, about writing in a state or condition of extremity, in the face of death. It begins "The struggle to save myself is hopeless . . . . But that's not important. Because I am able to bring my account to its end and trust that it will see the light of day when the time is right."

Moreover, the epigraph it is not only about writing under conditions of extreme travail, it is about the impossibility of writing "the truth" about the grotesque ("fantastyczna") event that was happening, in Warsaw, as viewed from "the 'Aryan' side of the city," sometime in 1943. The epigraph (which has been edited by Friedlander[9]) ends by saying: "And they will ask, is this the truth? I reply in advance: No, this is not the truth, this is only a small part, a tiny fraction of the truth. . . . Even the mightiest pen could not depict the whole, real, essential truth" (Friedlander Vol. 2, 2007, viii).[10]

The opening words: ("The struggle to save myself is hopeless. . . . But that's not important."[11]) are startling—they are not surrounded by scare quotes—and we might take them for the words of our

author, that is, until we recognize that they begin an epigraph, which excuses us from treating this statement as a properly historiographic one. By which I mean, we will not ask whether it is true or false, whether what it says is a matter of fact or whether it is simply an aid to reading the text to follow. But we might wish to reflect on the theme of the epigraph, since according to the rules of genrification, this passage is supposed to foreshadow or anticipate or enliven us to the theme of the book to follow.

On reflection I note that this epigraph (at least, as it has been edited by Friedlander[12]) consists of a kind of affirmation—of the task the writer has set for himself, which is to "bring my account to its end," and a denial or more properly a disavowal: "No, this is not the truth, this is only a small part of the truth, etc., . . . Even the mightiest pen could not depict the whole, real, essential truth."

In fact, the epigraph can be read as an emblem featuring an image of the writer *in extremis* and wagering everything on the possibility that his "account" will see "the light of day" sometime in the future, so that "people will know what happened" in spite of the fact that what he writes is "only a small part of the truth, a tiny fraction of the truth." So if Friedlander used the passage from Ernest's diary to say that his own text is "not even a fragment of a fragment of the truth," he must also take ownership of the other part of the passage which is about writing *in extremis*—writing in the face of death, writing on the wager that what one writes is worth the candle, in spite of its inadequacy to the "whole, real, essential truth," that, in some sense, the effort to tell "what happened" will find a kind of redemption "when the time is right" and "people will know what happened." Condensed into this small fragment of text is a whole allegory of the truth of writing as the writing of truth and the impossibility of that charge. And this makes of it a comment on the whole book which it introduces.

We should note also that the writing in this passage is *literary* writing, and it has nothing at all to do with either fiction or aesthetics. Friedlander uses it as a literary device to mark the inauguration of an account which will be as much about the travail of writing (*his* writing) as it is about the kind of truth that can be expected in a narration of the Holocaust.

Did Friedlander consciously intend all this? I do not know, but the fact is that he chose this passage from Ernest's diary as his epigraph. He edited it to say what it says and not something else. And he placed it at the start of his book to do what epigraphs are supposed to do: indicate a theme of the book to follow. This passage is not meant to be a contribution to the "data base" of the Holocaust—an epigraph is not a contribution to the factual record. Of course, the book has a rich and varied thematic content, but the thematic content of this epigraph, placed as it is, at the head of this text, has a special function. It tells the reader that the text to follow is as much about the stakes of writing, the difficulty of telling the truth, and necessity of testimony in situations of extremity as it is about the facts of the matter.[13] Condensed into this small fragment of text is a whole allegory of the truth of writing as the writing of truth and the impossibility of that charge. The writing in this passage is *literary* writing, and it has nothing at all to do with either fiction or aesthetics.[14]

In *Years of Extermination*, epigraphs are used to introduce the volume as a whole and each of the three parts ("Terror," "Mass Murder," and "Shoah") into which the narration is divided. There is a kind of "line" of development in the events laid out for our inspection but the line is only that of the "this happened here or there" of the chronicle. Friedlander calls this "loose" chronological arrangement a "temporal" line, but actually time does not order this text or the events about which it speaks. The turns from "Terror" to "Mass Murder" and from "Mass Murder" to "Shoah" do not mark transitions between different phases of a single process of development. The events are not "emplotted" in such a way as represent the development of some central subject, such as Nazi Germany, or the Jews, or the Holocaust. There is no plot-structure informing the whole chain of clusters or constellations of facts, anecdotes, epigraphs, quotations, and theories or speculations about why the Holocaust occurred. The only relations between one part of the text and another is that "before and after" and "here and there" which allows the clustering of events related only by similarity and contiguity rather than by equivalence and identity.[15] Thus, although "Terror" precedes "Mass Murder" which, in turn, precedes "Shoah," there is no spatial or temporal connection or causal

chain posited in this sequence. Nor is any "plan" being implemented. It is a matter of "furor Teutonicus," on the one side, and descent into a condition of "patiency," on the other. Which makes me want to grasp the whole text as a kind of modernist Walpurgisnacht, satura or pastiche, rather than as a story.

