
FOREWORD

Dorota Glowacka

Try to look. Just try and see.
—Charlotte Delbo, *None of Us Will Return*

Charlotte Delbo penned her memoir *None of Us Will Return* to commemorate 230 women with whom she had been transported from Drancy to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 24 January 1943. As one of only forty-nine members of the convoy who had “returned,” most of them French political prisoners, Delbo made a commitment to preserve the memory of her martyred comrades. With the images of tortured and dying women indelibly seared in her mind, her narrative is punctuated with the refrain, “Try to look. Just try and see” (*Essayez de regarder. Essayez pour voir*).¹ Delbo’s compassionate desire to see transforms her descriptions of horror and humiliation into a work of mourning and into an injunction that those who come after bear witness to what happened to her friends.

Nowhere has similar commitment to an ethics of testimonial gaze been expressed with more lucidity, eloquence, and passion than in *On the Death of Jews*. Straddling the boundary between historical inquiry and personal reflection, this extraordinary text unfolds as a series of encounters with eponymic Holocaust photographs. Although only a small number of photographs are reproduced here, Fresco provides evocative descriptions of many well-known images: synagogues and Torah scrolls burning on the night of *Kristallnacht*; deportations to the ghettos and the camps; and, finally, mass executions in the killing fields of Eastern Europe. The unique set of photographs included in *On the Death of Jews* shows groups of women and children from Liepaja (Liepāja), shortly before they were killed

in December 1941 in the dunes of Shkede (Šķēde) on the Baltic Sea. In the last photograph of the series, we see the victims' bodies tumbling into the pit.

The thriving Jewish community of Liepaja, a city in Latvia also known by its German name "Libau," was mainly destroyed between July and December 1941. In an earlier essay titled "Remembering the Unknown," Fresco wrote, "What the Nazis had annihilated over and above individuals, was the very substance of a world, a culture, a history, a way of life"—and for Liepaja these words ring especially true.²

Founded in 1625, the town of Liepaja, perched on the shores of the Baltic Sea, was an important hub on merchants' routes, first in German Courland (Kurzeme, in Latvian) and then in tsarist Russia after the region was annexed in 1795.³ Although Jewish merchants had passed through Liepaja already in the seventeenth century, the records of the first Jewish community date back to 1799. In the mid-1930s, more than seven thousand Jews lived there, tightly woven into the city's rich and diverse social fabric—this was their home. In an interview given to the Shoah Foundation in 1996, Shoshana Kahn, a survivor from Liepaja, reminisced about the city's beauty and the smell of linden trees, which had given the city its name (from *liepa*, the Latvian word for "linden"; the city's coat of arms displays a lion leaning on a linden tree). As elsewhere in Latvia, which had become an independent republic in 1918, Jews in Liepaja enjoyed full autonomy. The community was diverse, bustling with myriad cultural and business activities, as well as with scholarly and religious life. Many of the city's doctors, lawyers, and business owners were Jewish. Kahn recalls, "The Jews [in Liepaja] tried to identify with the higher culture. And in Libau, German was the culture."⁴ But, aside from so-called Courland Jews, assimilated to German culture, there were also Yiddish-speaking Jews and some who primarily spoke Russian. As Max Kaufmann, survivor from Riga, recalls in *Churbn Lettland*, his memoir written shortly after the war, Latvian Jews were rabbis and world-renowned secular scholars; painters, musicians, and writers; bank owners and dentists—all of whom played a central role in Latvia's cultural, social, and economic life.⁵

The rise of Latvian ethnonationalism in the 1930s, under the dictatorship of Kārlis Ulmanis, augured the eclipse of the

golden era of Latvian Jewry. Ulmanis's ambitions for an independent state were cut short, however, when the Red Army marched into Latvia on 17 June 1940. Immediately, property was confiscated and businesses were nationalized, with thousands of members of the "bourgeoisie" arrested and deported to Siberia. The number of Jews among the deportees was disproportionately high, which did not prevent their Latvian neighbors from blaming them for the evils of communism. As Bernhard Press, another survivor from Riga, bitterly remarked, "The fact that the victims of the KGB also included numerous Jews did not concern the anti-Semites."⁶

