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# Writing Resistance and the Question of Gender: Charlotte Delbo, Noor Inayat Khan, and Germaine Tillion

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# WRITING RESISTANCE AND THE QUESTION OF GENDER:

# CHARLOTTE DELBO, NOOR INAYAT KHAN, AND GERMAINE TILLION

A Dissertation Presented

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my beloved grandmother Eleanore, who would have loved to have seen this day, and who always knew how much I long to hear the trains that whistle in Valhalla.

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My interest in Holocaust Studies, the literature and history of World War II, and women of the Resistance has developed over the course of several years while I have been a student of Comparative Literature and French Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Prior to immersing myself in my university graduate work that has culminated in this dissertation, I spent two years in Israel, where I attended high school and then worked and studied on a kibbutz, after which I lived in Paris for a decade prior to returing to the United States fifteen years ago. I credit my own 'lived experiences' during those years abroad with having awakened my keen interest in seeking new and meaningful ways to study and analyze the kinds of fascinating relationships between life and literature that have occupied me in my research into the careers and writings of three remarkable women.

I am deeply grateful to many friends and colleagues for their contributions in support of this project. During the years leading up to my completion of this dissertation I had the special privilege of working with James Young toward the establishment of the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies at UMass, and to him I am doubly grateful, for his encouragement and the specialized feedback he has often given me on my dissertation topic, and for the splendid opportunity to take an active role in the establishment of a dynamic venue for research and teaching as well as a peaceful haven in which to write a dissertation. I thank Arnold Friedmann and Barbara Schmir for their many expressions of moral support while I was preparing this study. My sincere gratitude also goes to Sandra Lillydahl of the Department of Maps and Collections at UMass for our many fascinating discussions of the life and achievements of Noor Inayat

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throughout this entire process. Finally, I thank everyone in my family for being so selflessly patient with me while I was devoting a great deal of time to this project. I am grateful to all of them for their love and support every day of my life.

ABSTRACT

WRITING RESISTANCE AND THE QUESTION OF GENDER: CHARLOTTE DELBO, NOOR INAYAT KHAN, AND GERMAINE TILLION

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In this dissertation I profile and compare the lives and works of Charlotte Delbo, Noor Inayat Khan, and Germaine Tillion, who were of the same generation and who actively participated in the French Resistance during the Holocaust. I discuss ways in which these writers frequently infuse modes of art and frequently theater into their works, in literary characters, situations, imagery, and gendered subjectivity. I introduce my notion of "writing resistance," by which I mean not only these writers' eye witness accounts and representations of the historical events of WW II, but especially their subjective, often quite intimate reflections on their own personal engagements in initiatives aimed at resisting the devastating onslaught of Nazi power. "Writing resistance" thus examines how these writers' works and experiences foreground their respective roles as *résistantes*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF IMAGES

Image Page

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## Writing Resistance and the Question of Gender

This study examines the lives and works of three women born within a few years of one another, on the threshold of World War I: Charlotte Delbo (1913-1985), Noor Inayat Khan (1914-1944), and Germaine Tillion (1907-2008). Although their family backgrounds, social milieux, and cultural experiences were strikingly diverse from infancy, their lives were inextricably interwoven with the widespread carnage of World War I. All witnessed the rise of Hitler and the Third Reich, the Spanish Civil War, the ineffectual pacifism of a short-lived Socialist regime in France, and the imminence of another world conflagration. Throughout their formative years they were exposed to the painful reconstruction that unfolded precariously throughout Europe during the war's prolonged and troubled aftermath. Each came to maturity having completed her higher education within the academic and cultural milieu of Paris prior to World War II. At the outset of the war, all three committed to actively participating in resistance activities.

In this introductory chapter I profile the writers' prewar and wartime lives in order to show how the style and substance of their work was prompted and deepened by "writing resistance." I examine the unique stylistic tendencies of each writer comparing the textuality, temporality, and subjectivity of their works. "Writing resistance" thus encompasses not only the subjects' production of eye-witness accounts of the events of World War II, but also their particular evaluations of the political implications of those years through selected works that suggest ways in which literary characters, situations,

idioms and imagery are illuminated by gendered subjectivity.

Since the end of World War II, many autobiographical testimonies and historical studies have documented the significant contributions of hundreds of courageous women who responded to the political crises of those dark years. Unlike many of those accounts, which frequently center on notable and heroic deeds, or offer responses to the socio-political implications of that era, this study instead focuses on ways in which subjective, and often intimate reflections of personal engagements are conditioned by the impulse to resist the devastating onslaught of Nazi power.

My study thus examines ways in which the lives and accounts of these women foreground their respective roles as *résistantes*. It is also in dialogue with Dalia Ofer's observation that "women's narratives widen and nuance both the concept of accommodation and of resistance and force historians to reevaluate what they had formerly defined as heroism and resistance."[1] For just as Ofer deploys gender studies as a means of deepening and expanding an excessively "restrictive notion of resistance and fighting," so, too, does this project intend to amplify the literature of resistance and the Holocaust in relation to the experientially-based narratives of Delbo, Noor, and Tillion.

I incorporate Marianne Hirsch's concept of "connective approaches," which she developed in her recent work in the field of Memory Studies as a valuable modality for charting future directions for both Holocaust and Memory Studies. Connective approaches focus on interrelations among different stories, in terms of comparable "starting and reference points and different paradigms and models for working through,

[1] See *Gender and Jewish History*, Eds. Marion A. Kaplan and Deborah Dash Moore (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011). Although Ofer's chapter centers on Jewish women, she nonetheless implies that there is an important dialectic between the notion of gender and resistance during World War II.

and yes, without forgetting, for moving beyond a traumatic past."[2]

With regard specifically to writings on the Holocaust, Pascale Rachel Bos invites the reader to rethink critically *how* one studies and interprets the influential significance of gender.[3] In order to remedy the problems Bos perceives to be inherent in earlier scholarly work on women and the Holocaust, she proposes an alternative conceptual framework for what she refers to as a "different, *discursive* kind of gender analysis, to bring to center stage questions about (gendered) subjectivity and autobiographical representation, the politics of memory and narrative, and the psychological function of testimony."[4] She observes that first-generation research from the 1980s, beginning with the work of Joan Ringelheim, focused on the idea of a "women's culture," a notion that led to generalized or essentialized perspectives on women's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, interpretations of their testimonies tended to overlook or neglect the multifaceted interpretations and descriptions of the subjects' own perceptions of reality. Bos's own position emphasizes the importance of "cataloguing historical experiences of individual women," primarily in relation to the testimonies of other women.[5] Rather than accord exclusive attention to such testimonies, I focus more specifically on a diverse selection of works in which Delbo, Noor, and Tillion broach gender-related matters in their evocations of their own personal experiences; hence the possibility of sounding the interfaces between their gendered self-perceptions as wartime *résistantes* and their

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[2] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Introduction and 23.

[3] Pascale Rachel Bos, "Women and the Holocaust: Analyzing Gender Difference," in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 178-186.

[4] Bos, "Women and the Holocaust" 181.

[5] Bos, "Women and the Holocaust" 181.

engagements with gender in terms of how women are depicted in their literary works.

In recent studies of women of the Holocaust and resistance, Rochelle G. Saidel and Caroline Moorehead discuss women's cultures that developed under circumstances of duress, such as in combat or concentration camps, where women found mutual solace.[6] Likewise, in her analysis of two cases of women of the French Resistance, Judith Greenberg considers their activities on the "inside," within the private sphere where women protected each other apart from the official military hierarchy.[7] Although these studies directly address issues of resistance and gender, mine explores in greater depth these writers' uniquely feminine perspectives, both in autobiographical writings and literary representations that resonate with what we know of their lives.

Because each of these writers demonstrates a tendency to dwell on her subjectively meaningful "lived experiences" as a woman rather than exclusively on the empirical details of current events and routine matters of daily life, the question of gender assumes particular importance, and I give it due consideration both in their autobiographical writings as well as in their literary, artistic, and scholarly works, thus including not only fictional narratives and plays, but also scientific studies. Such an approach is potentially fruitful as well for comparing the experiences and writings of both men and women. Contrary to Bos, who with reference to Jewish men and women of the Holocaust insists that:

> …we could ideally compare narratives of men and women who lived under

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[6] Rochelle G. Saidel, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) and Caroline Moorhead, *A Train in Winter: An Extraordinary Story of Women, Friendship, and Resistance in Occupied France* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011).

[7] Judith Greenberg, "Paths of Resistance: French Women working from the Inside," *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust,* eds. Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003).

> 'equivalent' circumstances. But there are far too many factors to include to make any such comparison a useful one (besides gender, one would have to find a match between survivors' age, class, Jewish identity, nationality, education level, personality, and so on); it simply cannot be achieved.[8]

I suggest instead that such a comparison is indeed possible with particular attention to subjective personal testimonies. Like Hirsch, I focus on multiple narratives and links between their starting points and references.

**Charlotte Delbo: Writings Prefigured by Experience**

In my chapter on Charlotte Delbo I discuss her intellectual engagements immediately prior to and following the Holocaust, including ways in which some of these experiences are linked to her experiences at Auschwitz.[9] On the basis of her writings and details from the first biography devoted to her (2013), I show how characters in some of her stories reflect men and women with whom she was involved during the war, often in associations with critical or traumatic experiences she endured during the Holocaust. My analyses of the protagonists' interactions focus in particular on the fears and anxieties of female characters who have lost their compatriots, or beloved husbands, fathers, or sons. It is vital in this connection to establish the background of Delbo's initial intellectual and political engagements. There is little doubt that her intellectual pursuits during the 1930s prefigured her later role as a *résistante*. These first came to prominence in 1934, in the articles and journals she published in the *Cahiers de la Jeunesse*, a

[8] Bos, "Women and the Holocaust" 183.

[9] Her father Charles was from the Sarthe and her mother Ermini (née Morero) from Torre Pellice, in the Piemonte region of northern Italy. They married in 1911 and moved to Vigneux-sur Seine with their four children: Charlotte, Odette (born in 1918), André (born in 1922), and Daniel (born in 1926).

communist journal of the arts. It was during the 1930s that she joined the Parti communiste français (PCF) and studied Marxist theory with the noted philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre,[10] who clearly influenced her intellectual interests both before and after the war and was a key male figure in her life, and to whom she referred as her "complice intellectuel."[11] During the 1960s the two reunited and collaborated on a more formal level, while Lefebvre was a professor at the University of Strasbourg and held an appointment at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Delbo was his assistant and organized many of his seminars.

The second influential male figure was Georges Dudach, whom she married in 1936 and with whom she became actively involved with resistance activities as well as with projects for the *Cahiers*. While Dudach conducted clandestine activities on foot throughout Paris, Delbo transcribed messages transmitted via Radio Londres and Radio Moscou. On March 22, 1942 the French police arrested them for their involvement with the *Cahiers*.[12] Shortly thereafter Dudach was executed by a firing squad, and Delbo was imprisoned at Romainville and then in the Santé prison. At the end of 1942 she was deported in a convoy of two hundred thirty women to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she

[10] Violiane Gelly and Paul Gradvohl, *Charlotte Delbo* (Paris: Fayard, 2013). Henri Lefebvre received his doctoral degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne and joined the Parti communiste français in 1920.

[11] Gelly and Gradvohl 248.

[12] They were arrested at their apartment on rue de la Faisanderie. Among the resistance literature confiscated was the first number of *La pensée* and issues of *Lettres Françaises.* There was also a report on the execution of fifty hostages held in the Camp d'internement de Châteaubriant, twenty-seven of whom were communist militants. The victims were executed in retaliation for the October 1941 murder of German officer Hotz.

remained for a year before being sent to Ravensbrück when she was finally liberated.[13] In her writings she repeatedly alludes to the profoundly traumatic final moments she shared with Dudach just before his execution, and they figure prominently among her multifaceted descriptions of anticipated loss.

A third significant influence on her life and literature was Louis Jouvet, a celebrated actor and, beginning in 1934, director of the Théâtre de l'Athenée in Paris. Their professional relationship began around 1941 when she interviewed him for an article in the *Cahiers*. She so impressed him that he immediately appointed her as his secretary; she served in that capacity during his troupe's tour of South America.[14] After spending five months in Argentina, she returned to France in September of 1941 to join Dudach and engage in further resistance efforts. Jouvet was so opposed to her leaving the troupe to join resistance efforts in France that he hid her passport and told her that no boats were departing for France.[15] Despite their disagreement on that occasion, she remained his devoted friend. During her imprisonment at Romainville she organized 'cours de théâtre' and "après-midis artistiques" [theater courses and artistic afternoons] for her fellow inmates in order to involve them in performances of plays on classical themes and poetry readings. Later on she wrote that the *après-midis artistiques* had been inspired by her work with Jouvet.[16] Delbo's passion for the theater brought her back to work with him in 1947, and thereafter they corresponded until his death in 1951. In 1977

[13] "Convoi du 24 janvier 1943" is also referred to as "Convoi des 31000" because "31" was inscribed on the prisoners' arms. Of the two hundred thirty women deported to Auschwitz, only seventy survived.

[14] The Athénée troupe performed several plays on classical themes by Jean Giraudoux, including *Ondine, Electre,* and *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*.

[15] Precisely why Delbo left South America is unclear. See Gelly and Gradvohl 67-69.

[16] Gelly and Gradvohl 106.

she published one of her most complex works, *Spectres mes compagnons*, written in the form of a letter, as a tribute to him.

A lesser-known man in her life was Serge Samaraine, a descendant of the Russian aristocracy and head of the interpreters' division at the United Nations. Delbo began a relationship with him in 1950 when she went to Russia "pour retrouver l'idéal soviétique" [to rediscover Soviet ideals]. He taught her Russian and wanted to marry and have a family with her; she did not consent, however, claiming that her memories of the suffering of Jewish children in the concentration camps prevented her from having children of her own, and they parted company soon thereafter.[17] Inasmuch as he turned attention back to Soviet ideology in ways that may have resonated with her pre-war conversations about Marxism with Henri Lefebvre, that relationship is important for this study. I shall return to Delbo's personal and professional relationships with these men in Chapter Two.

She frequently evokes her associations with women in her reflections on the brutal circumstances that prevailed in the concentration camps, the nearly unbearable rigors of survival, and the prospect of imminent death. Her acute perceptions of women as they attempted to cope with these atrocities will be of special interest in my study of her works.

In my analysis of these carceral moments as well as those she details among her own "lived experiences," the question of trauma and memory will be of the utmost importance in relation to theoretical conceptualizations of nostalgia. Susannah Radstone questions whether the link between nostalgia and loss is better understood as an affective experience located in the past or in the present, and whether or not it persists within the

[17] Gelly and Gradvohl 235.

subject as an open question. Her observations will be helpful as I develop my own discussion of loss and nostalgia in Delbo's descriptions of the traumatic situations that confront her female characters.[18]

**Charlotte Delbo: Writing Inescapable Death**

A major focus of my analysis of Delbo's literary works is on the methodology and style of her writing about the Holocaust as she constructs a feminine sphere drawn from her own experiences at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Raisko, and Ravensbrück.[19] I examine ways in which she relives the shocking crisis in 1942 when she and Georges Dudach were arrested. While many scholars have focused mainly on *Auschwitz et après*, the trilogy for which she is best known and which established her as a writer, my study also takes into account a selection of her *récits* and plays that thus far have eluded substantive literary analysis. I identify ways in which a variety of her writings construct a 'gynocentric' sphere comprised of women's perspectives, especially those related to traumatic experiences, such as the moments at which her female compatriots are either facing death or witnessing the deaths of those who are close to them.

Some scholars have perceived *Auschwitz et après* as a memoir or a quasi-autobiographical text. Nicole Thatcher sees the blending of fragments of poetry and prose in the trilogy as a unique way of recording remembered sensations and the

[18] Susannah Radstone, *The Sexual Politics of Time: Confession, Nostalgia, Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[19] The three components of *Auschwitz et après* are *Aucun de nous ne reviendra (1965)*, written immediately after the Liberation but left it in a drawer for over twenty years before publication; *Une connaissance inutile* (1970), and *Mesure de nos jours (1971).* Other works pertinent to her experiences of internment are *La Sentence* (1972, written in 1966); *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* (1974); *Spectres, mes compagnons* (1977); and *Une scène jouée dans la mémoire* (1995) written a few years after the Liberation, *and Ceux qui avaient choisi* (2011).

particular qualities of specific moments, rather than of describing a chronological sequence of events representing the historical record.[20] She perceives this text as an effective means of highlighting the degradation of women rather than depicting them as glorious *résistantes*, and precisely at a time when the emphasis in writings about wartime was on heroic deeds and not on the endurance of suffering.[21]

In *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* and *Auschwitz et après* I examine passages that describe the harsh realities of the concentration camps when female characters are caught up in chaotic fluctuations between precarious regimens of mere survival and sudden near-death experiences. The characters' points of view at these moments reveal in stark detail the traumatic effects of internment, providing a space to develop my notion of writing resistance from the characters' points of view. In *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* for example, when Reine is confronted by a life-or-death situation she tells her fellow prisoners that they are combatants in a battle against death in which the stakes are akin to the potential world-wide victory of the Resistance. Her engagement with the question of death or survival thus pays homage to those outside the camp, fighting for a collective cause. However, Delbo separates her female characters from the political realm as if the paramount underlying concern were *always* the individual cause, comprised of each

[20]According to Gelly and Gradvohl, many writers on the Holocaust address emotions and intellect but not the *senses*, as does Delbo. They also note that in the United States studies on Delbo equal in number those on Primo Levi in the fields of both Gender Studies and Feminist Studies. In France over the past forty years, her texts and plays have received attention from only a small circle. For more on that issue, see the interview with Violaine Gelly: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvLoewpsedY.

[21] She claims that the notion of the degradation of women is especially true in *Qui rapportera ces paroles?*, a three-act tragedy about twenty-two women imprisoned in Block Twenty-Three. Nicole Thatcher, *Charlotte Delbo, une voix singulière: mémoire, témoingnage, et littérature* (Paris: Harmattan, 2003) 57-62. Thatcher also observes that Delbo's form of writing is unique in the way it invokes three types of memory: external, intellectual, and deep.

woman's personal experiences. Reine explains that the battle outside of the camp is fought for *us*, the women imprisoned:

> La bataille ne se joue pas ici. Elle se joue dans les maquis. Elle se joue à Stalingrad, à Londres, à Paris, à Athènes, à Belgrade, à Varsovie. Ceux qui se battent, dehors, se battent pour nous. S'ils ne devaient pas nous revoir, leur victoire aurait goût de défaite. Ils auraient le sentiment de s'être battus pour rien.[22]

> [The Battle is not unfolding here [in Block 230], But out in the maquis. It occurs in Stalingrad, London, Paris, Athens, Belgrade, and Warsaw. Those fighting outside are fighting for us. If they were never going to see us again, their victory would taste like defeat. They would feel as though they had fought in vain.][23]

Hence, from Reine's perspective, the political resistance takes place not within the confines of the concentration camp, but rather at the locations she lists, which is indicative of a separate and distinctive sphere that represents the imprisoned women. Several other passages show striking images of the devastating effects of internment, and there are numerous scenarios and fantasies of what life might be like during the post-internment period if one actually were to survive or *to return* – a notion to which Delbo often refers. The *return* in such contexts refers less to physical displacement than to indications that the author cannot psychologically recover from the experience of internment, as in *Mesure de nos jours*, the last volume of the trilogy in which the narrator recalls her return from the camp as she yearns to remain with her deceased compatriots:

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[22] Delbo, *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* (Paris: P.J. Oswald, 1974) 28-29.

[23] My translation. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from the French are my own.

> Ma vraie famille, c'est vous, ceux qui étaient là-bas avec moi. Aujourd'hui, mes souvenirs, mon passé, c'est là -bas. Mes retours en arrière ne franchissent jamais cette borne. Ils y butent[24]. . . Je ne suis pas vivante. Je suis enfermée dans des souvenirs et des redites. La nuit, j'ai le droit de n'être pas vivante. J'ai le droit de ne pas faire semblant. Je retrouve les autres. Je suis au milieu d'elles, l'une d'elles. Elles sont comme moi, muettes et dépourvues.[25]
>
> [My real family is you, those of you who were back there with me. Today, my memories, my past, are back there. My returns back there never go beyond that marker. They bump into it. . .I am not alive. I'm a prisoner of memories and repetitions. At night, I have the right not to be alive. I have the right not to pretend. I rejoin the others. I am among them, one of them. They are like me, silent and drained [of life].[26]

In *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* writing resistance thus extends to the extra-carceral reality of situations in the here-and-now. Gina, in the midst of suffering during her imprisonment, dreams of opening a tea salon. Mounette has a nightmare about surviving her internment and returning home to find her mother washing dishes and ironing; yet the moment she touches her mother's "dry, roughly-textured hand" and suggests she wear gloves, she awakens back in the concentration camp, holding hands with her fellow inmates Renée and Agnès.[27] There are many such moments in these works, when a

[24] Delbo, *Mesure de nos jours* 50.

[25] Delbo, *Mesure de nos jours* 54.

[27] Throughout the trilogy the female prisoners are occasionally depicted as nurturers, such as maternal figures who emerge when the characters are on the brink of death or traumatized from having witnessed the death of a compatriot.

prisoner's consciousness oscillates between life in the camp and feminine experiences and behavior on the outside. Thus these plays also signify women's resistance as they share bittersweet memories of their past lives or project the future.[28] In my analysis of *Auschwitz et après* I focus on transformations of physical appearance as the women confront death, as femininity acquires new meanings, or becomes irrelevant, such as the evocation of a nude cadaver in the snow that resembles a mannequin; internees who *become* maternal figures to their compatriots; and internees who leave the camps after Liberation and suddenly appear to metamorphose into phantoms.

The three-act play *La Sentence* is set in Burgos in 1970 and concerns Basque militants awaiting the trial that would eventually determine their death sentences. Although unrelated to the Holocaust or concentration camps, *La sentence*, like *Auschwitz et Après* and *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* focuses on women's perspectives, specifically those of the mothers, sisters, and spouses anticipating the death sentences of their sons, brothers, and husbands. Inès, the spouse of one of the condemned men, describes the agony of awaiting their executions:

> Je n'en peux plus d'attendre
> Et je ne veux pas que cesse l'attente
> Quand il faudra s'éloigner de ces terribles portes
> Je ne saurai que faire de moi.
> Au moins ici
> il me semble que je les vois

[28] The stage directions of *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* specify that "the faces do not count" and that "the costumes do not count," which is indicative of a desire to highlight the collective commitment among the women which transcends their roles as individuals.

que j'entends leur voix.

J'ai peur qu'au moment où je devrai m'éloigner d'ici

s'éloigne aussi la mémoire de leur voix et de leur regard.

Toutes leurs paroles résonnent encore en moi.[29]

[I can't stand this waiting any longer, / yet I don't want the waiting to end. / When the time comes to leave these horrible gates behind / I won't know what do with myself. / At least here / It seems to me I can see them, / that I hear their voices. / I'm afraid that when I'll have to leave here / The memory of their voices and of their expressions will fade too. / All of their words are still echoing within me.]

This passage is also reminiscent of *Une scène jouée dans la mémoire,* a one-act play in the form of a dialogue. Both plays depict the anguish of loss from the perspective of a woman within a carceral setting as she meditates on imminent death and, like *La Sentence*, this play highlights the perspective of the female character awaiting the death of her beloved. Set in the Santé prison on May 23, 1942, the play consists of a dialogue between Françoise and Paul as they bid farewell to each other before his execution. During the final moments of the play, Françoise listens to the rhythm of Paul's heartbeat and nostalgically recalls having done so when she slept in his arms.[30] Insofar as the male character represents Dudach awaiting execution for resistance-related activities, the play offers an important example of how Delbo reflects her personal experiences in her works.

[29] Delbo, *La Sentence* 61.

[30] Delbo, *Une scène* 25.

*Ceux qui avaient choisi* is also written in the form of a dialogue between a man and a woman. In this two-act play the characters meet for the first time in a café in Athens, twenty years after the Liberation. As in *Une scène joué dans la memoire*, the woman is Françoise; she had been a résistante and was deported. Werner is a German scholar specializing in classical Greek literature; they reminisce about their wartime experiences. Françoise *retells* the story of her final moments with Paul / Georges Dudach. She and Werner share a mutual fascination and feel that they were destined to meet; he is fascinated by Paris and she queries him about his wartime activities.[31] One sees that Werner's role as a scholar is reminiscent of Delbo's experiences with the men who influenced her, notably Louis Jouvet and Henri Lefebvre.

The last of Delbo's works I examine, *Spectres, mes compagnons,* published posthumously, is a powerfully written letter to Louis Jouvet in which she refers to the "faint memories of 1939."[32] There are references to moments prior to and after her deportation and internment. She evokes several theatrical characters in relation to her own experiences and those of Dudach and Jouvet, with whom she at times confuses the theatrical character Alceste. She describes the *dramatis personae* as if each of them had both a life and an afterlife. Delbo uses drama as a kind of metaphor for forgotten worlds and thus, once again, re-evokes her personal experiences through literature. In *Spectres, mes compagnons* she ushers her readers into what at times is rendered as a

[31] This play shows striking thematic similarities to Alain Resnais's film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) in terms of the dialogic format in which a couple, from completely different backgrounds, meets in the aftermath of war and shares an affective rapport based on having lived through the horrors of warfare. Novelist and filmmaker Marguerite Duras wrote the screenplay.

[32] Plays not discussed in this study: *La théorie et la pratique*: *dialogue imaginaire mais tout à fait apocryphe entre Herbert Marcuse et Henri Lefebvre* (1969) ; *Maria Lusitania et le coup d'Etat* (1975), and *La ligne de démarcation et la capitulation* (1977).

phantasmagorical 'domain' in which the struggle to prolong one's existence involves recourse to describing one's dreams and narrating one's recollections of life before, and also after, imprisonment. I show how the spectral Antigone and Electre reflect the attitudes of some of the *déportées* portrayed in the trilogy.[33] There are many moments in Delbo's works when protagonists drift back and forth between perceptions of their immediate circumstances and imaginary worlds, notably during feminine-gendered experiences.

As referenced above, I discuss the function of nostalgia and trauma in Delbo's writings in order to develop my notion of writing resistance in relation to recent work in the field of Memory Studies by Marianne Hirsch, Susannah Radstone, Michael Rothberg, and other cultural critics, literary critics, and historians. By drawing from a selection of Delbo's texts and examining them in relation to her experiences, I identify ways in which she constructs unique spheres in which male and female figures are frequently transformed or recreated in an attempt to evade inescapable death, or to *live on* through the power of the writer's imagination. To *write resistance* in this case is thus to write beyond the reality of atrocity so as to afford both the living and the dead a unique afterlife, which is constructed by the powerful memories and ongoing effects of everyday life in the concentration camp.

[33] Colin Davis notes that the letter expresses grief (for Dudach) and is addressed to a deceased person (Jouvet); it is a text about the dead, or the *not quite living*. Its most striking feature is the theatrical apparitions of what Delbo calls "ghosts," the *spectres* of the title. See Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

## Noor Inayat Khan: Conceptualizing Resistance from Sufism to the Second World War

In this chapter I discuss themes of perseverance and sacrifice that Noor Inayat Khan develops in her works from 1934 until the time of her execution at Dachau in 1944. I consider how her writings attest to the influence of Sufism and the inspirational teachings of her father, who founded the International Sufi Movement and promulgated the Sufi Order International in both Europe and the United States. These themes find expression in several of her writings in response to the evolving political situation prior to and during the war. In tone and style her writings reflect the Sufi value system and culture that was emergent within the western world.

In January 1943, at twenty-five, Noor became the first female wireless operator to be infiltrated into enemy-occupied France as an agent of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), an intelligence office that had recently been established in the cabinet of Winston Churchill. She served fearlessly as a secret agent in the SOE until the Gestapo arrested her in September, 1944. She was tortured and shortly thereafter murdered at Dachau.[34] France recognized her heroic achievement posthumously, awarding her the Croix de Guerre with a gold star, the highest award accorded to a civilian. In Great Britain she was one of only three women who posthumously received the George Cross for heroic deeds.[35] Although Noor is well known for her courage and achievements as a secret

[34] Claire Ray Harper and David Ray Harper, *We Rubies Four: The Memoires of Claire Ray Harper* (New Lebanon, New York: Omega Publications, 2011) 168-180.

[35] Harper and Harper, *We Rubies Four* 180-182.

agent, her fiction, essays, and correspondence have not been analyzed in depth, nor have they been considered in relation to her important role in the Resistance. Indeed, some of her fiction remained unpublished until 2012, and I am fortunate to be the first scholar to write about a collection of her unpublished writings, including her personal correspondence.[36]

Noor was the eldest of four siblings in an ethnically diverse family that traveled extensively and sojourned in several countries. She was born in Moscow in 1914 to Ora Ray Baker, an American from Wenatchee, Washington, and Hazrat Inayat Khan, an esteemed mystic, teacher, and musician who helped establish the Sufi movement in the West and whose philosophical doctrines continue to circulate among his disciples.[37] In 1914, following the birth of Noor, the Inayat Khan family moved to London, then in the early 1920s to Suresnes, France, where they lived in the home that Hazrat (and others) have referred to as "Fazil Manzil," meaning "the House of blessing." That residence also served as a well-known educational center of Sufism, where Hazrat led discussions with his *mureeds* (disciples). Like her father, Noor regularly taught lessons in Sufism, the

[36] David Harper, who holds the unpublished correspondence she had with her Turkish Jewish fiancé, Azeem Goldenberg, has granted me permission to examine unpublished letters written by her as well as the Inayat Khan family photos. Noor and Goldenberg were involved in a relationship between 1934-1940 and were engaged to be married. Their correspondence reveals her emotional ties with him and also sheds light on her personal sentiments with regard to many issues.

[37] For many years Ora Ray Baker lived with her half brother Pierre Bernard, a pioneer of American yoga and founder in 1905 of the Tankrit Order of America, and in 1910 of the Sanskrit College of New York. Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927) travelled throughout the world teaching Sufism. His establishment of the movement's infrastructure led to the founding of the Sufi Headquarters in Geneva; members of the movement now celebrate the anniversaries of his birth and death, and many adherents also commemorate the day he left his native India on a pilgrimage to the West. Inayat Khan and Baker met in San Francisco and were married in London in 1913. On the story of Noor's parents, see Ray Harper and Harper, *We Rubies Four* 25-39.

main focus of her attention being the education of young children.[38]

During the 1930s Noor was shaped by her education, which included music, writing fiction, and child psychology. She played the harp and the piano and even composed several pieces. In 1931 she and her three siblings were enrolled at the École normale de musique de Paris where they studied with Nadia Boulanger. This focus on music was likely attributable to the influence of Hazrat, who before his demise in 1926 had associated his musical fervor with the spiritual essence of Sufism.[39] Noor evokes her own interest in music in an essay which also pays tribute to famous opera divas active from the Victorian Era and the *Belle Époque* to her own lifetime. I discuss this essay in relation to gender and writing resistance in my chapter on her works.

Noor earned a *maîtrise* (master's degree) in Child Psychology at the Sorbonne in 1932 and in 1938 began writing children's stories for the *Figaro*, some of which were broadcast by RadioDiffusion France. *The Jātaka Tales* (1939), her first book and the only one published during her lifetime, contains stories I discuss, notably "The Fairy and the Hare," "The Monkey Bridge," and "The Tortoise and the Geese." During the 1930s Noor was romantically involved with Azeem Goldenberg, a Jewish pianist from Turkey. They had met at the École Normale de Musique and were engaged to be married, but the relationship ended abruptly at the outset of the war. Surprisingly, the significance of their relationship and its influence on Noor's life and writings has not been discussed, and several questions remain unanswered about the young Jewish man and the Sufi woman

[38] Unpublished letter from a Yetty, a friend of the Inayat Khan family, to David Harper, 7 April 2013. Courtesy of the Claire Ray Harper collection. In the letter, Yetty describes the kind of lessons on Sufism for children that Noor offered to him and his siblings.