There are lots of anecdotes or petits récits in this book but they do more to impede the movement of the narration than to help it along. In fact, Friedlander uses the genre of the anecdote to do most of the heavy work of commenting on and interpreting the events he relates.[16] I could make a case, I think, for the idea that Friedlander's is a modal text, that its principal explanatory effect is produced by modalizations, transitions from one structure of deprivation to another. This would imply an interest less in conceptual and categorical characterizations of the referents ("Nazi Germany" and "the Jews") than in figurations of persons, places, events in terms of feelings of "strength to world," mood, atmospheres, and "humors."

Thus, Friedlander chooses as the epigraph to Part I "Terror" a statement from Victor Klemperer's diary, "The sadistic machine simply rolls over us." By using Klemperer's figure of Nazi Germany as a "sadistic machine" as an epigraph, Friedlander can present an image of oppression, register a judgment on "Nazi Germany," project the feeling of helplessness felt by the oppressed, and indicate the power of the Nazi war machine all at once but without having to document or establish the adequacy of the judgment. In fact, whatever judgments are rendered in this text are rendered by the voices of those caught up in and being destroyed by the "sadistic machine." All reviewers note the evenhandedness, calm, fairness, and objectivity of Friedlander's account of how the "sadistic machine" operated. The judgments he leaves to the victims.

All of this is reinforced by the anecdote which opens Chapter 1 of the text proper, another quotation from the diary of Victor Klemperer: "On Friday morning, September 1, the young butcher's lad came and told us. . . . the war with Poland was underway, England and France remained neutral. . . . I said to Eva [that] a morphine injection or something similar was the best thing for us; our life was over" (Friedlander, Vol. 2, 2007, 3).

Friedlander has been praised and rightly so for admitting the "voices" of ordinary people, especially the victims, but also the perpetrators, and bystanders, into his account of the Holocaust, thereby injecting a sense of personal experience and humanity into the presentation but at the same time risking violating the demand for established fact rather than opinion in the historian's text. In his response to my suggestion that artistic images might be more effective than statements or numbers for presenting the shock of events like those of the Holocaust,[17] Friedlander said that "the only solution . . . for keeping to the strictest historical practice and nonetheless giving expression to those moments of shock, amazement, or denial, was to turn to the reactions of the victims as they were confronted by the events as expressed mainly in diaries and letters, . . . in memoirs, etc." Here he did not, he says, look for "'statements' by the victims, . . . but for their raw 'voices,' for the cries and whispers of the downtrodden and oppressed."

Fair enough, but I would point out that the quotations chosen for use as epigraphs in *The Years of Extermination* are rather more "artistic" and "literary" than "raw" and "spontaneous," and that in fact, it is their fashioned rather than their spontaneous nature that gives them their force and power. After all, they were written after the events of which they speak or the experience of the emotions they wish to express. Moreover, the quotations chosen for epigraphs in Friedlander's text are cast much more in figurative than in literal (or proper) terms. Why would they not be? Given the fact that they report reactions to events too monstrous to believe.

My point here is that Friedlander's text is replete with different literary, rhetorical, or discursive genres—epigraph, ekphrasis, anecdote, constellation, irony—which at once punctuate his narration and impede narrativization and, at the same time, create a level of figurative meaning alongside of and modulating the facts given in the chronological record—these genres serve perfectly well Friedlander's stated aim to produce the specific effects of "estrangement" and "disbelief" that would

protect his account from "domestication." How else could you create these effects in writing other than by "literary" means?

But I want to caution against a tendency to confuse all literary writing with fictional writing or identify poetic utterance with fictionalization. Factual writing—writing about matters of fact—can be just as literary as fictional writing—writing about imaginary things—without being necessarily fictionalizing. I would point out that the fiction-non fiction distinction is based on the nature of the referent of a discourse, while the literary-non literary distinction has to do with the formal features of an utterance.[18] The same formal features (generic, modal, tropical) may appear in both fictional and non- fictional (or factual) texts. Real events can be presented as describing trajectories of tragic or comic stories, real people can be enfigured as characters of the kinds met with in a novel or play (as heroes, or villains, as kings or beggars), and "contexts" can be described as threatening or benign, supportive or hostile, as the case may be. By the same token, all of these effects can be reversed by the same techniques and instead of the story one had expected, one can find story-parts that refuse to come together as a whole.

The point is that meaning can be imputed to real events by both conceptualization and figuration, but pathos and especially the pathos of suffering is more effectively produced by images than by concepts. Benjamin believed that "History does not break down into stories, it breaks down into images" (*Arcades*, K I, ii). It is a succession of images (rather than an argument, thesis, or explanation) which sums up, gives meaning to, and provides the principal "understanding effect" of Saul Friedlander's great work.

I mentioned that the first chapter of *The Years of Extermination* is introduced with an epigraph that quotes Klemperer's figure of "the sadistic machine" and that the chapter itself begins with an anecdote which features the figure of Klemperer contemplating suicide. The anecdote ends with the Klemperers' toasting Eva Klemperer's birthday and the British entry into the war. This is followed by an anecdote which shows that Chaim Kaplan of Warsaw had "grasped the peculiar threat that the outbreak of the war represented for the Jews," and had gained little solace from the efforts of the Warshavians to fortify their city against the attack to come. Then the action suddenly switches to Łódź, where Dawid Sierakowiak, "a Jewish youngster, barely fifteen," writes in his diary about the sudden enthusiasm of the Poles for everything German. And back again to Warsaw, where Adam Czerniaków is organizing a Jewish Citizens Committee for the defense of the city.

