Holocaust Literature: Novels and Short Stories

A Selection
Une Sélection

L’Holocauste : Les romans et les contes
Novels

Adler, H. G. *The journey*; translated from German by Peter Filkins. (2008)
A novel of the Holocaust based on the author’s own experiences which chronicles the ordeal of one family, forced from their home and struggling to cope with the destruction, deprivation, and death around them, from the perspective of a single survivor.

The story of the systematic 1942 execution of five thousand Belgrade concentration camp prisoners in a transport truck. A school teacher recreates historical events for his students on a school bus, an endeavour that overpowers the teacher with the brutality of the act.

In this story told backwards, the life of Nazi war criminal, Doctor Tod T. Friendly is told from end to beginning. The doctor dies and then feels markedly better, breaks up with his lovers as a prelude to seducing them and mangles his patients before he sends them home. Escaping from the body of the dying doctor who had worked in Nazi concentration camps, the doctor’s consciousness begins living the doctor’s life backwards, aware only that he is living the life of a horrible man at a horrible place in time.

Erwin Siegelbaum continues to ride European trains from place to place as he did during the Holocaust 50 years before, but since the war, he has been buying Jewish antiques from people who are unaware of their value to sell to collectors.

In the summer of 1939, prosperous members of the Jewish middle class flock to the resort town of Badenheim, oblivious of the ominous political and military events that will transform them into de facto prisoners in their familiar resort.

Stories of young Dutch victims of the Holocaust whose childhoods were spent in detention centers, in transit camps, and finally in “Star Hells” like Bergen-Belsen, with only a few surviving to liberation. The stories are narrated as though seen through the children’s own eyes, reflecting the stark, spare horror of their vision.
The narrator, a young middle-class Jew in the Italian city of Ferrara, has long been fascinated from afar by the Finzi-Continis, a wealthy and aristocratic Jewish family, and especially by their daughter Micol. But it is not until 1938 that he is invited behind the walls of their lavish estate, as local Jews begin to gather there to avoid the racial laws, and the garden of the Finzi-Continis becomes an idyllic sanctuary in an increasingly brutal world.

Becker, Jurek, *Jacob the liar*; translated and with a preface by Melvin Kornfeld. (1975)
With a yellow star on his chest, Jacob Heym gives hope to his fellow ghetto occupants by telling them he has clandestinely overheard a radio report that Russian troops are advancing and will soon liberate the ghetto. Jacob's stories halt a stream of suicides, even though savage beatings, shootings, executions, starvation and deportations to concentration camps continue unabated. Becker shows us ordinary people struggling to maintain their humanity and dignity.

With his mother having died in childbirth and his father having disappeared, Maciek is being raised by his Aunt Tania. Posing as Catholic Poles and carrying forged Aryan papers, they travel to Lwów, then to Warsaw--where they meet Maciek's grandfather -- then on to a village where they work on a farm, always barely escaping the trains to Auschwitz.

A professor of German history begins a long journey back into a past she has pushed aside, returning to Germany to reopen the wounds of her own life -- as well as that of her mother -- as a child living in Nazi Germany.

Bored and lonely after his family moves from Berlin to a place called "Out-With" in 1942, Bruno, the son of a Nazi officer, befriends a boy in striped pajamas who lives behind a wire fence.

Paul, raised as Jewish but biologically Aryan, Johann, a streetcar conductor turned rebel, and Martin, an industrialist trying to save Jews, react to the Nazis by overcoming their fears of fighting the regime.
A tale inspired by the post-Holocaust experience is set in an immigrant holding camp in 1945 Israel, where a Polish Zionist, a Parisian beauty, a war-weary Dutchwoman, and an Auschwitz survivor find healing and salvation in the bonds of friendship that are forged while recounting their losses.

The story of one family's struggle to survive in the squalor of the Warsaw ghetto during the onset of the Holocaust focuses on thirteen-year-old Yossel Yurek and his family.