[39] For more on music and the Inayat Khan Family, see Harper and Harper, *We Rubies Four* 103-108.

who, during the tumultuous pre-war years, had planned to spend their lives together. Jean Overton Fuller explains that their relationship was "never recognized by her family, who considered the match unsuitable, even though it continued in a non-official form for about six years."[40] According to Shrabani Basu, however, Vilayat, Noor's brother, said that Goldenberg was "initiated into the Sufi fold" and spent a great deal of time at Fazil Manzil, even though he was not accepted by the Inayat Khan family's belief that Goldenberg's overbearing behavior caused Noor emotional distress.[41] According to Claire Ray Harper, Noor's sister, their relationship came to an end due to the war, although she does not reference the family's objections. Although the circumstances of their relationship are obscure, there is little doubt that around 1934 it was a devoted one. Several unpublished letters from this period to which I have had access reveal Noor as a serene woman whose literary writings idealize Sufism and the philosophical teachings of her late father.

The final chapter of Noor's life began in 1939, when from her living room she heard a cannon firing at the gates of Paris. Shortly thereafter, she and Vilayat committed themselves to joining the war effort in some worthwhile capacity. Although they were both strong pacifists, they could readily foresee the futility of such a position. When Vilayat hypothetically evoked the horrifying image of a Nazi aiming a machine gun at a hundred hostages, they decided that they might actually have a chance to kill that Nazi

[40] Jean Overton Fuller, *Noor-un-nisa Inayat Khan: Madeleine* (East-West Publications: Rotterdam, 1971) introduction.

[41] Basu refers to Goldenberg as "a Rumanian Jew" from a "working class background," who lived with his mother in Paris and struggled to pay his tuition at the École Normale de Musique. Shrabani Basu, *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan* (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, 2007) 23-24. Ray Harper refers to him as "Goldenberg, a Turkish Jew," *We Rubies Four* 118. Overton Fuller, *Noor-un-nisa Inayat Khan* 51-52.

captor and save a hundred innocent people.[42]

At the outset of warfare, together, Noor and Vilayat fled to England, where they believed they would find shelter from the ominous threat of Nazism, which by then had taken control of many areas around France. The flight from Suresnes was an ordeal of several days during which they left behind their belongings and risked their lives as bombs fell throughout France. In an essay / fictional narrative Noor describes the traumatic experience of fleeing during the Occupation in reference to the plight of Poland and France at that time.[43] I discuss the autobiographical details that distinguish this essay from her earlier stories of Sufism and Indian sacrificial traditions.

After Noor and her family arrived in England, the siblings were trained as Red Cross nurses. Noor joined the First Aid and Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) and then the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), in which she trained as a wireless operator. In February of 1943 she enlisted in the Special Operations Executive as a secret agent, received extensive wireless and Morse code training, and began dangerous undercover work for the French and British Resistance.[44]

Several books and articles refer to Noor as a "spy" for the Resistance and as one of

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[42] "Healing Dachau," *Heart and Wings,* Summer and Fall, 1996, sec. 7. Pir Vilayat Khan recalled his memories of Noor on June 30, 1996, during a 'universal' worship ceremony in her honor at the Dachau concentration camp.

[43] Entitled "Escape from Saint Nazaire (1940)," this essay could be compared to Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française* in the way that both authors describe the trauma of exile, even though the latter's account is contained in a much longer manuscript.

[44] When Noor joined resistance movements she assumed several new identities. In FANY she became Nora Baker to conceal her Indian heritage. The SOE identified her as Jeanne Marie Renier, born in Blois, whose father was a philosophy professor and her mother a citizen of both France and the United States. Her radio code name was "Madeleine" when she was communicating with the headquarters of SOE. See Harper, *We Rubies Four* 157-162.

only thirty-nine women among four hundred forty-one men who were thus engaged.[45] Discussing gender and performativity in the SOE, Juliette Pattison writes that this agency typically modified women's conventional wartime roles.[46] One of her trainers in the SOE observed: She is also very feminine, very eager to please, very ready to adapt herself to the mood of the company or the tone of the conversation, interested in personalities, capable of strong attachments, kind-hearted, emotional and imaginative. She is very fond of her family. The motive for her accepting the present task is, apparently, idealism. . . it is the emotional side of her character, coupled with a vivid imagination, which will most test her steadfastness of purpose in the later stages of her training.[47] Significantly, this report evokes aspects of Noor's life that I, too, perceive in her work, especially the ways in which her writings on Sufism serve as a bridge that leads her to write narratives of resistance that directly reflect wartime resistance activities. I also examine ways in which the feminine-gendered behaviors evoked explicitly and implicitly in some of her texts relate to the question of performance. For this discussion, Judith Butler's influential work on gender and peformativity provides a useful theoretical framework. In her analysis of gender as a social construct, she postulates that peformative capacity derives from social behaviors and interactions. She rejects the notion of innate gender identities, maintaining instead that they emerge as constructs from performances that in effect conceal their constituent elements. According to this view, gender is an enactment that

[45] Among the key figures who recruited and trained Noor were Selwyn Jepson (1899-1989), A recruitment officer for the French section of SOE; Maurice Buckmaster (1902-1992), A leader of the SOE French Section); cryptographer Leo Marks (1920-2001); and Vera Atkins (1908-2000), assistant to Buckmaster. The two women with whom she worked closely during her training were Cecily Lefort (1900-1945) and Yolande Beekman (1911-1944).

[46] Juliette Pattison, "'Playing the Daft Lassie with Them': Gender, Captivity, and the Special Operations Executive During the Second World War," *European Review of History* 13.2 (2006): 271-292.

[47] This SOE report of April 1943 is cited in Harper, *We Rubies Four* 58.

masks the mechanisms of its own performance and erases the means by which it is produced.[48] I examine interactions of gender and performativity in Noor's writings from this perspective.

Finally, my study diverges from several others that depict Noor as a "heroic" wartime figure of Sufi extraction. I focus instead on her status as a prolific writer whose works capture her own lived experiences. These experiences in part resonate with ways in her depictions of female heroic figures who shield their nations and people from malevolence. As a *résistante*, she adopts a similar role, which becomes her own performative gesture of agency. I examine previously neglected personal letters, fictional narratives, and poems that offer acute insights into her subjective states that set the stage for writing resistance.

**Noor Inayat Khan: Creating Images of Resistance in Literature**

The heroic figures that appear throughout Noor's works are frequently committed to a cause and willing to sacrifice their lives for others. The diverse selection of her writings I examine, including several of her fictional narratives, transcripts, and letters to her fiancé Azeem Goldenberg, afford the reader a persuasive sense of her character and values, particularly her devotion to her parents and siblings, to Azeem, and to the ideals of Sufism.[49] The majority of Noor's personal letters to Goldenberg were written during

[48] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge,1999).

[49] Noor Inayat Khan, "Unpublished Letters to Azeem Goldenberg (1934)," Courtesy of the Claire Ray Harper Collection; *Twenty Jātaka Tales* (London: England: East-West Publications, 1939); *Noor-un-nisa Inayat Khan*, "Cinquante années de gloire!," ed Jean Overton Fuller, *Noor-Un-Nisa Inayat Khan (Madeleine)* (London: East-West Publications, 1971) 78-80; and *King Akbar's Daughter: Stories for Everyone as Told by Noor Inayat Khan* (New York: Omega Publications, 2012). In the posthumous publication of *King Akbar's Daughter* not all of the stories are dated. However, the three that were found in Noor's wireless training notebooks were probably written while she was actively involved with the British and French Resistance.

her travels in Spain and Holland in 1934. During their sojourn in Spain, Vilayat studied with the cellist Maurice Eisenberg, whom Noor recalls from the time she and her brother spent with Eisenberg and his family. In her letters she sometimes evokes traditional Sufi doctrines and expressions, excelling in descriptions of landscapes and sites, such as the mountains around Châtel-Guyon in the Auvergne, and the cities of Barcelona and Amsterdam. She reflects on spirituality, nature and her emotional ties to Goldenberg, for whom she longs. While in Holland she visits Henriëtte Willebeeck Le Mair, a long-time friend of the Inayat Khan family whose paintings appear in *The Flower Garden of Inayat Khan* and who also illustrated *The Jātaka Tales* (1939).[50] In one of her letters Noor indicates that Le Mair served as her literary mentor, encouraging her to submit her adaptations of Middle Eastern literature – what Noor refers to as "stories about Noor" – to an American literary journal that would publish them on a monthly basis.[51] From these letters it is apparent that Noor had begun to develop as an author of short stories well before *The Jātaka Tales* were published.

In my chapter on Noor I discuss that collection, which includes fables for children based on retellings of the mythic incarnations of the Buddha. One tale entitled "The Monkey Bridge," in which a monkey uses its body as a bridge to escape from a tyrant, provided SOE cryptographer Leo Marks with a useful moral analogy while he was teaching Noor the codes she eventually used to transmit secret messages to London. *The Jātaka Tales*, as many of Noor's other stories, often feature characters who frame ideas in

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[50] Le Mair, who adopted 'Saida' as her Sufi name, was a disciple of Hazrat during the early 1920s. In her letters to Goldenberg Noor describes the illustrations in the book taken from her paintings. Le Mair painted them from memory around 1930 and also chose the texts to accompany them.

[51] See letter #182 from the Claire Ray Harper Collection of Noor's correspondence.

relation to philosophical and moral concepts.[52] In "Cinquante années de gloire!," a short essay that Azeem saved from his collection of Noor's writings and later shared with Fuller,[53] the narrator yearns for the bygone days of the *Belle Époque.* The essay also pays tribute to Emma Nevada, whom Noor reveres not only for her extraordinary voice but also for her ability to balance a successful career and marriage while helping other lesser-known musicians succeed.[54]

Like "Cinquante années de gloire!" "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)" contrasts with her adaptations of moral tales, especially with those from India. As I have suggested, the anecdote evokes the plight of the French under the German Occupation and usefully demonstrates how Noor's writings began to reflect political circumstances based on her own eye-witness experiences. While it is neither an autobiographical account nor a detailed or precise description of the event, it is nonetheless suggestive of how the French, Polish, and English were responding to ongoing political unrest.[55]

*King Akbar's Daughter: Stories for Everyone as Told by Noor Inayat Khan*, published posthumously in 2012, contains previously unpublished short stories on themes Noor gleaned from Eastern and Western literature from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. It is the first publication of her stories since *The Jātaka Tales* some seventy years earlier. During the war she drafted some of the stories among the technical memos in her

[52] Sandra Lillydahl shared the unpublished stories with me. Several reflect the influence of a diverse array of both Eastern and Western literature, notably brief narratives from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Analysis of all of them would necessitate a separate study.

[53] She subsequently published it. Overton Fuller, *Noor-Un-Nisa* 78-80. To my knowledge, this essay is not widely accessible, nor is it mentioned in scholarship on her work.

[54] For more on the relationship between the Inayat Khan family and Emma Nevada, see Harper's *We Rubies Four* 37. See also Fuller *Noor-Un-Nisa* 252-253.

[55] Harper, *We Rubies Four* 129. An excerpt was first published in 2011. I have access to the full text and discuss it in its entirety in Chapter Three.

wireless training notebook. “Princess Wanda” and “The White Eagles of Poland” are rewritings of folk tales, which she composed around the time Germany invaded Poland, in 1939. They enable her to observe the current political climate in stories metaphorically and thematically linked to themes of sacrifice and loyalty. In a similar fashion, “Snow Drop” allegorizes political realities. Like “Princess Wanda,” the female protagonist reigns over her nation, preserves and saves it, and wins accolades from her subjects for her noble attributes and her beauty.

One might well ask why scholars have accorded no substantive attention to Noor’s literary works, nor to how the latter might reflect her life experiences. Given the praise lavished on her wartime heroism and her prominence as the daughter of a noted Sufi mystic whose family was steeped in Sufi customs and traditions, her fiction and personal writings have perhaps been contrastively perceived as being of less significance.[56] In the first biography on Noor, entitled *Madeline* and published approximately a decade after her death, Jean Overton Fuller – who was Noor’s personal friend – writes that six of the seven publishing companies to which she had submitted her biography rejected it because of its divided appeal, on the one hand to readers interested in the Indian background of “the Sufi Princess” and on the other those attuned to her life as “heroine of the Resistance.”[57] The book enjoyed moderate success and was reprinted in 1971, with additional material on Noor’s Sufi heritage and on her ancestors, a topic that captured the interest of Mr. Wite Carp, the publisher of East-West Publications, as well as information

[56] I attended the unveiling of the statue of Noor at Gordon Square, London, on November 8, 2012. Princess Ann, the daughter of Queen Elizabeth, was the guest of honor. The majority of those in attendance were practicing Sufis.

[57]Jean.Overton Fuller, (*Noor-Un-Nisa Inayat Khan (Madeleine)* (Rotterdam: East-West Publications Fonds N.D.; London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1971), Introduction, 9-10.

on her wartime activities that had come to light since 1952. Overton Fuller's study thus differs from others by showing similarities between Noor's life experiences, her literary works, and her role during the war. A second biography, *Spy Princess* (2007) by Shrabani Basu draws from materials covered by Fuller as well as from interviews with Noor's relatives and data from her SOE personal files, which became accessible in 2003.

My approach thus focuses on both the life experiences of Noor and the ways in which her fictions that idealize resistance begin as stories of the incarnations of the Budda and subsequently metamorphose into accounts that reflect the political climate of WW II. In the incarnation stories and those that reflect political situations, her characters frequently entertain fantasies of triumph over oppression. These texts typically concern women who perform heroic deeds, and I shall devote considerable attention to how their subjective positions may well reflect attitudes that were also characteristic of the author.

**Germaine Tillion: from the Perspective of a Holocaust Survivor and Ethnologist**

Germaine Tillion was born in south-central France to Jacques Denis-Lucien, who worked for the popular series of French travel guides, "Les Guides Bleus," and was keenly interested in archaeology and photography, and his wife, Emilie Cussac, a writer and art critic. Tillion recalls that her mother's interest in architecture eventually awakened her own passion for the study of human history and cultural traditions. During her formative years Tillion spent much of her time with her younger sister Françoise, especially at the family's second home in Saint-Maur-des Fossés, southeast of Paris.

Tillion recounts a vivid recollection of the declaration of war on August 1, 1914, when at the age of seven, sitting under a tree, she heard church bells ringing and saw passers-by weeping. Realizing that war had been declared, she plunged into a sort of

'meditation' which she describes at some length:

> Cette même année, très jeune pensionnaire esseulée d'un grand lycée, je fus abondamment nourrie d'homélies sur les dangers qui menaçaient Dieu et la Patrie. Inquiète pour eux, je me rassurais au sujet du Bon Dieu en me disant: "Puisqu'il est tout-puissant il va s'en tirer, mais notre pauvre patrie elle n'a que nous. . ." Non sans suspicion j'écoutais encore des histoires sur l'ogre et le loup mais je ne mettais plus en doute l'existence de deux monstres sans visage: l'Allemand et la Mort. La nuit je rêvais de m'engager comme chien de guerre.[58]
>
> [That same year, as a young boarder on my own at a large high school, I had been exposed to a wealth of homilies on dangers that threatened God and Country. Anxious about both, I reassured myself about God by telling myself: "Since he is the Almighty he will overcome this, but our poor country has only us. . ." Not without misgivings I continued to listen to stories of the ogre and the wolf, but I no longer doubted the existence of two faceless monsters: Germany and Death. At night I dreamed of enlisting as a dog of war].

She recalls that, following this "meditation," she heard several historical accounts of German annexations of French regions in 1871, which may have influenced how she eventually formulated her views on resistance and the war.

My principal objective is to examine the political implications of her "resistance

[58] From Tillion's accounts of her personal experiences in Tzvetan Todorov, *Fragments de Vie* (Paris: Seuil, 2009) 350-351. My translation.

writings" in relation to her work as a trained ethnologist.[59] I study certain aspects of her observations, especially those concerning women, in the fieldwork she conducted in rural Algeria before and after her political imprisonment at Ravensbrück. Some of these field studies usefully compare and contrast with her analyses of circumstances at Ravensbrück and thus shed light on how she recalls her own experiences both as a scholar and as a survivor. More specifically, I examine how Tillion situates women within the power structures she analyzes. I also accord considerable attention to her depictions of prisoners in her operetta, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers : Une opérette à Ravensbrück (The Campworker Goes to Hell : An Operetta at Ravensbrück* ).[60]

Elaborating the notion of writing resistance in her works, notably in the operetta, I draw from some of her personal statements about the deterioration of women's living conditions at Ravensbrück. Likewise, I consider her discussions of the traditional treatment and portrayals of women among the Berbers in the Aurès region of southern Algeria. Although I do not suggest that all the women whom Tillion describes were victimized or objectified, nor that her descriptions of the plight of women in the Aurès and at Ravensbrück are similar, I do develop a framework for useful comparisons of how she conceptualizes women within the two groups. In his comparison of Tillion's scientific study of Algeria and Ravensbrück, Todorov notes that her investigative method

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[59] Marcel Fournier addresses the problems of defining anthropology. The discipline was vaguely defined until the late nineteenth century when it finally began to proliferate in the curriculum and generated a profusion of publications and the creation of societies and museums. Although in its broadest sense anthropology encompassed ethnology and ethnography, in France the three terms referred to distinct disciplines, each with its own specific theoretical and institutional field. While anthropology is the comparative study of beliefs and institutions, understood as the foundation of social structures, ethnography entails the description of ethnic groups, and ethnology studies their linguistic, economic, and social unity as well as their evolution. See Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 233-234.

[60] Germaine Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers : Une opérette à Ravensbrück* (Paris: Martinière, 2005).

transforms her personal experience as she constitutes "the Other" ("construction de l'autre").

Tillion was trained as an ethnologist by Marcel Mauss,[61] the nephew of eminent sociologist Émile Durkheim, well known for his studies of religion as a social phenomenon and as the leader of the French school of sociology.[62] For his part, Mauss is renowned for his *Essai sur le don* (1925), on notions of exchange and reciprocity.[63] On occasion they collaborated: one of the conclusions they drew from their respective fields is that religious forces can only derive from collective forces.[64] Tillion participated in Mauss's seminars at the École des Hautes Études, and Mauss directed her doctoral thesis on the Chaoui people of Algeria.[65] She explicitly identifies herself as a disciple of Mauss – "c'est lui qui m'a faite ethnologue."[66] Mauss recommended that she devote her doctoral research to the Berbers in the Aurès, where between 1934 and 1940 she completed four field studies there.[67] It was the fieldwork under his direction that eventually influenced her three extensive studies of Ravensbrück, all three of which are highly significant documented, first-hand accounts of occurrences at Ravensbrück.

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[61] He was also a captain during the First World War and considered an ardent patriot.

[62] Durkheim (1858-1917) taught theology and considered religion one of the "major regulating origins of society." Fournier, *Marcel Mauss,* 37.

[63] Mauss was also a historian of religion interested specifically in the origins of prayer. He established the Ernest Renan Society for the study of the history of religion. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss* 218.

[64] Fournier, *Marcel Mauss* 161.

[65] The draft of which went missing permanently while she was at Ravensbrück. In 1932 she earned a degree from the Institut d'Ethnologie.

[66] "He is the one who made me an ethnologist." Tillion, *Combats* 63.

[67] Thérèse Rivière, who was affiliated with the Institut d'Ethnologie de Paris, traveled with Tillion to the Aurès in December of 1934. The two took photographs and collected items to bring back to the Musée de l'Homme for an exhibition.

After completing her fieldwork in Algeria in 1940, Tillion returned to Paris and became a "résistante de la première heure," among the first to join the French resistance. When on June 17, 1940 Maréchal Pétain announced that France had just signed an armistice with Germany, she felt utter disgust and disbelief: "Ce fut pour moi un choc si violent que j'ai dû sortir de la pièce pour vomir…" [For me, that was such a violent shock that I had to leave the room to vomit].[68] She immediately joined the Groupe du Musée de l'Homme,[69] a resistance network comprised of intellectuals and academics. Her duties included collecting information to transmit to London; helping prisoners escape to the Free Zone; assisting English parachutists in procuring false papers; and welcoming emissaries from London to assist *résistants* in the battle of the Free French Forces.[70]

Along with her mother and grandmother, Tillion was arrested for her involvement in resistance activities, incarcerated in the Santé and Fresnes prisons, then deported to Ravensbrück in 1943. She was a so-called "Nacht und Nebel" [Night and Fog] prisoner, meaning that she was designated to disappear without a trace.[71] In the following personal statement, she recounts how her fieldwork in the Aurès helped her prepare for her imprisonment at Ravensbrück:

> Mon expérience de 1934 à 1940, en Algérie dans l'Aurès, m'avait déjà appris à

[68] Tillion, *La traversée du mal* (Paris: Arléa) 43.

[69] A resistance group comprised of intellectuals and led by Anatole Lewitsky. See Martin Blumenson, *Le Réseau du musée de l'homme: Les débuts de la résistance en France* (Paris: Editions du seuil, 1979).

[70] *Fragments de Vie*, introduction. Tillion was arrested on August 13, 1942.

[71] Emilie Tillion, her mother, was deported to Ravensbrück in February of 1944 and died there. Following her internment, Tillion was involved with the Association Nationale des Anciennes Deportées et Internées de la Resistance (ADIR), in which she served as vice-president. ADIR had joined the Commission Internationale Contre le Régime Concentrationnaire (CICRC), an international organization of non-Communist political deportees to Nazi concentration camps, launched by writer and political activist David Rousset (1912-1997).

> vivre  dans un milieu qui m'était complètement étranger, à regarder tous les problèmes politiques comme des objets.  Lorsque je me suis retrouvée en 1940, en France, et ensuite à Ravensbrück, j'ai gardé cette façon de voir chaque chose, même la pire, comme un objet à analyser, ce qui oblige à aller chercher les informations là où elles sont.
>
> [My experience from 1934 through 1940 in the Aurès region of Algeria had already taught me to live in a totally unfamiliar environment and to perceive political problems as objects.  When I found myself back in France in 1940, and then at Ravensbrück, I maintained that same perception of everything, even the worst things, as objects to analyze, which obliges us to seek information wherever it may be].

Todorov notes that this passage further clarifies Tillion's characteristic alliance of knowledge and action and is indicative of how her work as an ethnologist actually protected her from the hardships she endured at Ravensbrück.[72]

After her liberation from Ravensbrück in 1944 Tillion became actively involved with political organizations supporting the rights of Algerian citizens and the interests of Holocaust survivors.  Her involvement in both of those causes undoubtedly reflects her desire to address issues pertaining to human rights and victimization.  She later became a member of the CICRC (Commission Internationale Contre le Régime Concentrationnaire) and was the only representative of France invited to attend the 1947

[72] Tillion, *Fragments* 12.

trials of war crimes committed at Ravensbrück.[73]

Tillion returned to Algeria in 1954 to assess the political situation at the outset of the Algerian War and to establish innovative educational and occupational programs; in 1957 she witnessed the torture being committed in the prison camps in Algeria. After the Algerian War she took part in numerous political panels and forums, notably regarding warfare in Algeria and the treatment of prisoners. In 1958 she was appointed Director of Studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études and conducted research on the Maghreb and the Middle East.

In sum, Tillion's experiences as both a wartime deportee and a social scientist offer a valuable opportunity to examine ways in which her training as an ethnologist shaped her perceptions and analyses of life in internment, especially with regard to the interface between the experiences of women at Ravensbrück and those of Berber women in remote regions of Algeria.

**Germaine Tillion: Representations of Algeria and Ravensbrück**

In addition to the central focus on *Le Verfügbar aux enfers: Une opérette à Ravensbrück* (2005), my chapter on Tillion touches on some of her other works that specifically address issues of gender and power, including *Ravensbrück* (1946; 1973; and 1988); *Le harem et les cousins* (1966); *Il était une fois l'éthnographie* (2000); *L'Algérie aurésienne (*2001); and *Fragments de Vie* (2009).[74] A reading of Tillion's publications

[73] In 1962 she returned to her cherished career in ethnology, while for her wartime efforts she received the Croix de Guerre, the Médaille de la Résistance and the Grand Croix de la Légion d'Honneur, as well as several other recognitions. The highest and most recent is her ceremonial entombment in the Panthéon in Paris in May 2015.

[74] *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Editions de la Baconnière, 1946); *Le harem et les cousins* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966); *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973); *Ravensbrück*, Trans. Gerald Satterwhite (New York: Anchor Press, 1975); *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Seuil, 1988); *L'Algérie aurésienne (*Paris:

on her research in Algeria in conjunction with her writings on Ravensbrück reveals ways in which her intellectual training and her experiences sometimes converged. I address those aspects of her writings on Ravensbrück that indicate a departure from her more 'systematic' scientific research on the Aurès.

Tillion wrote the five-act operetta *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* in longhand at Ravensbrück, a manuscript which Jacqueline d'Alincourt, her fellow internee, hid from the Nazi guards. It was finally published more than sixty years later, in 2005, although since then it has received scant attention from scholars.[75] In her introduction to the operetta, Claire Andrieu emphasizes its uniqueness: there is "no book like this '*opérette revue*."[76] Indeed, it contains more anti-heroines than heroines and heaps ridicule upon the plight of the imprisoned women. My analysis of their gendered representations, notably in terms of their behavior and physical appearance as they perform in their "roles" as prisoners, takes account of Patrick Bruneteaux's notion of *dérision* as it applies to the comportment of internees in concentration camps, confronted by seemingly impossible situations which they ridicule in order to endure their devastating mental and emotional consequences.[77] I expand this notion in order to show how the characters' mental resistance partakes of 'recreation' that increases their ability to disavow the draconian constraints imposed upon them. My usage of the term 'recreation' pertains

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Martinière, 2001); *Il était une fois l'éthnographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2000); *Le Verfügbar aux enfers : Une opérette à Ravensbrück* (Paris: Martinière, 2005), and *Fragments de Vie*., ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Seuil, 2009).

[75] In 2005 Tillion donated several of her unpublished writings to the L'Association Germaine Tillion, founded in 2004 by a group of her friends and collaborators. See http://www.germaine-tillion.org/.

[76] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 11-25.

[77] Patrick Bruneteaux, "Dérision et dérisoire dans les strategies de survie en camp d'extermination," Paris : *Hermès* : 29 (2001) 217-26.

inparticular to their 'performed' behaviors and dialogues.

Tillion also completed three studies on the female prisoners' circumstances at Ravensbrück. In the first, published in 1946, she discusses the French internees' resistance to Nazi oppression and the ways in which their patriotism set them apart from the Jewish and Gypsy internees.[78] She emphasizes her contention that women had to 'imagine' in order to survive, and thus to resist the reality of the situation, which brings to mind, once again, her own creative composition, *Le Verfügbar*. As documents and archives on war crimes became accessible between 1972 and 1987 Tillion expanded her coverage of Nazi atrocities. In the second study (1976) she notes that she herself was a "Verfügbar" ("available" [to work]) and describes her nearly unbearable routine. She also discusses "Schmuckstück," another category of female internees who suffered from the rigors of the concentration camp routine and whose physical appearance deteriorated as a result of that regime.[79] Tillion's studies on Ravensbrück not only hold important historical implications and sustain interpretations of that period but also offer important insights into her portrayals of the campworkers of the operetta, all of whom are representations of women who experienced the traumatic and previously unknown experiences of concentration camp internment.

Among Tillion's studies on Algeria I examine her analysis of women's roles and long-standing oral traditions within remote populations in *Il était une fois l'éthnographie*, in which she reconstructs parts of the doctoral thesis that was lost at Ravensbrück.[80] I

[78] Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (1946). The second version was published in 1973, the third in 1988.

[79] Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (1973) 49-53.

[80] Tillion, *Il était une fois* 19.

consider as well *Le harem et les cousins*, a study of the Mediterranean family structure in which she discusses female servants and concubines, and *Fragments de Vie,* neither an anthology nor a biography, but rather a compilation of her published and unpublished texts.[81]

*L'Algérie aurésienn*e (2001) addresses Tillion's four field studies in the Aurès during the 1930s and features photos of Algerian inhabitants accompanied by captions that describe their rituals and other cultural traditions. Like the descriptions of the characters in *Le Verfügbar,* the physical appearance, behaviors, and daily routines of the women of *L'Algérie aurésienn*e contrast sharply with those of the women she frequented in France during her formative years. Although photos from *L'Algérie aurésienn*e were never explicitly meant to reflect those described in *Le Verfügbar,* I will suggest that the fact that the writer had previously been exposed to an entirely different way of life might well have played a formative role in her ability to create this one-of-a-kind operetta under conditions that were by no means conducive to such an ambitious project.

Like Delbo, Tillion writes resistance as she *imagines* ways in which the circumstantial reality of women's lives during internment is recreated through the medium of theater. In *Le Verfügbar* the female characters are at times sexless creatures, as femininity evades them and humor alleviates the intolerable reality of internment. I consider ways in which women portrayed in this play and in some of her scientific studies of Algeria and Ravensbrück illustrate ways in which she *creates* power structures from her scientific observations and lived experiences. Analyzing these texts together

[81] Todorov anthologized excerpts from texts published between 1942-1945 during her internment and some of the essays she wrote between 1954-1957 during the early years of the war in Algeria. He chose texts that show "une mise en relation de l'analyse historique et sociologique avec l'expérience personnelle de son auteur." Tillion, *Fragments* 35.

will give insights into forms of resistance from the perspectives of both the ethnologist and the survivor of the Holocaust.

**Conclusion**

Comparative study of the lives and works of Delbo, Inayat Khan and Tillion with regard to their depictions of political, social, and above all *personal* engagements in resistance activities affords me an opportunity to measure the historical, literary, and autobiographical significance of their works from a fresh perspective. The similarities I have noted in their formative backgrounds that disposed them to respond as women irrevocably committed to a cause are among the key factors that I will argue impelled their own immediate, *spontaneous* responses to the calls for mobilization that came from many quarters at the outset of WW II. At the moment of collective crisis that propelled France into the war, what emerges in each case is a uniquely conditioned disposition to adhere to forms of organized *resistance*. Each writer resisted in her own way, and at virtually the same moment in history, negotiating the same crucial turning point, and each in a remarkable manner that compels and rewards comparative analysis. In addition to the salient biographical circumstances that highlight their affinities, especially with regard to their respective responses to the greatest crisis of the twentieth century, the most compelling feature they share is the substantial written legacy each left to posterity. At numerous junctures throughout their works, each either explicitly evokes or indirectly reflects upon the experiences, circumstances, and emotions that eventually culminated in her irrevocable engagement in an all-consuming cause which thereafter remained a commitment that sustained her during her wartime struggles.

By analyzing selected documents, including books, essays, letters, and photographs,

and evaluating biographical information, some of which will be considered for the first time in scholarly work, I propose a more comprehensive and detailed appraisal of the extent to which each writer was committed to a cause. At the same time, I take into account familial, social and cultural factors that brought each subject to the crucial moment of a personal, irreversible engagement that subsequently defined her transformative role within a fractured society, and reshaped the subsequent orientation and scope of her life and her work. In view of the fact that each served causes that required great personal sacrifices, I accord equal attention to factual documents, poetic and imaginative representations and interpretations that reflect particularly feminine experiences of the machinery of warfare and genocide in terms of their ominous meanings and catastrophic consequences.

# CHAPTER 2

# CHARLOTTE DELBO: WRITING INESCAPABLE DEATH

## Inscribing the Afterlife

A survivor ceaselessly besieged by traumatic memories, Charlotte Delbo crafted a literary afterlife from the shards of her shattered past, rewriting resistance amidst the remembered imminence of inescapable death. I refer to the 'literary afterlife' as an imaginary domaine Delbo created for the communion and co-existance of living and dead female internees. Her textual bequest was generous, not one work, but many, an ample corpus, of last moments and scattered remains. While many scholars have focused almost exclusively on *Auschwitz et après* as a primary representation of Delbo's testimonials of internment experiences, I approach the trilogy through an alternative lens, considering its prismatic connections to other works in her oeuvre, some of which are lesser known or have yet to receive the substantive scholarly attention they richly deserve. Within a sizable selection of her writings, I cast an analytical eye on recurring tensions, fears, and apprehensions of the female protagonists whose lives are deeply affected by the physical and emotional conditions of internment.