These four anecdotes about four different "ordinary" people in Dresden, Warsaw, and Łódź on the eve of World War II—together with their lapidary comment—are notable in the way that they stand in for the narrator, the way they permit him to draw back behind his text and let his subjects speak for themselves and him. It is this authorial retreat which I wished to indicate as middle-voicedness in my earlier remarks on the narrator's seemingly passive objectivity. Even before the "historiography" has begun, Friedlander uses anecdotes to block the impulse to narrativize, to block the emplotment of events, in order to let in a bit of reality in the form of the feelings of confusion, bewilderment, and, yes, "disbelief" of the patients of "the sadistic machine." Friedlander prefers to hear these voices as "raw" and spontaneous, rather than as "art." But his use of these voices is nothing if not artistic. And it takes art to conjure up a world with millions of Jews but no place for them.

I am sure that you are by now—if not earlier—thinking that I am over-reading, in a way that only a pedant or a Derridean deconstructor would do. That I am making more of what is, after all, only a convention, the convention of placing an epigraph at the head of a text or opening a chapter with an anecdote, than even a critical reading calls for.

But I would ask you to consider another anecdote, one which opens the "Introduction" to *The Years of Extermination* (we are still in the paratext of the narrative). It begins with a statement of fact: "David Moffie was awarded his degree in medicine at the University of Amsterdam on September 18, 1942." Then follows a longish description, not of this event but of a photograph of this event, somewhat in the manner of the description I have been giving of the opening epigraph of Friedlander's text.[19] We are not shown the photograph in Friedlander's text; rather—and this is the

tropological move—an *ekphrasis* (verbal description or "word picture" of an image) is presented in lieu of the photograph. The referent of the passage (the photograph) is withheld (Friedlander certainly could have had it reproduced[20]) and in its stead we are presented with a description of it. There is factual information about the event recorded in the photograph, who is in the photograph, when it was taken and where, and why the photograph can be interpreted as a record of an "act of defiance" on the part of University authorities against the German occupiers of the Netherlands (Friedlander Vol. 2, 2007, xxiv).

But having interpreted the manifest meaning or information of the photograph, Friedlander adds, "there is more." On the surface, he says, we have "a common enough ceremony, easy to recognize," in a "festive setting, a young man received official confirmation that he was entitled to practice medicine, etc." However, "as we know, the Jood pinned to Moffie's coat carried a very different message. Like all members of his 'race' throughout the Continent, the new MD was marked for murder."

This statement is glossed by a look "inside" the photograph, "faintly seen," and in "characters specially designed for this particular purpose, ...in a crooked, repulsive, and vaguely threatening way, intended to evoke the Hebrew alphabet and yet remain easily decipherable," are the Jewish star and the word "Jood." It is "in this inscription and its peculiar design," that Friedlander discerns "the quintessence" of "the situation represented in the photograph" and its sinister meaning: "The Germans were bent on exterminating the Jews as individuals, and in erasing what the star and its inscription represented—'the Jew'."

I hope it will not be considered inappropriate to point out that what we have here is a kind of *mis en abyme* or a representation of a representation of a representation, etc. Thus, in his (Friedlander's ekphrastic) representation of a representation (a photograph) that represents an event ("a common enough ceremony"), Friedlander perceives a further representation (a sign) which he now interprets as the "quintessence" of that complex of events called the Holocaust. In the inscription of the star and the word "Jood," Friedlander says, "[We] perceive but the faintest echo of a furious onslaught aimed at eliminating any trace of 'Jewishness,' any sign of the 'Jewish spirit,' any remnant of Jewish presence (real or imaginary) from politics, society, culture, and history" (Vol. 2, 2007, xiv).

Friedlander's reading of this photograph is allegorical: the photo seems to represent two things or two or more levels of meaning simultaneously. In fact, however, there is no way that the photograph of Moffie's graduation ceremony can be said to emit the message Friedlander purports to find in it. The allegorical dimension is provided by Friedlander and his own knowledge of the fate that had awaited the Jews of Amsterdam in that time, all unbeknownst to them. Friedlander reads back into the photograph a meaning which could hardly have been known to Moffie and the others at the time the photograph was taken. The result is to produce that effect of "estrangement" which Friedlander had described as his aim in Volume 1 of his masterpiece[21] (Vol. 1, 1997, 5). But the effect is produced not so much by a recitation of the facts as, rather, by their figuration. Thus, in his description of the star and its inscription as "characters specially designed for this particular purpose, ...in a crooked, repulsive, and vaguely threatening way, intended to evoke the Hebrew alphabet and yet remain easily decipherable," Friedlander has already built into his description the interpretation that he sees as "easily decipherable." The decision to substitute an ekphrasis for the photograph is a specifically literary or, as I would prefer, a tropological move: it puts a verbal image in place of a visual image, proceeds to interpret the latter, and thereby substitutes the photograph for the event as the referent of this passage of the discourse.