At the same time, rumors about the persecution and murder of Jews in Germany and Austria began to reach the Jewish communities in Latvia. George Schwab, a survivor from Liepaja, remembers overhearing rumors that Jewish women in Vienna were forced to use their furs to polish Germans' cars. In his recollection, however, "everyone felt safe in the Baltics. We felt safe. Nothing is going to happen to us."⁷ It was a false sense of security, of course. Operation Barbarossa stormed into the Baltic republics at the end of June 1941, and Liepaja, after a five-day siege, was the first city to come under German occupation.⁸ The Jews of Liepaja were subjected to a rapid succession of restrictions. Schwab says that he will never forget the humiliation of running into a Latvian classmate on the street and being forced to walk in the gutter: "She sort of looked away, and I felt embarrassed that I was a Jew, that I had to wear this [the yellow star] and I could not go on the sidewalk."⁹ Many Latvians greeted Germans as liberators; Kaufmann remembers that on the first day of the occupation, the Latvian hymn was played alongside the Horst Wessel song. Soon, Latvian auxiliary security police would play a major role in arrests, round-ups, and killings. Based in Riga, the infamous Arājs Kommando, named after its leader Viktors Arājs, would travel to the execution sites in blue buses, the sight of which has been carved in the memory of the survivors of the Riga ghetto: "The blue buses drove back and forth."¹⁰ Survivors of the ghetto also recall acts of humiliation against elderly Jewish men, brutal sexual assaults of young Jewish women, and systematic destruction of cultural and religious landmarks. Even the Jewish cemeteries in Riga were obliterated to erase the traces of the city's Jewish past.

The first ghettos in Latvia were established in July 1941, and the Jews of Riga were relocated to the ghetto in September: “One must imagine this move to be roughly similar to the Jews’ exodus from Egypt,” writes Kaufmann,¹¹ trying to make sense of the precipitate collapse of the Jewish world. The Riga ghetto was sealed in October: as it turned out, the ghettos mainly served the purpose of concentrating undesirable populations in preparation for mass killings. The majority of Riga Jews were murdered in two large *Aktionen* in the Rumbula forest, just outside the city, on 30 November and 8–9 December 1941. With the ghetto emptied out, thousands of Jews from Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Germany were resettled in the abandoned apartments.¹² Gertrude Schneider, who had been one of these deportees, later remembered that “the new arrivals found food, frozen solid, still on plates.”¹³

In Liepaja, mass executions started early in July 1941, escalating when Untersturmführer Wolfgang Kügler took over as SD and Security Police Chief and recruited the help of the Kriegsmarine (War Navy) and the Arājs SD Kommando. Daily executions took place in the Rainis city park, at the Fishermen’s Harbor near the Baka lighthouse, and on the beach near the harbor.¹⁴ The victims were killed in small groups to conceal the nature of the operations and to maintain order. In September, a new killing site was established at the former Latvian army shooting range at Shkede, located on the Baltic shore about fifteen kilometers north of the city. Here, on the orders of the new commander of the region, SS General Friedrich Jeckeln, the “final solution” of Liepaja Jews was carried out: 2,749 women, children, and elderly men were shot over the pits in the dunes of Shkede between 15 and 17 December 1941.¹⁵ The annihilation of Liepaja’s Jews followed what we now know was a typical pattern of genocide: men of fighting age and male leaders of the community were the first to be rounded up and killed, followed by the root-and-branch murder of women and children.¹⁶ In a short film of the executions carried out at the end of July 1941, we see only men being shot. Photographs of the December executions in Shkede, however, which marked the final stages of the extermination campaign, show women and children.