In the first part of this chapter I analyze ways in which these women are portrayed with regard to questions of nostalgic memory and trauma, also including the type of nostalgia that awakens projections of some positive place remote from the scene of internment or of an idealized future. I then examine how the male characters are incorporated into the narratives, in particular those who represent men with whom Delbo had personal or professional connections having in some way to do with the Holocaust. The core of this study is my analysis of what I call the "literary afterlife" Delbo nourishes

retrospectively, with descriptive evocations of death and an array of metamorphic identities. Delbo's literary edifices haunted by spectral survivals resist tendencies toward renewal and rebirth in order to dwell on her deeply troubling memories of the dead and the dying and the acute experiences of loss. This is also indicative of the political solidarity that Delbo had had with her compatriots.

Hence the prominence of nostalgia among the affective registers in her writings. The term was first defined by Johannes Hofer (1669-1752) who, in his Basel dissertation, identified it as "homesickness."[82] Since then, many scholars have developed, nuanced and illustrated its multiple meanings within a number of disciplinary contexts, with a notable tendency to perceive it as being fundamentally about longing.[83] In her extensive study of nostalgia in psychoanalytic cases, Susannah Radstone shows how recent research in the area of Memory Studies, as well as on trauma and the subjective dimension of suffering, has been usefully brought to bear on the subject.[84] Radstone believes that at the heart of most accounts of nostalgia lies the enigmatic question of what in fact has been lost, and whether or not that loss is best understood as a component of the past or of the present.[85] Svetlana Boym further nuances the paradoxical nature of nostalgia, suggesting that "Algia –longing- is what we share, yet nostos - the return

[82] Hofer, Johannes, "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia." *Bulletin of The Institute of the History of Medicine.* Trans. Carolyn Kiser Anspach 2.6 ((1688) Aug. 1934): 376-91.

[83] See, for example, Aurélie Kessous's recent article, which takes account of several definitions and theoretical conceptualizations of nostalgia. "La Nostalgie: une grille de lecture sémiotique" (Paris: Université Paul Cézanne Aix-Marseille III, 2007), http://tinyurl.com/6xg2sc.

[84] Susannah Radstone, *The Sexual Politics of Time: Confession, Nostalgia, Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2007) 193.

[85] Radstone, *Sexual Politics* 147.

home – is what divides us."[86] There are aspects of both loss and longing in Delbo's texts. Moreover, her characters typically voice their mental and emotional investment in recollections that awaken nostalgic states which tend to impinge upon their affective engagement with present circumstances. Nostalgia in her works thus evolves as a developing state-of-mind, informed by a progressive accumulation of both traumatic and memorable experiences.

Nostalgic memory features prominently in the final book of the trilogy *Mesure de nos jours*, comprised mainly of flashbacks and recollections of post-internment experiences.[87] These emanate from the perspective of a narrator who longs to maintain a rapport with the deceased. By refusing to sever her affective ties with the deceased female compatriots, she remains in solidarity with them and claims that they are "like her and silent and drained [of life]"[88] : Je ne crois pas à la vie éternelle, je ne crois pas qu'elles vivent dans un au-delà où je les rejoins la nuit. Non. Je les revois dans leur agonie, je les revois comme elles étaient avant de mourir, comme elles sont demeurées en moi." [I do not believe in eternal life, I do not believe that they live in the great beyond where I join them at night. No. I see them once again in their agony, I see them again as they were before dying, as though they had remained permanently within me]. Rather

[86] Svetlana Boym, introduction, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

[87] It is not always clear if it is the writer herself, or one of her fictional characters who represents the narrative voices in the vignettes. I address this question later in this chapter. Although the Trilogy has been considered an autobiographical memoir, in several instances it is unclear whom the narrator represents. Colin Davis discusses ways in which Delbo refuses to exert authority over the stories of the survivors. She speaks through others, and perhaps vice versa, creating a collective community of stories that seem to belong to all of the survivors. Colin Davis, "Other People's Pain: Narratives of Trauma and the Question of Ethics," *Cultural History and Literary Imaginations* eds. Martin Modlinger and Philipp Sonntag (London: Oxford University Press, 2011) 19-42.

[88] Charlotte Delbo, *Mesure de nos jours* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1971) 54.

than “looking back” from a temporally remote perspective at the suffering of those who were at the point of death, the narrator shares with them and internalizes their agony at that very moment. The apparent perceptual fusion here of past and present effectively allies nostalgia with emotions generated by memory and trauma, and this imbrication of affect and experience exceeds the constitutive sphere of a single time and place. While the narrator obviously refers back to the prisoners during internment, she nonetheless interprets herself as continuing to co-exist with them, within the expansive confines of the literary afterlife. Hence, to “join” them at night, where they are “permanently within [her],” offers her the imaginary feasibility of somehow evading their collective death through repeated mental rehearsals of its very imminence.

**Configurations of Death, Feminine Links**

Thus in the vignette entitled “La mort de Germaine,” the narrator’s account of specific experiences during the post-internment period illustrates the futility of establishing any kind of subjective detachment from the past. When fellow inmates Germaine and Charlotte are reunited for the first time since they were interned together at Auschwitz several years earlier, Germaine is on her deathbed and astonished at how many years have passed since their captivity. Shortly afterward, Charlotte finds herself gazing at an inert corpse, mesmerized by her friend’s passage across the ultimate threshold:

> Germaine était couchée, pâle sur l’oreiller blanc, redevenue elle-même dans la mort. Ses traits que j’avais vus déformés par la douleur quelques jours seulement auparavant avaient repris leur place, leur symétrie, avec leur noblesse d’avant leur beauté. Quelqu’un, l’infirmière ou la fille de Germaine, avait coiffé ses cheveux

en tresses qu'il lui faisaient une couronne d'argent. C'était Germaine avant le camp, Germaine à son arrivée au fort de Romainville, avec sa coiffure nette et hiératique.[89]

[Germaine, pale, lay on the white pillow, having in death become herself again. Her features, which only a few days ago had been so distorted by pain, were back in place, once again symmetrical, their nobility heightening their beauty. Someone, the nurse or Germaine's daughter, had styled and braided her hair into a silver crown. It was Germaine before the Camp, Germaine when she arrived at Fort Romainville, with her perfect, hieratic hairstyle.]

To write that in death Germaine had "become herself again," and to compare her deathly visage to her appearance prior to internment, is to suggest that her identity during internment is not known, or repressed, can only be described in relation to an external sphere. My observation is reminiscent of Barbie Zelizer's discussion of visual culture in which she raises the question of suffering, noting that Delbo and Primo Levi have both observed that "even the words that seem to describe that suffering become false tokens when it comes to the Shoah. 'Hunger' and 'tomorrow' do not mean in everyday language what they meant in the camps."[90] While representations of life in the camps may alter and distort the meanings of ordinary language, they also complicate the question of nostalgic memory in relation to subjective states-of-mind that may forestall the establishment of any psychological distance from the persistent recollections of harsh experiences. Delbo's narratives aptly capture the uncanny effects induced in a

[89] Delbo, *Mesure* 137-138.

[90] Barbie Zelizer, *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (London: The Athlone Press, 2001) 122.

woman as her consciousness oscillates between a striving for life and a looming death, or between a fugitive life and what I consider to be a *second death*, when death-related situations are rehearsed in the mind and in the imagination and thus acquire new metamorphoses of meaning within the realm of the literary afterlife.

Just as Delbo dwells on the details of physical appearance in her description of Germaine on her deathbed, throughout her trilogy she makes striking visual images of women the characteristic loci of traumatic memories. Often the female body, notably the hand, while serving to signify intersubjective relationships among her characters, is an especially prominent reference point that triggers profound memories. I suggest that these "points" have some affinities with what Marianne Hirsch refers to as "points of memory." In a recent publication she discusses such points in relation to the notion of postmemory (a second-generation memory that is belated, secondary, and displaced), and to the second generation of survivors of the Holocaust, explaining that points of memory "tell us more about our own needs and desires, fantasies and fears, than about the past to which they supposedly bear witness."[91] She also writes that the notion of "small points of memory," inspired by Roland Barthes's notion of *punctum*, "connects productively to feminist preoccupations with the subjective, the daily, the intimate and embodied, the affective."[92] As a complement to the views of Hirsch and Barthes, there are concerning points that offer feminine insights into the signifying loci of trauma manifested by her deeply painful memories that nonetheless serve to console, comfort,

[91] Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer. *Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Introduction.

[92] Ibid, introduction, with reference to Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida* (New York: Editions du Seuil, 1980).

and thereby shield her from the atrocious realities of the Holocaust to which she bore witness.

In her discussion of transmitting memory, Hirsch analyzes visual discourses in relation to trauma in its literal sense, as a "wound inflicted on the body."[93] Citing examples drawn from across a considerable range of subjects and generations, she claims that bodily marks, wounds, or tattoos "produce affect in the viewer, speaking from the body's sensations, rather than speaking of, or representing the past."[94] With this observation in mind, though without associating trauma with a particular "mark" on the body, I perceive Delbo's carceral characters as being marked with what I call the "feminine link," already attached to, and part of the body. Although the links are not "transposed" onto the body or literally carried over as a distinctly visible object, they function as a starting points for narrations that reject the past as a time and place separate from the "here and now." Each link is associative, indicating the relationship the women share, and in relation to their experiences of internment. Thus, as Charlotte continues to observe Germaine on her deathbed, she says to her: "laisse moi tenir ta main dans la mienne pour endormir. Tu as les mains de ma mère. Tu te souviens, Charlotte, que tu disais cela à Auschwitz?"[95] [Let me hold your hand in mine to fall asleep. You have my mother's hands. Do you remember, Charlotte, you said that at Auschwitz ?] This intimate moment between the two women has a nostalgic dimension, especially for Germaine, as her nostalgic memory evokes a specific place and time.

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[93] Hirsch, "Marked by Memory: Feminist Reflections on Trauma and Transmission," *Extremities, Trauma, Testimony, and Community,* (2002) 71-91.

[94] Ibid, 71-79.

[95] Delbo, *Mesure* 138-139.

However, although the moment at hand is the ghost-like aftermath of a demise, the desire to recall, both in sleep and beside the deathbed, the soothing sensation of a nurturing mother's hands, makes it more akin to an amalgam of fantasy, memory and desire that gives a full sense of filling the void created by the reality of traumatic and inescapable death.

**Maternal Figures, Transforming Women**

Mounette's nightmare in *Qui rapportera ces paroles*, evoked in Chapter One, also illustrates the interplay between memory and some dimension of fantasy. The moment she touches her mother's "dry and roughly-textured" hand, her fleeting oneiric evasion dissipates and she awakens back in the concentration camp, holding hands with her fellow inmates Renée and Agnès.[96] Here as in "La mort de Germaine," the maternally emblematic hand provides a positive, reassuring associative link with the feminine sphere, as well as momentary respite from memories of trauma and internment.

In her discussion of the maternal figure in Delbo's works, Nicole Thatcher cites as an example of "deep memory," the enduring bonds between mother and child, whereby the image of the maternal "helper" emerges at critically difficult moments, and this "external memory" is awakened by associations with "incidents and feelings" in the [concentration] camps."[97] As further examples of external memory, Thatcher cites one passage in which a woman's bones, visible through her yellow coat, and her posture on

[96] Delbo, *Qui rapportera ces paroles* 48-49.

[97] Nicole Thatcher, *A Literary Analysis of Charlotte Delbo's Concentration Re-presentation* (Michigan: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000). The passage to which Thatcher refers is from *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* (Delbo, 104).

the snow as she is about to die remind the narrator of how she had called out to her mother upon seeing the emaciated remains of a dog. She also evokes another passage in which the narrator projects the figure of her mother onto the friends who are protecting her, so that in effect they become her mother-surrogates.[98]

Thatcher and several other scholars have discussed forms of external and deep memory in Delbo's works, frequently with regard to comparable memories inside and outside of the camps.[99] While I concur with Thatcher that the narrator "projects maternal figures onto protective friends," insofar as Delbo writes of "inescapable death" within a much broader context I also perceive the maternal figure as a metaphorical configuration of the feminine nurturer's death. In *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, for example, those internees who are referred to as "mothers" merely cease to exist as such: "Ils ont mis nos mères nues devant nous. Ici les mères ne sont plus mères à leurs enfants."[100] [They have put our mothers naked in front of us. Here, mothers are no longer mothers to their children.] Or in the case of Mounette's dream, her mother no longer recognizes her when she returns home.[101]

A wide range of visual images of women provide these feminine links while also simultaneously recalling the narrator's earlier experiences. In the following example,

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[98] Thatcher, *Delbo's Concentration Re-presentation* 103-104.

[99] See, for example, Dylan Trigg, "The Place of Trauma: Memory, Hauntings, and the Temporality of Ruins," *Memory Studies*, 87 (2009): 87-101. Trigg discusses Delbo's nightmares and ways in which she sees her "other self," within the camp and outside of the camp.

[100] Delbo *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 23.

[101] See also Frederica K. Clementi's Holocaust *Mothers & Daughters*: *Family, History, and Trauma* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press) 2013. Clementi studies the mother-daughter dyad under six rubrics: death with the mother in Auschwitz; witnessing the mother's death in Auschwitz; surviving Auschwitz with the mother; survival in hiding with the mother; mothers and other women organizing the children's rescue abroad; and birth to mother-survivors. Delbo's writings fall into none of these categories. A new rubric might thus be "The absent-present mother figure."

the narrator writes as though she were still at Auschwitz. As she gazes at a macabre heap of women, she reimagines herself as a child standing on the Boulevard de Courtais back in Montluçon:

> Je regardais. J'étais troublée par la nudité des mannequins. J'avais souvent vu des mannequins dans la vitrine, avec leur robe, leurs souliers et leur perruque, leur bras pliés dans un geste maniéré. Je n'avais jamais pensé qu'ils existaient nus, sans cheveux. Je n'avais jamais pensé qu'ils existaient en dehors de la vitrine, de la lumière électrique, de leur geste. Le découvrir me donnait le même malaise que de voir un mort pour la première fois.[102]
>
> [I gaped. I was disturbed by the mannequins' nudity. I had often seen mannequins in store windows, in their dresses, shoes, wigs, their arms folded in a mannered gesture. I had never thought that they existed outside of the store window away from the electric lighting. That discovery gave me the same discomfort as seeing someone dead for the first time.]

This instance of writing comparatively from routine experiences prior to internment typifies Delbo's tendency to superimpose images of painful past experiences upon others that involved much more ordinary moments. In a similar passage elsewhere, emaciated and moribund women appear to enter a new life within the sphere of death. As they dance in the snow, they become "wild skeletons" with "small faces and shaved heads," and one of them catches the narrator's eye:

> La couverture s'écarte. C'est une femme. Un squelette de femme. Elle est nue. On voit les côtes et les os iliaques. Elle remonte la couverture sur ses épaules,

[102] Delbo *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*, 30.

continue à danser. Une danse de mécanique. Un squelette de femme qui danse. Ses pieds sont petits, maigres et nus dans la neige. Il y a des squelettes vivants et qui dansent.[103]

[The blanket moves aside. A woman. The skeleton of a woman. Naked. We see her ribs and hipbones. She pulls the blanket back up over her shoulders, continuing to dance, a mechanical dance. A woman's skeleton, dancing. Small, thin feet, naked in the snow. Living skeletons, dancing.

Life and death converge, as the skeletal women perform their *danse macabre* in the snow. Defunct, or nearly so, these dancing skeletons are, like the mannequins, caricatural representations of women, their femininity reconstituted and metamorphosed in death, and thus objectified in oddly meaningful ways, at once familiar and yet inappropriate to the context, and thus strikingly grotesque.

Delbo often describes women, both individually and collectively, in states of transformation, and sometimes even eradicates their feminine features, as when they come to resemble mannequins or skeletons devoid of virtually all of their human attributes. Indeed, the prelude to her play *Who Will Carry the Word?*, [104] which highlights the plight of women of the French Resistance who were imprisoned and also reflects the situation of women portrayed in the trilogy, bluntly states that "The faces [of the women] do not count." Likewise, a vignette in *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* alludes to faceless women. The narrator describes Auschwitz itself as a "ville étrange. .

[103] Delbo *Aucun de nous*, 45.

[104] Delbo *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* (Paris: P. J. Oswald) 1974.

. les femmes portaient des chapeaux. . .elles avaient aussi des souliers et des bas comme à la ville. Aucun des habitants de cette ville n'avait de visage."[105]

[A strange city. . . the women wore hats. . . .they also wore shoes and hose as in the city. Not a single inhabitant of that city had a face.] These faceless women of Auschwitz seem devoid of individuality, reduced through traumatic internment to a collective emblem of neutered gender, their feminine characteristics absorbed into the abysmally "strange city" of Auschwitz.

More generally, myriad configurations of loss and morbidity pervade the trilogy and appear in a variety of guises throughout her other writings. In *Une connaissance inutile*, the second book of the trilogy, a poem akin to an epitaph eulogizes individual women by name and cites a salient feature of each one:

> Yvonne Picard est morte / qui avait de jolis seins. Yvonne Blech est morte / qui avait les yeux en amande et des mains qui disaient si bien. Mounette est morte qui avait des yeux couleur de mauve. Tant de beauté tant de jeunesse. Tant d'ardeur tant de promesses… Toutes un courage des temps romains. Et Yvette aussi est morte, qui n'était ni jolie ni rien et courageuse comme aucune autre. Et toi Viva et moi Charlotte dans pas longtemps nous serons mortes nous qui n'avons plus rien de bien.[106]
>
> [Yvonne Picard, who had such lovely breasts, is dead. / Yvonne Blech, who had almond eyes and such expressive hands, is dead. / Mounette, who had mauve-colored eyes is dead. / Aurore, who had mauve-colored eyes, is dead. So much

[105] Delbo *Aucun de nous,*140.

[106] Delbo *Aucun de nous,* 50-51.

beauty,

> so much youth, so much zeal and so much promise. . . All had the courage of ancient Romans. / And Yvette, who wasn't beautiful or anything though braver than anyone else, is also dead. And you, Viva, and I, Charlotte, not long from now we who have nothing good left, will be dead too.]

In this implementation of the *ubi sunt* topos, death cancels all beauty and individuality. These individualized descriptions also suggest the writer's close association with the deceased, as well as her acute sense of how her own survivorship permanently separates herself from them. This passage illustrates the dual purpose of Delbo's testimonials, to commemorate the victims of internment as well as to serve as semiautobiographical memoirs.[107] Generically, the poem functions on both levels, as both an "epitaph" and an anticipation of her own fate as the destiny she shares with the dead she commemorates.

Grey areas nonetheless linger as to the how, why, and whence of these recollected characteristics and physical traits of the women evoked in the poem. Such questions arise, for example, when Charlotte "becomes herself again in death," which seems to evoke her appearance and personality *prior to* Auschwitz. Hence, perhaps, a gesture toward some other, not clearly identifiable memory only indirectly related to internment.

**A Spectral Presence and Afterlives of the Deceased**

Anne M. Parent has recently cited the poem above from *Une connaissance inutile* in relation to the notion of "communautés," noting that Delbo constantly opposes two irreconcilable "communities [of women]: the first being the deportées – les

[107] For more on Delbo's perspective of her "Auschwitz self," see *Days and Memory* (Evanston, Illinois: The Marlboro Press/Northwestern Northwestern University Press) 1990.

'revenants' or 'spectres,' the second being the non-deportées – the living."[108] She notes that the women evoked in *Une connaissance inutile* are less anonymous, whereas the deportées in the first book of the trilogy are not always named. The poem is a "connaissance intime de la mort" [intimate acquaintance with death] because it personalizes and familiarizes the women for the reader.[109] This cultivation of familiarity with the departed notwithstanding, for Parent the two communities are "irreconcilable" because Delbo's writings never cease to be haunted by the deceased, as I have been suggesting here as well.

Parent further suggests that the title *Une connaissance inutile* stems from the execution of Delbo's husband Georges at Mont-Valérien, and I concur with this. She claims that Delbo had already acquired a sense of traumatic death prior to her deportation : "la connaissance de la mort"[110] [knowledge of death.] Having already been subjected to the trauma of death prior to deportation, ". . . avec le décès de Georges, Charlotte Delbo débute son apprentissage de la mort qui, peu à peu, fera d'elle une revenante, un spectre exilé de la communauté des vivants avec qui il sera, dès lors, difficile de communiquer."[111] [. . . Upon the demise of Georges, Charlotte Delbo began her apprenticeship with death, which little by little, would make her a specter exiled from the community of the living with whom it would henceforth be difficult to communicate.]

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[108] Anne M. Parent "Communautés Spectrales," *Les Revenantes: Charlotte Delbo; la voix d'une communauté à jamais deportée*, eds. David Caron and Sharon Marquart. (Toulouse, France: Presses Universitaires du Mirail) 2011, Pp. 132-133.

[109] Ibid, 132.

[110] Ibid, 133.

[111] Ibid, 133.

Delbo the writer is indeed a revenante, an "exiled ghost," and her continued writing about the traumas of her own lived experiences ultimately awakens her longing for a sense of "home," her place of origin, though not to any material residence, but rather to a vantage point from which she can reconnect with the experiences she once shared with the deceased. This finds expression in her construction of a compensatory "literary afterlife," in which her own authorial voice may ceaselessly commingle with the cast of ghosts in exile she assembles from the archives of her memory. This tendency is apparent from her evocation of the deaths of Charlotte and Viva:

> De la même manière que la mort s'installe peu à peu dans le corps de Viva, elle s'installe aussi chez Charlotte, faisant de l'une cadavre et de l'autre un spectre. Quand Charlotte prend la main de Viva et constate qu'elle est déjà froide, elle remarque que 'la mort a déjà saisi sa main. Son pouls est loin, loin. La mort montera de sa main à ses yeux.'[112]
>
> [Just as death gradually settles into the corpse of Viva, it also settles into Charlotte, making one a cadaver and the other a ghost. When Charlotte takes Viva's hand and notices that it is already cold, she says that "death has already seized her hand. Her pulse is already faint, faint. Death will rise from her hand to her eyes."]

Once again, the hand provides the symbolic link between the female characters, as each slips into the realm of death. Parent notes that here both are transformed by their memories of internment. With regard to this poem, she says that when Charlotte observes and witnesses her dear friend Viva dying, she, like Viva, is also transformed by the

[112] Delbo *Une connaissance inutile*, 67.

memory of having been interned.[113]

The way Delbo revives the dead and thus preserves recollections of them is clearly evident in both the trilogy and in *Spectres mes compagnons* to which I shall return presently. These texts resist rebirth and renewal as Delbo has them instead summon traumatic memories associated with thematically-related life experiences. Thus in the following passage, a survivor of deportation writes about the birth of her son a few years after the Liberation; the elation of motherhood for the first time is overshadowed by the haunting memory of the deceased inmates who will never experience childbirth and maternity:

> Ce fils que j'avais souhaité, il était là, à moi. Une joie calme et bienfaisante. Je n'ai pas pu me laisser porter par cette joie, je n'ai pas pu m'y abandonner. En même temps que montait autour de moi, en moi, cette eau douce et enveloppante de la joie, ma chambre était envahie par les spectres de nos compagnes. Spectre de Mounette qui disait: "Mounette est morte sans connaître cette joie." Spectre de Jackie qui tendait des mains inutiles. Spectres de toutes ces jeunes filles, de toutes ces jeunes femmes qui sont mortes sans avoir connu cela, sans avoir été baignées de cette joie.[114]
>
> [This son I wished for, there he was, mine. A serene, gratifying joy. I couldn't allow myself to be carried away by such joy, couldn't abandon myself to it. Even as that sweet, all-consuming joy welled up all around me, and within me, my room was invaded by the phantoms of our companions. Phantom Mounette was saying "Mounette died without ever knowing this joy." Phantom Jackie reached

[113] Parent, "Communautés Spectrales," 135-36.

[114] Delbo, *Mesure* 55.

out in vain. Phantoms of all of these young girls, of all of the young women who died without ever having known that, without ever having been enveloped in such joy.]

Like the narrator "drained of life" and the nocturnal companionship of dead women, this survivor deportée knows quite well the spectral aggressors who impinge upon her joyful experience of new life. Moreover, phantom Mounette overpowers her and exercises full authority over the survivor deportée, as though somehow injecting her with the same resistance to the renewal of life. Mounette is an inescapable voice, speaking from within the troubled conscience of the survivor : "Mounette died without ever knowing this joy."

Then, as the narrator is gazing lovingly at her newborn son, she suddenly recalls from the period of internment the image of a mother and her stillborn son:

"L'eau soyeuse de ma joie s'est changée en boue gluante, en neige souillée, en marécage fétide. Je revoyais cette femme - tu te souviens, cette paysanne, couchée dans la neige, morte, avec son nouveau-né mort, gelé entre ses cuisses. Mon fils était aussi ce nouveau-né là. Je regarde mon fils et je lui reconnais les yeux de Jackie, une mou d'Yvonne, une inflexion de Mounette. Mon fils est leur fils à toutes.[115]

[The silky waters of my joy turned into viscous mud, dirty snow, a fetid swamp. I was recalling that woman – you remember – that peasant, lying there in the snow, dead, with her dead newborn, frozen between her thighs. My son was also that newborn. I look at my son and see Jackie's eyes, Yvonne's pout, Mounette's nod. My son is all of their sons].

[115] Delbo *Mesure,* 54 -55.

Gazing at life is simultaneously gazing at death; a heap of corpses can suddenly metamorphose into a stack of undressed mannequins, mingling deaths with memories. Here the narrator becomes a morbid Pietà, the "wellsprings of joy" a fetid bog, her very survival a conundrum: "comment être vivant au milieu de ce peuple de mortes?"[116] [how to stay alive amidst this colony of dead women?] Grotesque and morbid memories paradoxically infuse new life into the haunting, perennial presence of death.

**Idealizing the Post-Internment Future**

It should be emphasized that Delbo deftly explores a considerable variety of responses to the prevailing sense of inescapable death. Not all of her representations of the rigors of internment arise from obsessive, irrepressible remanifestations of traumatic memories. There are, for example, salient moments that awaken projections of some positive place remote from the scene of internment. In one of the fantasized scenarios of what might be happening concurrently elsewhere, far beyond the walls, Reine in *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* urges her fellow inmates not to give in to the imperious prospect of death so that those doing battle for them in the cities will not have fought in vain.[117]

Other passages feature fantasies of what it would be like if one were actually to survive and return to a normal life. Thus in "La maison," a vignette in *Aucun de nous ne reviendra,* women wandering through an empty and abandoned house imagine it as having traditional, domestic living space, dining rooms and bedrooms. In such passages fantasy compensates for seemingly unendurable circumstances through projection of an

[116] Ibid, 55-56.

[117] Delbo *Une connaissance*, 176.

idealized concurrent scene or some desirable futurity. In many of these instances a woman's touch has significance.

Although in these and other passages I have shown ways in which they effect temporal, mnemonic, or thematic links between narrators and their subjects, Colin Davis, in his analysis of *Mesure de nos jours,* finds no "thematic consistency of the lives of the survivors" in the vignettes:

> no explanation is offered of how the narratives were gathered or composed, and no generic marker on the book indicates whether the reader should take them as biographical or fictional. It would seem that Delbo is doing exactly what I have been objecting to: speaking in the place of others, presenting their stories as first-person narratives when the words they use may not be their own. . . there is no thematic consistency of the lives of survivors which would allow us to interpret *Mesure de nos jours* monolithically as a work of, say, despair or hope. The text implies that there is no story of the return from Auschwitz; rather we are offered a multiplicity of stories without overarching sense.[118]

Indeed, as Davis notes, it is not always clear who the narrators of the vignettes are in *Mesure de nos jours* or in the other parts of the trilogy, or whether or not Delbo explicitly wants the reader to assume that her works directly represent her own personal recollections. However, I believe they can and should be read as literary reflections generated from personal experiences. For in their deeply defined, starkly blunt yet also poetically arresting visual imagery they often convey an acute, compelling sense that these stories of "new beginnings," in idealized places or appealing future situations

[118] Colin Davis, "Other People's Pain: Narratives of Trauma and the Question of Ethics." *Cultural History and Literary Imagination,* vol. 18, ed. Martin Modlinger and Philipp Sonntag (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011) 19-42.

which are invariably thwarted by obsessively renewed reminiscences of past traumas, are indeed the stuff of her own past experiences. They strike the reader as being the privileged components with which she is carefully elaborating for posterity her own intimate "literary afterlife." Whereas Davis claims that Delbo should not give her characters their own voices at the risk of misrepresenting their experiences, I perceive this tendency instead as her very effective way of consolidating a convergence of gendered representations of women's voices, to honor the memory of her compatriots by emphasizing to the reader that her suffering was not simply hers alone, but that she shared intimately in theirs. By giving her characters such vividly individualized perspectives, Delbo affords them an opportunity to recall a wide range of poignant subjective states that would otherwise be concealed by their deaths. Moreover, these states of mind persuasively convey a sense that she, too, had experienced them, either inwardly or while witnessing them in others, or both, and had felt them deeply enough to render them as integral components of her own lived past.

**Depictions of Men**

It should also be emphasized that Delbo's literary afterlife is by no means an exclusively gynocentric domaine. Although her depictions of internment concern primarily the experiences of women, she also portrays certain remarkable male characters and offers a few glimpses of men in general. The latter appear largely in the abstract, as being akin to the women to the extent that they have suffered the same hardships of life in a concentration camp: "Les femmes regardent l'homme et ne le voient pas. C'est-à-dire qu'elles ne le voient pas dans ses détails, dans ce qui le

distingue en tant qu'homme. Elles ne voient qu'un homme, une effigie des humains oubliés."[119] [The women look at the man and don't see him, that is, they don't see him in detail, in terms of what makes him unique as a man. They see only a man, an effigy of forgotten human beings.] Here, "the man" is devoid of the personal features and mannerisms that once set apart his individuality. Thus do the women tend to perceive and remember the men :

> Les hommes nous aimaient aussi, mais misérablement. Ils éprouvaient, plus aigu que tout autre, le sentiment d'être diminués dans leur force et dans leur devoir d'hommes, parce qu'ils ne pouvaient rien pour les femmes. Si nous souffrions de les voir malheureux, affamés, dénués, ils souffraient davantage encore de ne plus être en mesure de nous protéger, de nous défendre, de ne plus assumer seuls le destin. Pourtant, les femmes les avaient, dès le premier moment, déchargés de leur responsabilité.[120]
>
> [The men liked us too, although pathetically. They felt, more acutely than anyone else, a sense of having been deprived of their strength and their manly responsibility, because they could do nothing for the women. While it was painful for us to see them unhappy, starving, deprived, it was even more so for them, being unable to protect and defend us, no longer able to take charge of their own destiny. Right from the start, however, the women had relieved them of their responsibility.]

This distinction between men and women from a feminine point-of-view partakes of

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[120] Delbo *Une connaissance*,10-11.

Delbo's progressive construction of a gendered history of the Holocaust. The question arises as to how Delbo's focus, here and elsewhere, on the collective sphere was related to her own "self" history. This brings to mind Stephen Spender's discussion of "life writing" as a simultaneous engagement of two distinct spheres:

> One is the self that others see - the social, historical person, with achievements, personal appearance, social relationships. These are 'real' attributes of a person living in the world. But there is also the self experienced only by that person. The self from the inside that the writer can never get 'outside of.' The 'inside,' or personally experienced, self has a history. While it may not be meaningful as an objective 'history of the times,' it is a record of self-observation, not a history observed by others.[121]

At issue, then, is the extent to which the "inside" voice of the writer, when it interfaces with an "outside" history of events, comes to express a collective as opposed to an individual voice. Although some of her portrayals of both male and female characters as victims of the degenerative effects of imprisonment conceivably do hold potential as components of a gendered history of the Holocaust, I believe that within the global context of her works these elements are tributary and ultimately subordinate to her own objective to provide, in Spender's words "a record of self-observation, not a history observed by others." Her construction of a "literary afterlife" is by no means an "objective" history, but rather a history of consciousness.

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[121] See *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives,* Second Edition. Eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 6.

