is to know it. Standing at the site and seeing the sights give us the illusion of reproducing that past and keeping it ever-present.

A quite different cultural response foregrounds the unfamiliar, the distance between now and then. It recognizes with some terror and certainty that art does not reproduce reality. It does not reproduce the material and iconographic — the cattle cars, the piles of hair and shoes and glasses, the gates of Auschwitz, the numbers on the arm; rather, it reproduces the disproportions between the enormity of the loss and the words we use to express it. The monument in Hamburg that is designed to disappear does not remind us that the memory of the Holocaust must not fade, even though its victims and perpetrators will; it reminds us that annihilation is an ongoing process. We can no longer depend for meaning on physical or temporal proximity. A movie like "Life Is Beautiful" does not remind us that humor existed there and then too; it leaves us stunned at the distance between this humor and that reality. Poetic metaphor, in this view of artistic production, does not compare two things in order to show their similarities (as much Holocaust literary criticism has assumed), but rather to show their differences, to give us an uncanny sense of the distinction between the red of roses and of blood, chimney smoke and the smoke from *those* chimneys, the air we breathe and the air we may become.

This sense of estrangement, and this self-consciousness about our distance from the Holocaust will, no doubt, continue. Some things seem clear: as survivors are replaced in the cultural world by the second and third generation, there is an increasing urgency to describe their experiences; as globalization increases, the Holocaust is placed in an increasingly comparative perspective, linked to other traumas, others' hidden identities, other historical periods, other peoples; as history recedes, historical novels arise. The new and the old will continue to comment on one another, and post-modernism will continue alongside realism and representation. Beyond that, it seems foolhardy to predict the future of Holocaust literature. Like the rest of us, writers are affected by, respond to, sometimes try to affect the historical, political, economic, and social experiences of their day. Future responses to the Holocaust will depend on the "present" in which writers find themselves. In the future, our view of the past will be determined by whether or not the U.S. goes to war with Iraq and the outcome of that war. It will be understood through the prism of rising rates of assimilation and fundamentalism within Jewish communities. It will be determined by whatever happens in the Israeli *matzav*, the neutral word, "situation," wherein Israelis try to contain the terror of the present. It will be influenced by the bull or bear markets and by global warming and by the next elections. The future, we have long known, is shaped by the past and responds to it. But the past, too, depends on the future.

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The Future's Past Is Now

James E. Young

Keeping the past ever present is both the defining core and the bane of Jewish existence. But it is also, as Anita Norich has made so eloquently clear, an essential (if sustaining) illusion. Standing at the sites of memory and seeing "the sights" of memory make us feel "as if" we were there in time as well as in space, akin to the Passover injunction to remember these events "as if they happened to us." By remembering events, such as the Holocaust, we experience them metaphorically and vicariously, two qualities we are often asked to forget in our memorial texts.

A new generation of writers and artists, how-

ever, refuses to forget that what they know of the Holocaust is necessarily and mercifully vicarious and metaphorical, passed down to them in books, pictures, parents' stories, films, and art. As Art Spiegelman so poignantly reminds us, "MAUS is not what happened in the past, but rather what the son understands of the father's story.... It is an autobiographical history of my relationship with my father, a survivor of the Nazi death camps, cast with cartoon animals." While his father recalled what happened to him at the hands of the Nazis, son Art recalls what happened to him at the hands of his father and his father's stories. In this way, the son remains as true to his second-hand experiences and memory of the Holocaust as his father was to his own direct experiences and memory of events.

That is to say, the future of Holocaust literature is *now*. Just as the generation of victims and survivors questioned the limitations of their writing, its commensurability and appropriateness in their diaries and memoirs (recall Chaim Kaplan's plaintive question in his Warsaw ghetto diary, "How to describe such a disorderly thing in an orderly fashion?"), the next generation is exploring the great gulf between themselves and the terrible events preoccupying them. As Norich makes so profoundly clear, poetic metaphor no longer makes the similarities clear but now embodies the absolute and glaring unlikeness between then and now, between the literal experiences of survivors and the vicarious experiences of the next generation. We no longer ask whether the events can or should be represented, but we recognize that they have been depicted for better or worse. This leads us to ask: What of the Holocaust is being remembered in this literature and how? What kind of knowledge is being passed down? And how do we grasp the world today in light of such knowledge? These are the questions we find embedded in the works of a current generation of writers and artists born after, but indelibly shaped by, the Holocaust, writers such as Melvin Bukiet, Thane Rosenbaum, Francine Prose, and Anne Michaels; artists like Art Spiegelman, Shimon Attie, Ellen Rothenberg, Vera Frenkel, and Pier Marton; film-makers like Abraham Ravett; composers like Steve Reich.

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In a parallel vein, people often ask me what the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is going to look like in 50 years. Will it be remembering "new holocausts," they wonder, or will it remember "the Holocaust" in a new way, or will it be remembering different past catastrophes altogether? In fact, I have to admit that I have no idea what exactly it will be remembering. What I do know is that it will not be what it is now, despite its founders' fervent desire to leave an everlasting memory of the Holocaust on the national mall in Washington, D.C. What future generations remember at the Museum will depend on what happens between now and then, as well as on their own reasons for visiting and remembering the Holocaust in the first place.

What is the future of Holocaust literature? Norich is right to tell us that we cannot know. The most literal scenario of Holocaust literature's future might be found in the retellings of extant Holocaust literature, such as Roman Polanski's current cinematic version of Wladyslaw Szpilman's 1946 memoir, *The Pianist*. Otherwise, all we know is that the future of Holocaust literature will depend on every new generation's own reasons for telling and retelling these events to themselves, that *mi-dor le-dor*, these events will be animated again and again by every generation's own reasons to know and remember. And as the saying goes, only time will tell what those reasons will be.

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