On 1 July 1942, the remaining Liepaja Jews, 832 in number, were relocated to a small ghetto, the size of one square city block, and forced to perform basic services for the Germans. Among the survivors were George Schwab, who was twelve years old at the time, and his mother; the kommandant of the ghetto, Franz Kerscher, hired Schwab as his errand boy. In October 1943, the ghetto was liquidated and the prisoners were transported to Riga's Kaiserwald concentration camp—which, as Schwab recalls, “was hell . . . with constant beatings and screamings.”¹⁷ As the Red Army was approaching in October 1944, those still alive in Kaiserwald were transported by ship or rail to Stutthoff concentration camp. With the imminent end of the Third Reich in April 1945, the survivors were put on barges and left adrift at sea without food or drinking water. George Schwab recalls that they were eventually rescued by Norwegian prisoners, but some, including eight survivors from Liepaja, were shot by German navy servicemen as they were wading to the safety of the shore. George Schwab was among a handful who were liberated by the British army a few hours later. Fewer than two hundred Liepaja Jews survived the war, including those who were hidden by Latvian neighbors.¹⁸ As Kaufmann wrote in 1947, expressing his grief, “Jewish Liepaja exists no longer.”¹⁹

After years of searching the archives and mining survivor testimonies, American scholar Edward Anders (a survivor from Liepaja, born E. Alperovitch) and Juris Dubrovskis (a scholar from Riga) compiled a database of 7,142 names of victims and survivors from Liepaja; for almost every murdered Jew of Liepaja, we now have a name.²⁰ On 4 June 2005, the monument to the victims of the December mass killings was dedicated in Shkede. Designed by sculptor Raimonds Gabaliņš, the monument takes the form of a large menorah, laid out alongside what is believed to be the site of a mass grave.²¹ Concluding the dedication ceremony, George Schwab stated, “I hope you look at [this monument] and remember.”²² When the visitors to the memorial turn to look at the Baltic's rolling waves, what they see is likely the last view the condemned saw before they were shot.

The frothing waves can be clearly recognized in the photographs of the executions, taken, most likely, by Carl (Karl)-Emil

Strott, who was stationed in Liepaja between July 1941 and January 1945.²³ Schwab remembers Strott's visits to his parents' apartment: the SS Oberscharführer scavenged for valuables, and one of the prized possessions he took was a stamp collection that belonged to Schwab's brother. The family also owned two Leica cameras: one of them had to be given to a Latvian collaborator, likely a member of the Arājs Kommando, and the other was stolen by the SS Scharführer Erich Handke, who, like Strott, was an avid photographer and one of the officers participating in the *Aktion* at Shkede.²⁴ Although the pictures at Shkede were captured with a Minox camera, I wonder what scenes Handke may have captured looking through the lens of the camera that used to belong to a Jewish family.

A man whose life had been spared because his skills as an electrician were "essential" to the Germans stationed in Liepaja found the negatives of the photographs in Strott's apartment. The photographs were entered as evidence during the *Einsatzgruppen* trials in Berlin and Hannover in 1971. In this volume, Fresco introduces Strott as the man who "saw nothing."²⁵ In his deposition in the 1964 trial of another perpetrator, Strott denied that he had taken the photographs. Although he admitted to having been at the site of the execution, he described his duties as making sure that there were no German or local spectators, so that no one—apparently not even he himself—could "see" anything at all. What Strott presented before the court was a narrative of blindness and willed amnesia.

Another notorious perpetrator with a camera stationed in Liepaja was Reinhard Wiener, a member of the Kriegsmarine who filmed the executions at the end of July 1941.²⁶ Compared to Strott, he was a less reluctant witness: in 1981 he agreed to be interviewed about his film in Tel Aviv, perhaps in pursuit of a perverse claim to fame as the author of the only such extant documentary. It is clear from his interview, however, that he also remained blind to what was unfolding before his camera, even if he could see it clearly. When asked what exactly he had seen, he replied, "I couldn't observe what exactly was going on around when I was filming because I was looking through the lens and I could only see that section that I was looking at through the lens."²⁷ The camera's lens refracted the specta-

cle, apparently shielding the photographer from the realization that he was participating in mass murder. The presence of the camera also protected him from the emotional impact of what he saw. Thus, while we have evidence that alcohol was often used to alleviate perpetrators' stress and lessen inhibitions, it appears that cameras functioned as buffers that kept the grisly reality of their involvement in genocide at bay. A camera could shrink the photographer's or filmmaker's field of vision to a carefully selected fragment, perhaps giving him an illusion of being in control of what must have eluded his comprehension.