**Echoes of Fears and Anxieties**

While distinctly feminine perspectives are salient throughout Delbo's works, they are especially prominent in her play *La Sentence.* Although it was published shortly after the Trilogy, it has received scant attention from scholars. Set in Spain during the Franco dictatorship, *La Sentence* is based on the trial of Basque militants that took place in Burgos in 1969. Although it is not a Holocaust-themed narrative, it shares significant links with the Trilogy, especially in the way the stories are for the most part recounted from the points of view of women. These are the wives, sisters, and mothers of the prisoners on trial as they fearfully await the verdict that will determine whether or not their husbands, brothers, or sons will be sentenced to death. As the trial unfolds, "les jours d'attente" [days of waiting] heighten the anxiety in anticipation of the inevitable verdict. While "la jeune fille" [young lady] worries that the incarcerated men may be chained, hungry, cold, and in pain, Aurora, one of the mothers, counsels a different attitude in response to such concerns:

> remuez pas la pitié ni la solitude / C'est la part des femmes / je sais / la part éternelle des femmes / mais il est temps d'en finir avec la part éternelle des femmes/ les femmes aux mains d'infirmière / les femmes doivent renoncer à être femmes en cela / il leur faut aussi ce courage-là.[122]
>
> [Leave off with the pity and solitude. That's the women's role / I know / women's eternal role / but it's time to do away with the eternal role of women / the women with nurses' hands / women should refuse to be like that / they should have that kind of courage [as the men] too.]

[122] Delbo *La sentence,* 61.

*La Sentence* may reflect a new emphasis in Delbo's approach to women's roles, one that insistently promotes a more tough-minded variety of resistance. On the other hand, of course, Aurora's comment also evokes a more familiar dimension of feminine resistance: the "eternal role of women with the nurses' hands" brings to mind the nurturant maternal figures in the Trilogy. Yet another preoccupation related to resistance finds expression among several of the women in the play *Who Will Carry the Word?* Finding themselves trapped in a perpetual psychological limbo and totally preoccupied with the uncertainty of who among them shall live and who shall die, their overriding concern is with the fate of what they now consider to be their most important personal legacies: their stories of the suffering and atrocities that occurred during their internment. Thus, considered in terms of Pascale Rachel Bos's aforementioned concept of gendered subjectivity, it is apparent from the contrasts among Delbo's female characters at Auschwitz and Burgos that they manifest a considerable range of subjective attitudes as they resist extreme adversity and confront imminent death.[123]

In the introduction I mentioned ways in which carceral situations overlap in *La Sentence* and in the play "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire." In the former, Inès, the spouse of one of the condemned men, describes her agony as she awaits his execution: "Je n'en peux plus d'attendre / Et je ne veux pas que cesse l'attente. . . ."[124] [I can't

[123] In her conceptual framework for gender analysis, Bos brings "to center stage questions about (gendered) subjectivity and autobiographical representation, the politics of memory and narrative, and the psychological function of testimony." Pascale Rachel Bos, "Women and the Holocaust: Analyzing Gender Difference," in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings,* ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 178-186.

[124] Here is the rest of the passage: The perpetual stage of waiting: Inès: Nous ne sommes pas des nonnes / ne vous méprenez pas à notre costume / nous sommes encore les femmes des hommes-là / nous sommes encore vivantes pour eux / leurs soeurs, leurs mères, leurs amantes / Nous attendons dans une intolérable attente / mais nous ne sommes pas encore les veuves / nous ne sommes pas encore en deuil malgré nos costumes noirs / et dans les plis de notre jupe / vous ne verrez pas la croix consolatrice

stand this waiting any longer, / yet I don't want the waiting to end.] "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire" consists of a dialogue between Françoise and Paul, who is about to be executed; and like Inès, Françoise anxiously dreads this awful moment. Here she describes their final moments together: ". . . Je mesurais combien de coups son coeur avait encore à battre. Chaque battement dévorait les minutes et c'est ainsi que j'ai su la mesure de ma vie et de mon amour. . . " [I calculated how many times his heart still had to beat. Every beat devoured the minutes, and thus did I discover the depth of my life and of my love. . .] The acute anguish Inès and Françoise experience prior to the executions is stronger than the grief they feel afterward. According to Magali Chiappone-Lucchesi, Françoise, who is portrayed in both "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire" and in *Who Will Carry the Word?,* is a "double littéraire" [a literary double] whom Delbo created in her own image:

> Charlotte, par l'intermédiaire de Françoise, établit avec le lecteur ce que Marie Bornand appelle "un contrat de vérité"; le "je" de Françoise venant certifier l'identité biographique de l'auteur. Le double Françoise devient donc élément supplémentaire attestant du témoignage de Charlotte.[125]
>
> [Charlotte, through the intermediary of Françoise, establishes with the reader what Marie Bornand calls a "truth contract"; the "I" of Françoise comes to certify the biographical identity of the author. The double of Françoise becomes a

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/ quand celui que nous aimons aura été supplicié. [We're not nuns / don't misinterpret our clothing / we're still these men's wives / we're still living for them / their sisters, their mothers, their lovers / we're waiting in an intolerable situation / but we're not widows yet / we're not in mourning yet despite our black clothing / and in the folds of our skirts / you'll not see the consolatory cross / when our loved one has been executed]. See Delbo, *La Sentence* 61.

[125] Magali Chiappone-Lucchesi. "Le témoignage théâtral de Charlotte Delbo : du double au testament," *Etudes théâtrales,* vol 51-52 (2011) 33-39. See also Marie Bornand's *Témoignange et fiction : les récits de rescapés dans la littérature de langue française (1945-2000)* (Geneva: Droz, 2004).

supplementary element that attests to the author's identity.]

Chiappone-Lucchesi further notes that the "double" is a *mise en abyme* in the aforementioned plays, representing a dichotomy between two Françoises: one who has returned from the past, the other who remains there:

> Par ailleurs, nous pouvons remarquer une mise en abyme du double dans *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* et "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire". Sur scène, il y a deux Françoise, celle du présent, qui est revenue, la narratrice omnisciente, et la Françoise du passé. Le double se dédouble. Françoise, écho intime de Charlotte, semble être une passeuse, l'intermédiaire entre le monde des morts et celui des vivants. Juxtaposer deux temps – passé et présent - faire vivre et mourir de nouveau ses camarades à l'infini, c'est leur donner une sépulture qu'elles n'ont jamais eue: la pièce-témoignage devient aussi piéce-cénotaphe.[126]
>
> [In addition, we can note a *mise en abyme* of the double in *Qui rapportera ces paroles?* and "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire." There are two Françoises on stage, the one who has returned from the past, the omniscient narrator, and the Françoise of the past. The double splits in half. Françoise, an intimate echo of Charlotte, seems to be a passer, the intermediary between the world of the dead and the living. To juxtapose the two temporalities – past and present – to make her comrades die and revive over and over, is to give them the burial they never had; the testimonial play is also a cenotaph play.]

Indeed, the cenotaph opening a perdurable narrative space for both the dead and the living provides a gateway to the literary afterlife. Delbo's role as "intermediary" between past and present recurs throughout her works, regardless of the genre, date of publication, or the period represented. She

[126] Chiappone-Lucchesi "Le témoignage théâtral," 34-35.

frequently obscures the place or time at which a story or some of its aspects occur. This suggests a rejection of historical specificity and a preference to give psychological accounts that are "around" historical events rather than being an integral part of them. Although I concur with Chiappone-Lucchesi that the "literary double" conforms to the biographical identity of the author, in several of Delbo's texts I find overlapping of the perspectives of several of her female characters as they experience acute anguish. Most of them occupy the same literary space, which is directly associated with Delbo's own traumatic experience while she was awaiting the execution of Dudach. At five a.m. on May 23, 1942, guards at the Santé Prison brought Delbo and three other women to say *adieu* to their husbands who had requested to see their wives prior to being executed at Mont Valérien. Delbo was reluctant to leave Dudach, and thus had to be forcefully escorted away from his prison cell by the prison guards.[127] Likewise, "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire" also takes place at daybreak on May 23, 1942 within a carceral setting, and its one act depicts the final, fleeting moments Françoise and Paul are able to share, as the two lovers bid each other farewell just before Paul's execution.[128]

More generally, the figure of the "literary double" reflecting her own experiences extends well beyond the role of Françoise, even to male characters who "double" men with whom she was personally or professionally involved, for example, men like Georges Dudach, Henri Lefebvre, Louis Jouvet, and Serge Samaraine. Their characteristics, especially their intellectual roles and situations when Delbo was with

[127] Violiane Gelly and Paul Gradvohl, *Charlotte Delbo* (Paris: Fayard, 2013) 9.

[128] "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire," Théodore Balmoral. *Revue de littérature*, No. 23, Orléans, 1995. This was originally written a few years after Liberation.

them, are reflected in her works.[129]

For example, George Dudach is doubled in *Ceux qui avaient choisi.*[130] Like "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire," this play consists of a dialogue. Werner, whose specialty is ancient Greek literature, served in Athens as an officer of the Wehrmacht during World War II; Françoise, the résistante déportée portrayed in texts previously discussed, now emerges two decades after "Françoise / Delbo" and "Paul / Dudach" said farewell before the latter's execution in 1942. Hence, a strong indication that Delbo remains loyal to her autobiographical double. At a café in Athens, Werner and Françoise recall how during the war they had resisted warfare in support of universal peace.[131] Before the war ended Werner had lost his wife Hilde, also a résistante, who was arrested by the Gestapo and never heard from again. Now as Werner gazes at Françoise he sees Hilde and experiences a twinge of nostalgia:

> Werner: J'ai cherché Hilde, une trace de Hilde pendant des années. (Il prend une main de Françoise). C'est vous que je trouve.
>
> Françoise: Moi, que vous trouvez. .
>
> Werner: Hilde, si elle était revenue, aurait eu ce profil fier que vous avez, ce visage redessiné par la volonté, ce visage un peu dur que vous avez quand vous n'y prenez pas garde. Je vous observais, tout à l'heure, assise là, toute seule. Le visage que vous vous êtes modelé vous-même depuis le jour où vous avez dit

[129] The first biography of Delbo, by Gelly and Gradvohl, published in 2013, has afforded me an opportunity to identify ways in which Delbo incorporated these men into her works.

[130] Charlotte Delbo. *Ceux qui avaient choisi* (Paris: Les provinciales, 2011). This was written in 1967.

[131] Olivier Véron writes that the play is, as Malraux says, "a representation of the memory of the battle of 'la vraie résistance' [true resistance], of political passion for a people and for freedom." See the introduction of *Ceux qui avaient choisi.*

adieu à votre mari.[132] [Werner: I've searched for Hilde, for some trace of her, over the years. (He takes Françoise's hand.) And I find you.

Françoise: You find me. Werner: If Hilde had returned, she would have had this same proud way about her that you have, your expression of determination, that slightly stern face of yours when you're unaware of it. I was watching you, just now, sitting there, all alone. The face you've displayed ever since the day you said goodbye to your husband.]

Werner's scrutiny of her countenance renews his bond with Hilde through her while also evoking Paul's death. The gaze they exchange is an associative link with Delbo's own experiences with intellectuals: Werner, Louis Jouvet, Henri Lefebvre and Serge Samaraine. With the exception of Lefebvre, her relationships with the others were short-lived, like this brief encounter between Werner and Françoise. Thus transcending the two characters, this play resists the consignment of her bygone political engagement and resistance and her previous intellectual relationships to mere oblivion. Like the other texts I have discussed, *Ceux qui avaient choisi* features characters and other salient details that tend to transcend individual identities, becoming altered and associated with Delbo's personal experiences.

**Encountering Death in *Spectres, mes compagnons***

*Spectres, mes compagnons* is written in the form of a letter from Delbo to Jouvet and centers on several encounters between characters and theatrical figures, some of whom,

[132] Delbo *Ceux qui avaient choisi*, 52-53.

like Dudach and Jouvet, she reimagines as part of the world of Auschwitz.[133] *Spectres* is comprised of feminine perspectives on trauma in situations similar to those I have discussed in her other works. As narrator, Delbo compares herself to the theatrical character Ondine who, when her lover Hans dies, suffers the same despair she did when Paul/Dudach died. The association is apparent when Hans bids Ondine eternal farewell:

> Hans allait me dire adieu, avec des mots qui sont ceux de tous les adieux, car c'était celle de sa vie même. . . Et pourtant c'était un éternel adieu, impossible de s'y méprendre, et la présence d'Ondine l'attestait, elle qui oublierait; et de savoir que moi aussi je devais oublier me déchirait le cœur.[134]
>
> [Hans was about to say farewell to me, speaking the words used in all farewells, because it was a farewell from his very own life. . . However, it was an eternal farewell, no doubt about it, and Ondine's presence attested to that, she who would forget ; and knowing that I, too, would soon forget was heartbreaking.]

Delbo explicitly associates herself with Ondine and even momentarily wonders if they are one and the same: "elle était là à côté de moi, aussi présente, aussi réelle que moi. Était-ce moi? "[135] [. . .she was there beside me, just as present, just as real as I was. Was it I?] This moment is reminiscent of the passage from *Mesure de nos jours* in which the narrator rejoins her deceased compatriots at night because they are permanently part of her, as she once again shares the same agony as those victims of internment. In both cases the narrator's identity seems to blend with theirs, as if the nostalgic memory of lost

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[133] The theatrical figures represented in the text include Fabrice del Dongo from Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme,* and Phèdre, Electre, Ondine, Antigone, and Alceste from Moliere's *Misanthrope*.

[134] Charlotte Delbo *Spectres, mes compagnons* (Lausanne: Maurice Bridel, 1977) 21.

[135] Delbo *Spectres,* 22.

compatriots and the character of Hans were both literary efforts to resist forgetting the final moments of what for Delbo was an all too familiar scenario.

Thatcher asserts that with *Spectres, mes compagnons* Delbo in part seeks to heal her trauma and to "reconnect her concentrationary experience with the world of the theater she inhabited before her deportation, thus bringing together her divided self."[136] Although I concur with Thatcher, I see this play less as an effort to reconnect with her concentrationary experience in the abstract but more specifically with the affective range of "*sentiments*" she experienced during internment and which she expresses through her female characters who are fearful of what their futures may hold. While the sentiments of her characters may not always relate directly or explicitly to her memory of a specific event, they are nonetheless suggestive of what is known about her own traumatic encounters with death.

Davis writes that *Spectres* is a testimonial in which there are least two acts of witnessing: to the narrator's own experiences, and to experiences that are not her own, into which she has no insight, and the text registers only abstrusely and uncomprehendingly. He maintains that the ghosts that haunt her are linked with fears, desires, and betrayals that predate her deportation.[137] I agree with Davis that the "ghosts" may indeed be linked to her anxieties prior to her deportation, but I have argued that the narrator's experiences and those of her characters share common links, whether the

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[136] Nicole Thatcher. *Charlotte Delbo, une voix singulière : mémoire, témoignage et littérature*. (Paris : L'Hartmattan, 2003) 78.

[137] Davis, Colin. *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead*. (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 109.

experiences are similar or not. For it is the multifaceted perspectives of death portrayed by those characters that offer insights into the subjective position of the narrator herself.

**Conclusion**

The selection of Delbo's works in various genres and on a variety of topics that I have discussed in this chapter offers convergent perspectives with regard to women and suffering. Delbo's female characters seemingly function as extensions of herself as she bore witness to the traumatic experiences of internment or imprisonment. I have explored these affinities under the rubric of my notion of "feminine links" in a few vignettes and passages from her plays. With regard to *Spectres mes compagnons* as well as "Une scène jouée dans la mémoire" and *Ceux qui avaient choisi*, I have concluded that the male characters can be associated directly or indirectly with the male intellectuals with whom Delbo was involved. Analysis of situations of the male and female characters *separately* has enabled me to observe the nature of gendered specificity she creates within her own literary afterlife. I have also shown that in her choice of themes, as well as in her constructions of situations and her descriptive imagery, she maintains a strong tendency to dwell on the imminence or the after-effects of inescapable death. My aim throughout this chapter has been to show how Delbo consistently sought to capture and to express in her literary afterlife what it meant for her to be a political résistante, as well as to indicate how she writes resistance as a psychological activity, from the perspective of women, in relation to her own life and experiences.

Finally, in this examination I have identified inscriptions of the author's literary afterlife, including configurations of deceased women whose lives and deaths I have associated with my notion of "feminine links." I have also analyzed the function of

maternal figures within the sphere of internment, and have examined ways in which characters recall earlier memories, or idealize the future, if they were to survive. To highlight the impact of trauma in relation to internment, I have described ways in which characters are permanently transformed, at times becoming spectral. Throughout these works the characters are caught between the possibility of survival or death, which causes them to anticipate grief and attempt to cope with it. While remaining attuned to the echoing anxieties and terrors that resound throughout her *oeuvre,* I have sought to offer a new perspective on the scriptorial survivorship of Charlotte Delbo, in a long rehearsal of her companionships with inescapable specters.

**Charlotte Delbo: Primary Sources**

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Delbo, Charlotte. *Aucun de nous ne reviendra*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1965.

# CHAPTER 3

## NOOR INAYAT KHAN: CONCEPTUALIZING RESISTANCE DURING WORLD WAR II

### Adapting and Blending Traditions of Sufism During Wartime Europe

During World War II Noor Inayat Khan was the first woman to be infiltrated into Nazi-occupied France by the Special Operations Executive, the newly established intelligence office in the cabinet of Winston Churchill that coordinated espionage by members of the French and British Resistance. Soon after the end of the war Noor received posthumous accolades from both France and Great Britain for making the ultimate sacrifice as a heroic *résistante.* Since then her contributions have by no means been forgotten, and the recent upsurge of interest in her military career extends to the fascinating and unusual features of her life story. In 2012 her heroism returned to international prominence with the unveiling of a statue in her honor in London, at a ceremony attended by guests including Princess Anne and members of Noor's family. Early in 2014 the American documentary filmmaker Robert Gardner completed the first cinematic portrayal of her life in a docudrama entitled *Enemy of the Third Reich: The Noor Inayat Khan Story.*[138] In March of that year the Royal Mail issued a commemorative postage stamp in its "Remarkable Lives Series" to mark the centenary of

[138] Robert Gardner, *Enemy of the Third Reich: The Noor Inayat Khan Story* (Baltimore: Gardner Films, 2014).

her birth, all of which suggests the legendary quality her life has assumed.[139]

While Noor is best known for her clandestine engagement against Nazi oppression during World War II, her literary voice and personal writings have long been neglected by scholars, partly because the attention she has received as a *résistante* engaged in wartime espionage has overshadowed her contributions to the literary world, and partly because many of her writings have not been available in print until quite recently, while others have yet to be published. Noor became a prolific writer during the years leading up to her untimely death at age thirty, and her personal correspondence from which I cite later in this chapter indicates that writing was a major part of her life despite the many hardships she endured during that time. My focus will be on how her works reflect aspects of her experiences and shape her role as an active participant in the Resistance movement in Great Britain and France.

Of particular interest in this study are ways in which Sufism influenced her life. A wealth of scholarship on Sufism covers both the long history of the Sufi tradition and the range of beliefs and practices associated with it across many centuries. In a recent comprehensive study of these developments UCLA historian Nile Green offers a definition of Sufism as a "powerful tradition of Muslim knowledge and practice bringing proximity to or mediation with God and believed to have been handed down from the Prophet Muhammad through the saintly successors who followed him."[140] Green explains that Sufis were always "acutely conscious of their discursive links to past

[139] On this commemorative issue, see *Business Standard* http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/royal-mail-issues-stamp-of-ww-ii-heroine-noor-inayat-khan-114032401043_1.html. March 24, 2014.

[140] Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*. (London, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) 8.

precedent," and that it was this consciousness of tradition that prompted them to continue identifying themselves as Sufi *Muslims* rather than as "charismatic lone stars or prophetic founders of new religions."[141] Green argues that Sufism is better understood under the rubric of 'tradition' rather than 'mysticism.' Since tradition is by definition that which is transmitted through time and space, any genuine attempt to pursue the history of a tradition must accept the temporally diachronic and spatially distributive nature of the exercise.[142]

Accordingly, given the temporally and spatially circumscribed nature of my study, I perceive Sufism primarily at one particular, relatively recent moment, as it was received and promulgated by Noor's father Hazrat Inayat Khan, whose thought exercised a powerful influence on her life. Hazrat Inayat Khan was a venerable Sufi master—a *murshid*—the recipient of tradition, and during the early twentieth century he became the most influential Sufi teacher in Europe and subsequently in North America. While Noor was still in her early twenties her earliest writings already showed the influence of Hazrat, who had died when she was thirteen years old, and the same is occasionally apparent in her later works. Hence throughout this chapter my frequent references to these affinities, which typically occur at moments that are particularly charged with moral and ethical significance. Together they suggest that she adhered to and internalized her father's Sufi teachings and at times brought them into prominence at crucial junctures in her works. I shall thus consider ways in which they find expression in her reworkings of antecedent literary traditions as well as certain responses she offered

[141] Ibid, 5.

[142] Ibid.

to the grave political crises unfolding in Europe.

At numerous points in her fictional narratives, essays, poems, and letters, Noor, like Charlotte Delbo and Germaine Tillion, explores modes of resistance in relation to what I identified in Chapter One as "lived experience." In their seminal study on self-referential writing, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson refer to "life narrators" as those who use personal memories as primary archival sources, complemented by supporting materials such as letters, journals, photographs, conversations, and knowledge of an historical moment to document information about a particular subject.[143] Citing Joan W. Scott's discussion of experiential constitution of subjectivity, they conclude that experience is "the process through which a person becomes a certain kind of subject owning certain identities in the social realm, identities constituted through material, cultural, economic, and psychic relations."[144] Hence my attention in this chapter to the developing identitary dimension Noor progressively fashions from her subjective reflections on memories of personal experiences as well as her factual reconstruction of the larger social and political contexts within which she experienced them. Of special interest will be the variety of ways in which Noor tends to write resistance in relation to questions of gender and identity. In addition, while personal experience is thus constitutive of the subject, it is no less important to consider how, over time, the author's methods of treating specific experiences *changed*, notably in keeping with significant changes in the nature and gravity of her own circumstances.

Thus in her *Twenty Jātaka Tales*, which I discuss in the next section of this chapter,

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[143] See *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives,* Second Edition, Eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 7.

[144] Ibid, 31.

her depictions of animals in the roles of guiding spirits and teachers echo her father's belief that some people live the life of God in their consciousness, thus serving "as a medium through which God chooses to impart His knowledge to the world" and to "awaken humanity from the slumber of this life of illusion."[145] Likewise in the *Twenty Jātaka Tales,* tutelary creatures of the natural realm assume these roles, imparting knowledge, conveying ideas and messages, and guiding those around them toward divine perfection. In doing so, they clearly reflect her father's spiritual views while also to some degree re-investing them with deeper spiritual meanings already inherent in their folkloric sources. In marked contrast, Noor in her later works moves away from allegorical depictions of animals, and yet that major shift in no way diminishes her enduring allegiance to the values of Sufism her father had passed down to her. I shall consider examples of how she incorporates them in quite different ways into many of her subsequent works, as for example, in various father/daughter literary configurations that are evocative of the close spiritual bond she always maintained with him and the ideals he espoused.

As the drastically deteriorating political climate throughout the world brought her to her decision to join resistance forces, her writings strongly indicate that she tended to weigh issues in contemporary politics in terms of the moral lessons of Sufism. In some of her narratives thematic notions of resistance resonate autobiographically, especially when she associates herself with her female characters who are sacrificing their lives for

[145] Hazrat Inayat Khan "Ten Sufi Thoughts," in *Caravan of Souls: An Introduction to the Sufi Path of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, ed. Pir Zia Inayat-Khan (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications Inc., 2013) 12-14. This anthology of Hazrat's writings is also a spiritual treatise. The articles it contains on Sufism relate mainly to the works of Hazrat Inayat Khan and his disciples. The editor of this anthology, Pir-Zia Inayat Khan, is Noor's uncle, and is himself a Sufi master.

values they believe to be honorable and morally correct. I refer to Noor's tendency to invest her modes of writing resistance with material from a variety of spheres of influence as a "blending of traditions," as when she directly associates specific details in her narratives with core ideals of Sufism, notably the cultivation of wisdom and the *process* of self-realization. The latter illuminates the author's subjective position and her sense of the nature of her being. These important aspects of Noor's works resonate with Hazrat Inayat Khan's observation that by the process of Sufism one realizes one's own nature, one's true nature, and thereby one realizes human nature. And by the study of human nature one realizes the nature of life in general. It is in self-realization that the mystery of the whole of life is centered.[146] I submit that Sufism's nurturance of a process that ultimately leads to an understanding of human nature in general is a principle implicitly reflected in unique ways in several of Noor's writings. It imbues the progressive development of her works with a growing sense of spiritual self-awareness that matures along with the increasing gravity of her experience, especially with regard to the ways in which her opinions as well as her actions reflect her keen perception of resistance as a core value of human nature.

**Decoding Jātaka Tales in the Context of the Resistance**

The prologue of *Twenty Jātaka Tales* identifies the narratives as retellings of tales from *The Gâtakamâlâ* or *Garland of Birth-Stories Jātaka* or *Stories of Buddha's Former Births*.[147] Comparison of Noor's *Twenty Jātaka Tales* with English translations of her

[146] Hazrat Inayat Khan, *Caravan of Souls* 11-21.

[147] Âyre Sûra, *The Gâtakamâlâ*, or *Garland of Birth-Stories* (London: Oxford University Press, 1895). Eds. Edward B. Cowell and Robert Chalmers, *Jātaka* or *Stories of Buddha's Former Births* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1895-1913).

sources shows that she adapted from them shorter versions that would appeal to younger audiences. *Twenty Jātaka Tales* also prefigures her subsequent narratives that in my view "blend traditions." Thus she aligns these didactic stories addressing ethical questions from Buddhist perspectives with the moral values of Sufism.

She recounts an anecdote entitled "The Monkey Bridge" that clearly illustrates the potential her *Twenty Jātaka Tales* held as allegories of lived experience. In this tale the chief monkey sacrifices his life to save eighty thousand monkeys from the onslaught of a tyrant king by suspending his body between two trees so that the other monkeys can cross the river to safety. The puzzled monarch queries the dying monkey: "You made of your body a bridge for others to cross. Did you not know that your life would come to an end in so doing? You have given your life to save your followers. Who are you, blessed one, and who are they?"[148] To which the monkey replies: "I do not suffer in leaving this world for I have gained my subjects' freedom. And if my death may be a lesson to you, then I am more than happy."[149] Head of Communications Leo Marks told Noor during her training in the SOE that every time she encoded a message she was to think of each letter as a monkey crossing a bridge between Paris and London. Because any that fell would surely be shot, it was incumbent on the encoder to ensure their safe passage. When Noor took Marks' advice to heart, her encoding skills improve immensely.[150]

Just as "The Monkey-Bridge" could provide her with a conceptual link between her

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[148] Noor Inayat Khan, *Twenty Jātaka Tales* (East-West Publications, 1975) 20. The text was first published in1939.

[149] Ibid, 21.

[150] This conversation is evoked in Leo Marks's publication entitled *Between Silk and Cyanide: A Codemaker's Story 1941-1945* (London, England: Harper Collins, 1998). It is also depicted in Gardner's film.

literary production and her life, so apparently could her version of the Jātaka tale entitled "The Two Pigs." In that story a woman adopts and cares for two piglets until the townsfolk undertake to capture and butcher them. Aware that the two are about to die, the piglet Mahatundila utters a remarkable couplet:

> Bathe in the pool of water as on a bright feast day,
> And you shall find a perfume that never fades away.[151]

This exhortation exercises a quasi-magical effect on both man and nature: "Flowers in the grass opened their hearts to listen, the trees bent over, the wind became silent, and the birds tarried in flight."[152] The townsfolk were "moved to tears" and all dire designs on the pair were abandoned. The verses thus acted as a kind of charm that brought mankind into harmony with the universe, which is, as I have noted, a fundamental objective of Sufism. The piglets, meanwhile, were nonetheless prepared to die, and with stoic optimism and stolid resistance to fear of his own demise, Mahatundila, recalling that the "the pool of water" is love, expressed no sadness at the prospect of leaving this world, as "many stay and are unhappy; many leave and joy is theirs."[153] His sanguinity saves their lives, and both are sent to the king's palace to be bathed in perfume and clad and treated royally. When Noor, alluding to this tale, asked Marks if she could "think about the pigs" when transmitting messages from France back to London, she was presumably mindful in particular of the lesson encapsulated in the couplet cited above, which also

[151] Noor Inayat Khan, *Jātaka Tales* 83-89.

[152] Ibid, 88.

[153] Ibid, 89.

appears as a question in the tale's prologue.[154] The affirmative image of a festive ritual of bathing amid an aura of perfume "that never fades" is suggestive of the Buddhist sense of attaining a higher, spiritual consciousness detached from all temporal adversaries and even from all concern for the imminence of death.

Thus, as in the story of the bridge, this tale promotes cultivation of a deep sense of mental and spiritual equilibrium that Noor felt could help sustain her while she was engaging in stressful and dangerous espionage. In both stories the animal characters are sacrificial victims, and though the oppressors are initially a threat, the likelihood of death, instead of generating fear, instills a deep sense of serenity and reconciliation. The two tales together valorize complementary attitudes, in the first instance the inherent goodness of supreme self-abnegation on behalf of others, in the second the self-sustaining power of communal peace and love.[155]

These stories in *Twenty Jātaka Tales* reflect a current that surfaces frequently in Noor's later works which, though they are not adapted from narrative sources, feature characters and narrators that express similar ideological and ethical perspectives. This is precisely what I mean by "blending traditions," whereby the ethical foundations of Noor's works frequently stay the same, even as her plots develop and her source materials change. Although *Twenty Jātaka Tales* was perhaps not initially intended to be

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[154] Marks, *Between Silk and Cyanide* 82.

[155] Ibid, 45-52. Other than "The Monkey Bridge" and "The Two Pigs," there are no direct references to other Jātaka Tales that Noor might have evoked in a similar fashion during her SOE training. According to Jean Overton Fuller, however, of the twenty tales Noor deemed "The Fairy and the Hare" to be the most "sublime." In this narrative a hare encounters a fairy who has transformed herself into a starving old male beggar seeking food in a forest. When the beggar approaches the Hare, the latter has nothing but himself to offer as food and jumps into a fire to create flesh for the beggar to eat, whereupon the latter transforms himself back into a fairy, cooling down the flames so as not to burn the hare. The fairy exclaims: "The fire is not real, it is only a test," thus saving the Hare's life. Hence yet another example of the self-sacrificial theme prominent elsewhere in the *Jātaka Tales.*

wartime literature nor to offer metaphorical representations of the contemporaneous wartime situations that Noor was witnessing, the two tales I have discussed, given the emblematic status they held during her SOE training, can be considered narratives expressing her own resistance, as well as her implicit valorization of the Resistance as a collective response to a global crisis.

**New Resistance Narratives, Legends of War and Renewal**

*Twenty Jātaka Tales* are not the only stories that are evocative of Noor in her role as *résistante* during World War II. Her narrative entitled "Perce Neige" / "Snow Drop" was discovered as a handwritten entry in her wireless training notebook.[156] The eponymous protagonist, also referred to as "little daughter," frequently brings her father "Great Sun" happiness in what the narrator refers to as a "brown gloomy" world.[157] The wicked fairy queen, who is jealous of Snow Drop and her many admirers, orders three personified representatives of nature, Frost-Bite, Fog-Gloom, and North-Wind, to kidnap and kill her. They comply and whisk her away from the world.[158] When the robins beg her to return, she reappears in disguise: "Chut! I will come!" whispered little daughter, "but I will come as a flower as tiny as a drop, and as white as the snow so that Queen Winter cannot see me."[159] Like the obliging and nurturant protagonist of this tale, Noor in her role of

[156] Noor Inayat Khan, *King Akbar's daughter: Stories for Everyone as Told by Noor Inayat Khan*, ed. Sandra Lillydahl (New Lebanon, New York: Omega Publications, Sulūk Press, 2012) 198-205.

[157] Ibid,199.

[158] According to the introduction of *King Akbar's Daughter*, Noor wrote this story after having had a premonition of her own dire fate. Like Perce Neige held captive by "Fog-Gloom," Noor was a prisoner of the Nazis, under the decree of "Night and Fog" (Nacht und Nebel), which was a designation given to some prisoners who were considered dangerous by the Nazi Regime. These prisoners' names were to be erased from official records.

[159] Noor Inayat Khan, *King Akbar's Daughter* 203.