In 1944, Joel Brand – a courier for the Jewish Rescue Committee – carries to Jewish leaders in Palestine an offer from Adolf Eichmann: one hundred Jews will be traded for each truck delivered to Germany.

The King of the Jews is I.C. Trumpelman, the member of the Judenrat responsible for drawing up the death camp lists, a power he uses to establish his own authoritarian regime.

Short stories about the Holocaust written by a variety of Israel’s finest writers.

This portrait of life in Berlin under the Nazis features one working-class couple who decides to take a stand when their only son is killed at the front. With nothing but their grief and each other against the awesome power of the Reich, they launch a clandestine resistance campaign that soon has an enraged Gestapo on their trail, and a world of terrified neighbours and cynical snitches ready to turn them in.

This is a collection of short stories about the horrors of the Holocaust in Poland.

In the autumn of 1942, two young Polish women flee the ghetto and embark on a journey into the heart of enemy territory, working as hired labourers in the factories, farms, and villages of wartime Germany.
A young American man, tracing the history of his grandfather in Russia, hires a Russian guide to help him locate a now destroyed shtetl. In the search the young men discover that they share a previously unknown bond.

A collection of stories depict the author's journey through the Holocaust as a young boy, from the first hints of war on the tranquil Polish countryside, through the ghettos and concentration camps, to bittersweet post-war reunions.

Momik, the only child of Holocaust survivors, is determined to understand the nature of the evil that he hears about in his great-uncle's stories.

Amir is the son of Holocaust survivors. His entire family knows everything about everything, but they refuse to talk about the past. He is determined to understand what life was like for his parents and neighbours. Translated from the Hebrew and written by a child of Holocaust survivors.

Jewish partisan Eliza Wolf leaves her infant daughter with a Polish peasant when she flees the Nazis, and the separation continues after the war when her daughter and her guardians move to America, while Eliza settles dejected in Israel.

In the wake of World War II, Max Berenzon, the son of an art dealer and his pianist wife, wanders Paris in an effort to recover his family's lost masterpieces, looted by the Nazis during occupation, uncovering in the process stories about the heroism of Rose, his father's beautiful gallery aide, the disappearance of his closest friend, and an old family secret.

Ninety-two-year-old Maime reflects on her life, recalling her strong family ties in Poland, her troubled marriage, her survival during the Holocaust in a root cellar, the challenges of a new life in America, and her struggles to cope with an awful moment she was unfairly forced to experience.
After being freed from a Nazi concentration camp, Lisa realizes she is one of the few Jews left alive but dares not hope that her husband is still living.

Kelby, N. M. *In the company of angels*. (2001)
Marie Claire, a young French Jew during World War II, is rescued by two Belgian nuns after her village is bombed and is taken to a convent, where miracles begin to occur, leaving everyone hiding at the convent to wonder if it is Marie Claire who is causing them.

Provides a fictional recreation of the activities and courage of Oskar Schindler, a Catholic German industrialist who gambled everything to save as many Jews as possible from the Nazi death camps.

Relates the daily life of prisoners at a Nazi concentration camp as seen through the eyes of Georg Koves, a fourteen-year-old boy who is deported from his home in Budapest to Auschwitz.

Kis, Danilo. *Hourglass*; translated from the Serbo-Croatian. (1990)
In a devastating story of the Holocaust, a fifty-three-year-old minor functionary of the Royal Hungarian Railways, E.S., investigates the reduction of his pension, while the Nazis plot the extermination of the European Jews.

The book is a collection of stories of Holocaust survivors told by Kovner, the partisan leader who, while dwelling in the Vilna Ghetto, decided to create a partisan organization, and who declared that the Jews should refuse to go to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter.

When his father, a one-time stand-up comedian and humanitarian dedicated to international Jewish causes, is stricken with Alzheimer's, Michael Rosenheim begins to read about his father's life in some old journals, only to discover that the man he thought he knew had invented himself during the Second World War and hidden his dubious past.