This is not a criticism, because—in my opinion—every historian must do something like this in order to "work up" past events as objects of possible historical analysis. This kind of move does not diminish, but rather heightens the reality effect of the text. Why? For the simple reason that photographs are mute. They do not say, assert, or affirm anything. They need captions or texts of some kind to give them voice. This is the purpose of the ekphrasis, to transform a visual into a verbal image.

But the discussion of the David Moffie image serves another purpose as well: placed as it is, as the opening of the Introduction of the body of the text, Friedlander provides his readers with insights into the compositional choices he will make in order to move from the event, to description of the event, to interpretation of the event. The narratological function of the whole passage is to reveal the literary tools that will be used to bring to life a panorama of brutality, suffering, and death. The analysis (or description, or interpretation) of the Moffie photograph can serve as paradigm (or what Kenneth Burke called a "representative anecdote" and Peirce the "interpretant") of how to read historical artifacts symbolically (Burke 1969, 59-61). The Moffie photograph opens the Introduction and serves as a figure (*schema*) of reading (allegorically) which will be "fulfilled" at its end. That is to say, at the end of the Introduction.

Thus, the last paragraph of the Introduction which comes eleven pages later, begins:

> Let us return to Moffie's photograph, to the star sewed to his coat, with its repulsive inscription, and to its meaning. Once its portent is understood this photograph triggers *disbelief*. Such disbelief is a quasivisceral reaction, one that occurs before knowledge rushes in to smother it. (Friedlander Vol. 2, 2007, xxvi. My emphasis. HW)

Although the passage states that "once the portent [of the photograph] is understood," it "triggers" disbelief, it cannot possibly mean this; what it must mean is that, once understood, the photograph *should* trigger disbelief. Did it trigger disbelief in Friedlander? Disbelief in what? Disbelief in the photograph? In the reality of the event it records? In the "portent" of the star and the word Jood? In the situation of which the symbol on Moffie's coat is a synecdoche?

These questions are answered by Friedlander's immediately proffered definition of what he means by "disbelief" in this context: " 'Disbelief,' he says, "here means something that arises from the depth of one's immediate perception of the world, of what is ordinary and what remains 'unbelievable'" (Vol. 2, 2007, p. xxvi).

This definition is, to say the least, idiosyncratic: syntactically and semantically. I believe that it is a bit of parapraxis—a moment of confusion and disorientation in the text—over which we must linger and try to identify what is seeking to emerge from the text in addition to what it says. Read syntactically or literally, the definition says: "disbelief . . . means (1) something that arises from the depth of . . . immediate perception of the world, (2) of what is ordinary and (3) what remains 'unbelievable." Disbelief, Friedlander goes on to say, is a "quasivisceral reaction" by or in which something of what is given in "immediate perception" remains "unbelievable." On this view, unbelief is a quality of some aspect of "immediate perception" which, because it is not *un*believable, can be *dis*believed. But why should we wish that the truth—which so many have labored so hard to cover up or deny and others have labored so hard to bring to light—be *dis*believed?

The usual definition of "disbelief" is something like a conscious rejection or denial of an idea or assertion or perception offered as not only "believable" but also as actually "believed." Disbelief differs from unbelief by the element of will or voluntativeness motivating it. In unbelief, I simply do not believe what others see or hear or feel to be the case. Friedlander wants his readers to have the "quasivisceral reaction" of "disbelief" to what he will be telling them about the Holocaust in order to experience the feelings of very many Jews of Europe, not only when they heard news of the death camps and the Nazi program of extermination, but also while they were experiencing what happened to them in the camps, and while they were recounting what had happened in the camps after they had returned home. ["I still cannot believe it. You won't believe it when I tell you, etc."—cf. the last paragraph of Friedlander, *Extermination*, p. 663 and also Geoffrey Hartman's essay in *Probing*.] But disbelief is very close to the psychoanalytical notion of disavowal, which in Freud's classical formulation, consists of the denial of an absence or lack where one had expected to see something. In denial I can deny what I perceived; in disavowal I deny what I did not perceive. Disavowal is a product of a moral repugnance, a "quasivisceral" feeling of disgust arising from the perception of

what is difficult to believe because it ought not to have happened. "Why did the heavens not darken?" Arno Mayer's question receives a believable and compelling answer in Friedlander's account of the Holocaust: because of the disquieting realization that, under the Nazi regime, the last vestige of what had formerly undergirt any sense of human solidarity had been erased.

All very well but what is the import of the remark about the feeling of disbelief being threatened by a "knowledge" rushing in immediately to swamp it? This question is answered by the "metahistorical" comment: "The goal of historical knowledge is to domesticate disbelief, to explain it away" (Friedlander Vol. 2, 2007, xxvi) and the explanation of what will be grasped immediately by his critics as his deviation from the normal expectations of the normal reader of a normal historical narrative. "In this book I wish to offer a thorough historical study of the extermination of the Jews of Europe, without eliminating or domesticating that initial sense of disbelief" (Vol. 2, 2007, xxvi). Friedlander repeats this characterization of conventional historical knowledge as domesticating and disarming of a moment of "disbelief" in the face of events or actions which, although grotesque, bizarre, or scandalous, are rendered quite believable by historical knowledge and have their moral or ethical import neutralized or cancelled out as a result.