*résistante* dutifully participated in the attempt to restore peace and justice in a "gloomy" world in the throes of widespread warfare, an engagement to which she was unwaveringly committed at the very moment she was entering this narrative in her notebook. In addition, like Perce Neige, Noor adopted a surrogate identity in order to protect herself from being captured and killed.

The father/daughter motif that features so prominently in "Perce Neige" / "Snow Drop" occurs elsewhere in Noor's writings, notably in "King Akbar's Daughter," to which I shall return. It also recurs in her personal correspondence with Azeem Goldenberg, in which she frequently and affectionately signs her letters "Babuli," meaning "father's daughter."[160] This brings to mind Magali Chiappone-Lucchesi's notion of the "double littéraire" [the literary double], which I discussed in Chapter One with regard to her discussion of how Delbo creates her literary double in two of her plays.[161] Noor often reflects her own identity in her female protagonists who are pre-eminently in the role of daughter of a powerful male. For example, Perce Neige and King Akbar's Daughter are both empowered by the sovereignty and prestige of their fathers. In turn, these paternal figures most likely mirror an idealized spiritual and intellectual image of Hazrat Inayat Khan, whose life and legacy Noor repeatedly reconfigures in her narratives.

In Noor's 1939 adaptation of the Polish folktale entitled "Princess Wanda," she maintains her focus on a female protagonist while also somewhat displacing the

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[160] Claire Ray Harper and David Ray Harper, *We Rubies Four: The Memoirs of Claire Ray Harper* (New Lebanon, New York: Omega Publications, 2011). On Noor's use of pseudonyms, see page 399.

[161] Magali Chiappone-Lucchesi. "Le témoignage théâtral de Charlotte Delbo : du double au testament," *Etudes théâtrales*, vol 51-52 (2011) 33-39. See also Marie Bornand's *Témoignage et fiction: les récits de rescapés dans la littérature de langue française (1945-2000)* (Geneva: Droz, 2004).

father/daughter motif by a variant featuring a protective paternal sovereign fostering the birth of a rejuvenated *Patrie*. The narrative's embodiment of a testimonial and a moral lesson suggestive of the potential destruction of Poland by the Germans makes it likely that she wrote it after the country had been invaded by the Nazis.[162] In this tale the medieval Polish king Boleslaw the Brave declares that the white eagle will be the symbol of an indomitable nation: "The knights of Poland shall dwell in it [The Eagles' nest] and as long as they live, Poland shall live."[163] Yet in the final paragraph contemporary Poland comes to the fore:

> The flag is now torn down, and the Eagle of Poland wounded, but it can never die. White eagles never die. As soon as its wings are healed, it will return to the nest, and Gniezno shall be full of knights with lances and spears, and Poland shall live again forevermore.[164]

Adapting this medieval Polish legend to reflect the contemporary political context, Noor conveys an ideological message of renewal and reversal on a collective scale to counter what appears to have been the tragic demise of Poland. As in the *Twenty Jātaka Tales,* there are overtones of the legendary, as well as an emphasis on collective renewal. Unlike the earlier stories, however, "The White Eagles of Poland" centers more explicitly on a major event at a specific historical moment contemporaneous with her own circumstances at the time she was writing.

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[162] Claire Ray Harper notes that Noor wrote a long story about Poland's plight in the notebooks containing the technical memos she had on hand while training as a radio operator. She adds that "it is also said that Noor had a romantic liaison with a Polish officer around that time" and cites the ending of "The White Eagles of Poland" in that regard. See Harper and Harper, *We Rubies Four,* 154.

[163] See "The White Eagles of Poland" in Noor Inayat Khan's *King Akbar's Daughter* 197.

[164] Ibid, 197.

**Nostalgia and Gendered Performativity**

A more apparent stylistic departure from both *Twenty Jataka Tales* and "The White Eagles of Poland" is Noor's four-page narrative entitled "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)." It undoubtedly captures traumatic moments during which Noor and her family fled Suresnes to escape from the occupied zone in France and join resistance efforts in England. She and her mother and her siblings were among the throngs who escaped from France during the massive Nazi incursion in June of 1940. In her memoir, Noor's sister Claire Ray Harper describes the exhausting and dangerous nine-day ordeal through streets in chaos, when transportation was frequently inaccessible and there was "nothing to eat and no chance to sleep."[165] Harper specifically associates their ordeal with the events Noor describes in "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)" and cites part of the essay in her memoir: "Noor put into words her sentiment regarding the plight of the French people under German occupation."[166]

It is not known whether Noor intended "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)" to be a lengthier account or if in its current state the text is merely a draft. The numerous typographical errors would seem to suggest the latter possibility. Furthermore, unlike her other narratives, this is written in a journalistic style and more akin to a reportage, as is already apparent in the first line: "12:30 At the docks of St. Nazaire. News Time."[167] The narrator is standing on a dock crowded with people anxiously awaiting a ferry,

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[165] Harper and Harper, *We Rubies Four* 123-129.

[166] Ibid, 129.

[167] Noor Inayat Khan, "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)," (Unpublished) 1. Courtesy of the Claire Ray Harper Collection. For more on France during the Nazi occupation, see Isabelle von Bueltzingsloewen *Morts d'inanition: Famine et exclusions en France sous l'occupation* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2005).

among whom are a wounded corporal and a naval officer. Railway travel has ceased, and the narrator fears that France may have been devastated:

> I understood that the news of France on fire, in flames, destroyed to dust would have not been as hard a blow. France! depositing arms. . . negociating [sic] . . . Paris! gates open, the tomb of their unknown one guarded by the ennemy [sic] God! it was worse tan [sic] Death![168]

Fearing that France will fall to the enemy, the anguished speaker says that everyone is reliving the past in one fleeting instant; "20 glorious generations" flash through every mind and conjure associations with the generation of World War I. At the very end, however, a notable change of tone occurs, as the narrator asserts that "thousands are giving their lives 'Pour la Patrie' and that "we hold a task never in history a land has held before"; "France shall not die! France shall live again."[169] This resolutely positive endorsement of sacrifice leading to collective rebirth and renewal recaptures a prevalent outlook in *Twenty Jātaka Tales* and recalls the triumphal rescue of nationhood affirmed in "The White Eagles of Poland." Moreover, the nations mentioned in the latter and in "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)" show thematic interfacing between diverse works, as Noor once again moves beyond strict allegiance to any single tradition in order to convey a coherent and relatively stable ideological orientation whose implications clearly pertain to wartime Europe.[170]

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[168] Ibid, 1.

[169] Ibid, 4.

[170] Ibid, 4. Given that "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)" reflects Noor's own experience, it has significant biographical value. Although brief, it is nonetheless reminiscent of Irène Némirovsky's posthumously published manuscript *Suite Française*, which also depicts the aftermath of German bombardment as the characters flee occupied France. According to Corpet and Marwell, given our knowledge of Némirovsky's personal history and that she wrote *Suite Française* near the end of her life,

As Noor moves beyond the traditional objective accounts frequent in her earlier works and toward expressions of more openly subjective points of view, certain aspects of nostalgic memory find expression in her fiction. Of interest in this regard is Svetlana Boym's distinction between two forms of nostalgia, "restorative" as opposed to "reflective":

> Restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future; reflective nostalgia is more about individual and cultural memory. The two might overlap in their frames of reference, but they do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity. In other words, they can use the same triggers of memory and symbols, the same Proustian madeleine pastry, but tell different stories about it."[171]

While in instances of restorative nostalgia "the past is a perfect snapshot," "reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space."[172] Indeed, whereas restorative nostalgia inheres in Noor's idealization of unconquerable nations and legacies that are protected by those who make painful, selfless sacrifices, reflective nostalgia thrives in disparate fragments of her deeply personal memories, laced with perceptions and evaluations shaped by the idealistic principles of Sufism and cherished recollections of moments she shared with her late father, to which I shall return when discussing her correspondence.

In Noor's 1939 "Princess Wanda," another adaptation of a Polish folktale, the

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fearing she would run out of paper and time, one is tempted to "search in this manuscript for clues to the context in which she wrote and to her emotional and mental state." See "Woman of Letters: Irène Némirovsky and *Suite Française,"* Eds. Olivier Corpet and Garrett White (Montreal, Canada: Five Ties Publishing, Inc. 2008). Likewise, knowledge of Noor's personal history might prompt us to search for clues in her text about the stressful situation in which she was writing.

[171] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001) 49-55.

[172] Ibid, 49.

eponymous protagonist declines a proposal of marriage from the king of Germany. Dismissing his envoy, she says "Return to your king and tell him I cannot love him, for he loves not his people; and as I cannot love him, I shall not marry him."[173] Infuriated by her refusal, the king threatens to attack Poland, and Princess Wanda decides that the only way to save her own land is by her own self-sacrificial death. Thus, prior to plunging into the depths of the Vistula, clad in a beautiful gown made from the flowers of Poland, she addresses her subjects: "My people, as long as you live, Poland shall not die. If the whole world crushed it to dust, it would rise again through you. I must leave you now, but remember Wanda sometimes, perhaps at dusk when the old tales of Poland are told."[174] While the tyrannical German king threatening Poland is clearly evocative of the grave political crisis that was unfolding in 1939, Wanda's message to her compatriots anticipates the proclamation Noor's narrating protagonist made the year following – "France shall not die! France shall live again," in "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)." While both texts express the same kind of forthright restorative nostalgia, the narrator of "Princess Wanda" exclaims: "Wanda is always remembered, for the Vistula still repeats her words as it flows: 'Poland shall never die. If the whole world crushed it to dust, it would rise again through you.'"[175] Wanda at last assumes an exalted patriotic grandeur that takes her well beyond the folkloric milieu in which she originated. Noor has transcended that tradition by transforming Wanda into a civilizing heroine of mythic proportions.

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[173] See "Princess Wanda" in *King Akbar's Daughter* 193-195.

[174] Ibid, 195.

[175] Ibid, 195.

Although Noor frequently portrays her female protagonists as gifted musicians or storytellers in positions of power and fully committed to others or to a cause, the time and context in which she retells the story of "Princess Wanda" offers especially acute insights into her conceptualization of feminine-gendered specificity. This connection brings to mind Judith Butler's discussion of gender as a social construct, specifically in terms of ways in which gender is shaped by elements of culture.[176] Butler explains that "when the relevant 'culture' that 'constructs' gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation."[177] I perceive the law or set of laws not necessarily in connection with political matters, but instead as how Noor writes consistently about attributes and inherent characteristics of women. Noor endows her idealized female protagonists with the characteristics of women who enjoy public approval and prestige and whose actions entail collective benefits in moments of crisis. Indeed, the continuity between individual courage and its effects on a wider scale is variably evoked and runs throughout most of her corpus.

**Princesses of the East: Empowerment, Exile, and Isolation**

The way in which Noor retells the story of "Princess Wanda" by considerably magnifying and glorifying her heroine partakes of a more general emphasis in her works, highlighting, in a variety of ways, elements of feminine-gendered specificity. Consideration of a few salient examples of this tendency is thus in order here. *King Akbar's Daughter* features a section entitled "From the East" containing three tales

[176] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge,1999).

[177] Ibid, 12.

concerning princesses: "Zeb-un-Nisa," "Mira Bhai," and "King Akbar's Daughter."[178]

In the latter Noor explicitly associates her own identity with the female protagonist whose name is "Nur." One day the eponymous monarch who reigns over the Indian kingdom of Akbar sees a box floating at sea and inside it discovers a baby girl: "Dear little one, lost in the waves of the sea, I have found thee, and thou shall be my little daughter and thy name shall be Nur." When she reaches adulthood, he asks her to whom she owes her life and she tells him that it was God who rescued her. Infuriated that she did not name him, he exiles her to an "unknown city" where a monstrous king who, hoping to make her his queen, adorns her with garments and jewels. Each night, however, Noor lulls him to sleep with another story from *One Thousand and One Nights*, which the narrator says "saved a thousand and one daughters."[179] The life-saving premise of the story offers insights into a seemingly autobiographical link to the situation, given that Noor gives the protagonist her own name. Saving not only one daughter, but many, is an implication that the situation is a collective call to save and protect those whom she sees in the image of herself resisting tyranny. After telling the final story, she escapes from the tyrant king and returns to Akbar, her adoptive father, whom she now credits with having rescued and saved her. Upon her return, Akbar acquires a spiritual and metaphysical perspective on the situation. He now identifies God as the divine master whose power is greater than his own. Akbar's revelation about God is reminiscent of the

[178] According to the editor of *King Akbar's Daughter*, these three narratives reflect Sufi themes and "illustrate certain ideals and principles that are not to be taken as literal history." See Noor Inayat Khan, *King Akbar's Daughter*, xvi.

[179] Noor Inayat Khan, *King Akbar's Daughter* 96-98. The writer allusively associates herself with Scheherazade, the storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights;* otherwise there is no indication that this narrative derives from another source.

first of the ten principal Sufi tenets of Hazrat Inayat Khan, who explains that "There is One, the Eternal, the Only Being; none exists save He" and that "the God-ideal is to the Sufi as a lift by which he raises himself to the eternal goal, the attainment of which is the only purpose of his life."[180] In both "King Akbar's Daughter" and "The Monkey Bridge" the male protagonist's initial response to the situation has changed drastically when the narrative comes to a close. Both monarchs seemingly undergo the process of self-realization, a core ideal of Sufism, a process whereby the subject becomes less focused on his internal self and his own desires, and instead realizes a "oneness of the whole being," idealizing God and humanity.[181]

Like Princess Wanda, Nur resists being forced to live away from her father's palace, while Princess Wanda defies the political demands that confront her. Both escape marriage to a tyrant and by doing so save numerous lives. In both "Perce Neige" and "King Akbar and His Daughter," the father/daughter configuration is the significant core of the story, and while both Great Sun and Emperor Akbar are empowered by their exalted status, their respective daughters possess some truly exceptional power, gift or talent that saves them from paternal oppression. Less obvious than these father/daughter oppositions are the more remarkable similarities between the two female protagonists, one of whom is isolated from others, the other exiled. Before Perce Neige returns to the world as a tiny flower, she is "whisked away" by the frost and the wind, while Nur in exile must outwit an evil king before she can return to her adoptive father. Their gendered-positions thus momentarily give them either vulnerability to or empowerment

[180] Hazrat Inayat Khan, *Caravan of Souls* 11-12.

[181] Hazrat Inayat Khan, *Caravan of Souls* 1-25.

over the supreme paternal authority. Comparison of these two situations reinforces my sense that Noor's characters portrayed as daughters, especially within these father/daughter literary configurations, likely echo some of the personal, and sometimes ambivalent sentiments she held as the daughter of such a powerful figure.

Similar parallels appear in "Zeb-un-Nisa," in which the eponymous protagonist is a Persian poetess and daughter of Emperor Aurangzeb.[182] This "unworthy and weak" ruler poisons and kills Zeb-un-Nisa's husband, a young prince. Following his death, as Zeb-un-Nisa remains alone in the palace, beset by grief and longing for her beloved husband, her tears miraculously metamorphose into poetic verses: "Et les larmes qui jaillissaient de son coeur se transformèrent en vers miraculeux." [And the tears gushing from her heart changed into miraculous verses.] Thereafter "the greatest poets of the era were named after Zeb-un-Nisa."[183] Unlike Nur, however, Zeb-un-Nisa is not exiled by her father, but must suffer and grieve in isolation before becoming a legendary poet.

Noor's tale entitled "Mira Bhai"[184] centers on the eponymous princess who loves Lord Krishna but is forced to marry Raja of Udaipur, one of the numerous princes who asks her for her hand. Her love for Krishna remains steadfast, however, and she eventually abandons her castle in order to live in his temple where she develops her talents on the

[182] Zeb-un-Nisa was a sixteenth-century Persian poet. On women, religion, and literature and art of the Mughal empire, see Annemarie Schimmel, *The Empire of the Great Mughals*, ed. Burzine K. Waghmar, trans. Corinne Attwood (London, England: Reaktion Books, 2004).

[183] Noor Inayat Khan, *King Akbar's Daughter* 84-87. As mentioned, Noor's tales often culminate in some type of transformation. While this is a characteristic feature of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, it is also a frequent outcome in folktales, and Noor may well be reflecting that folkloric convention.

[184] Ibid, 88-95. Mira Bhai, an historical personage, was born during the late fifteenth century in Merta, Rajasthan. She was raised as a princess and chosen by the Rajput rulers to be the first Hindu queen of medieval North India. Her spiritual life was centered entirely on Lord Krishna. See Louise Landes-Levi, *Sweet on My Lips: the Love Poems of Mirabai* (Brooklyn, New York: Cool Grove Press, 1997).

vina[185] and becomes an accomplished musician. Her musical talents attract the attention of the emperor Akbar, who gives her a priceless necklace. Enraged by jealousy when he learns of the gift, Raja de Udaipur exiles her to a distant land, where "seul les oiseaux et les ruisseaux répétaient ses chants d'amour" [only the birds and rushing streams repeated her songs of love.] The tale of Mira is "inscrit dans l'histoire immortelle des Indes, et le soir, sur les terrasses, sa vie demeure le thème principal des contes et des legends." [inscribed in the immortal history of India, and in the evenings, on the terraces, her life lives on as the main theme of stories and legends.] Like Zeb-un-Nisa, Mira Bhai has an unusual gift that determines her everlasting legacy to an entire nation, despite her being personally bereft of what she holds most near and dear to her heart. Both princesses remain alone in the end, and like Nur, Mira Bhai must endure life in exile, which in her case is permanent. These female protagonists who suffer isolation or exile illustrate modes of surmounting cruelty or oppression early in life and eventually they either leave some remarkable legacy to posterity or become exemplary spiritual figures whose stories, while conveying moral instruction to the reader or listener, are imbued with themes related to Sufism. Here, as elsewhere in Noor's narratives, Hazrat Inayat Khan's Sufi message comes to mind: "To harmonize with oneself is not sufficient; one must also harmonize with others in thought, speech, and action; that is the attitude of the Sufi."[186] Indeed, many of her characters seek to "harmonize with others in thought," especially with regard to issues of gender and values. To "harmonize in thought" also resonates with various forms of solidarity that the female protagonists share with one another and

[185] A vina is an Indian instrument that usually has four strings and a bamboo fingerboard.

[186] Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Caravan of Souls* 9.

with how they respond similarly to their circumstances. More subtly, harmonizing in thought is harmonizing ideologically, as the author herself frequently writes to convey messages of collectively significant moral instruction to the reader.

**Powerful Feminine Voices and the End of an Era**

The final selection for my discussion of Noor's fictional narratives is a short vignette entitled "Cinquante années de gloire!," which was likely broadcast on Radiodiffusion Française around 1939. Noor's fiancé Azeem Goldenberg saved and later shared it with Jean Overton Fuller, who published it in her biography of Noor.[187] To my knowledge, this text is not widely accessible; it is not included in *King Akbar's Daughter,* nor is it mentioned in scholarly publications on Noor.[188] It is nonetheless tremendously significant in relation to certain motifs and themes in Noor's works discussed in this chapter. It reflects her sense of her own identity and her attitude toward the power of influential women. The writer longs for the bygone days of the *Belle Époque*, in a moment of nostalgia likely triggered by anxiety and fears near the outset of World War II:

> Comment donc est passée la période des grandes cantatrices? Il y a à peine vingt ans de cela et déjà c'est un conte d'autrefois! Où donc sont elles allées, ces femmes dont les voix magnifiques ont étonné le monde entier? Comme des fées qui ont fait vibrer

[187] See Jean.Overton Fuller, *Noor-Un-Nisa Inayat Khan* (Rotterdam: East-West Publications Fonds N.D.; London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1971).

[188] In their recent articles on Noor and gendered experiences of women of the SOE Juliette Pattinson and Shompa Lahiri consult SOE reports, biographies, oral testimonies, and observations by historians but overlook "Cinquante années de gloire!." This is surprising, given that Noor discusses music and feminine voices in relation to multiculturalism, which was a major part of her life. See Juliette Pattinson, "'Playing the Daft Lassie with Them': Gender, Captivity, and the Special Operations Executive During the Second World War," *European Review of History* 13.2 (2006): 271-292, and Shompa Lahiri, "Clandestine Mobilities and Shifting Embodiments: Noor-un-nisa Inayat Khan and the Special Operations Executive, 1940-44," *Gender & History* 19.2 (2007): 305-323.

> des cordes magiques, elles sont passées dans l'oubli, mais où sont-elles cachées dans ce monde? Patti, Nevada, Emma Calvé, Melba, Tetrazzini! Il en est une à qui mes années d'enfance ont été liées et c'est en hommage à elle, la grande Nevada que (sic) je vous conte sa vie merveilleuse.[189]
>
> [How can the era of the great singers be over? That was scarcely twenty years ago and it's already a tale of yesteryear! Where have they gone, these women whose magnificent voices enthralled the whole world? Like fairies that once made the magic cords hum, they have faded into oblivion, but where in the world are they hiding? Patti, Nevada, Emma Calvé, Melba, Tetrazzini! My childhood years were marked by one of them, and I pay tribute to her, the great Nevada, by telling you the story of her marvelous life.]

Having been a student at the École Normale de Musique de Paris and having composed music herself, it seems natural that Noor would have evoked these celebrated female vocalists. Moreover, Noor knew both Emma Nevada and her daughter Mignon personally; she refers to Emma as the "great Nevada" and also praises Mignon as a devoted daughter. Yet after celebrating this mother/daughter relationship, she dwells on the physical decline of Emma in relation to the decline of an entire era:[190]

> En ce moment où je vous parle, elle est encore auprès de sa mère, souffrant avec elle. Et ces deux femmes sont cachées dans les brouillards londoniens. Et comme si la nature ne voulut point qu'elle voie le monde sans la gloire qu'elle lui donna jadis,

[189] Fuller, *Noor-Un-Nisa* 78.

[190] On the relationship between the Inayat Khan family and Emma Nevada, see Harper's *We Rubies Four* 37. See Fuller *Noor-Un-Nisa* 252-253.

> elle a perdu la vue pour toujours. Mais Mignon est auprès d'elle, conduisant ses pas tremblants, écoutant vibrer encore dans la faible voix cinquante années de gloires passées.[191]
>
> [While I'm talking to you right now, she [Mignon] is still with her mother, suffering with her. And these two women are enveloped in fogbound London. As if nature had not wanted her to see the world bereft of the glory she used to bestow upon it, she has lost her eyesight forever. But Mignon is beside her, guiding her faltering steps, listening to her feeble voice still murmuring fifty years of bygone glory.]

Emma's dwindling voice betokens the evanescence of the era that once idolized it, yet it also awakens in Mignon a poignant moment of reflective nostalgia, as she regrets the once vibrant life she shared with her mother, its limelight now lost in the dense fog of a war-torn city. The strikingly nostalgic tone of this passage resonates with "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)," in which "20 glorious generations passed through every mind: Charlemagne, Jeanne d'Arc, Napoleon, Foch . . . 16 . . .17 . . . 18 . . . 39 . . . 40 . . . as a man's entire life flashes past him as he faces death,"[192] which resonates with "Cinquante années de gloire!." Likewise, in wartime London a faint afterglow of the brilliance of the *Belle Époque* lingers momentarily in Mignon's mind. The latter offers diverse nostalgic scenarios featuring the daughter, whether in flight or in a fog, as a reflection on cultural decline within a landscape devoid of any restorative horizon. In both there is an acute awareness that an era has ended or is about to come to an end.

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[191] Overton Fuller, *Noor-Un-Nisa* 80.

[192] Noor Inayat Khan, "Escape from St. Nazaire (1940)," (Unpublished).

**Personal Accounts: Letters from Noor to Azeem**

Some of Noor's earliest writings are unpublished letters she sent to her fiancé Azeem Goldenberg around 1934 while she was traveling in France, Spain, and the Netherlands.[193] As noted in Chapter One, Noor and Azeem were romantically involved for several years before the War. Little is known about Azeem's life, such as what it meant for him to be both a Jew and an active participant of the Sufi Movement in wartime France. However, Henriette Blanc Van Gool, a former piano student and a friend of both Azeem and Noor and their families, recently shared some of her memories of him in letters to me. Azeem Goldenberg (Ely Goldenberg) was Van Gool's piano teacher in 1936, and for several decades after the war she and her mother maintained contact with him. He was what they considered a French "mureed" (Persian for a "Sufi initiate") and thus familiar within the circle of those directly involved in the Sufi movement. Van Gool claims that during the Occupation Goldenberg escaped deportation beyond the Drancy Camp and later had to be admitted to the main psychiatric unit at Charenton where he remained until the end of the War. She writes that he was saved by "one of the doctors [who] decided to protect him and give him use of a piano, and let him stay there until the end of the War." Goldenberg later married and eventually died in a Jewish home for the elderly in Paris. As for his relationship with Noor, Van Gool says that "we heard rumors and most comments by members of the Sufi Movement in Suresnes were unfavorable. Could it be due to latent anti-Semitism, or that his personality did not appeal to us?"[194]

During her travels Noor clearly derived a sense of security and consolation from her

[193] Noor Inayat Khan. "Letters to Azeem Goldenberg." Unpublished letters, circa 1934. Courtesy of the Claire Ray Harper Collection.

[194] Citations from Henriette Blanc Van Gool's unpublished letters to me of November 13, 2013, April 9, 2014, and May 14, 2014.

correspondence with Azeem, as is apparent in one of her letters to him:[195] "je les garde [les lettres] dans le couvre-livre de cuire marocain que tu m'as donné. Je regarde pleine de joie, ces lettres qui m'ont tant consolée et qui m'ont donnée tant de force et tant de courage!"[196]

[I keep them in that Moroccan leather book-cover you gave me. Filled with joy, I look at these letters that have given me such consolation and tremendous strength and courage.] Some of the letters indicate that the two of them had discussed intellectual matters, while others reveal her profound spiritual convictions and how they tie into her sense of her surroundings and emotional state.

One letter reveals Noor's interest in pursuing a career as a writer; she is seeking counsel from Azeem about the "histoires orientales" [Oriental stories] she has written for children and the possibility of submitting them on a monthly basis to an American journal:[197] "Je pense en ce moment à l'histoire de Noor et combien d'autres il y a!"[198] [I'm thinking at the moment of the story about Noor and how many others there are!] Although the referent of "the story about Noor" is unclear, she may be referring to "King Akbar's Daughter" because of the protagonist's name. Noor's keen interest in writing and publishing her works in fact developed well before the 1939 publication of *Twenty*

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[195] I number each unpublished letter, most of which are not dated, though in Document 167 Noor indicates that she is leaving Châtel Guyon in the Auvergne for Spain, while in document 168 she is writing from Barcelona in October 1934 and is soon to leave for the "Plage de San Salvador."

[196] Noor Inayat Khan, Document 144. Unpublished letters, circa 1934. Courtesy of the Claire Ray Harper Collection.

[197] In this letter Noor mentions Henriette Willebeeck Le Mair, who adopted 'Saida' as her Sufi name. Saida had suggested that Noor write stories for an American journal on a monthly basis. Saida was also the illustrator of *Twenty Jātaka Tales* and a disciple of Hazrat Inayat Khan during the early twenties.

[198] Noor Inayat Khan, Document 182.

*Jātaka Tales* and continued during her training as a member of the Resistance movement.[199] Among her intellectual interests, Noor expresses her devotion to her father's teachings and in one letter reminisces about his lectures, declaring that his words are unforgettable and deeply ingrained in her memory : "… comme déjà dans mon petit coeur d'enfant de 12 ans, ces paroles avaient pénétré si profondément…"[200] […already in my heart of a little twelve-year-old those words had penetrated so profoundly. . .]; "j'aime tant que tu me dises chaque fois le titre de la conférence et que tu me l'expliques. Il y'en a tant parmi celles que tu m'as expliquées que je me rappelle si bien le moment où mon père les avait données."[201] [I so much love it when, each time, you tell me the title of the lecture and explain it to me. Among those you've explained to me I remember so well the moment my father delivered them.] As Noor consults with Azeem about literary matters and discusses Sufism, there is an implicit sense that he might have had more exposure to the teachings of her father than she did. Azeem was thus likely her mentor, perhaps filling the void of the absent and influential paternal figure in her life, whom Noor knew only during her early teens but who continued to inspire her throughout her life.

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[199] In one letter, Noor compares a beach she saw during her travels to a passage from the works of Alphonse de Lamartine: "En regardent cette scène au chapitre si émouvant que Lamartine avait écrit pour raconter ses aventures dans la barque d'un pêcheur de Naples, comme ils avaient à lutter toute la nuit contre la tempête et comme le petit garçon était grimpé au mât tenant haut une torche enflammée pour que tous ceux qui verraient la torche de la côte puissent prier pour eux." [(And I recalled) while looking at this scene a deeply moving chapter that Lamartine had written to recount his adventures in a Neapolitan fisherman's boat, about how they had had to struggle throughout the night against the storm, and about how the little boy had climbed the mast, holding a flaming torch on high, so that everyone along the coast who saw the torch could pray for them.] Ibid. Document 162.

[200] Noor Inayat Khan, Document 159.

[201] Noor Inayat Khan, Document 173.

Noor met Azeem at the École Normale de Musique de Paris where they were both students of Nadia Boulanger. During that time Noor visited the home of renowned cellist Maurice Eisenberg in Spain, and she writes to Azeem about her conversation with him: "Nous avons parlé de tant de choses et il m'a demandé des nouvelles de toi puis nous avons parlé de mon illustre fiancé et son feu sur le piano."[202] [We discussed so many things and he asked me for news about you and so we discussed my illustrious fiancé and his incredible gift as a pianist.][203] The fact that Noor mentions both Eisenberg and Boulanger in more than one letter is indicative of the rapport that she and Azeem had with both of these eminent musicians. Noor's letters to Azeem and her evocations of music in her literary writings highlight some of things that were the most important to her during her lifetime, such as ways in which writing, music, and Sufism are interconnected affectively and spiritually and intimately associated with her relationship with Azeem.

From a letter she wrote during her travels with her brother Vilayat it is apparent that she found solace and serenity in her relationship with Azeem. Her vivid description of her surroundings offers insights into her psyche and her feelings about him:

> Châtel-Guyon, juillet-août 1934. Dimanche.
>
> Mon Azeem bien-aimé,

Nous sommes assis ici parmi les bruyères et les pins, pas trop haut dans les montagnes. Si seulement je pouvais te décrire un peu ce tableau de la nature qui s'étend devant nous,

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[202] Noor Inayat Khan, Document 170.

[203] In another letter to Azeem, Noor mentions Nadia Boulanger : "Si je ne fais pas l'harmonie avec Nadia Boulanger, je te promets que je le ferai avec toi, et au fond je préfère la faire avec toi." [If I cannot be in harmony with Nadia Boulanger, I promise I'll be so with you, and truthfully I prefer to be so with you.] See Noor Inayat Khan, Document 134.

on (sic) t'envoyer un peu de cette atmosphère divine. J'ai pensé à toi si fort toute l'après-midi et je me disais, si seulement mon Azeem était ici comme toute cette beauté qui nous entoure serait plus vivante et nos coeurs unis trouveraient dans la nature plus d'attrait mais nos coeurs ne sont-ils pas unis en ce moment plus que jamais et je sens maintenant que toute la beauté que je vois devant mes yeux tu la vois refletée dans ton âme, et je me sens en ce moment transportée à tes côtés.[204]

[Châtel-Guyon, July-August 1934. Sunday.

My beloved Azeem,

We are sitting here among the heather and fir trees, not too far up into the mountains. If only I could describe a little of this natural panorama spreading out before us, or send you some of this heavenly atmosphere. I thought of you intensely all afternoon and said to myself, if only my Azeem were here, all of this beauty surrounding us would be more real, and together our hearts would find more closeness to nature. But aren't our hearts united more than ever at this moment, and I feel now that all of the beauty before me, you can see it reflected in your soul, and at this moment I feel myself transported to your side.]

Noor's description implicitly echoes Hazrat Inayat Khan's Sufi notion of the highest vision of beauty, what he refers to as "the Unseen," as a "gradual evolution from praising beauty in the seen world" to one single vision of beauty.[205] Noor's perception of beauty resonates with her father's conceptualization, whereby a "single vision" [of beauty] emanates from the natural setting that she observes while she is simultaneously

[204] Noor Inayat Khan, Document 120.