In the interval between Wiener's filming of the killings in Liepaja and Strott's taking the photos at Shkede, the restrictions against photographing executions came into effect; hence, while Wiener described the presence of rows of spectators, the executions in December were hidden from public view. Until the policy was reversed, however, the soldiers were ordered to attend the executions, although evidently many were eager to do so. As the head of the 2nd company of Reserve Police Battalion 13 testified, "The execution area [near the naval port in Liepaja] was visited by scores of German spectators from the Navy and the Reichsbahn (state railway). I turned to Kügler and said in no uncertain terms that it was intolerable that shootings were carried out in front of spectators."²⁸ In his interview, Wiener recalled that obtaining permission to film was easy, and even after prohibitions against filming executions were introduced, no real measures were undertaken to confiscate the existing footage. In fact, cases of courts-martial for disobeying the prohibition were rare. Although, during the trial of SS-Untersturmführer Max Täubner in May 1943, "his disobedience on account of taking photographs [was] viewed as a particularly serious case," an equally damning circumstance was the fact that he had tried to coerce his wife into having an abortion, in violation of the Nazi policies of population control. In any case, Täubner received a lenient sentence of five years' imprisonment, and he was promptly pardoned in January 1945.²⁹

During the campaign in the East, German soldiers made excellent use of small-size cameras (Minox, Zeiss Icon, and a more expensive Leica) that could easily fit into a backpack or even a pocket. They took thousands of photographs, many of which were discovered after the war, although only some later became

iconic, circulating in documentary films, visual histories of the Holocaust, and museum exhibits. For the soldiers, these photographs were prized possessions, collected in albums, shared among their comrades, and sent home as “mementos,” as if “shooting” the destruction of the Jewish communities had been necessary to make the vision of Germany’s *Volkskörper* (national body), cleansed of the Jewish presence, real.

On the Death of Jews recounts the fate of the destroyed Jewish communities, but it also offers a visual anamnesis of the history that the Nazi regime sought to remake in their own image. One of the most striking episodes early in the book is Fresco’s description of the photograph that shows the citizens of the town of Mosbach assembled in the market square on 10 November 1938 to watch the burning of the furniture from a nearby synagogue. The onlookers are arranged several rows deep.³⁰ Another picture shows the synagogue veiled in thick smoke. Throughout her commentary on this photograph, and then continuing for the remainder of the book, Fresco repeats the phrase “*vor aller Augen*” (before everyone’s eyes) as if it were an incantation. This reiterated phrase amplifies the violence of the spectators’ gaze and enhances the effect of this scene as a gruesome, carnivalesque ritual. Yet, Fresco’s inference that the fabric flung on top of the heap of furniture was probably the covers of the Holy Ark suddenly conjures a very different point of view: namely, survivors’ recollections of cultural destruction. Helga Franks, who was ten years old in November 1938, was on her way to school located in a Berlin synagogue when she saw that the building was “lit up,” and the firemen with hoses were standing around, protecting the nearby houses: “I went back to the apartment and I was crying. The synagogue was burning!”³¹ Three years later, standing on the balcony of his house in Riga, Kaufmann saw “the burning of the great synagogue on Gogol Street and the Old-New Synagogue and the Hasidic houses of prayer [in Riga]. Many Jews, dressed in their prayer shawls and *talith [sic]*, flung themselves into the flames to save the Torahs,” bringing to mind apocalyptic scenes from Marc Chagall’s paintings.³²

In another remarkable passage, Fresco describes a photograph that shows the deportation of a group of Jewish inhabitants of “a small town in the Rhineland.”³³ She remarks on

the professional quality of the shot, but then she redirects our attention to the faces of the deportees. The final destination of this transport will be Riga, Latvia, the city to which thousands of German and Austrian Jews were deported.³⁴ Although this photograph was also intended as part of Nazi propaganda, Fresco's description submits it to a double retake: she inscribes the fate of the Jews of Mosbach into the history of this German city, from which it was efficiently airbrushed after the war, as if forcing the photograph to say, *J'accuse!* At the same time, by focusing the reader's gaze on a group of condemned individuals, she resignifies this image as a work of mourning.