The close friendship between Martin Simmonds and violin prodigy Dovidl Rappoport, two Jewish boys living in London between the 1930s and the end of World War II, is threatened by the unexpected disappearance of Dovidl on the eve of his debut performance.
Working as a counsellor at a small Vermont college, Rabbi Rebecca, who has come into possession of a Torah once owned by holocaust victims, pursues her suspicions about the identity of a campus murderer and spiritually explores the nature of a God who would allow evil to happen in the world.

Recounts the adventures of a band of Jews – former Soviet soldiers and concentration camp survivors--who battle the retreating German army in the closing days of World War II.

The story of a Jewish girl's experiences throughout the war and her adjustment to life after the concentration camps.

Litewka recounts the life of resistance leader Abrahm Bankart, whose legendary exploits have humiliated the Nazis. Obsessed with Bankart's capture, the Germans disguise SS officer Eugen Glueck as a Jew and send him into the ghetto to find their nemesis.

Hiding his past as a Nazi officer while living the life of an entrepreneur and family man in northern France, Dr. Max Aue remembers horrifying graphic acts of violence he committed during World War II, including contributions to the Battle of Stalingrad and the final days of the Nazi regime in Berlin.

An account of the daring escape of the author and a friend, then teenagers, from a Nazi death train and of their two weeks in Germany's forests trying to survive and make their way back to their native Prague.

Provides a fictionalized account of the August 1943 revolt of six hundred prisoners at the Treblinka concentration camp, an insurrection that left only forty survivors.

An exploration of the limitations of language in understanding and describing the Holocaust, and a tale about a novelist and a taxidermist who collaborate on a play about a donkey and a howler monkey who have survived a genocide.
Fran and Becky, two children of European parents growing up in Buenos Aires after World War II, must face the complex and destructive heritage of the Holocaust and understand the meaning of guilt and loyalty.

A retelling of the classic fairy tale, set in Nazi-occupied Poland, follows two Jewish children, left by their father and stepmother to seek refuge in a dense forest, as they wander the woods until being taken in by Magda, an eccentric old woman.

An unmatched evocation of the exodus from Paris after the German invasion of 1940, and of life under the Nazi occupation, it was written by the French novelist Irène Némirovsky as events unfolded around her.

A fictional chronicle of the Holocaust revolves around a canny Jewish boy, Jozsef Sondor, and his family in war-torn Budapest, from 1938 to the Russian liberation of 1945.

To a survivor of the Holocaust living in the United States, a shawl symbolizes all that was lost.

Two sisters separated by adoption and a romantic betrayal emigrate to America from Berlin after their parents fall victim to the Nazis.

Wrestling with the contradictions in her life, Rabbi Deborah Green discovers a world of tragedy, madness, love, and redemption when she encounters Henry Friedman, a Holocaust survivor who had attempted suicide.

Chava Rosenfarb, herself a survivor of the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen, draws on her own history to create characters who struggle daily to retain a sense of humanity and dignity despite the physical and psychological effects of ghetto life.
In September 1943, Claudette Blum and her father flee across the Alps into Italy where they seek refuge, only to find an open battle ground among the Nazis, Allied forces, resistance fighters, and ordinary Italians struggling to survive.

At the age of fifteen, Michael Berg falls in love with a woman who disappears, and while observing a trial as a law student years later, he is shocked to discover the same woman as the defendant in a horrible crime.

A young man flees political persecution in Nazi Germany, only to end up shipwrecked on a lifeboat with a jaguar as his only companion.

Jacques Austerlitz, an orphan refugee child who arrived in London in 1939 and was raised by a Methodist minister, struggles to understand who he is as he moves through his life.

Journeying through England, Austria, and America to salvage memories of the Holocaust, four narratives capture the lives of four people in exile – a painter, an elderly White Russian, Sebald's schoolteacher, and his own eccentric Great Uncle Ambrose – in a family portrait of a family destroyed.