[205] Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Caravan of Souls* 19.

experiencing a deep sense of intimate spiritual harmony with Azeem.

These letters are the only documented glimpses of Noor's romantic and emotional involvement with Azeem. They clearly complement the moral and spiritual aura with which she surrounded the ideological and intellectual aspects of her life and works. Her commitment to Azeem and to preserving her father's legacy thus provide useful background for consideration of the ways in which she constructs her narratives years later. Her epistolary observations also bring to mind Boym's notion of reflective nostalgia, for they disclose disparate "fragments" of Noor's personal history that suggest the ideological dimensions of her writing. Her recollections of Hazrat Inayat Khan seem to underlie and inspire the father/daughter literary configurations and shape the ways in which her own identity is mirrored in them. The strong commitment she maintained both to a system of belief and to those upholders thereof undoubtedly contributed to her eventual engagement as a *résistante* and to her willingness to risk her life for a higher cause as an agent of the SOE.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have considered how Noor, by blending traditions in her literary works and personal letters, variously conceptualizes modes of resistance that also reflect her early formation according to the tenets and principles of Sufi traditions. These shaped her most fundamental values, beliefs, and attitudes and were essential factors in motivating her selflessly heroic contributions during WWII. I have analyzed ways in which the Sufi valorization of an unfolding meliorative process of self-realization variously found expression in many of her works. Hence my primary focus on her works against the ever-present backdrop of her early spiritual formation, which resurfaces in

myriad reconfigurations, from the Buddhist reincarnations in *Twenty Jātaka Tales* through "Cinquante années de gloire!," both of which she wrote on the eve of WWII. While I have suggested that some of Noor's works are allegorical representations written in response to the political climate of her immediate circumstances, her works, regardless of the topic, typically move in the direction of a characteristic synthesis that makes serenity consequent upon sacrifice. The unique blend of two potentially contradictory attitudes, and one that perhaps seems all the more out of place given the extreme disarray of contemporary worldly affairs, was largely inspired by, and in harmony with, her father's widely influential role as world-renowned master of the fundamental teachings of Sufism. To my knowledge, my study is the first examination of Noor's fictional narratives and correspondence to be undertaken in conjunction with her comprehensive personal history, from her early familial nurturance through her formal education and the later phases of her personal maturation in response to the successive challenges that confronted her even unto the premature end of her life. All along the way I have sought to offer fresh insights into her life and works that are reflected in the prism of the gendered subjectivity she invested in her characters, as well as by the ingenious ways in which she creatively sought to "adapt and blend traditions" and to "write resistance" so as to mirror the turbulent political circumstances of her time.

**Noor Inayat Khan: Primary Sources**

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Collection. Circa 1940.

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# CHAPTER 4

## GERMAINE TILLION: OBSERVATIONS OF ALGERIA AND RAVENSBRÜCK

### Rising to Prominence in the Twenty First Century

In both her scientific and her autobiographical writings, Germaine Tillion contributed significantly to cultural and historical studies throughout her adult life. In this study I will discuss the publications and circumstances in which she wrote the play *Le Verfügbar aux enfers: Une opérette à Ravensbrück* and her scientific study entitled *Il était une fois l'éthnographie*. During the six years she spent conducting research as an ethnologist in the Aurès mountains of Algeria prior to World War II, she developed a deep interest in the material culture of the native population of this region and extensively documented the inhabitants' every day lives. At the outset of the war she joined the French Resistance and in 1942 was arrested and deported to Ravensbrück where during her internment she steadfastly devoted herself to careful observation of the operations and living conditions in the camp. After she was liberated in April 1945, she wrote her own vivid memoirs of her three-year incarceration in Ravensbrück.[206] Her quasi-ethnographic documentations of the torture that female prisoners endured are among the most significant first-hand accounts that describe in detail the painful and often tragic circumstances of daily life at Ravensbrück, as well as the mechanisms and systems that made them possible.

While Tillion had established her credentials as an ethnologist well before the

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[206] Germaine Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Editions de la Baconnière, 1946); *Ravensbrück*. (Paris: Éditions Famot, 1976) and *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Seuil, 1988). She revised them twice over a period of forty-two years.

beginning of World War II, only in recent years have her activities and writings during and after the war emerged from relative obscurity, and that greater prominence has in turn stimulated renewed interest in her earlier work as an ethnologist. In 2004, Tillion's friends, including historians, writers, and also a former *résistante* who was with Tillion at Ravensbrück, created the Association Germaine Tillion to preserve her archival documents and to create a society for the study of her works.[207] In 2007, the centenary of her birth and a year before her death, the publication of *Le siècle de Germaine Tillion* made available a wide range of her scholarly essays.[208] In 2014, French President François Hollande announced the establishment in May 2015 of a memorial in her honor at the Panthéon in Paris in order to pay tribute to her work as a *résistante* during World War II,[209] and this solemn ceremony was televised nationally on May 27th. Thus, as was the case for Noor Inayat Khan, Tillion's highest collective honors have been awarded posthumously.

They were bestowed in recognition of her many important contributions over the course of more than seventy years, beginning in 1940. In that year she co-founded the Réseau du Musée de l'Homme, one of the first resistance organizations opposing the German occupation of France. That small group of like-minded intellectuals who actively opposed the pro-Nazi government of Vichy included her mother Émilie, a writer

[207] See http://www.germaine-tillion.org/association/. This site also lists several theatrical performances of the play which have been scheduled regularly since 2007, two years following the first publication of *Le Verfügbar aux enfers: Une opérette à Ravensbrück* in 2005.

[208] *Le siècle de Germaine Tillion*, Ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2007). Todorov is the president of the Association Germaine Tillion.

[209] For further information, see the article by Todorov in *Le Monde.fr* http://alturl.com/xoy55. February 2, 2014. http://www.pantheon.com/. On May 27th Tillion and three other heroic resisters of WWII were inducted into the Panthéon in Paris. http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/figures-french-resistance-inducted-paris-pantheon-31328076.

and art critic who was deported to Ravensbrück along with her, never to return, and Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, the niece of the founding commander of France Libre in London whom Tillion met and befriended as a fellow prisoner at Ravensbrück. Following their Liberation, both women transformed their deep concerns for the poor into significant humanitarian initiatives, de Gaulle-Anthonioz as president of ATD Quatre Monde (Agir tous pour la dignité Quatre Monde), an immense world-wide organization for the alleviation of poverty, and Tillion, as an outspoken critic of racism and the practice of torture in Algeria who created centers for the relief of widespread poverty in Algiers and vigorously defended the cause of colonial prisoners of war. Tillion was one of four new inductees into the Pantheon, along with de Gaulle-Anthonioz, Pierre Brossolette, who under General de Gaulle was a principal coordinator of the Resistance within France, and Jean Zay, a distinguished pre-war political leader and martyred victim of the Vichy Milice. Thus, given the commemorative emphasis of this latest *'panthéonisation'*, one might sum up the meaning of Tillion's ultimate accolade in a single work, *résistance.*

Among the writings of Tillion, who both 'lived' and 'wrote' resistance, two major works are of particular interest for this study. Because both, despite their many historical and literary qualities, remained unpublished until recently, they have to date received only limited scholarly attention. *Le Verfügbar aux enfers: Une opérette à Ravensbrück* is a brilliant musical drama that Tillion secretly composed during her imprisonment, featuring a cast of fictive female prisoners, who offer kaleidoscopic reflections, ranging from bitterness and despair to acerbic irony and dark humor.[210] The latter quality is

[210] Germaine Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers: Une opérette à Ravensbrück.* (Paris, France. Editionsde la Martinière, 2005).

especially prominent throughout, and I refer to it as 'dark humor' strictly for the purpose of providing a useful generic designation for many striking combinations of humor and tragic consequences of internment that occur throughout the play. In his discussion of the philosophy of humor, John Morreall writes that during the Holocaust humor focused the prisoners' attention on the abuses being meted out and emphasized flagrant violations of human rights while also enabling the prisoners better to resist their destructive effects by laughing together at their oppressors. Humor thus served as a vital coping function that helped the oppressed "get through their suffering without going insane."[211] I concur with Morreall's points and would suggest in addition that laugher is indeed a form of testimony in *Le Verfügbar aux enfers*. Echoing Rabelais citing Aristotle, Tillion once referred to laughter as the "propre de l'homme" [a faculty unique to man], and her deployment in the play of varieties of humor in order to highlight inhumane atrocities at close range is indicative of a belief on her part that shared laughter, despite unspeakable suffering, could touch a fundamental affective stratum of human nature.[212] This work is perhaps the only revue that embodies such a detailed representation of the circumstances of internment during the Holocaust, and its abundant, richly nuanced veins of 'dark humor' rely on the extreme situational gravity of what amounts to an eyewitness account

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[211] John Morreall, *Comic Relief: A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor* (The United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell Publications, 2009). See the discussion entitled "Humor During the Holocaust" p.119.

[212] See the interview with Tillion http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8zir0_germine-tillion-et-le-verfugbar-aux_music, an excerpt from a performance of the play https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieiBKQByr5g. Rabelais, citing a well-known passage in Aristotle's treatise on animals, tells his readers that "Mieulx est de ris que de larmes escripre, Pour ce que rire est le propre de l'homme." *Gargantua*, aux lecteurs, vv. 9-10 [Better it is to write of laughter than of tears, for laughter is unique to man.]

of crimes against humanity.[213]

In *Il était une fois l'ethnographie*, published in 2000, the second work to be discussed here, Tillion offers a much belated reconstruction of the doctoral thesis she had begun before the war under the direction of Marcel Mauss, perhaps the most eminent and highly influential French anthropologist of the first half of the twentieth century. Mauss was instrumental in developing the discipline of ethnology and, in collaboration with Paul Rivet who founded the Musée de l'homme, conducted the first formal seminar in the subject at the Sorbonne in 1925. Unlike anthropologists, ethnologists historicize cultures rather than studying them primarily in terms of human evolution and racial classifications, hence the French designation of ethnography under the rubric of "anthropologie sociale." For Mauss, field work as a means of interactive assessment of "new" cultures was a central component of ethnographic training. His seminal theoretical essay *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925) is founded on the concept of intersubjective human encounters that provide a means of understanding ethnicities and how they are culturally historicized.[214] Tillion had met Mauss in 1931 at the prestigious Institut d'Ethnologie in Paris, and as her mentor he was subsequently instrumental in arranging for the fellowship that would enable her to undertake the ethnographic study of kinship systems among the Chaouïa in the remote

[213] According to Andrea Loselle, the few clandestine accounts from World War II that did survive are seldom quoted from directly but are alluded to only in passing, while the extant manuscripts containing musical revues are frequently "darkly comic" in nature. See Loselle, "Performing in the Holocaust: From Camp Songs to the Song Plays of Germaine Tillion and Charlotte Salomon." *The Space Between*, (2010): 13-38.

[214] Alice L. Conklin, *The Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). See pp. 2-5 and p. 252 for more on *The Gift* (1925). The original French title of the essay is *Essai sur le don: Form et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques.* (*L'année Sociologique, seconde série,* 1923-1924*)* 1-106.

mountains of Algeria that was supposed to have comprised the substance of her thesis.[215] Unfortunately, however, the circumstances of wartime prevented her from finishing it: after her arrest in 1942, while in transit from Fresnes prison south of Paris to the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück, located 56 miles north of Berlin, some of the notes she had taken during her research in the field were lost, and they were indispensable for the completion of her thesis.[216] The only part of her initial research that she was able to save for the substantial reconstruction of her projected thesis that culminated in *Il était une fois l'ethnographie* were the notes from the first months of her long stay in Algeria between 1934 and 1940.[217]

These two relatively recent publications, one essentially a work of professional scholarship, the other a remarkable literary hybrid, comprise a substantial portion of her mature writings. Consideration of them together makes apparent that the rigorous ethnographic training Tillion had received before the war served her well during internment, providing her with a consistent methodology for organizing her writing while in captivity as well as, on a personal basis, with a kind of mental refuge and mechanism for her very survival. Her observational skills as an ethnographer enabled her to offer a wealth of invaluable information about, and insights into, both the institutional structure of Ravensbrück and the daily life of its internees.

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[215] Tillion specifies a threefold meaning of Chaouïa: "ce mot est arabe, et en arabe il sert à la fois à nommer un métier, une ethnie et une langue étrangère. Le métier (peu rentable) est celui de gardien de petit bétail; l'ethnie vit retranchée dans un massif abrupt; la langue, qui lui appartient en propre, fait partie de la grande famille berbère." *Il était une fois l'éthnographie* (Paris: Seuil 2000) 16. [This Arabic word designates a trade, an ethnicity and a foreign language. The (scarcely profitable) trade is herding small livestock; the ethnic group lives in isolation on a steep mountain range; their language, which is unique to them, belongs to the Berber language family.]

[216] See the discussion of this major mishap in Conklin, *The Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France* 260.

[217] Tillion, *Il était une fois l'éthnographie* 8.

It was the relatively recent recognition of the interdisciplinary dimension of Tillion's works, in terms not only of her contributions to anthropological research and ethnic studies, but also, and perhaps especially, with regard to her acute, first-hand observations of the *univers concentrationnaire*, that prompted the founding in 2004 of L'Association Germaine Tillion and brought her achievements to far greater prominence, notably among historians and students of the Holocaust. Indeed, it is now apparent that the beginning of the new millennium has ushered in what one might refer to as the 'Tillion era,' as her life and works continue to inspire keen interest among an ever-growing following of scholars as well as a broadening cross-section of the general public.

**Creative Adaptation of Ethnological Methodologies**

It is thus a major objective of this chapter to examine in depth one salient instance of that powerful interdisciplinary dimension of Tillion's works that has scarcely been explored, having to do with a major interface between the work of the ethnographer and that of the internee: the significant relationships between her three-act play *Le Verfügbar aux enfers: Une opérette à Ravensbrück* and her earlier ethnographic field work in Algeria. Consideration of the play in relation to the re-constituted doctoral thesis brings into focus the ethnographic methodology Tillion the playwright implemented in her on-site, interactive elaboration of a ludic universe of carceral confinement. Such a comparison also fosters recognition and appreciation of the unprecedented descriptions of and insights into the hierarchical, social, and - as was so often the case at Ravensbrück - arbitrarily-defined *ad hoc* 'legal' structures of dominance and subordination within that artificially constructed and coercively administered 'cultural' sphere. Consideration of

her mature, retrospectively constructed synthesis of the formative ethnographic work she completed in the field before the war will lead to a fuller understanding of the organization and meaning of the later 'scenographic' universe she created from, and within, the toxic environment of the camp.

Although Tillion obviously wrote *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* under circumstances radically different from those she had lived through while researching what was to become *Il était une fois l'ethnographie*, in both cases her analyses feature documentation of a carefully circumscribed socio-cultural sphere and the specific comportments of those living within it. Yet despite her adherence to this fundamental methodological principle for conducting research in social anthropology, she attests quite explicitly to a rather unique penchant for weighing the significance of any *folkloric* or *literary* dimensions that might inhere in her ethnographic field studies. In *Il était une fois l'ethnographie* she points out that her research in Algeria, unlike that of others in the field, also involved analysis of several distinct narrative genres, including fairy tales, fables, folklore, and legends passed down to inhabitants of the Aurès through the generations. She also notes that the incidence of ethnologists who had studied the folklore of provincial France as extensively as she had were rare indeed; hence, "entre les littératures orales de l'Europe du Sud et de l'Afrique du Nord, je pouvais ainsi m'amuser à cueillir des analogies."[218] [I could thus enjoy the pleasure of gathering analogies between the oral literatures of southern Europe and North Africa.] From this candid acknowledgement of the importance she accorded to folkloric traditions in her ethnographic research, it would seem that the kind of sensibility for narratives, narrativization, and literary conventions

[218] Tillion, Ibid 57-59. Tillion uses the term 'folklore' in the text.

which she demonstrated so aptly as playwright was to some degree conditioned by the many narrative genres and traditions that she had identified in the stories told by the inhabitants of the Aurès region. Consequently, both of these works from the summit of her career are quite unique in terms of their profile as generic amalgams: while it was rare, if not unprecedented, to make comparative consultation of provincal French folklore an accessory to the analysis of North African culture, it was just as unusual, and indeed startling, for a trained ethnographer to create the story-line of a dramatic work to serve as a vehicle for recording, first-hand, her observations of the sociocultural norms and aberrant anomalies within a severely marginalized, artifically constructed community.

**A Little Night Music: The Ethnographer as Impresario**

Moreover, Tillion's interdisciplinary proclivities in *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* are by no means confined to the sphere of folkloric and literary traditions. Her familiarity with a wide variety of works and traditions in the humanities and fine arts is also apparent from her frequent adaptations from several musical genres. She notes that during her formative years she had been exposed to several varieties of music that her father had often listened to, ranging from the works of Beethoven to musical comedy. This early familial environment may well have inspired some of the musical incorporations that transformed her play into an operetta.

The wide range of music sporadically featured throughout the drama includes passages evocative of operatic motifs, including pastiches of passages from libretti, children's songs, and clever adaptations of current as well as vintage and classic French and German music. The musical elements she imported into her play are for the most part relatively simple, piecemeal reminiscences of various works and traditions, and

frequently include at least one refrain or repetition, all of which suggests that she was relying on her own long-term memory without having had any direct access to musical scores while she was writing. She adapts motifs from operettas by Bruno Coquatrix, Charles Lecocq, Rodolphe Berger, and Oscar Straus. For example, from the third act of the latter's Viennese operetta *Trois valses* (1935) Tillion adapts a song entitled "Je ne suis pas ce que l'on pense, je ne suis pas ce que l'on dit" [I'm Not What They Think I Am, I'm Not What They Say I Am.]. She has the prisoners' collective voices sing instead "Nous ne sommes pas ce que l'on pense" [We're Not What They Think We Are] as they allude to the imperious Gestapo who have arbitrarily redefined their identity and assumed full authority over their very existence.[219] She adapts the original song entitled "Mon ange qui veillez sur moi" (1940) [My Angel Who Watches Over Me] by Bruno Coquatrix as a choral number, "Blokova qui veillez sur nous" [Blokova Who Watches over Us]:

> *Blokova, ayez pitié de nous!*
> *Vous qui êtes notre gardienne,*
> *Sur not' ration quotidienne,*
> *S'il vous plaît, ne rognez pas tout*
> *Mon ange!*[220]
> [Blokova, have pity on us!
> You're the guardian angel
> Of our daily ration

[219] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 70.

[220] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 64.

Please, don't cut us off entirely,

My angel!]

The theme of entrapment prevails in their evocations of the Blokova who severely controls every privilege and aspect of the prisoners' lives as the desperately rely on her for their very survival.[221] In a related musical setting the prisoners lament their psychological and physical entrapment and surveillance by Gestapo agents who know the "secret of our existence."[222] Tillion sometimes shows a special flair for the coarse and boisterous revelry of the music hall, such as when her delightful toying with musical reminiscences serves as a medium for expressing the prisoners' varied reactions to their onerous working conditions. For example, she twists the lyrics of Émile Jacques-Dalcroze's "Vivons en chantant" [Let's Live While Singing] into the no doubt guffaw-productive "Tuyautons ma mie en chantant" [Let's Hose My Honey While We Sing], referring wryly to the hoses the prisoners carried while working on the roads.[223] "Vainement, ma bien-aimée" [In Vain, My Beloved] from Édouard Blau's opera *Le roi d'Ys* (1888) becomes "Vainement depuis des années" [For Years in Vain] so as to emphasize the monotonous routines of the "terrassières" [road workers]. As they punningly sing "nous planirungons toujours" [We'll Be Flattening Things Forever], the German verb 'planieren' (cf. Fr. "aplatir" [to flatten]) meaning to 'flatten' or compact the

[221] The Polish *Blokova* was a countess who struck the French women with wooden laths. "Blokovas" was Czech jargon designating the *Blockälteste*, the Block leaders among the detainees.

[222] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 70.

[223] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 78.

pavements, also aptly carries overtones of French 'plaindre', to lament.[224] At one point, prisoner Rosine parodies Tino Rossi's popular 1935 tango "Il pleut sur la route" [It's Raining in the Street] as she endlessly awaits the "Schluss," ('end'), i.e., the cry "Schluss!" announcing the end of the work detail for the day:

> Il pleut sur la route …
>
> Le coeur en déroute
>
> Dans la nuit j'écoute
>
> Le bruit de tes pas
>
> Mais rien ne résonne
>
> Et mon corps frissone
>
> L'espoir s'envole déjà
>
> Ne viendrais-tu pas? [225]
>
> [It's raining on the road . . .
>
> My heart's befuddled
>
> During the night I listen for
>
> Your footsteps
>
> But there is no sound
>
> And my body shudders
>
> All hope has taken wing
>
> Might you never return?]

[224] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 81.

[225] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 85.

Tillion paradoxically transforms this tango about a lover in despair awaiting his beloved, which was listed high on the record charts before the war, into an anxious complaint of a prisoner awaiting the long overdue "Schluss." These are typical of the many clever musical citations that occur prominently throughout the play, most being comical or ironic allusions to issues having to do with political resistance, sexuality, food, and especially with labor-related grievances such as those cited here. The issues Tillion evokes in the music implicate a profound sense of both the effects of physical imprisonment as well as psychological entrapment. In sum, by skillfully blending methodological and stylistic vestiges of her research in Algeria with an impressive array of literary conventions and allusions as well as a charming selection of musical borrowings and reminiscences, Tillion created a truly hybrid masterpiece that could perhaps best be characterized as a "musico-theatrical ethnographic study" of Ravensbrück.

**A Tripartite Dynamic of Decline**

In its broadest outlines, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* is comprised of three acts, entitled "Printemps," "Été," and "Hiver" (though the latter appears to be incomplete).[226] These titles tracing a seasonal decline are perhaps meant to reflect the guarded though fragile optimism expressed in the first act, which proves illusory in the blinding light of harsh realities that loom much larger in the second act and culminate in the moribund atmosphere of utter futility that finally suffocates the unfinished third. In Act One,

[226] The three titles are reminiscent of section headings in *Il était une fois l'éthnographie* which also evoke seasons (and annual seasonal events), e.g., "Octobre, saison des noces et des labours," "Le neuvième mois lunaire: Ramadan," and "L'année lunaire," etc. ["October, the Season of Weddings and Toil" "The Ninth Lunar Month: Ramadan," and "The Lunar Year."] *Il était une fois l'éthnographie* 211-215.

*printemps* (Spring), one highly prominent figure identified simply as "Le naturaliste" occupies the stellar role. Seemingly endowed with masculine qualities, s/he assumes the function of the *meneur du jeu*, or master of ceremonies. While maintaining a pretentiously authoritative, yet seemingly scientifically-trained manner, the Naturaliste constantly provides sophisticated, though sometimes also sophistic, learned discourses and pronouncements, including numerous and often specious explanations of the nature and significance of the carceral environment. This eminently magisterial yet absurdly comic persona is plausibly the author's double, whereby Tillion ludically cultivates a strong sense of academic self-parody while also deliberately injecting that humorously incongruous level of discourse with acute glimpses of the hellish, unending struggle merely to survive.

Act One unfolds as a long pseudo-scientific lecture in which the Naturaliste formally describes and analyzes the so-called 'primitive' comportments of the Verfügbaren, whom s/he refers to as "inferior animals."[227] Apart from the occasional erudite asides addressed to an assumed audience and laced with anthropological observations concerning the inmates, the Naturaliste more often engages directly in dialogues with the prisoners themselves. Although these can begin with dignity and decorum, as when s/he attributes the origins and development of the Verfügbaren to Darwinian mechanisms of evolution as part of an ostensibly scientific, factual and objective explanation that would seemingly avoid any controversy, such overtures frequently provoke interruptions followed by hostile exchanges with the prisoners. They are often represented collectively by various "choeurs," or choruses, reminiscent, perhaps, of remote analogues in Greek tragedy. The

[227] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 48.

choeur de Verfügbaren [chorus of the Verfügbaren] are the rebellious prisoners; because they have been placed 'at the disposition' of the guards in the Schutzstaffel (SS), they retreat into hiding after roll call in order to escape the work duties assigned to them.[228] They are offended that the SS guards refer derisively to any member of their grotesque group of starving and emaciated women clad in filthy rags with seeping wounds on their legs as a "Schmuckstück," a term meaning literally "a piece of jewelry" that in context is cruelly sarcastic: "Isn't she a real gem?"[229] "Le choeur des julots" [the chorus of female husbands] are women who assume the masculine role in lesbian relationships, and "le choeur des Cartes roses" [the pink cards chorus] is comprised of the elderly and infirm who cannot work and so must remain confined to their prison block.[230]

The play thus resounds with primarily strident choral voices that respond to the Naturaliste with expressions of agreement or indifference, though far more frequently with irony, sarcasm, or outright skepticism.[231] Rich exhanges occur at these junctures. The Naturaliste, noting that the bewildered characters are repeatedly asking where they are as they strive to adjust to their surroundings, queries prisoner Nanette about where she thinks she is, and the latter responds with wry bitterness that she has been locked up for having served as president of a society for the liberation of canaries. Following up with a cruel stereotype used by their captors, she admits to having harbored several

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[228] Ibid 39.

[229] French prisoners gave the word another twist by calling them 'schmoustique,' meaning "low life." See Jack G. Morrison, *Ravensbrück : Everyday Life in a Women's Concentration Camp 1939-1945* (Princeton NJ : Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000).

[230] Because they were incapable of working, the Cartes roses were among the first women to be murdered by the SS. Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 30.

[231] Ibid 58.

fugitives in her large home, including Jews with long noses.[232] Seeking to restore the conversation to a more dignified level of exchange, the Naturaliste counters with a taxonomic classification suggestive of Tillion the ethnographer: s/he introduces the prisoners according to the colors of the triangles they wear on their clothing to designate their classifications as various types of *déportées.* To take another example, when the prisoner referred to as the "Troisième voix" [Voice Three] complains that she and her fellow inmates are condemned to die, the Naturaliste lashes out with a hostile retort: "Tu n'es jamais content de rien: Tu te plains sans arrêt de la vie que tu mènes ici, et pourtant tu n'a aucun effort à faire pour te libérer. . ."[233] [You're never satisfied with anything! You never stop whining about the life you're leading here, and yet you never come up with any way of freeing yourself].

When a chorus responds defensively to the Naturaliste's invectives, as it frequently does, the stage directions may indicate that s/he is in turn fearful of a reprisal: "**Le Choeur** *donne des signes de plus en plus marqués de nervosité et se rapproche de plus en plus du naturaliste qui recule avec effroi.*"[234] [The chorus shows signs of increasing annoyance and moves closer to the Naturalist who recoils in fear]. Thus the greatest challenge this pretentious lecturer faces is to maintain a sober, dignified "ton de conférence" [decorum of a lecture] when confronted with detractors who are fiercely skeptical of what s/he says and persistently interrupt with objections.[235]

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[232] Ibid 36-37.

[233] Ibid 58.

[234] Ibid 50.

[235] Ibid 48 and 50.

On occasion the Naturaliste may temporarily recede into the background in order to give voice to a character or a chorus, and these moments provide another means of allowing victims to focus autobiographically on deeply troubling aspects of their internment. Multiple types of torture are mentioned throughout the play, and in Act One a chorus evokes torture by water: "Là il m'a trempée dans une baignoire, Pour me faire raconter des histoires. . .Il m'a dit qu'il m'avait reconnue. J'ai compris que j'étais bien vendue. . . ."[236] [He dunked me in a bathtub in there, to make me squeal. . .He said he'd recognized me. I realized I'd been denounced]. Elsewhere a prisoner's gruesome appearance is often darkly suggestive of having endured sadistic rituals. While their accounts of ordeals by fire and water vividly underscore the severity of their suffering, the chorus of young Verfügbaren lament the progressive deterioration of their femininity and their loss of sex-appeal:

Notre sex-appeal était réputé. . . Aujourd'hui sa pile est bien déchargée [En solo.]

Mon ampoule est morte

Je n'ai plus de feu [En chœur]

Ouvrez-nous la porte Pour l'amour de Dieu.[237]

[Our sex-appeal was once renowned. . .today its battery is totally discharged. (one voice) My bulb's burnt out my fire's gone out. (chorus) Open the door for God's sake !].

Here the pathos of these alternating voices of soloist and chorus, as if Tillion were mindful of antiphonal exchanges in liturgical settings, resonate with the Naturaliste's own repeated emphasis on the ruined femininity of the Verfügbaren. In view of the

[236] Ibid 42.

[237] Ibid, 49. This passage is sung incongruously to the melody of *Au clair de la lune.*

worrisome, anxious, bizarre behavior of the chorus members, which she says is unprecedented in human history and archaeology, as though they somehow belong to some race of aliens, s/he offers no satisfactory solution but simply mandates an "étude de caractère" [character study]. Here and elsewhere in the play, while crafting an artistically grotesque spectacle of deteriorating humanity which is interwoven with the graphically realistic horrors of Ravensbrück, Tillion cultivates, through the agency of the Naturaliste, a rather detached, analytical attitude toward the dramatic flow of alarmingly disturbing circumstances.[238] Here Tillion situates her professional training within the context of satire, approaching suffering in order to disengage herself from it affectively, thereby assuming a unique role and voice as a *résistante*.

The contentious first act ends in an inconclusive scuffle. The *Cartes roses,* whose daily roll call summons the prisoners to their designated work duties,[239] arrive on scene to perform a dance of death prefiguring their extermination. They shove aside the lecturing Naturaliste, who screams "Ma conférence ! Ma conférence ! Laissez-moi faire ma conference. . ." [My lecture! My lecture! Let me give my lecture!]. Thus, with a bang *and* a whimper, as it were, the lively opening act is prematurely reduced to silence by an ominously macabre dance.

The spectacle nonetheless pursues its frantic downward spiral through the rest of the play, with poignant evocations of daily ordeals and the prisoners' varying attitudes toward them. Act Two, *Été* (Summer) is perhaps thus entitled because it offers painful

[238] Act One also offers insights into the prisoner's cynical attitudes regarding their future prospects, e.g., "J'irai dans un camp modèle, avec tout confort, eau, gaz, électricté…" [I'm going to the perfect camp with all the comforts, water, gas, and electricity.] Ibid, 76.

[239] Ibid, page 74 where the chorus sings "La carte rose, et le transport noir" [The Pink Card and the black express (to extermination)]. See 76 for the meaning of "l'appel des cartes roses." The *danse macabre* alludes to the tone poem by that title by Charles Camille Saint-Saëns, page 77.

glimpses of demanding kinds of outdoor labor, such as the work of the *terrassière* [road worker] who toils for hours without a break.[240] There is a prevailing sense that forced labor cannibalizes the prisoners' lives while the merciful *Schluss,* the announcement of the end of the work day, is never to be heard. While Prisoner Rosine sings woefully "Si ça ne schlousse pas" [if there's no quitting time], Dédé de Paris sings "Travaille sans jamais t'arrêter"[241] [work without ever stopping] and "L'appel des Inedienst (sic),"[242] [the call of the 'interior service', the prisoners' corruption of German 'Innendienst'] which refers to the Verfügbaren who are too ill to work and thus receive a pass to remain confined to their quarters in the block. Harsh labor induces pleasant fantasies: Titine and Rosine imagine they are enjoying exquisite meals in Avignon and traveling far from the camp as they sing, from Reynaldo Hahn's operetta *Ciboulette,* "nous avons fait un beau voyage," another song harshly incongruous in context, as it extols the pleasures of savoring many fine varieties of food and wine.[243] The characters also reminisce about close family members: Lulu de Belleville, who like her father was arrested, dreams of her mother; just before awakening to the stark reality of the camp, Bébé had been dreaming about harvesting plums with her grandfather; Nénette says she was told that her son had been executed but then later learned that he had in fact been liberated.[244] Such passing reflections on family members that poignantly express feelings of personal loss and nostalgic memories occasionally emerge from beneath the prevailing satiric and

[240] Ibid 82-83.

[241] Ibid, 82.

[242] Ibid, 87.

[243] Ibid, 88-94.

[244] Ibid, 103.

grotesquely comical account of life at Ravensbrück. These are a few of the rare instances in which the prioners dwell lingeringly on the past, less as Verfügbaren who are deeply wounded and emotionally damaged from having been tortured, and more as women who cling to past moments of the past and express deeply felt emotional connections to them.