In her book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag, who would never forget the shock of seeing, at age twelve, the photographs of the liberation of the camps, draws attention to the violence inherent in the act of photographing: the camera, she writes, is a phallic, predatory weapon, while the act of taking pictures is "a semblance of appropriation, a semblance of rape."³⁵ In the context of Holocaust photographs, this violence is literalized: at the sites of mass executions, the clicking of the shutter reverberates with the salvos of guns, the coalescence brought out when a more neutral French word, *les clichés*, is translated as "shots." Similarly, looking at the well-known photograph of the four women and the girl shortly before their execution at Shkede (see this book's cover), Marianne Hirsch comments: "Displayed in their full vulnerability and humiliation they are doubly exposed in their nakedness and their powerlessness. They are shot before they are shot."³⁶ Fresco notes, "Only the youngest women, it seems, were made to strip naked," drawing attention to the prurient nature of the camera's gaze.³⁷ It is no coincidence that many of the iconic Holocaust photographs show violated and naked female bodies.³⁸ Yet, looking at the same photographs, Shoshana Kahn sees a friend rather than a degraded emblem of Nazi atrocities: "Those are people from my—there is a girl from my class. She sits like that . . . Jenny Brun. She sits like that, naked in the ice."³⁹ Kahn looks at this tortured likeness of Jenny with compassion, as if deflecting the murderous, sexualized Nazi gaze away from her former classmate's body.

That these photographs exist, writes Fresco, is testimony that the persecution and murder of the Jews "had its witnesses, at

the same time as it had its victims and its perpetrators.”⁴⁰ The presence of a photographer can be traced in the trajectory of his gaze as he calibrated the best shot; although he is invisible, his gestures are imprinted in the posture and facial expressions of those whom he captured in the picture. In the photographs described by Fresco, there are also numerous bystanders present at the scene, some caught on camera and others cropped just outside the frame.

According to French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, we are all primarily witnesses to the lives and the suffering of others: “The subject in which the other is in the same . . . bears witness to it.”⁴¹ Through these acts of witnessing, we are ethically bound to others, for whom we are responsible and whose lives and well-being are inseparable from ours. This undeclinable ethical duty does not render murder and betrayal of the other impossible, as Lévinas, a Holocaust survivor originally from Kaunas, Lithuania, knew well. Yet, because we are always implicated in the lives of others, even if we turn away from the spectacle of their suffering, we are witnesses nevertheless—albeit, perhaps unwilling or even hostile ones who refuse to see the other’s face. A woman with a child in her arms gawking at a Jewish man having his beard cut off (I am thinking of a well-known image from the Warsaw ghetto), the onlookers assembled in the market square in Mosbach, and Strott standing behind the camera in Shkede are negative witnesses—witnesses in spite of themselves. Within the purview of Lévinas’s ethics, even a murderer (and, at his trial, Carl-Emil Strott was found guilty of murder) bears witness to the lives he has helped extinguish, although he is a reluctant, self-incriminating, and “unseeing” witness. Regardless of the murderous intent, writes Lévinas, the other always “concerns me” and “looks at me” (*Il me regarde*).⁴²

What about contemporary witnesses? Looking at the photographs of the executions at Shkede, we have to imagine ourselves standing in the exact place from which they were taken, which is likely identical to the spot from which the shots were fired. As cospectators after the fact, we are implicated in this scene of unspeakable violence unfolding before our eyes: *vor unserer Augen*. Fresco’s book demands that we put ourselves in the place of this negative witness so that we can look at

the victims depicted in the photographs “otherwise” (to borrow Lévinas’ expression signifying primordial responsibility), so that we can “see” them look at us. By orchestrating this imperceptible yet radical shift in the trajectory of the gaze, Fresco coimplicates us in this look, enabling a passage from the perpetrator’s negative witnessing to ethical testimony and remembrance. As she reminds us, such testimonial practice of radically disrupting the Nazi gaze was initiated already in 1960 when Gerhard Schoenberner published *Der gelbe Stern* (The Yellow Star), an album of Holocaust photographs, for his “compatriots who did not want to see.”⁴³