I will return to "disbelief" down the way. For the moment I want to comment on two other devices used by Friedlander to break up his account into discrete temporal and spatial fragments and reassemble them under relatively *under*determined assemblages which admit of no overarching emplotment, summary, or narrativization. These are the *anecdote* and the *constellation*.

As you know, in conventional narrative historical writing, the transformation of a chronicle of events into an emplotted story is supposed to be the interpretation of the events. Grasping the series of events as a story, being able to recognize that the story that is taking shape before one's eyes is a story of a particular kind (genre), that it is cast in a certain register or tone (mode), this is the interpretation of events produced by narrativization. In *Years of Extermination*, Friedlander uses epigraphs as hinges between one section of his discourse and another. By narrativization a complex of condensed (imaginal) materials is transferred from a horizontal (before-after) axis onto an axis of vertical (surface-depth) combination. Condensation on a vertical (or surface-depth) axis can be exemplified in the structure of the epigraph chosen by Friedlander to negotiate the transition from the end of Part II ("Mass Murder") to the beginning of Part III ("Shoah") of his text. Thus, we turn the page ending Part II, "Mass Murder," to find a page which in its entirety looks like this:

Part III

Shoah

Summer 1942-Spring 1945

> "It is like being in a great hall where many people are joyful and dancing and also where there are a few people who are not happy and who are not dancing. And from time to time a few people of this latter kind are taken away, led to another room and strangled. The happy dancing people in the hall do not feel this at all. Rather, it seems as if this adds to their joy and doubles their happiness . . . ."
>
> Moshe Flinker (sixteen years old),
>
> Brussels, January 21, 1943[22] (Friedlander Vol. 2, 2007, 357)

We learn a great deal more about Moshe Flinker later on in the text, but for the moment I want to fix our attention on this passage from his diary used by Friedlander as an epigraph to Part III of his text, "Shoah (September 1942-Spring 1945)" and try to explain why I wish to characterize it as a literary device which adds "interpretation" to the assemblages of "facts" comprising the two chapters it at once separates and joins.

First, the quoted passage itself contains nothing factual. We are invited to entertain what we would in another context regard as a purely imaginary scene in which some people are happy and dancing and others are not and from which, "from time to time," some of the latter kind of people are taken away and "strangled," while the "happy dancing people in the hall" do not "feel this" but an increase in their own joy and happiness. The caption, which tells us that it was written by Moshe Flinker at a certain time, can be questioned as to its veracity, but the passage itself posits a scene more fantastic or grotesque ("a great hall") than realistic; it is a simile ("It is like . . .") which analogizes a situation (of Jews in Brussels, we know from the context only) to a wild dance-party where "many people are happy" and "a few people . . . are not happy," where some are taken away and strangled and some are not, and where, finally, those who are not strangled apparently become happier and more joyful in response to or as a result of the murders of the less happy lot.

I say that the epigraph negotiates the transition from Part II to Part III and from Chapter VI to Chapter VII. How so? And what happens during this process of transition? First, it continues a metaphor that has been used to close Chapter VI, which ends with an anecdote about objections to a party planned for Jewish children in the Warsaw Ghetto. The anecdote serves to introduce another metaphor for the characterization of the situation of the Jews of Europe during the years of extermination. Thus, the head of the Ghetto, Adam Czerniaków, remarking on objections to certain "play activities" that had been organized for the children of the Warsaw Ghetto, writes: "I am reminded of a film, a ship is sinking and the captain, to raise the spirits of the passengers, orders the orchestra to play a jazz piece. I have made up my mind to emulate the captain" (Friedlander Vol. 2, 2007, 595). The next page takes us from the image of the jazz orchestra on the sinking ship to the image of a dance party conjured up by Moshe Flinker in which, "from time to time . . . a few people are taken and strangled." The image of the jazz orchestra playing as the ship goes down is (ironically) replicated in the image of the dancers at a wild party where some are murdered while others ignore them and, at the same time, are stimulated by their fate. The second image can be taken as a "fulfillment" of the first, and the two taken together can be seen as an allegorical structure which adds meaning to the account quite in excess to whatever "facts" are reported in the conventional historiographical mode.

Now, I could go on like this throughout the entire book but not only to show the advantages of "close reading," even of non-literary texts. My point would be to try to show that the literary devices, tropes, genres, and figures found in Friedlander's book are not just a function of the inevitably "figural" aspect of natural languages, the fact that in addition to their denotative function they come laden also with a wide variety of connotative significances. But the use by a writer, whether of factual or fictional prose, of literary devices, such as epigraph, ekphrasis, anecdote, constellation, and commentary, is not simply a way of clothing unpalatable "facts" with a glossy veneer in order to make them more ingestible to a resistant reader. Such devices have the effect of drawing attention to the means and modes of literary production (effecting what Jakobson calls "the poetic function") themselves and of endowing the putatively "plain speech" parts of the text with specific affect (the conative function of the speech event, in Jakobson's terms). But they are also parts of the "content" of the text.