Act Three, *Hiver* (Winter), which is brief, dreary, and seemingly truncated, explicity and implicitly shows that the prisoners are on the brink of physical and psychological collapse. As prisoner Marmotte laments the loss of a work pass that had initially excused her from hard labor, the chorus describes the physical abuse they must endure: "S'il n'y a pas de bâtons c'est des coups de pieds. S'il y a un baton c'est les deux."[245] [If there are no sticks, there are kicks. If there's a stick, it's both.] This passage also showcases the so-called "colonne des wagons" [the wagon brigade], known administratively as the *Bekleidung* (clothing and accessories), comprised of detainees who are forced to sort and stash in immense warehouses goods plundered and hauled in by the SS, such as random household items as well as a wide variety of garments, hence the detail's official name.[246] There are also many evocations of wretched individuals. Prisoner Rosine recounts the tribulations of Sympathie, a woman who had long endured myriad forms of torture. After she had been beaten to a pulp, all that remained of her was her name. Rosine cites her example in order to encourage the detainees to stop pitying themselves and realize that sympathy toward their peers must be their only response to the unspeakable torture being meted out to them.[247] Shortly after that last feeble glimmer in Rosine's allegorical

[245] Ibid 109.

[246] Ibid, 107.

[247] Ibid, 107.

account, the apparently unfinished manuscript breaks off. Although this interruption may inadvertently stem from circumstances that prevented Tillion from continuing, it might also have been intentional on her part. Given the growing pessimism that runs throughout the play, the sudden victory of death over the dwindling life of the play could certainly be construed as an appropriate outcome. If Tillion intended to end the manuscript by bringing this message to the fore, it may have been because she herself finally succumbed to the rigors of internment and was no longer able to distance herself emotionally from the seemingly hopeless situation by perceiving it as "satirical." The drastic shift in tone from satire to a sense of desperation is also strongly indicative of Tillion's own progressive mental deterioration, as well as of the consequent exhaustion of her poetic and musical faculties of invention. Rosine's account of the tribulations of Sympathie is the longest description of torture in the manuscript, signaling this major, and abrupt, downward shift in Tillion's writing style. If indeed humor was used to overcome human catastrophe during the Holocaust, as Morreall notes in his study of the philosophy of humor, then Tillion was perhaps coping on an alternative level by reconciling suffering with death instead of continuing her creative development of this masterpiece.

**Verfügbaren are Born at Ravensbrück**

Tillion's descriptions of the women in *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* are comparable to those she develops in her scientific monograph, *Ravensbrück* (1973). In a chapter entitled "Résistance à la mort: personnalités nationales" [Resisting Death: National Personalities], she notes, based on her own observations, that they "venaient immédiatement après les Schmuckstücke sur la route de la mort. . . " [followed immediately behind the

Schmuckstücke on the road to death. . . ]. French women succumbed more quickly to their incarceration than women of other nationalities. When questioned about why this was the case, Tillion observed "la mortalité exceptionnellement élévée de nos compatriotes était due à des conditions de vie plus dures que celles des autres nations, ou à une résistance physique inférieure."[248] [The exceptionally high mortality rate of our compatriots was caused by living conditions more difficult than those of other nations, or by an inferior physical resistance.] In her retrospectively focused study entitled *Ravensbrück* it is evident that she associated her compatriots' pain with her own suffering as a French political prisoner. Consider how she describes the appearance and demeanor of the Schmuckstück:

créature apparemment humaine, que je n'ai jamais vue ailleurs qu' à Ravensbrück. ..incapable de discipline intérieure ou sociale, ne se lavant plus, ne cherchant plus ses poux, vêtue de loques invraisemblables, couverte de plaies suppurantes jamais soignées, de gale infectée, d'avitaminose, rouée de coups, avec ou sans prétexte, par toutes les Allemandes vigoureuses du camp (gardiennes SS ou prisonnières galonnées, les réflexes étaient les mêmes), se jetant à plat renversée, sans camarades, sans espoir, sans dignité, apparemment sans pensée, mue seulement par la faim et la peur, et finalement destinée à être gazée comme un rat après une de ces chasses à l'homme qu'on appelait "sélections. . ." Quoi d'étonnant à ce qu'elles meurent? Elles étaient déjà au-délà de la vie.[249]

[An apparently human creature, the likes of which I have never seen anywhere other than Ravensbrück. . .incapable of personal or social discipline, no longer washing or de-

[248] Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973) 50.

[249] *Ravensbrück* 49-50.

lousing herself, clad in unbelievable rags, covered with oozing, untreated sores, infected with scabies, vitamin deficient, beaten mercilessly, with or without reason, by all the swarthy German women at the camp (whether they were SS prison guards or imprisoned trustees, the responses were the same), throwing herself face-down, friendless, hopeless, without dignity, seemingly without thinking, motivated only by hunger and fear, and finally destined to be gassed like a rat after one of those manhunts they call 'selections. . .' Why was it surprising they died? They were already beyond living.] Tillion's description of the Schmuckstücke here is reminiscent of Primo Levi's 'Muselmann' (pl. *Muselmänner*), a prisoner in the final stage of exhaustion, a figure that represents the living dead designated for selection and who have lost the will to live.[250] Levi engages in a conversation with fellow prisoner Steinlauf, who explains that they [the prisoners] are slaves, "deprived of every right, exposed to every insult, condemned to certain death," and therefore must do everything possible not to succumb to this nearly inhumane identity imposed on them and instead sustain their dignity by maintaining cleanliness, remaining strong, and not allowing death to govern their condition.[251] Tillion's Schmuckstücke, as "déjà au-délà de la vie" [already beyond living], suggests a female counterpart of the Muselmann.

Indeed, severely beaten, emotionally drained, and lacking introspection and subjective connectivity, the Schmuckstücke is already beyond life itself, a mere simulacrum of humanity; this is her own autobiographical observation of the doomed wretches she encountered at Ravensbrück. Her portrait of the Schmuckstücke is not entirely dissimilar

[250] Primo Levi. *Se questo è un uomo* [If This is a Man] (Torino: F. DeSilva, 1947). Trans. Stuart Woolf, *Survial in Auschwitz* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993). For a definition of the Muselmann, see the translation, page 88.

[251] Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* 41.

to some of Delbo's characters, notably Germaine whom we met in Chapter Two and whose ghastly transformation consigns her to an ominously alien "external sphere." It is particularly remarkable that the Schmuckstück, despite her rather static profile as an exemplar of a particular species, progressively develops through the play according to a dynamic process of dehumanization; identities metamorphose in an accelerating downward spiral generated by unrelenting hard labor and the multiple inhuman privations imposed amid the universal squalor of their incarceration.

As the scourge unfolds, Tillion ingeniously maintains the forward momentum of the play – as well as an aura of scientific observation – by means of a thread of dialogic exchanges between the Naturaliste and the various choruses that respond to the latter's commentaries. S/he gives voice to several sub-species of prisoners, such as the recalcitrant Verfügbaren who rebelliously attempt to avoid the work detail, the *Cartes roses* excluded from working on account of their infirmities, and the strutting *julots* who sport masculine attire. These voices create a polyphonic array of perspectives on the action. As Loselle aptly observes, the strident choral clamor of the Verfügbaren further "reinforces the message of the dehumanizing process inmates undergo to become new species."[252] Their dehumanization provides them with a kind of passive resistance by releasing them from any logical, more humanly rational perspective.

Like the ethnologist whose purpose is to observe and formally describe cultural identities, the Naturaliste typically parodies this scientific, authoritative role, at times investing it for comic effect with erudite allusions drawn from the history of science, as

[252] Loselle, "Performing in the Holocaust" 19.

in her magisterial discourse throughout Act One. Consider, for example, how s/he verbosely sketches the 'pre-history' of the Verfügbar's origins:

Le Verfügbar était inconnu des anciens. Pline l'a ignoré, Buffon également, Fabre lui-même n'en parle pas, et tout nous porte à croire qu'il n'est apparu à la surface du globe qu'au cours de la 4e décade du XXe siècle. . .Ce serait une grossière erreur de l'apparenter aux esclaves antiques, ou aux serfs du Moyen Âge, même ceux qui se nourrissaient de rats et de pissenlits, pendant la guerre de Cent Ans, paraîtraient des gaillards grassouillets auprès de notre animal, et d'ailleurs, à choisir, aucun n'aurait consenti à devenir Verfügbar. . .[253]

[The Verfügbar was unknown to the ancients. Pliny didn't know about it, nor did Buffon; Fabre himself doesn't mention it, and all of the evidence suggests that it didn't appear on earth until the 4th decade of the twentieth century. . . it would be an egregious error to trace it back to the slaves of antiquity, or to medieval serfs; even the ones who fed on rats and dandelions during the Hundred Years' War would have looked like strapping fatsos compared to our specimen. What's more, if they'd had to choose, none of them would have chosen to become a Verfügbar.]

Indeed, it is the Naturaliste who now proudly lays claim to having been the first authority in the history of science to identify and trace the etiology of the Verfügbar back to a specific type of sexual coupling, or "conjugaison": "Nous sommes parvenus, d'ailleurs, à déterminer avec certitude son origine. . .[Avec emphase.] Il est le produit de

[253] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 40.

la conjugaison d'un gestapiste mâle avec une résistance femelle."[254] [We were in fact able to determine its origin with certainty. . . [with emphasis.] It results from coupling a male Gestapo agent with female *résistante*.][255] After having triumphantly unveiled her 'scientific' discovery, the Naturaliste follows up in the same vein with the kind of flagrantly pseudo-scientific pronouncements that she so often makes, in this instance by homogenizing the process of gestation and methods of torture:

La vie embryonnaire de l'animal est très agitée. On la divise en trois grandes périodes: une première période dite unicellulaire ou à caractère secret. Le jeune embryon est introduit par son père dans une couveuse glacée où on le soumet périodiquement à l'épreuve de l'eau, du coup de poing sur la gueule, et du nerf de boeuf, pour ne parler que des plus usuelles. . .

Mentionnons seulement l'aréole de seins brulée à la cigarette, les poils des aisselles arrachés, les fesses pyrogravées à la torche, les pouces écrasés au marteau et diverses autres fantaisies sur lesquelles nous ne nous étendrons pas. . .[256]

[The embryonic life of the animal is very agitated. It is divided into three major phases: an initial unicellular phase of a covert nature. The father of the young embryo places it in a chilled incubator, where it is periodically submitted to an ordeal by water and punched

[254] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar* 40, author's emphasis. This "conjugaison" allegorizing the pernicious coupling of oppressor and victim brings to mind a nefarious coupling evoked in *Il était une fois l'ethnographie.* In the section entitled "Incubes et 'Jinn," Tillion discusses the folkloric "ajenni" [ajenni of the Aurès] that belong to a sub-species of the Jinni in the Koran and Moslem tradition. When in human form, these spirits may exercise supernatural influence on people. Like the incubi and succubi in western traditions, while the male "ajenni" attacks women, the female "tajennit" persecutes men. Tillion notes that, when they are united, the ajenni and tajennit are "conjugués" [conjoined]. See *Il était une fois* 89-95. Her conceptualization of the harmful "conjugaison" she features in the play may thus reflect her familiarity with this motif in the folklore of the Aurès.

[255]Author's emphasis. Loselle correctly identifies this incongruous 'union' as a "metaphor for the arrest and interrogation of a female *résistante* by a French police officer working for the Gestapo," 18.

[256] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 41.

in the face with a fist or a bullwhip, to cite only the most common procedures. . .But let's also mention the nipples seared by cigarettes, armpit hair yanked out, buttocks engraved with a torch, thumbs crushed by a hammer, plus various other whims we won't go into.][257] This passage well illustrates how the Naturaliste impassively describes the grossly *unnatural*, indeed often extremely cruel and perverse, protocols of internment imposed upon these wretched women in terms of natural, biological processes, thus inventing a startling dramatic universe in which utterly inadmissible atrocities are ironically 'naturalized' as being merely banal routines of daily life. While its understatedly habitual nature shocks the spectator, this technique also records all the more starkly many socially and politically significant details along the way. The process of bisexual procreation provides the terms of an extended metaphor for characterizing the extremely fragile *résistante*: 'reborn' as a Verfügbar after having been 'sired' by a Gestapo agent, the resulting mature 'offspring' is then mercilessly held captive by her progenitor, who cruelly, and often mortally, abuses her with his devastatingly savage brutality. This sordid "conjugaison" also depicts cruel, unrelenting torture in familial terms:

> **Le choeur.** [Il chante.]
>
> Mon papa est venu me chercher,
>
> Puis il m'a emmenée rue des Saussaises. . .
>
> Là il m'a trempée dans une baignoire,
>
> Pour me faire raconter des histoires. . .
>
> Il m'a dit qu'il m'avait reconnue.

[257] Ibid 41-42.

J'ai compris que j'étais bien vendue. . .

J'étais toujours dans la tasse,

Côté pile, ou côté face,

Et mon père m'a quand même reconnue. . .[258]

[**The Chorus** (sings)

Daddy came to get me,

Took me down Willow Lane. . .

Dunked me in a bathtub

To make me squeal. . .

He said he'd recognized me.

I understood that I was for sure sold out. . .

I knew I'd been denounced. . .

I was still down in the drink,

Face down, face up,

Even though Daddy recognized me.]

The representation of torture moves it from the realm of purely physical cruelty in order to strike at the very core of the female psyche, as an extreme perversion of the primordially nurturant father-daughter relationship. In sum, juxtaposition of embryonic development with images of torture and other unmentionable "fantasies" creates an irrational and illogical, quasi-surrealistic and phantasmagorical reconfiguration of the

[258] Ibid 41-42.

grossly realistic circumstances of incarceration.[259]

**Uses of Humor at Ravensbrück**

As noted above, Tillion during an interview about her play observed that naturalists consider laughter as the "propre de l'homme" [a faculty unique to man] and that even in the most tragic situations even a doomed victim can laugh until the very last moment. She called laughter "un élément convenant" [a engaging element], the implication being that laughter is an extremely powerful and widely 'accessible' distraction capable of allaying human suffering.[260] Indeed, Andrieu asserts that engagements of the characters' fears through laughter is fundamental to the comical dimension in *Le Verfügbar*. The play also brings to mind Patrick Bruneteaux's discussion of derision, specifically with reference to deported prisoners and to strategies of survival in extermination camps. He notes that laughter allowed prisoners to resist reality both morally and mentally, and that some were tempted to "recréer leur propre monde*"* [re-create their own world] in forms of humor.[261] However, Bruneteaux also claims that some narratives of the Holocaust are ambiguous in

[259] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar* 41-42.

[260] For this interview, see Tillion: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8zir0_germine-tillion-et-le-verfugbar-aux_music.

[261] See Patrick Bruneteaux, "Dérision et dérisoire dans les strategies de survie en camp d'extermination," Paris : *Hermès :* 29 (2001) 217-26. See also *La dérision au moyen âge: de la pratique sociale au rituel politique*. Eds. Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan and Jacques Verger (Sorbonne: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2007) 219, which defines *derision* as "moquerie non dépourvue de méchanceté cherchant non seulement à faire rire, mais à humilier, à discréditer, voire à annihiler, au moins symboliquement, celui ou ceux qu'elle vise, semble être de tous les temps et défier l'analyse historique" [mockery, not lacking in malice, seeking not only to elicit laughter, but also to humiliate, to discredit, indeed to annihilate, at the very least symbolically, the one or ones at whom it aims; it seems ageless and defies historical analysis.] According to Todorov, "*Le Verfügbar aux Enfers* permet d'abord aux détenues d'introduire provisoirement une distance entre elles-mêmes et leur vie: elles ne sont plus seulement victimes, elles sont aussi observatrices. Aussi tragiques que soient les faits rapportés, cette distance engendre le rire." [*Le Verfügbar aux Enfers* initially allows the prisoners to distance themselves temporarily from their own lives: they are no longer merely victims, they are also observers. No matter how tragic the reported acts may be, that distance produces laughter.] Tzvetan Todorov, *Le siècle de Germaine Tillion* (Paris: Seuil, 2007) 42.

terms of distinguishing between "le rire d'évasion, et le rire impliqué ou derision."[262] [escapist laughter, implicit laughter, or derision.] He explains that while one invents an amusing story in order to forget the hardships of internment, laughter may be either purely emotional and visceral or environmentally aware. "[I]l se manifeste un autre rire, le rire impliqué des railleries qui ne cesse de s'attacher à la réalité aliénante pour la dénoncer."[263] [a different kind of laughter manifests itself, the implicit laughter of ridicule that never loses sight of the alienating reality, so as to denounce it.][264] In his discussion of Holocaust narratives, Terrence Des Pres notes that "laughter is hostile to the world it depicts and subverts the respect on which representation depends."[265] He analyzes the function of humor in Tadeusz Borowki's *This Way for the Gas,* which is also an account of prisoners in a concentration camp: "it is not that laughter is comic, but that an elementary human response is out of place, has become ridiculous and wild. Possibly only those *too* familiar with the camp will appreciate Borowski's point." Pres implies that a first-hand observation of concentration camp life is a distinctive experience and thus humor may be a unique response from that particular perspective.

While I concur with these assessments, I would add that in some instances the critical functions of laughter may be even more diversified. In the following passages, for example, the choruses of young and old Verfügbaren exchange banter and ridicule one

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[262] Ibid.

[263] Ibid.

[264] An example of this is the Nobel prize-winning autobiographical novel entitled *Fateless* in which the protagonist engages in wry humor about his life in the camps. See Imre Kertesz's *Fateless* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992).

[265] Terrence Des Pres, "Holocaust Laughter?" *Writing and the Holocaust,* ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc. 1988) 216-233.

another. Although the elders purport to wield absolute authority over the younger ones, both groups trade barbs with equal vehemence:

**Les jeunes Verfügbaren. –** Finis tes radotages lugubres. . . Nous en avons assez de toutes ces histoires. Tu fais ça exprès pour nous démoraliser . . . zut et zut . . . nous aimons mieux les recettes de cuisine. . .

**Les Vieux Verfügbaren. –** Pauvres idiotes, vous vivez comme des moutons, le nez dans votre touffe d'herbe sans rien vouloir savoir. . .

**Le Naturaliste.** – Taisez-vous toutes! Vous n'avez aucune civilisation. . .

[*Au public.*]

- Malgré sa maigreur squelettique, le Verfügbar nourrit et même engraisse de nombreux parasites, dont les principaux sont les poux, les puces, et les Blockovas. . . On peut même dire que la quasi-totalité de ses maigres loisirs, il la consacre à se protéger contre eux. . .[266]

**[The young Verfügbaren.** – Knock off your dismal rambling . . . We're sick of all these tales. You deliberately do that to demoralize us. . . damn it, damn it. . .we prefer recipes from the kitchen. . .

**The old Verfügbar.** – Poor idiots, you behave like sheep, your noses buried in your clumps of grass, not wanting to know anything.

**The Naturaliste.** – Hush everyone! You're so uncivilized!

*[To the public.]*

Despite being all skin and bones, the Verfügbar feeds and even fertilizes numerous parasites, head lice, fleas, and the Blockovas. . .We can even say that the Verfügbar

[266] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 64. "Vous n'avez aucune civilisation" alludes to the invectives of a Blokova. See 64 notes 1 and 2.

spends virtually all of its rare spare time protecting itself from them. . .]

Hence another type of escapist laughter: instead of indulging in cathartic mockery of their captors, both choruses distract themselves with adversarial sniping at one another over their trivial differences, while it is the Naturaliste addressing the public who finally intervenes to foreclose on their nattering and recall the gravity of their plight.

On the other hand, in the passage below these young Verfügbaren express themselves in a more lucid manner that contrasts notably with their earlier inane exchanges. Although they are seemingly still impulsive, they respond in a more human, reflective way to their circumstances, perceiving themselves as imprisoned *résistantes* and describing in metaphorical terms the path that led them to the camp:

**Choeur des jeunes Verfügbaren. – [Il chante]**

*On m'a dit "il faut résister". . .*

*J'ai dit "oui" presque sans y penser. . .*

*C'est comme ça qu'dans un train de la ligne du Nord,*

*J'eus ma place retenue à l'oeil, et sans effort,*

*Et quand le train s'est arrêté,*

*On ne m'a pas demandé mon billet. . .*

*Mais malgré le plaisir de la nouveauté*

*J'aurais bien voulu m'en aller.*[267]

**[Chorus of young Verfügbar. – [It sings]**

They told me "You must resist". . .

I said "sure!", almost without giving it a thought. . .

[267] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 44.

That's how on that train on the Northern Line

I got a reserved seat for nothing, no sweat,

And when the train stopped,

Nobody asked to see my ticket

But despite such an unaccustomed courtesy,

I'd rather have gone away on my own.]

The comical effect here stems from ironic understatement and lends a flippant tone to the somber reality it connotes: I eagerly joined the Resistance: "J'ai dit 'oui' presque sans y penser" but then found myself being deported.[268] This victim's depiction of deportation in the guise of pleasant railway traveler's anecdote illustrates a form of resistance to despair by inventing a fiction that conveys implicit laughter. Indeed, this metaphor for resistance effectively conveys a sense that the consequences of joining forces with the political resistance, and then being arrested, were both inconceivable and shocking.

Elsewhere, Tillion's cultivation of dark humor intensifies as she portrays the older Verfügbaren as the predecessors and storytellers who sardonically explain to their younger peers the progressive nature of victimization and violent exploitation they are about to endure:

*On t'a pris tes cheveux,*

*Pour serrer des moyeux,*

*Mais ça ne suffit pas!*

*Tu travailleras,*

[268] Ibid, 44.

*Tu ne mangeras pas. . .*

*Quand tu succomberas,*

*On t'achèvera,*

*On te brûlera,*

*Et ta graisse encore servira. . .*[269]

[They cut off your hair

To tighten the hubs,

But that won't be enough!

You'll work,

You'll not eat. . .

When you finally collapse,

They'll kill you,

They'll burn you.

Your lard'll still be useful, though. . .]

Absurdity and dark humor heighten this macabre preview of the ghastly demise that plausibly lies ahead for all of them, as prisoners of the same species who, regardless of their petty squabbling over fragile internal hierachies, are suffering the same end game in equal measure. Numerous examples from the play cited thus far show prisoners who feign unresponsiveness to pain and torture. On the other hand, Marmotte, who is portrayed as a Schmuckstück, bitterly laments having lost her pass to remain indoors, the coveted *Innendienst*:

[269] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 46.

**Marmotte.** [Elle arrive sur la scène et chante pathétiquement.]

J'ai perdu mon Inedienst (sic),"

Rien n'égale mon malheur,

Sort cruel, quel supplice,

Rien n'égal mon malheur.

Inedienst! Inedienst (sic)![270]

**Marmotte.** [She enters singing pathetically.]

I've lost my indoor service assignment,

No misfortune worse than mine,

Oh cruel fate! Such torture!

Indoor pass! Indoor pass!

Marmotte's response is more visceral than is characteristic of the Schmuckstück, who frequently lacks introspection and self-awareness and thus does not lament the hardships of captivity. This forthright expression of grief and sorrow lends a more human dimension to the more frequent profile of the 'primitive' Schmuckstück. On the other hand, Marmotte's emotional response indicates that the Schmuckstück, in spite of her image, is eager to resist the powerful constraints imposed upon her, even though her psychological sensitivity to the situation is limited.

**Hierarchical Structures and a 'New Zoological Species'**

The Naturaliste characterizes the prisoners in *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* as

[270] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 107-109.

exemplars of a 'new' zoological species. "Mesdames, mesdemoiselles, monsieur Julot. Vous savez déjà que l'objet de ma conférence est l'étude approfondie d'une nouvelle espèce zoologique, celle des Verfügbar."[271] [Ladies, Maidens, and Monsieur Julot, You already know that the purpose of my lecture is an in-depth study of a new type of zoological species, the Verfügbar.] The lecturer's consistently pseudo-scientific style here and elsewhere in the play resonates with Tillion's discussions in *Il était une fois l'ethnographie* of zoological studies of animal behavior. She explains, for example, that "les vieux singes se bornent souvent à l'intimidation, mais, chez les espèces stupides, l'intimidation peut aller jusqu'au meurtre: par exemple, tel cerf dix-cors envers des daguets et des brocards."[272] [The old monkeys often limit themselves to intimidation, but among the stupid species intimidation can lead to murder: for example, some ten-pointed stags when pitted against brocket and brocard deer.] Such descriptions of mutual antagonisms among young and old males of the same species bring to mind moments when the Verfügbaren in various ways seem to lose their higher cognitive abilities and indulge in primitive, animalistic behavior. Such passages occur throughout the play and cumlatively suggest the extent of Tillion's indebtedness to the norms of her scientific writngs for depictions of the behavior of interactions among characters. The play also shows the influence of her ethnographic studies of social organization, notably her typological categorizations of the inmates, as when she distinguishes between the frail, elderly, chronically ill "cartes roses" and the stronger, more robust "julots" in same-sex relationships. Gender-based diversification on the basis of physical strength and sexual

[271] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 36.

[272] Tillion, *Il était une fois l'éthnographie* 190.

orientation is also an organizational principle in *Ravensbrück,* while in *Il était une fois l'ethnographie* she cites case studies of families that distinguish among younger and older children and specify the degrees of veneration the community accords to elders.[273]

**Death at Ravensbrück and in Algeria**

The specter of death looms ominously throughout the play. Andrieu writes that it is always treated in a comedic fashion, though I would add that this applies not only to death in a purely literal sense but also to various figurative kinds of death, a salient example being the unavoidable transformation of every once-vigorous *résistante* into a gruesome skeletal relic of herself leading the living death of a Verfügbar.[274] Moreover, the characters often voice a prevailing sense that the harsh daily routines imposed upon the prisoners are themselves actually lethal. As the Verfügbaren who have been forced to stand for eleven hours are discussing death, Lulu de Belleville says "Mieux vaut mourir debout que vivre à genoux. . ."[275] [Better to die standing than live on one's knees], thus suggesting with bitter irony that, to adapt an old saying, "they also die who stand to serve"; her comrade Havas quips paradoxically that not all those who die have *not* committed suicide and vows never to volunteer for work in the crematorium or the Betrieb, which she thus implies is a form of suicide.[276] These and numerous other

[273] Tillion, *Il était une fois* 125.

[274] In Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers,* see Claire Andrieu's introduction.

[275] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 80.

[276] 'Betrieb' designates work in a factory or workshop at Ravensbrück. This brings to mind the *Sonderkommando,* a work unit comprised of death camp prisoners whose job it was to clear the corpses out of the gas chambers, burning them, and then removing any remaining gold teeth from their mouths. For more information about the *Sonderkommando,* see Gideon Greif *We Wept Without Tears* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

ironizations of hopeless situations imbue the inevitability of death with varying shades of dark humor.

In *Il était une fois* as well, Tillion compares attitudes toward death in various cultures, and some of its figural images are comparable to those in the play: "La rencontre fatale de la mort n'est pas un mythe et tous les peuples de la terre le savent, mais dans chaque pays elle se présente à la façon du pays. Dans le Finistère, ou le Morbihan, la mort se montre parfois sous la forme d'un viellard ou, plus classiquement, d'un squelette."[277] [The fatal encounter with death is no myth, and every populace on earth knows this, but in every land it appears according to that land's conventions. In the Finistère or the Morbihan death occasionally resembles an old man, or a skeleton.] In the Aurès, on the other hand, death is configured by "une vielle femme" [an old woman]; she "n'a pas de pouce et ses yeux sont fendus en hauteur comme ceux de la *tamza.*"[278] [has no thumb and her eyes are slit vertically like those of a *tamza*.] Like these human embodiments of death, the "full-grown" Verfügbar, as formally described by the Naturaliste, displays a characteristic death-like profile: "Le Verfügbar adulte est d'une maigreur squelettique, son corps est couvert de plaies et de pustules."[279] [The adult Verfügbar is as thin as a skeleton; her body is covered with wounds and blisters.] Thus do Tillion's doomed and moribund characters at times seem uncannily evocative of the anthropomorphic icons of death she encountered in cultural and folkloric representations. Tillion does not hesitate to declare her abiding devotion to the formal study of folkloric traditions in France as

[277] Ibid, 75.

[278] Ibid, 75. In Berber a *tamza* (pronounced "hamza" or "thamza") is an ogress; see pages 62-63.

[279] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 55.

well as in North Africa and elsewhere in the world. In one particularly revealing passage she explains that

> Rare et solitaires étaient alors les chercheurs orientés vers les systèms de parenté des provinces de France, et l'étiquette de *folkloriste* servait préférentiellement à disqualifier les oeuvres des confrères. Bravant les préjugés, je n'en était pas moins restée fidèle au cours de Jean Marx sur l'hagiographie du Moyen Âge, j'avais également rendu visite plusieurs fois à Arnold Van Gennep et entrepris d'interroger systématiquement mon grand-père.[280] [Researchers oriented toward kinship systems in relation to the French provinces were few and far between back then, and the title 'folklorist' was a frequent means of dismissing the significance of a colleague's work. Defying such prejudices, I was no less loyal to Jean Marx's course on medieval hagiography, and I also consulted Arnold Van Gennep on several occasions and also queried my grandfather on a regular basis.] Citing both Van Gennep, who was then the foremost authority on French folklore, and Jean Marx, who was internationally noted for the seminars on medieval European folklore he gave in the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Ve section. Thus Tillion proudly declares her professional scholarly engagements with folklore long before such consultations became fashionable among French anthropologists during the early sixties and thereafter.[281] She was in that respect a harbinger of the flourishing of

[280] Tillion refers in particular to Gennep's *Rites de passage* (1909) as well as his *Manuel du folklore français contemporain* published between 1943 and 1958. Tillion, *Il était une fois* 57-58.

[281] These were impelled to a considerable extent by Claude-Lévi Strauss's famous analysis of *La Morphologie du conte* by Valdimir Propp, which was first published in Russian in 1928 but not in English translation until 1958. In "The Structural Study of Myth," *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, No. 270 Myth: A symposium (Oct.-Dec., 1955), pp. 428-444, Lévi Strauss established, and also illustrated, the seminal methodolgical importance of Propp's analysis of Russian folklore to the emerging discipline of structural anthropology.

folklore as a fundamental discipline accessory to social and cultural anthropology in Europe and North America.[282]

**A Post-Internment Publication and Back to Algeria**

Over a decade after her release from Ravensbrück, Tillion returned to matters regarding women and resistance in *L'Algérie 1957*. Written in 1956 for a newsletter of the Association Nationale des Anciennes Déportées (ADIR), comprised of women resisters who were subsequently deported, the essay gives her acute perceptions of the political climate in Algeria following her visits to the country in December, 1954 and March, 1955. During these sojourns she coined the word "clochardisation," derived from French "clochard," or 'tramp,' to characterize the decline of the rural Algerians.[283] "Un jour, she explains, "le terrain qu'on cultivait de père en fils – et qui s'amenuise, désormais, à chaque generation – ne peut plus faire vivre, même très mal, même au plus bas niveau, la famille. Alors, c'est la 'clochardisation'."[284] [Eventually, the arable land passed down from father to son – which becomes smaller with each succeeding generation – can no longer sustain the family, not even at the lowest level. This is '*clochardisation*.'] She also compares the typical female in that social category with some of the prisoners she had observed at Ravensbrück. As for the '*clocharde*,' or peasant woman, she affirms that even the "hungriest, most ragged representatives of that

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[282] For a useful overview of these developments see Alan Dundes, *The Meaning of Folklore*: The analytical essays of Alan Dundes. Ed. Simon J. Bronner. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2007.

[283] Tillion, *L'Algérie en 1957* (Paris: Aux Éditions de Minuit, 1957) 27.