While the debates about Holocaust photographs have revolved around the question of whether images of atrocity desensitize us to horror or, conversely, have the capacity to provoke empathy and awaken our conscience,⁴⁴ the fundamental question that Fresco posits is of a different nature altogether. Renowned for her work on antisemitism and Holocaust denial, she focuses on the processes of forgetting, denial, and historical distortion. What she puts in full view in *On the Death of Jews*, however, are the mechanisms that first set in motion the very possibility of denying that “it happened.” These mechanisms were, paradoxically perhaps, enabled by the perpetrators’ compulsive photographing of the acts of both symbolic and physical destruction of Jewish existence in Europe. But, as Fresco writes in an earlier essay entitled “Negating the Dead,” fabricating denial also “reveals the true weight of genocide.”⁴⁵ This is why it is imperative that we look at the images that have been bequeathed to us by perpetrators from an entirely different angle. Rather than numb us to horror, these photographs, endlessly recycled throughout the postmemorial landscape, can interrupt the complacency of our habits of seeing (and the habits of not seeing). “Through repetition,” writes Hirsch, “the postmemorial viewers attempt . . . to re-envision and redirect, the mortifying gaze of these surviving images.”⁴⁶ If the Nazi gaze was like the deadly look of the Medusa who turned living beings into stone, as Primo Levi famously wrote, we are now reminded that, in the ancient myth, Medusa was a beautiful woman and a beloved daughter before she was violated, turned into a monster, and then decapitated.⁴⁷ So were the women in the photographs from Shkede.

Thus, when we look at these images, we must reconceive what “the death of Jews” means, as the title of Fresco’s book stipulates. German Jewish thinker Hannah Arendt once wrote that the true force of annihilation in the Nazi camps (and, we must add, in the killing fields of Eastern Europe) was that “*they took away the individual’s own death*, proving henceforth nothing belonged to him and he belonged to no one.”⁴⁸ Fresco’s unique engagement with photographs from the Shoah shows that, although we cannot return the victims to the world of the living, perhaps we can at least give them back their deaths. Through careful historical research, we can wrest their deaths from the anonymity of mass destruction and situate them in the context of former Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Indeed, as we have seen, it is largely the rediscovery of the photographs that gave the impetus to the efforts to recreate and commemorate the life of the Jewish community in Liepaja. Looking at the photographs, Fresco pries the Jewish victims’ unique lives from the frames into which they were forced by the perpetrators, and she releases them into the current of history and memory. Referring to a group of forty German Jewish refugees who, when they found themselves unwelcome in occupied France, wrote a desperate letter to the prefecture, Fresco writes, “You can almost hear their voices.”⁴⁹ In *On the Death of Jews*, we can almost see the victims’ faces, hidden behind the grimace of terror or a forced pose that was captured by the camera.

Fresco has carefully documented the itineraries that led European Jews to the sites of their murders. In that sense, the Shkede photographs she reproduces are just that: historical documentation. And yet, although the book is entirely devoid of pathos, every word in *On the Death of Jews* is unsettling, as if it were choked with sorrow, just as the photographs, despite their objective status as evidence, are unbearable to look at. The elegiac rhythm of Fresco’s narrative brings to mind the tonality of Sarah Kofman’s *Paroles suffoquées* (Smothered Words), in which the French philosopher struggles with the tension between the necessity of commemorating her father’s death in Auschwitz and the impossibility of “saying it.” As a result, Kofman’s narrative is written in impossible words: “Knotted words . . . which stick in your throat and cause you

to suffocate, to lose your breath, which asphyxiate you, taking away the possibility of even beginning.”⁵⁰ Every paragraph of *On the Death of Jews* is suffused with similar breathlessness.

Intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra has argued for a participatory model of writing history, which would integrate empathy and account for the transferential impact of past traumas on the historian. This modality of “empathic unsettlement” in historical writing would allow for productive, “tense interplay between . . . objective reconstruction and affective response to the voice of the victims.”⁵¹ Yet even LaCapra’s empathic model of “writing history, writing trauma” cannot explain the undercurrent of grief that runs through Fresco’s text and that leaves me dumbstruck every time I read it.