Thus, Friedlander's substitution of his description (*ekphrasis*) of the photograph of Moffie's graduation ceremony for the photograph itself draws our attention—draws my attention, at least—to a fundamental trope of historiography: the creation of the subject of the discourse by the description of the putative referent. A photograph of a historical event is a good illustration of this principle because its substitution by a description shows how any historian's gesture toward a real referent in

the past must already presuppose a description of that referent to serve as the referent's discursive stand-in. This does not make the events being described less real or more fictional. It is simply that the description of any historical phenomenon is a way of constituting it as a possible object of historiographical representation.

But I have suggested that although the devices, tropes, and figures that I have identified are those known to traditional criticism, Friedlander uses them to produce the specifically modernist (literary) effects of estrangement and disbelief in, not so much the truth as, rather, the "reality" of the events he recounts. And in the representation of historical reality, this constitutes the principal difference between traditional 19th century realism and its modernist alternative.

Works cited

Burke, Kenneth. 1969. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ernest, Stefan. 2003. *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami Warszawy, 1939-1943*. Przedm., oprac., przypisy Marta Młodkowska. Warszawa: Czytelnik.

Evans, Richard J. 2007. *The Third Reich in Power*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Friedlander, Saul (ed.). 1992. *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution."* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

—. 1997-2007. *Nazi Germany and the Jews.* 2 vols. Vol. 1, *The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*; Vol. 2, *The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945*. New York: HarperCollins.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge.

Morrison. Toni. 2004. *Beloved*. New York: Vintage International.

---

[1] Hayden White, "Historical Discourse and Literary Theory," paper presented at the Institute für Zeitgeschichte, Jena, June 2011, forthcoming in Norbert Frei and Wulf Kansteiner, eds., *Den Holocaust erzâhlen? Historiographie zwischen wissenschaftlicher Empirie und der narrative Kreativitaät* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

[2] I had in mind Jean-François Lyotard's metaphor of an earthquake which not only destroys large tracts of land and buildings but also the very instruments by which to measure the source, span and intensity of the tremor (Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[3] In *Probing the Limits of Representation*, Friedlander writes: "For most historians a precise description of the unfolding of events is meant to carry its own interpretation, its own truth" (1992, 7). This statement is similar to that of R.G. Collingwood, who argued that when you know *what* happened, you already know *why* it happened. See Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

[4] I am indebted to two analyses of Friedlander's work: Wulf Kansteiner, "Success, Truth, and Modernism in Holocaust Historiography: Reading Saul Friedladner Thirty-five Years after the Publication of *Metahistory*," *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 47 (May 2009), pp. 25-53; and Dominick Lacapra, "Historical and Literary Approaches to the 'Final Solution'," *History and Theory*, 50 (Feb. 2011), pp. 71-97.

[5] "A newspaper clipping in *The Black Book* summarized the story of Margaret Garner, a young mother who, having escaped slavery, was arrested for killing one of her children (and trying to kill the others) rather than let them be returned to the owner's plantation. She became a cause célèbre in the fight against the Fugitive Slave laws, which mandated the return of escapees to their owners. Her sanity and lack of repentance caught the attention of Abolitionists as well as newspapers. She was certainly single-minded and, judging by her comments, she had the intellect, the ferocity, and the willingness to risk everything for what was to her the necessity of freedom. […]

The historical Margaret Garner is fascinating, but, to a novelist, too confining. Too little imaginative space there for my purposes. So I would invent her thoughts, plumb them for a subtext that was historically true in essence, but not strictly factual in order to relate her history to contemporary issues about freedom, responsibility, and women's 'place'. The heroine would represent the unapologetic acceptance of shame and terror; assume the consequences of choosing infanticide; claim her own freedom. The terrain, slavery, was formidable and pathless. To invite readers (and myself) into the repellent landscape (hidden, but not completely; deliberately buried, but not forgotten) was to pitch a tent in a cemetery inhabited by highly vocal ghosts." Toni Morrison, from the Foreword to the 2004 edition of *Beloved* (New York: Vintage International, 2004), pp. xvi-xvii.

[6] "Whether one considers the Shoah as an exceptional event or as belonging to a wider historical category does not impinge on the possibility of drawing universally valid significance from it. The difficulty appears when this statement is

reversed. No universal lesson requires reference to the Shoah to be fully comprehended. The Shoah carries an excess, and this excess cannot be defined except by some sort of general statement about something that must be able to be put into phrases [but] cannot yet be. Each of us tries to find some of the phrases" (Friedlander 1992, 19-20).