Four Jewish musicians, who are fleeing persecution in Nazi Germany, form a brilliant quartet in Israel during the late 30's. The book is written in the form of a quartet with each member relating his or her story.

Chaim Skibelski, a concentration camp prisoner who escapes death by Nazi firing squad, wanders like a ghost through memories of the past, accompanied by a rabbi who has changed into a talking crow.

In Nazi-occupied Warsaw of 1943, Irma Seidenman, a young Jewish widow passes as the wife of a Polish officer, until an informer spots her and drags her off to the Gestapo to await her fate.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus I and Maus II: A Survivor's Tale* 
This is a graphic novel about the artist/author's parents and their experiences as Jews caught up in the Holocaust. It is a chilling rendition of their indescribable experiences and how it affected their subsequent lives in the United States.
The relationship between the Kommandant of a Nazi concentration camp and the Jewish woman inmate who becomes his mistress is captured from the perspectives of both protagonists, as well as from the objective view of official documents.

An opera singer who is being treated for her psychoses by Freud is later trapped in the Holocaust.

Her family lost to the Nazi terror, Helene Gelson survives the Holocaust and determines to locate the son she abandoned in order to save his life and to wreck revenge on those who once betrayed her.

Weil based this novel on his experiences hiding from the Nazis in Czechoslovakia in order to avoid the concentration camps.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night; Dawn; Day.* (1985).
First published in 1960, this trilogy is the autobiographical account of an adolescent boy and his father in Auschwitz. Wiesel writes of their battle for survival, and of his battle with God for a way to understand the wanton cruelty he witnesses each day.

Wojdowski, Bogdan. *Bread for the departed; translated from Polish,* (1997)
Written by a survivor who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto from age ten to 12, this novel is an excellent literary depiction of the Holocaust. Bread, the main subject of daily life in the Ghetto, is the central theme. Showing how children adapt to the particular human condition of near-starvation, Wojdowski describes a life of grovelling for a scrap of bread.

Yehoshua, A. B. *Mr. Mani.* (1992)
Several generations of a Sephardic Jewish family struggle to overcome their self-destructive urges that resulted from a shocking act by the founder of the family.
Romans

C'est l'histoire de Vera et Istvan, Juifs hongrois survivants de la Shoah, qui ont fui Budapest en 1956. Ils ont trouvé refuge au Danemark et se sont donné la mort à Copenhague en 1991.

Appelfeld, Aharon. *Et la fureur ne s'est pas encore tue*; traduit de l'hébreu. (2009)
À 50 ans, Bruno revient sur les épisodes graves de sa vie : de son amputation de la main droite au divorce d'avec sa femme et le rejet de son fils, en passant par les discriminations contre les Juifs, la déportation, l'errance, avec pourtant l'espérance toujours présente d'un monde uni.

Un homme découvre le nom d'une femme qui aurait dénoncé les parents juifs de son épouse durant l'Occupation. Tous sont morts en déportation. Une enquête névrotique s'ensuit qui oblige à nuancer les motivations mais il est trop tard... Un récit oppressant.

Recueil posthume de nouvelles, largement autobiographiques, de David Gordon, jeune Juif érudit de Varsovie, qui fuit le Ghetto au début des années 40 en se faisant passer pour feu Wladyzlaw Grabowski, un Polonais catholique.

Ce roman évoque d'Israël comprend une première partie qui décrit le terrorisme ambiant et une seconde qui plonge dans le souvenir atroce de la Shoah.

Boulouque, Clémence. *Nuit ouverte* (2007.)
Regina Jonas, ordonnée à Berlin en 1935, a été la première femme rabbin au monde. Un réalisateur propose à Elise Lermont, une actrice célèbre secrètement hantée par l'histoire de sa famille, d'incarner la vie de Regina.