[284] Tillion, *L'Algérie en 1957*, 49-50.

type were better off than certain of my poor comrades at Ravensbrück,"[285] and to her fellow resisters she says parenthetically: ("Nous, au moins, dans nos camps de concentration, nous avions connu antérieurement la dignité, l'effort utile, la réflexion, la responsabilité – et ce souvenir a permis à la plupart d'entre nous de continuer jusqu'à l'agonie à appartenir à l'espèce humaine.") [286] [We, at least, in our concentration camps, had previously known dignity, useful work, reflection, responsibility, and our memories that enabled most of us to remain members of the human race until the final agony.] The emphasis here is on *resistance* as having been their persistent virtue, first as active *résistantes* then by their efficacious resistance to the Nazis' brutal exactions during their imprisonment. [287] The ways in which Tillion incorporates her retrospective reflections on imprisonment at Ravensbrück into her persectives on the Algerian situation in 1957 suggests that, for her, 'writing resistance' meant accounting as fully as possible for both the experiential and the ideological significance of her engagements in the perilous struggles that confronted mankind during her lifetime.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have identified ways in which Tillion's training, research, and

[285] Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973).

[286] Tillion, *L'Algérie en 1957*, 51-52.

[287] Tillion dedicates *L'Algérie en 1957* to her comrades and declares that "Je sais que je parle pour la majorité d'entre nous – un amour passionné de la Justice, une solidarité quasi instinctive avec les opprimés, les prisonniers, les fugitifs, mais aussi la fidélité à notre pays lorsqu'il est en danger."[287] [I know I speak for most of us – an impassioned love of justice, a solidarity with the oppressed, the prisoners, the fugitives, but also loyalty to our country when it is in danger.] The Algerians have "versé leur sang pour nous dans trois guerres, parce qu'ils partagent notre destin depuis 130 ans (depuis plus longtemps que les Niçois et les Savoyards)." [shed their blood for us in three wars, because they have shared our destiny for the past 130 years (for a longer time than have the Niçois and the Savoyards).] This comment reveals the impact that Tillion's prewar and wartime experiences had on her personal and political perspectives years later. Tillion, *L'Algérie en 1957*, 13.

fieldwork as an ethnologist influenced her brilliant conceptualization and virtual completion of *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* as a musical drama that also cumulatively incorporates what amounts to an ethnographic study combined with a personal testimonial. In my examination of the behaviors and attitudes of the characters as they interact in myriad revealing ways with the analytic presence of the Naturaliste, I have in particular noted details having to do with gendered identity and satire. I have also indicated some aspects of the play that show similarities to *Il était une fois l'ethnographie* and thus call attention to the playwright's enjoyment of her unique dual-focus vantage point as deported resister as well as ethnologist. It is conceivable that she wrote her play as a means of secretly documenting life at Ravensbrück while deliberately moving beyond the conventional confines of the scientific monograph. Whatever the case may be, in her extensive studies of both Algeria and Ravensbrück, by writing from her own experiences she offered a unique perspective on Holocaust history informed by the combined viewpoints of a deported resister and a social scientist. One can only conclude that Tillion's academic and professional training as well as her 'lived experiences' were instrumental in contributing to her ability to resist oppression and endure the trauma of imprisonment.

Moreover, despite the total darkness that finally engulfs the scene, it is apparent from the foregoing analysis of the play that Tillion the playwright was most likely *not* seeking either merely to insinuate a documentary of carceral abjection into the fiction or to create an unfolding drama of ultimate despair. Quite the contrary: I believe that for the purposes of the play's initial reception, most likely during a forbidden and clandestine nocturnal gathering of anxious and distraught women, Tillion had attempted to imbue it

with a very special kind of potential for achieving dramatic 'catharsis,' by 'purging' the women's fears and anxieties through dark humor. Indeed, Andrieu maintains that the play acts as a "catharsis de la peur par le rire"[288] [a catharsis of fear through laughter.] To that useful point I would add, given the harshly intensifying sense of last things capped by the last anecdote in the final act, Tillion was ultimately recommending compassion in the face of a bleak and uncertain future that might well entail total extermination. She also attempted to rekindle within her beleaguered audience a spirit of stoic mental resistance and indomitable collective solidarity before the looming specter of oblivion.

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[288] Tillion, *Le Verfügbar aux enfers* 11-26.

# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

Charlotte Delbo, Noor Inayat Khan, and Germain Tillion were among the earliest women to unhesitatingly committed to resistance upon learning of the Nazi incursion into Western Europe; each bequeathed to posterity a unique, memorable and historically significant profile of courage in her respective role as a *résistante.* A major objective of the foregoing chapters has been to examine these writers' reflections on their wartime experiences while engaged in what I have referred to as *writing* resistance. The notion of 'writing' as a means of resistance of course pertains to a very wide range of specific types of writings that have been produced throughout the history of mankind, presumably ever since the inception of writing as a means of human communication. Moreover, a comprehensive history of 'resistive' writing, if such an endeavor were even possible, would undoubtedly bring to light a vast array of its widely diverse functions - aggression, persuasion, defense, self-defense, incrimination, and countless others, on behalf of collective or individual, beneficial or harmful objectives – as well as the myriad motivating forces that called them into being, and the intricate and rhetorical stratagems that sustain their resistive force. Such an investigation would obviously exceed the far more modest scope of this study. Despite the absence of an historical synthesis on this question, it seems to me highly likely that texts produced during periods of major political and social upheaval would compromise a substantial sub-set of writings in service to some type of resistance. Hence the likelihood that many such texts proliferated during World War II and the Holocaust and that the three cases under consideration here

could eventually be identified and compared with a much larger corpus of contemporary writings. Clearly my objective has not been to consider the writings of Delbo, Noor, and Tillion against that much larger hypothetical background. It will be apparent that my primary focus has instead remained on the modalities of resistance their writings reflect as having been generated within the spheres of the respective experiences they each lived through subjectively.

Chapters Two and Four address ways in which Delbo and Tillion recall their own and other women's experiences under the rigors of life within a *univers concentrationnaire* and the strategies used by each in the process of surviving prolonged captivity. Delbo's prewar background in literature and theater finds expression in her grotesque and graphic retrospective representations of the simulacra of ordeals she had to endure along with her fellow internees, and those literary and theatrical 'after-the-fact' rehearsals serve textually to 're-presentify', as it were, their colossal traumas and thus resist posterity's consignment of them to oblivion. In contrast, Tillion's formation in social anthropology, while it enabled her to produce a postwar scientific study of the systems, mechanisms and principles of internment, informed her earlier creation of a living theater of resistance *en situation*, which she wrote and produced within the confines of the unfolding scene of cruelty the spectacle reconfigured parodically. While both Delbo and Tillion were able to pursue their modes of writing resistance well into the postwar era, there is no evidence to suggest that Noor ever wrote about her experiences of incarceration, either initially when she was imprisoned at the Avenue Foch, or subsequently, during her imprisonments at Pforzheim, and finally Dachau.[289] However, in Chapter Three, I discussed how she relied

[289] See Shrabani Basu, *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan* for more information about Noor's imprisonment. Noor was imprisoned at a facility on the Avenue Foch for over a month, and then in

on the wisdom of short narratives in her own *The Jātaka Tales* in order to bolster her courage and morale as she sought to master the specialized training in clandestine communications required for her service in the SOE. Moreover, in that chapter I hope to have demonstrated from numerous examples the extent to which her written perceptions of war-related crises were profoundly influenced by her formative background in Sufism over the course of many years prior to her wartime service. In sum, her writings cumulatively illustrate a mode of mental and spiritual resistance based on a self-disciplined cultivation of spiritual serenity and practical wisdom for coping with stressful challenges within a relentless climate of danger on a personal scale and, on a much larger scale, the ideal objectification of an ethic of universal peace and harmony. In sum, these resistive writings produced by each of the three women provide a vital biographical link between their lived experiences and the ultimate shape assumed by their respective careers as *résistantes.*

This study has thus examined their cases far less in terms of any official function they may have served within the political realm than with regard to their subjective, and at times deeply personal and poignant, reflections on their emotions and circumstances. I have aimed throughout to offer a close analysis of how these remarkable women responded in writing to having been perilously exposed to the brutal atmosphere of the war and the Holocaust and in doing so offered, each in her own way, alternative perspectives on what it meant to 'resist.'

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Pforzheim. She was the first political prisoner at Pforzheim to be categorized as Nacht und Nebel before being transferred Dachau, where she was executed. (New York: Omega Publications, 2007) 167-180.

**Three Factors that Made a Field Late in Flourishing**

My study of 'Writing Resistance and the Question of Gender' seems especially timely in view of the long-standing scarcity of scholarship on the contributions of *résistantes* during World War II. At first glance, the relative dearth of work in this area would seem rather surprising given the emergence over the past four decades of Women's Studies on an international scale and across a wide range of disciplines, notably history. There are nonetheless important reasons why the study of women involved in resistance activities has been relatively slow in taking shape. The results of my study bring to mind three in particular.

The first has to do with vexing questions of *perception* and *self-perception*: who were the 'resisting' women? Did they perceive themselves as such? How can historians perceive them? On March 19, 2015 I attended a panel entitled "Women in Occupied France," the focus of which was on how to contextualize women's wartime experiences and take adequate account of their underrepresented roles.[290] In her presentation, Margaret Collins Weitz discussed the fundamental problem of defining 'resistance' and emphasized that women who participated in wartime activities aimed at resisting oppression did not always consider themselves agents of warfare or identify themselves as *résistantes* in any explicit, formal sense. During the postwar years Weitz conducted eighty interviews with women who had been involved in some type of wartime resistance. She found that many of them perceived their roles as having been "minor" and a matter of "simply" doing "what had to be done." She further notes that the theme of

[290] Contributors to this panel discussion were Robert Allison, James Carroll, Margaret Collins Weitz, and Susan Rubin Suleiman. "Women in Occupied France," March 19, 2015, Suffolk University Law School in Boston, Massachusetts.

'self-effacement' and expressions of apologies are widespread throughout their testimonies.[291] Their attitudes reflect the fact that during the war *résistance* was itself still an ill-defined notion, while among its many forms, not a few were localized, sometimes informal, and even spontaneous initiatives in which women were "volunteers for the most part and amateurs."[292] Moreover, while many of these women were 'resisting' the enemy, they were also likely to have been involved, more often than men, in other responsibilities, especially those having to do with meeting the needs of daily life, for example as wives, mothers, homemakers, farm women or salaried workers. Their 'role' in terms of wartime 'resistance' was not infrequently one of several others that were competing for their attention on a regular basis. In addition, much of the activity that came under the heading of 'resistance' was necessarily of a strictly *clandestine* nature. "Members worked in secrecy, hence largely in isolation."[293] Women as well as men involved in such activities consequently took the utmost care to be 'invisible,' not only to their adversaries but sometimes to their peers and even to members of their own family, and countless among them no doubt remained invisible even thereafter, lost beyond any possible horizon of recovery created retrospectively by the historian.

Mindful of these methodological problems concerning the recognition and identification of wartime *résistantes,* I have throughout my study maintained a broadly inclusive sense of the term, capable of accommodating a wide range of specific cases.

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[291] Margaret Collins Weitz. *Sisters in the Resistance: How Women Fought to Free France, 1940-1945* (New York: J. Wiley, 1995) 8-11.

[292] Ibid., p. 10.

[293] Ibid., p. 10.

Thus, like Weitz, I have included among the *résistantes* not only women who were actively engaged as members of or adherents to specific resistance organizations but also women who acted independently of any such groups.[294] The breadth of this definition has obviously been of crucial importance to each part of my study: whereas during the initial phases of their 'resistance' activities, Delbo, Noor, and Tillion were or recently had been associated with one or more identifiable resistance groups or organizations, following their arrest and eventual deportation they were nevertheless still active as *résistantes* in other significant ways, despite having been removed, geographically though not ideologically, from the spheres of organized resistance.

A second reason for the rather modest amount of work published thus far on women's wartime resistance activities has to do in large part with the long-term prevalence of a historiographical current that began to mature during the nineteenth century and still has many adherents today, which is to maintain the primary focus at the level of 'great events' under the aegis of powerful regimes and their leaders.[295] A comment by Sarah Helm in her recent study of Ravensbrück highlights a typical example of this approach, variously illustrated by studies of the major political events and figures that marked World War II, as well as of the decades preceding its outbreak and its long aftermath. She observes that until the 1990s historians paid little or no attention to women's stories about the camps and preferred to "theorize about the Nazi leadership

[294] Ibid, 8-11. Weitz notes that historian Henri Michel defines *resistance* as any violation "in acting or in writing" against the armistice between France and Germany signed on June 22, 1940. See also Henri Michel's *Bibliographie critique de la Résistance* (Paris: Institut Pédagogique National, 1964) 9.

[295] The various phases of this trend have been widely discussed by historiographers, often under the rubric of *histoire événementielle*. For a chronological overview and penetrating critique, see Paul Ricoeur, "Le retour de l'événement," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Italie et Méditérrannée* 104 (1992), 29-35. http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/mefr_1123-9891_1992_num_104_1_4195.

rather than explain what happened on the ground."[296] The shift of focus during the 1990s to "what happened on the ground" to which Helm alludes in passing stems to a considerable extent from the widespread pursuit of new directions of research in the humanities and social sciences that emphasize the importance of studying *all* levels of society, including the attitudes and daily life of people in places often lying well beyond the centers of political power and their leaders, and in this respect her approach is similar to mine.[297] Throughout my dissertation, I have taken account of numerous studies from the 1990s and thereafter that offer a more balanced understanding of resistance during World War II and the Holocaust as a collective social and economic phenomenon and especially of the roles women played in initiatives that come under the broad heading of 'resistance.'

However, my research on 'women's narratives' calls for discussion of a third significant reason why research and discussion on the women of World War II and the Holocaust have taken so long to come into the foreground. This concerns what could be

[296] Sarah Helm. *If This is a Woman: Inside Ravensbrück, Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* (London: Little, Brown, 2015) 64. The title of course echoes Primo Levi's Holocaust memoir *Se questo è un uomo* [If This is a Man] (Torino: F. DeSilva, 1947). Elsewhere Helm has written about Vera Atkins, who assisted the leader of the French section of the SOE Maurice Buckmaster and was involved with recruiting Noor for the SOE. See also Helm's *Ravensbrück: Life and Death in Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* (New York: Nan. A. Talese/Doubleday, 2014) and *A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Missing Agents of WWII* (New York: Random House LLC, 2008).

[297] One of the earliest manifestations of this tendency was the creation in 1929 of *Annales*, a journal founded by French historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. Its receptiveness to a wide assortment of new methodologies adapted to a much broader cross-section of cultures and societies gave rise to the so-called '*Annales* School' that flourished through several generations of historians and found exemplars in many other nations. It was an inspirational factor in the awakening of interest during the 1990s in research on gendered and culturally diverse issues. For a useful history of the *Annales* school see Philippe Carrard, *Poetics of the New History: French Historical Discourse from Braudel to Chartier*. (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins, 1995).

called a problem of 'historians without histories.'[298] If scholars were in fact slow to take up women's histories, it was due to a prolonged dearth of source materials. Helm aptly notes that camps for women were "of no interest to historians at all, particularly [because] there were no official documents and oral history was distrusted."[299] Numerous factors were of course responsible for the documentary void, among them the widespread lack of public records at many local and regional levels, the aforementioned anonymity cultivated by members of resistance groups and their affiliated partisans, and the officialization in France of a puppet regime that was mandated to obliterate its domestic adversaries by delegating its iron-clad authority to all regional and local levels within its purview. With regard specifically to the scarcity of profiles of individual women, however, the preceding chapters illustrate delays owing to factors having to do with the *résistantes* themselves. Two are particularly consequential, one being a lingering attitude of hesitation on the part of the writer herself during the postwar years. At first Delbo did not consider herself to be a 'writer,' and so put the first book of her trilogy *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* in a drawer for twenty years before publishing it.[300] Tillion also stored *Le Verfügbar aux enfers: Une opérette à Ravensbrück* in a drawer, but for *sixty* years, concerned that "people would get the wrong idea [about the comical aspects of the play] and think we were enjoying ourselves."[301] Such initial concealment of writings about

[298] For one of the first articles on women and the Holocaust, see Joan Ringelheim "Women and the Holocaust: A Reconsideration of Research." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 10, no 4 (Summer 1985) 741-761.

[299] Helm, *If This is a Woman* 64.

[300] Rosette C. Lamont. "The Triple Courage of Charlotte Delbo: A Place Without a Name." *The Massachusetts Review*, vol 41, no. 4 (Winter, 2000-2001) 483-497.

[301] Douglas Martin. "Germaine Tillion, French Anthropologist and Resistance Figure, Dies at 100." *The New York Times* Editorial, April 25, 2008.

wartime and the Holocaust implies that these writers may not initially have perceived them as significant contributions to the historical record or as being appropriate or of interest to the public eye. Had someone interviewed them soon after the war, it is conceivable that they, too, might not have considered themselves heroic or worthy as ranking among the notable resisting women of the wartime years. Noor exemplifies the other consequential factor, a writer's inability to publish her own writings. As Chapter Three indicates, most of her literary legacy consists of works that were either published posthumously, and long after she died, or which still remain unpublished. Although it is known that her collection of writings was still growing during the war and that, according to one of her letters to Azeem Goldenberg, she intended to publish her stories, she did not live long enough to reflect on her completed writings or her experiences as a *résistante*. That the works of Noor, Delbo, Tillion and numerous other women finally *did* find their way into print has much to do with a growing climate of eager receptivity to accounts by and about wartime women, and that keen interest among scholars was impelled by the shifts in historiographical emphasis discussed above. In short, receptive scholars finally began to gain access to a growing volume of women's writings about themselves and their own experiences.

**Seminal Scholarship**

At this point some comments are in order about how I perceive, in terms of both affinities and differences, a few of these recent, and for my own project to some degree seminal, scholarly contributions in relation to my study of these *résistantes* writing resistance. I fully concur with the observation by Dalia Ofer I cited near the beginning of

this dissertation, according to which women's narratives "widen and nuance both the concept of accommodation and of resistance and force historians to reevaluate what they had formerly defined as heroism and resistance."[302] This affirmation, which at the outset I adopted, and also *adapted* as something of a 'manifesto' for my own study of writing *as* resistance, has been borne out in detail throughout the preceding chapters. With Pascale Rachel Bos I share a keen interest in how women who were engaged in resistance activities perceived themselves in subjective, autobiographical dimensions and with regard to their gender. As I noted in the introduction, Bos calls for a "different, *discursive* kind of gender analysis to bring to center stage questions about (gendered) subjectivity and autobiographical representation, the politics of memory and narrative, and the psychological function of testimony," and she also emphasizes the importance of "cataloguing historical experiences of individual women."[303] Although my approach often reflects those priorities, her analytical focus remains primarily on women's testimonies, whereas mine features instead a selection of works by each writer and sounds the interfaces between her gendered self-perceptions as a wartime *résistante* and her engagements with factors of gender, so as to examine aspects of the particularly feminine sphere inherent in the writer's personal history.

For these assessments of significant interrelationships among an author's texts, Marianne Hirsch's concept of "connective approaches," also evoked in the introduction,

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[302] See Dalia Ofer's chapter entitled "The Contribution of Gender to the Study of the Holocaust," in *Gender and Jewish History*, eds. Marion A. Kaplan and Deborah Dash Moore (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011) 120-138.

[303] Pascale Rachel Bos, "Women and the Holocaust: Analyzing Gender Difference," in *The Holocaust: Theoretical Readings*, ed. Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 178-186.

proved usefully suggestive, especially with regard to my interest in detecting affective changes expressed or implied within or among texts. In order to perceive the dynamics of affect, Hirsch recommends that critical attention be directed to intra- and intertextual "starting and reference points and different paradigms and models for working through, and yes, without forgetting, for moving beyond a traumatic past."[304] Hirsch's concept was helpful for consideration of the writers' varying responses to the threat of Nazi power and the traumas of warfare and the Holocaust. However, as my analyses progressed, it became increasingly apparent that "moving beyond a traumatic past" was typically envisaged, if at all, as a remote, and tenuous, possibility, in contrast with a much greater anxiety about the traumatic present, as well as an interest in using more immediate "starting and reference points" in times past for gauging the significance of one's pre-war experiences. As for not "forgetting," the three writers showed notable tendencies to subject key moments of their past lives to renewed scrutiny in contrast with their current circumstances, as well as to reflect, directly or indirectly, on their individual responses to the onset of the war.

Although each woman featured in my dissertation has been studied elsewhere on an individual basis, and justifiably so, in my introduction I discussed at length why I was prompted to consider them together, especially in view of the revealing comparability of their respective itineraries prior to nearly the same chronological moment of personal and collective crisis that launched their careers as *résistantes.* Two recent comparative studies of three eminent women are indicative that my decision to organize my

[304] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). Introduction and 23.

dissertation in the form of a 'triptych' is not without precedent.[305] In *Dreaming in French: The Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag, and Angela Davis* Alice Kaplan brings the lives of these three young women into a comparative spectrum based on the fact that each had fervently dreamt of going to France long before eventually leaving the United States for an extended period of study in Paris. Kaplan draws from an ample assortment of archives, books, and interviews, though she could not locate interviews with any of them during their respective sojourns in France. For each of them, Kaplan explains, "France was the place where they could become themselves, or protect themselves from what they didn't want to become, as products of their families, their societies."[306] Foreign study thus offered all three a sophisticated milieu of cultural alterity within which they had enough latitude to pursue their personal and intellectual individuation in creative ways. In *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* Natalie Zemon Davis compares the lives of three seventeenth-century women, Glikl Bas Judah Leib, a Jew from Hamburg, the Protestant Marie de l'Incarnation, a Québécoise, and Maria Sibylla, a Catholic who lived in Germany and Holland. In her comparative biographical study of these women Davis identifies the intricate "hierarchical structures" that weighed heavily upon each and details how in each case religion exercised an enormous influence on their attitudes toward the struggles they

[305] A third tripartite study of somewhat earlier vintage also comes to mind here: Neal Oxenhandler, *Looking for Heroes in Postwar France: Albert Camus, Max Jacob, Simone Weil* (Hanover, New Hampshire; Dartmouth College: University Press of New England, 1996).

[306] Alice Kaplan. *Dreaming in French: the Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag, and Angela Davis* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2012) 4. Kaplan has also authored books that touch on World War II, notably *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), which investigates fascist ideology in prewar and occupied France.

faced over the course of their complicated lives.[307] Davis's works often reflect the influence of the *Annales* school of historiography, in particular her sensitive analyses of archival evidence in order to construct revealing case studies featuring women and individuals from the lower strata of early modern society. Accordingly, my approach in this study reflects my admiration of Davis's efforts to penetrate the obscure underside of so-called 'eventful' political history, especially through detailed study of specific cases concerning 'women on the margins' as well as 'marginal' figures like Martin Guerre and the members of the lower classes she studies in *Pardon Tales*, obscure individuals who have been convicted of crimes and whose revealing autobiographical letters plead for clemency from the Monarch. While in *Women on the Margins* Davis reconstructs in details each woman's life and attitudes toward those around her by piecing together historical documents that often reveal indirectly essential biographical insights, I examine human activities and belief systems, and explore a wide-range of materials in order to draw conclusions.[308] While Davis reconstructs in detail and in depth each woman's life and attitudes toward those around her by piecing together historical documents, Kaplan marshals her research around a primary focus on what three women idealized about France and then brings them together comparatively on the basis of their nationalities and their temporary status as students in France. Both studies are unique and compelling, and

[307] Natalie Zemon Davis. *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995) 201-216. Davis has authored numerous case studies of marginal figures in early modern culture, including *The Return of Martin Guerre*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983) and *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers.* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1987). For many years while at Princeton she chaired the Shelby Cullom Davis Center, which is noted for providing a forum for scholarship that reflects the heritage of the Annales School.

[308] For a useful history of the Annales School, see the recently updated second edition of Peter Burkes *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929-2014* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

I am inclined to believe that, like theirs, my tripartite and comparative organizational scheme and the rationale I elaborated for in my introduction bring 'my' three women into a highly meaningful and revealing convergence, the significance of which transcends what could have been ascertained had the same analytical criteria been applied to any one of them individually.

**Prospects for the Future**

While I was researching the cases of Delbo, Noor, and Tillion I came across those of several of their European contemporaries that I believe hold potential for future studies: Virginia (Roush) d'Albert-Lake (1910-1997), a native of Florida who had married a Frenchman, chose at the outbreak of the war to remain in Paris with him, and in 1943 they joined the Resistance and began leading scores of downed American and British airmen to safety in the free zone, until she was eventually captured and deported to Ravensbrück. Her recently published diary and memoir offer a wealth of subjective perceptions and insights into "what happened on the ground" in Paris and rural France during the war.[309]

Hélène Berr (1921-1945), a Paris-born Jew, was active before and during the war in the Union Générale des Israélites de France (UGIF). She was unable to complete her studies in Russian and English literature at the Sorbonne because the anti-Semitic laws enforced by the Vichy regime prevented her from taking her exams. She and her parents were arrested and taken to the Drancy internment camp near Paris, then to Auschwitz. She died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945, shortly before it was liberated

[309] *An American Heroine in the French Resistance: The Diary and Memoir of Virginia d'Albert-Lake*. Ed. Judy Barrett Litoff (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

by the allies. During the spring of 1942 she had begun making entries in her diary, published in 2008, which includes many accounts of her personal relationships and daily life and acute observations about the war during the Nazi Occupation.[310]

Irène Némirovsky (1903-1942) wrote fiction prolifically from the 1930s until she was arrested and deported to Auschwitz in 1942, where she died a month after her arrival. During the last days of her life she wrote the manuscript of her final work *Suite Française.* Following its publication in English it was featured in an exhibition in her memory at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York.[311]

Wanda Jakubowska (1907-1998), a survivor of Auschwitz, was a Polish filmmaker who recorded in film her observations of the relationships among women incarcerated during the Holocaust. She was born in the same year as Tillion, and her filmic depiction of imprisoned women in *Ostatni Etap [The Last Stage]* (1948), part of which she shot on location at Auschwitz-Birkenau, is in some respects comparable to Tillion's depiction of the emaciated physical appearance and aberrant behaviors of her Verfügbaren in the play.[312] Both the writer and the filmmaker magnify the effects of victimization and physical and psychological abuse in their portrayals of life in a concentration camp and thus feature ways in which prisoners responded to trauma. In addition, like Tillion,

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[310] Hélène Berr, *Hélène Berr Journal, 1942-1944*. (Paris, Tallandier, 2008); *The Journal of Hélène Berr*. Trans. by David Bellos. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008).

[311] Irène Némirovsky *Suite Française*. (Paris: Denoël, 2004); *Suite Française.* Trans. by Sandra Smith (London: Chatto & Windus, 2004; New York: Knopf, 2006). Some of her other fictional narratives were not published until 2005. See *La vie d' Irène Némirovsky*, eds. Olivier Philipponant and Patrick Lienhardt. (Paris: Denoël, 2007). Susan Suleiman is currently writing a book on Némirovsky amd the Jewish question in France.

[312] Catherine Portuges explains that the film is a "portrayal of what became a cinematic iconography of the experience of Nazi persecution, thereby laying the groundwork for a new filmic genre that has since become ubiquitous: the docudrama." See Portuges, "Intergenerational Memory: Transmitting the Past in Hungarian Cinema," *Quo Vadis European Cinema? Spectator*, ed. Luisa Rivi. 23:2 (Fall 2003) 44-52.

Jakubowska punctuates the unfolding intrigue with various types of music.[313] Born in the same year as Tillion and Jakubowska is Gisella Perl (1907-1988), a *résistante* from Máramarossziget, Hungary and gynecologist who in 1948 published a chilling memoir entitled *I was a Doctor in Auschwitz*, in which she gives a harrowing account of her medical 'practice' as an inmate working under duress and in hellish conditions within the confines of a death camp.[314] After the Liberation she immigrated to the United States and then to Israel and devoted herself to her practice of gynecology.

I suggest that my methodology could well be adapted to the study of any of these cases. Berr, d'Albert-Lake, and Némirovsky were involved in major stratagems of resistance under perilous circumstances, and like Delbo, Noor, and Tillion, they were all exposed to the atrocities of war in France during the same period and documented them vividly in their first-hand observations or in literary contexts. Examination within a single comparative study of Perl's and Jakubowska's documentations of conditions within a *univers concentrationnaire* holds rich potential for a gender-oriented analysis as well as for study of cultural perspectives outside of France during the war. Moreover, referencing my earlier comments on how women's accounts of their wartime experiences in resistance activities were often late in becoming available, let me emphasize that some of these cases are among the very recent latecomers: the memoir by d'Albert Lake, published in 2006; Berr's dairy in 2008, and Némirovsky's *Suite Française* in 2004. In

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[313] See Laura Conning, "The Rhythm of Death: How Diegetic Music is Used in 'The Last Stage'" <https://www.academia.edu/4700124/The_Rhythm_of_Death_How_Diegetic_Music_is_Used_in_The_Last_Stage> Accessed July 4, 2015. See also *Le Cinéma et la Shoah: Un art à l'épreuve de la tragédie du 20e siècle*, ed Jean-Michel Frodon (Paris: Éditions Cahiers du cinema, 2007).

[314] Perl, Gisella. *I Was a Doctor at Auschwitz.* (New York: International Universities Press, 1948; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1979). See also Anne S. Reamey, "Gisella Perl: Angel and Abortionist in Auschwitz Death Camp" < http://www.holocaust-history.org/auschwitz/gisella-perl/> accessed July 4, 2015.

addition, *Out of the Ashes*, a 112-minute feature film made for television and directed by Joseph Sargent, brought the career of Gisella Perl to renewed prominence in 2003. In 2014 *Enemy of the Reich: The Noor Inayat Khan Story*, directed by Robert Gardner, offered the very first filmic portrayal of her career.[315] Meanwhile, a growing interest in fiction set during the Holocaust has directed further attention to historical situations during this era.[316] Hence a considerable variety of extremely important cases that await either initial study in depth or further scrutiny. Given the aforementioned 'climate of receptivity' among historians to the study of women and minorities on the margins that acquired momentum less than three decades ago, the time is ripe for the development of new research projects on these and other women's histories that await their historians.

**Charlotte, Noor, and Germaine: Three Women of Engagement**

The foregoing chapters have shown that one of the most important common factors linking Charlotte Delbo, Noor Inayat Khan, and Germaine Tillion is that in each case their prewar and wartime pursuits were mediated in 1940 by a transitional crisis of consciousness that ushered them into a full-scale engagement in the Resistance. Before the war, Delbo had been an active member of the Parti communiste français (PCF) as well as a student of Marxist theory. By 1940, Noor, steeped in her father's 'new' mystical vision of western social and cultural Sufism, was on the brink of a promising career as a writer of works enriched by his teachings. Tillion was one of the first women

[315] See *Enemy of the Reich: The Noor Inayat Khan Story*. (Dir. Robert Gardner**.** 2014 DVD). This film had its premier screening at the Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival in 2014.

[316] See Ruth Franklin. *A Thousand Darknesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Although this study is not particularly focused on women's writings, it provides significant observations about representations of the Holocaust in literature. In the introduction, Franklin discusses the interest of analyzing the Holocaust in fiction that does not rely exclusively on historians' observations.

in France to be trained as an ethnologist when the discipline was still in its formative phase and by 1940 had completed the fieldwork in Algeria that was to be the substance of her doctoral thesis. Thus, through those engagements during the interwar years each of them had been indelibly marked by powerful ideological, intellectual, and moral orientations that they then 'carried over' into the forefront of wartime activities.

As I leave them, at least for now, let me in closing evoke images of each woman who looms large in her writings as a *résistante:*


**IMAGE 1 from http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2011/11/04/the_brave_women_of_the_resistance.html: Charlotte Delbo.** Charlotte, the political activist and now first-hand witness, huddled among more than 300 shivering women, mostly communists, many from the working-class, in a convoy bound for Auschwitz, or elsewhere, gazing at a stark heap of abject and emaciated corpses.

**IMAGE 2 from http://www.sufiorder.org/noor.html: Noor Inayat Khan.** Noor, the moralist, rewriting Asian and European folkloric and mythic tales to reflect allegorically unsettling political landscapes and her clandestine career in espionage.

**IMAGE 3 from http://blog.contexttravel.com/3-heroines-of-wwii/: Germaine Tillion.** Germaine, the intellectual, scrutinizing Ravensbrück analytically, and often sardonically, through the lens of the ethnologist.

-Such images linger in memory, capturing in suggestively pre- and post-crisis

glimpses the complementary ‘bifocal’ lives of Charlotte, Noor, and Germaine.

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