[7] Evans' text is a perfect example of conventional narrative historiography: Evans tells a story, the story has a plot, and the plot functions to tie up the end of the story to its beginnings: it shows how "the Nazis' headlong rush to war contained the seeds of the Third Reich's eventual destruction. How and why this should be so is one of the major questions that runs through this book and binds its separate parts together" (2007, xvi). The mode of presentation of this story is spelled out in the Preface, which says:

> This book tells the story of the Third Reich, the regime created by Hitler and his National Socialists, from the moment when it completed its seizure of power in the summer of 1933 to the point when it plunged Europe into the Second World War at the beginning of September 1939. The approach adopted in the present book is necessarily thematic, but within each chapter I have tried . . . to mix narrative, description and analysis and to chart the rapidly changing situation as it unfolded over time. . . . . A narrative thread is provided by the arrangement of the chapters, which move progressively closer to the war as the book moves along. . . . . I hope that [the thematizing] decisions about the structure of the book make sense, but their logic will only be clear to those who read the book consecutively, from start to finish. (Evans 2007, xv)

Evans' statement can be viewed as both an instruction on how to read his book and a promise to the potential reader: the author effectively contracts to deliver a conventional kind of narrativized (or storified) account of the Nazis' consolidation of power in Germany between 1933 and 1939. And what follows are 712 pages of thematized narration, augmented by 113 pages of notes, 41 illustrations, 22 maps, 73 pages of bibliography, and an Index of 41 pages (for "Anyone who wants to use [the book] simply as a work of reference . . . ."). Professor Evans has certainly fulfilled his contract with his potential readers and in a prose that has been described as "brilliant," "magisterial," "gripping," "vivid," "impressive," fluent," and "often magisterial." Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007).

[8] The transformation of the relation between *logos* and *mythos* from a complementary into an oppositional one is a topos of modern philosophy of science. They were not so conceived in Classical Greek. *Logos* had the meaning of "discourse" and *mythos* that of "plot." Their modern meanings are "reason" and "myth" respectively, as if there could be no rationality in myth and no myth in rationality.

[9] Here is another translation of this passage:

> I clearly feel how I am losing my strength; how [I feel] more and more sultry... Fight for a personal rescue becomes hopeless... Here, on this side of the wall... But this is not important. Because I am able to complete my report and I trust that it will see the light of day in a proper time.... And people will know how it was... And [they] will ask if this is true. In advance I will answer: no, it is not true, this is only a small, it is like part, a tiny fragment of truth. This essential, absolute, true Truth cannot be represented even by the best pen. Because it is so incredibly cruel, fantastic that it escapes in its totality and fragments the perception of normal human imagination. Normal brain, even exercised in the time of these long months and years to note down all perceived and heard atrocities, would not be able to absorb and to memorize this bottomless evil. Eyes were seeing, ears were hearing, but consciousness could not comprehend, grasp, and heart already did not feel. Because it was not for humans... (Ernest 2003, 354)

This translation of Stefan Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami Warszawy, 1939-43* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2003) is by Wlad Godzich. I thank Katrina Stoll, currently doing research in Warsaw, for finding the Polish text for me. Friedlander does not cite the source of the version he used for an epigraph, but I presume that it comes from Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Lodz Ghetto, 1941-44* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), listed in his bibliography.

[10] Friedlander's version of this passage from Ernest's diary differs from another published translation of it by Michał Grynberg:

> I am hiding in a pit, lingering on without fresh air, without steady nourishment, without sufficient plumbing, without any prospect of change, and every passing hour is worth its weight in gold. I can feel my strength fading away, feel myself suffocating for want of air. The struggle for my personal survival is becoming hopeless. Here, on this side of the wall—but that doesn't matter, because I will finish my account, and I have faith that in the proper time it will see the light of day and people will know how it was. And they will ask if this is the truth. I will answer in advance: No, this is not the truth, it is only a small part, a tiny fraction of the truth. The essential truth, the real truth, cannot be described even with the most powerful pen. (p. 334; quoted in a review by Tim Cole of Michał Grynberg, et al., in *Guide to Historical Sources: The Holocaust*)

[11] An interviewer for *The Daily Jewish Forward* asked Friedlander:

> You take your book's epigraph from the diary of one Stefan Ernest, a Jew hiding in "Aryan" Warsaw in 1943. . . . It seems here that you are trying to sound a note of humility. But am I wrong in sensing a hint of bravado here, too? Do you see yourself as wielding "the mightiest pen"?

To which Friedlander replied:

> I don't want to underestimate my work. It would, in a way, be grotesque to write and then say, "This is worthless." *But I meant the epigraph very simply and directly*: Don't let us have any illusions. We try, and we have to try, but this is not even a fragment of a fragment of the truth. (My emphasis. HW)

"I meant the epigraph very simply and directly. Don't let us have any illusions, etc. . . . "? If that is what Friedlander meant, he could have simply and directly said that. Instead he used a trope, the epigraph.