In “Remembering the Unknown,” Fresco recounts interviews with eight Jewish men and women born shortly after the war in France.⁵² The members of the second generation, who inherited “wounds of memory of parents frozen in silence,”⁵³ are bound together by the absence of the memory of the past that has affected them deeply, the past that holds them in its grip.⁵⁴ Silences weighed with that history seep through the pages of Fresco’s encounters with Holocaust photographs, the emotion occasionally expressed in a choking succession of sentence fragments: “Refugee. A national. Turned away. Alien, Jew. In France. ‘It is right that he should pay’”;⁵⁵ or in a series of repeated negations: “These photographs do not say. . . . And the little one. . . . whose face we cannot see. . . . We do not hear whether she is crying. Nor do these photographs say whether, as unthinkable as this is. . . .”⁵⁶ Suddenly, the refrain *vor aller Augen* returns with the force of traumatic compulsion to repeat. Inflected with grief, it keeps the reader riveted to the sights of displacement and loss. Yet, as Hirsch has argued, although such endless repetition of the image might carry the danger of overidentification with the victim, for the second generation, it also enables the transmission of an inherited traumatic past in such a way that it can be worked through.⁵⁷

Nadine Fresco’s book, which I read for the first time almost ten years ago, left me with the images that, to echo Susan Sonntag’s words, have haunted me ever since;⁵⁸ the images that can never fade “out of sight, out of mind.” This translation of *On the Death of Jews* into English will make it possible for many

new readers to apprehend them outside of their immediate frames and to think about them beyond the accustomed trajectories of Holocaust history; that is, to look at them and try to see.

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Notes

1. Charlotte Delbo, "None of Us Will Return," in *Auschwitz and After*, trans. Rosette C. Lamont (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 95. Delbo, *Aucun de nous ne reviendra* (Paris: Minuit, 1970), 137.
2. Nadine Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown," trans. Alan Sheridan, *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 11 (1984): 20. The essay was originally published in *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* 24 (1981).
3. After the annexation, Germans living in the Courland Governorate retained autonomy and privileges.
4. Transcript of Shoshana Kahn interview, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, interview Code 16106, 3–4.
5. Max Kaufmann, *Churbn Lettland: The Destruction of the Jews of Latvia*, ed. Gertrude Schneider and Erhard Roy Wiehn, trans. Laimdota Mazzarins (Konstanz, Germany: Hartung-Gorre Publishers, 2010 [1947]), 30.
6. Bernhard Press, *The Murder of the Jews in Latvia, 1941–45*, trans. Laimdota Mazzarins (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 34. See also Press, "A Town Named Libau (Liepaja, Latvia)," www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/libau/libau.html.
7. Transcript of interview with George Schwab, 18 March 2005, USHMM Jeff and Toby Herr Oral History Archive, 2005 RG-50.030*0493, 20.
8. Andrew Ezergailis emphasizes the city's spirit of resistance, which, in his view, was also behind its ethnically Latvian inhabitants' more compassionate attitude toward the Jews than elsewhere in German occupied Latvia. See Andrew Ezergailis, "The Killings in the Cities: Liepaja," in *Jews in Liepaja, Latvia, 1941–45: A Memorial Book*, ed. Edward Anders and Juris Dubrovskis, 1–11 (Burlingame, CA: Anders Press, 2001).
9. Transcript of George Schwab interview, 44.
10. Kaufmann, *Churbn Lettland*, 68.