Une enfance, une adolescence à huis-clos dans l'ombre étouffante d'une mère rescapée de la déportation et qui ressasse inlassablement ses souvenirs : la dénonciation, l'horreur des camps de concentration, la disparition de son époux...
En 1942, quand l'Europe est à feu et à sang, à Payerne, en Suisse, une ville de charcutiers, rurale et cossue, le chômage aiguise les rancoeurs et la haine ancestrale du Juif.

Histoire d'un jeune résistant français "surdoué et romantique qui aime depuis l'enfance" une jeune aristocrate polonaise "plongée sans conviction dans la Collaboration" avec l'occupant allemand. Le sujet semble bien banal, mais selon Noëlle Loriot, Gary, avec un art subtil, sait "faire du neuf - et même de l'insolite - avec du vieux".

Robi et Mordi, deux juifs, se retrouvent par hasard après la guerre sur le quai d'une gare, dans une ville en ruine, quelque part en Europe. Alors que Robi recherche sa famille, rêve d'amour et de fortune, Mordi l'intellectuel essaie de comprendre.

En grandissant, Amir et Efi veulent comprendre ce qui s'est passé "là-bas", pendant la guerre. Mais personne n'en parle, et il leur faut inventer mille ruses et astuces pour pousser les membres de cette famille reconstituée à se confier.

Jan Karski, résistant polonais, est entré clandestinement en 1942 dans le ghetto de Varsovie afin de témoigner de l'extermination des Juifs d'Europe. Il a tenté aussi d'avertir les Alliés mais s'est heurté au soupçon et au refus.

Hantée par ses souvenirs, ceux d'une vie antérieure merveilleuse et ceux de la souffrance indicible infligée par ses bourreaux, Héléna a vacillé. Entre fiction et réalité, entre ombre et lumière, elle a effacé des preuves et inventé des faits pour se construire un monde à elle. Par petites touches se dessine le bouleversant portrait d'une femme rescapée de la Shoah.

Langfus, Anna. *Le sel et le soufre*. (1962)
Une jeune femme juive, qui n'a jamais connu que le petit monde calme, confortable, que lui ont aménagé ses parents puis son mari, se voit soudain jetée dans la réalité de la guerre, en Pologne, sous l'occupation allemande. Ses parents meurent, ensuite son mari. Et ce sont les caves de la Gestapo.
Chronique romancée d'une enfance et d'une adolescence. Un mélange habile de noir et de rose. Dans la France occupée par les Allemands, un jeune Juif de 15 ans ne veut pas 'mourir sans avoir fait l'amour et la résistance'!

L'Exode de juin 1940 brassa dans un désordre tragique des familles françaises de toute sorte, des plus huppées aux plus modestes. Irène Némirovsky traque les innombrables petites lâchetés et les fragiles élan de solidarité d'une population en déroute.

Dans une petite bourgade juive en Pologne, histoire d'une famille très modeste dont l'ancêtre se nomme Haïm. Ses descendants vont être confrontés au nazisme et à l'histoire de l'après-guerre avec, en particulier, la création et l'existence d'Israël. Parution à titre posthume.

Surminski, Arno. *Les oiseaux d'Auschwitz; traduit de l'allemand* (2009)
Marek Rogalski, étudiant en art, est déporté à Auschwitz. Il fait la connaissance d'un soldat SS, Hans Grote, ornithologue, qui a obtenu l'autorisation d'observer les oiseaux qui survolent le camp pour étudier les flux migratoires. Il devient son assistant afin de réaliser des esquisses des volatiles. Entre les deux hommes, une relation forte et pudique se noue.

À travers le parcours de Patrice Ovieto, jeune diplomate durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, l'auteur retrace le destin tragique des sentinelles, ceux qui ont tenté d'alerter sur les atrocités commises, contre les Juifs notamment.

Un enfant juif face au mal absolu. Récit de l'expérience vécue par l'auteur dans les camps nazis (Birkenau, Auschwitz, Buna et Buchenwald).
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