[12] The Polish version by Ernest, as edited by Marta Młodkowska, is: „Walka o osobisty ratunek staje się beznadziejna. . . Tu, po tej stronie muru… Ale to nieważne. Bo sprawozdanie moje mogę doprowadzić do końca i ufam, że ujrzy ono światło dzienne we właściwym czasie…I ludzie będą wiedzieć, jak to było… I zapytają, czy to prawda. Z góry odpowiem: nie, to nie jest prawda, to jest tylko niewielka cząstka, drobny ułamek prawdy. Ta istotna, cała, prawdziwa Prawda nie da się przedstawić najtęższym choćby piórem. Bo jest ona tak nieprawdopodobnie okrutna, fantastyczna, że wymyka się ona w całości i szczegółach postrzeżeniu normalnej wyobraźni ludzkiej. Normalny mózg, choćby w ciągu długich tych miesięcy i lat zaprawiony do notowania wszelkich dostrzeżonych i zasłyszanych okropności, nie mógł być w stanie wchłonąć i spamiętać owego bezdennego zła. Oczy patrzały, uszy słyszały, ale świadomość nie mogła pojąć, ogarnąć, a serce dawno nic czuło. Bo to nie było dla ludzi…" (Ernest 2003, 354).

[13] Epigraphs play an important role in *The Years of Extermination*. In the preceding volume, *The Years of Persecution*, there is only one epigraph. It introduces the whole book and consists of a single, direct statement by one of the architects of "The Final Solution":

I would not wish to be a Jew in Germany.
Hermann Göring, November 12, 1938

The difference between this epigraph and the one taken from Ernest's diary indicates the difference between the two volumes of Friedlander's text: the one about "persecution," the other about "extermination."

[14] The concept of literary writing as distinguished from the mystifying concept of "literature" is crucial for my thesis. Literary writing is identifiable by the dominance of what Jakobson calls the poetic and metalinguistic functions of the speech event. Prior to the advent of literary modernism, realistic writing was identified with the dominance of the referential function and the world of fact. Modernist writing no doubt problematizes the notion of referentiality and attenuates it in the degree to which emphasis shifts from the referent to the problem of the modes and means of referring. In modernist literary writing, reality and even "history" are present but as ambiguated and hidden rather than as given to sight and sound.

[15] "The part of a journey that is nearer its starting point comes before the part that is nearer its end. The spatial relation of nearer and farther underpins the relation of *before and after* in motion, and the relation of *before and after* in motion underpins the relation of earlier and later in time. Thus, on Aristotle's view, temporal order is ultimately derived from the spatial ordering of stretches of motion."
Anthony J. Kenney, "Aristotle," History.com
(http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:CCH1W5slqxEJ:www.history.com/topics/aristotle+Aristotle+%22before+and+after%22&cd=6&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&lr=lang_en|lang_fr|lang_de)

[16] See Joel Fineman, "The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction," in *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991). Against the idea that anecdote and even anecdotage are low genres, Fineman seeks to redeem the anecdote as the basic unit of historiographical writing (the historeme) which gets lost or at least subdued in the process of narrativization. The irreducibility of the anecdote serves to remind the narrativizer of the "reality" of that historical process which he or she is trying to incorporate into the "plot."

[17] I had suggested as a model of what I had in mind H.G. Adler's *Eine Reise*, which, in my view, could be considered a veritable lexicon of figures and tropes for representing the Holocaust with all of the "facts" left out. Professor Friedlander and I disagree over whether Adler's book is to be considered a "fiction." I consider it to be a deconstruction of the fact-fiction dichotomy when it comes to the problem of representing the Holocaust. It is neither factual nor fictional but metafictional, in Linda Hutcheon's and Amy Elias's sense of the term. It shows how the contrast between fictional and factual presentations of an event like the Holocaust cannot do justice to all of the ghostly aspects of that event, the ways in which the facts seem grotesque and the fictions more truthful to them than any simple chronicle or history of them might be.

For a survey both of the postmodernist novel in the West and the theoretical issues raised by the revival of the historical novel as a dominant genre, see Amy Elias, *Sublime Desire: History and Post-1960 Fiction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). Some time ago, Linda Hutcheon pointed out that the postmodernist novel was given to the production of what she called "historiographical metafiction," which she characterized as showing "fiction to be historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured" (Hutcheon 1988, 120).

[18] On this "referentialist" conception of "fiction," see Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

[19] Let me be even more pedantic, the genre of the ekphrasis (*descriptio*) is typically used by art historians to extract the symbolic meaning from the literal description of the visual elements of a work of art.

[20] I wrote to Professor Friedlander asking him about the omission of the photograph from his book, and he responded that he had not made a conscious decision *not* to publish but that his description of the photograph would have been the same even if he had published. From a textological point of view, it is the fact that the photograph was *not* published and that a verbal description of it is put in its place that makes it a trope.

[21] In the Introduction to *The Years of Persecution*, Friedlander speaks of "shifts" in his "narration" required by his desire to "juxtapose entirely different levels of reality. . . . with the aim of creating a sense of estrangement counteracting our tendency to 'domesticate' that particular past and blunt its impact by means of seamless explanations and standardized renditions. That sense of estrangement seemed to me to reflect the perception of the hapless victims of the regime, . . . of a reality both absurd and ominous, of a world altogether grotesque and chilling under the veneer of an even more chilling normality" (Vol. 1, 1997, 5).

[22] Taken from Moses Flinker, *Young Moshe's Diary: The Spiritual Torment of a Jewish Boy in Nazi Europe*. Edited by Shaul Esh and Geoffrey Wigoder. Jerusalem, 1971. The original was in Hebrew.