11. Kaufmann, *Churn Lettland*, 49.
12. Martin Dean and Geoffrey P. Megargee, eds., "Estonia and Latvia Regions," *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the USHMM, 2012), 992–96. See also Josifs Šteimanis, *History of Latvian Jews*, trans. Helena Belova, ed. Edward Anders (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
13. Gertrude Schneider, *Journey into Terror: Story of the Riga Ghetto* (New York: Ark House, 1979).
14. Ezergailis, "The Killings in the Cities," 6.
15. Jeckeln was previously in charge of the massacres in Babi Yar, on the outskirts of Kiev, occupied Ukraine, and of the Rumbula killings in Riga.
16. See Adam Jones, "Gendering Genocide," in *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 464–98.
17. Transcript of George Schwab interview, 57.
18. 138 Latvians (including 14 from Libau) were declared Righteous among the Nations by Yad Vashem in Israel for helping Jews during the war. See <https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/pdf-drupal/latvia.pdf>.
19. Kaufmann, *Churn Lettland*, 162.
20. See Edward Anders and Juris Dubrovskis, "Who Died in the Holocaust? Recovering Names from Official Records," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 114–38.
21. In 1993, the remains of the Jews who had been shot in Rainis Park in July 1941 were reburied in the Liepaja Jewish Cemetery and a granite stone with the Star of David was unveiled. In 2004, a memorial wall was installed next to the memorial, with 6,428 names of the Jews of Liepaja, as well as 46 names of the Latvian rescuers.
22. *Memorial to the Jews of Liepaja (Libau): Victims of the Holocaust (1941–1945)*, DVD 0148, USHMM.
23. See Ezergailis, "The Killings in the Cities," 4.
24. Transcript of George Schwab interview, 42, and a personal conversation with Schwab, 6 July 2019. The information on Handke was obtained at https://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/murderSite.asp?site_id=572, accessed on 7 July 2019.
25. Fresco, see below, 57. In his own trial in Hannover in 1971, Strott was found guilty of direct participation in the executions, but, as did the other members of the SD tried in Hannover, he got a light prison sentence. See "Liepaja," *Encyclopaedia of Camps and Ghettos*, vol. 2, part B, 1,011–14.
26. Reinhard Wiener, *Juden Exekution in Libau 1941* [Execution of Jews in Liepaja], Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, RG Number: RG-60.1767, Film ID: 4149. Also accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mroRsZ5yUY>.

27. The interview with Reinhard Wiener was conducted in Tel Aviv on 27 September 1981.
28. Ernst Klee et al, eds., *"The Good Old Days": The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders*, trans. Deborah Burnstone (Old Saybrook, CT: Konecky and Konecky, 1991), 128–29.
29. Klee et al, *"The Good Old Days,"* 202.
30. Fresco, see below, 13. See the photograph with the caption "German civilians watch as the furnishings of the synagogue in Mosbach (Baden-Württemberg) are burned in the town's market square."
31. Interview with Helga Franks, the USHMM Jeff and Toby Herr Oral History Archive, 6 August 1991. 1989.346.19 |RG Number: RG-50.031.0019.
32. Kaufmann, *Churbn Lettland*, 39.
33. Fresco, see below, 29.
34. The photograph with the caption indicating the destination of the transport is reproduced in Reinhard Rürup, *Vor aller Augen: Fotodokumente des nationalsozialistischen Terrors in der Provinz / Klaus Hesse und Philipp Springer* (Essen: Klartext, 2002), 153.
35. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 24.
36. Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 24.
37. Fresco, see below, 51.
38. See also Janina Struk, "Images of Women in Holocaust Photography," *Feminist Review* 88 (2008): 11–21.
39. Interview with Shoshana Kahn, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, interview Code 16106, transcript, 3–4.
40. Fresco, see below, 9.
41. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 146.
42. Emmanuel Lévinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 196, and *Dieu, la mort et le temps* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2006), 2,001.
43. Fresco, see below, 5.
44. See Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), and Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London: L. B. Tauris, 2004). See also Griselda Pollock, "Photographing Atrocity: Becoming Iconic?" in *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, ed. Geoffrey Patchen et al. (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), and Brad Prager, "On the Liberation of Perpetrator Photography," in *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetic, Memory*, ed. David Bathrick et al. (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 19–37.

45. Nadine Fresco, "Negating the Dead," in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), 191.
46. Hirsch, "Surviving Images," 8.
47. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (2007), 100, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book IV, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 101–6.
48. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 452; emphasis in original.
49. Fresco, see below, 27.
50. Sarah Kofman, *Smothered Words*, trans. Madelaine Dobie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 39.
51. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 109.
52. Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown," 417.
53. Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown," 419.
54. Fresco, "Remembering the Unknown," 417. Efraim Sicher speaks of the second generation as bearing "the scar without the wound" in *Breaking the Crystal* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press), 27.
55. Fresco, see below, 24.
56. Fresco, see below, 51.
57. Hirsch, "Surviving Images," 9.
58. Susan Sontag concludes, "Let the atrocity images haunt us. . . . The images say: This is what human beings are capable of doing. . . . Don't forget." Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 115.