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## Re-reading Adorno: The 'after-Auschwitz' Aporia

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Because representation necessarily mediates between a subject — in the case of the Shoah, a subject of acute moral magnitude — and its reader, there is inevitably a moral peril involved in its artistic rendering. Representation after all requires a medium, medium implies the imposition of form, form raises the question of literary language as the means of representation. The writer in the aftermath of the Shoah was confronted with an irresolvable aporetic situation: there was a moral obligation to bear witness to the heinous crimes, yet the writer was constantly threatened with speechlessness due to the constraints which this event of unimaginable magnitude imposed upon conventional language. As a formidable challenge to human comprehension and conceptualisation, the Shoah presented, by extension, an onerous challenge to articulation. Those writing in the German tongue faced yet another formidable barrier — the medium itself had become compromised. Having lain at the core of a decadent ideology the conventional German language had been manipulated and distorted under the National Socialist regime and had adopted perverse and sinister meanings and associations. The writer was thus forced to express a horror of unimaginable magnitude by means of an impaired and misappropriated linguistic medium, which seemed to be completely incommensurate with its subject of representation. Added to this of course was the question of the legitimacy of the artistic rendering of the suffering of millions. The crisis of aesthetics thus acquired an ethical dimension. The moral and aesthetic justification for the very act of writing itself was fundamentally called into question. The issue was thus not only *how* the Shoah could be represented but *whether* its appropriation in literary form was legitimate at all.

It is difficult to think of another area of literary discourse in which a critic has brought such a profound influence to bear, as Theodor W. Adorno has, in the area of literature concerning the Shoah. It is also difficult to think of another area of literary discourse in which a critic's pronouncements have been misinterpreted so often and to such a degree as have Adorno's reflections concerning the status of art after the Shoah. Reference here is of course being made to Adorno's (supposed) 'dictum' concerning the barbarity of poetry after Auschwitz. The principle aims of this paper are to restore his reflections to their argumentative context and to restore the

dialectical tension conferred on them in the original text. I will examine what I have termed the “after-Auschwitz” aporia, so evident in Adorno’s reflections on post-Shoah art and yet overlooked all too frequently in the research literature. Defined as an irresolvable impasse as a result of equally plausible yet inconsistent premises the term “aporia” succinctly captures the essence of Adorno’s deliberations on post-Shoah art: the imperative to represent the egregious crimes and the impossibility of doing so. I will demonstrate that Adorno’s pronouncements were never meant as silence-inducing taboos, but rather as concrete theoretical reflections upon the moral status of art in the aftermath of the Shoah and as warnings of the moral peril involved in the artistic rendering of mass extermination.

There is hardly a single contribution to the debate surrounding the representation of the Shoah that does not draw, to some degree or other, upon Adorno’s thought; and rightly so: his extensive reflections on the status of art after the event are after all crucial to any consideration of the representation of the event. The problem, however, is that time and time again his complex deliberations have been and indeed continue to be reduced to a single sentence: “Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben ist barbarisch” [It is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz].<sup>1</sup> These eight words have come to be known as Adorno’s ‘dictum’; a dictum, which has supposedly denounced all art after Auschwitz as invalid. To cite but a very brief number of misquotations and misinterpretations; Susan Gubar makes reference to “Adorno’s *injunction* against poetry” and to the “nihilism of his *prohibition* against poetry” (240, my emphasis). Günther Bohnheim (promoting an argument in direct contrast to the latter critic) goes so far as to entitle his monograph *Versuch zu zeigen, daß Adorno mit seiner Behauptung, nach Auschwitz lasse sich kein Gedicht mehr schreiben, recht hätte*. [The attempt to show that Adorno’s claim, that after Auschwitz poetry cannot be written, is correct]. One of the most recent contributions to the debate by Elrud Ibsch again misreads Adorno’s words as a call for silence: “Adorno mußte widersprochen werden. *Das Verstummen der Poesie* wäre der Triumph der NS-Barbarei noch über ihr politisches Ende hinaus“ (48, my emphasis). [Adorno must be contradicted. *The silencing of poetry* would mean the triumph of the National Socialist barbarity]. When examined within context, however, it becomes rapidly clear that Adorno did not cancel the possibility of art after Auschwitz but rather highlighted the aporetic situation in which the post-Shoah writer found

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<sup>1</sup> All translations my own

himself; an aporia so extreme that it leaves no space for meaningful resolution. The basic context of the sentence, overlooked time and time again in the research literature is as follows:

Je totaler die Gesellschaft, um so verdinglichter auch der Geist und um so paradoxer sein Beginnen, der Verdinglichung aus Eigenem sich zu entwinden. Noch das äußerste Bewußtsein vom Verhängnis droht zum Geschwätz zu entarten. Kulturkritik findet sich der letzten Stufe der Dialektik von Kultur und Barberei gegenüber: nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frißt auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben" (Adorno „Kulturkritik I“ 30). [The more total the society the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its attempt to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric, and this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today].

For Adorno, the barbarism of poetry after Auschwitz stems from the fact that it will fail to produce the knowledge of its own impossibility due to absolute reification. All-encompassing instrumental rationality fused with irrational ends, technological domination and the reduction of all thought to the calculation of the efficiency of means - these Enlightenment and capitalist tendencies (for Adorno, as a member of the Frankfurt School, the perilous legacies of modernity) had their apotheosis in the Nazi death camps. Absolute reification has halted the process of self-reflection. As a form of supposedly free and individual expression it is irreconcilable with the fact that fascism not only integrated the individual, but along with it those cultural spheres presumed to be autonomous. In the concentration camps human life had been rendered indifferent and by extension expendable. This freedom of individual expression is thus but a façade and a denial of the fact that the death camps brought an end to the very idea of the autonomous subject. The annihilation of the very *concept* of the individual is of absolute centrality to Adorno's line of thought:

“Der Völkermord ist die absolute Integration, die überall sich vorbereitet, wo Menschen gleichgemacht werden, geschliffen, wie man beim Militär es nannte, bis man sie, Abweichungen vom Begriff ihrer vollkommenen Nichtigkeit, buchstäblich austilgt. [...] Was die Sadisten im Lager ihren Opfern ansagten: morgen wirst du als Rauch aus diesem

Schornstein in den Himmel dich schlängeln, nennt die Gleichgültigkeit des Lebens jedes Einzelnen, [...] schon in seiner formalen Freiheit ist er so fungibel und ersetzbar wie dann unter den Tritten der Liquidatoren. [...] daraus führt so wenig hinaus wie aus der elektrisch geladenen Stacheldrahtumfriedung der Lager“ („Negative Dialektik“ 353). [Genocide is the absolute integration. It is on its way wherever men are “polished off”, as they called it in the military and literally exterminated as deviations from the concept of their absolute nullity. What the sadists in the concentration camps said to the inmates: tomorrow you will be trailing skyward in the form of smoke from this chimney, reveals the indifference towards the life of the individual. Even in his formal freedom he is just as fungible and replaceable as he is under the boots of the liquidator. He can escape this no more than he can escape the barbed wire enclosure of the camp].

For Adorno the Shoah was the obliteration of the very *concept* of the autonomous subject. His reflections in this regard are *fundamental* to his deliberations concerning the status of art in the wake of the Shoah. To return to artistic subjectivism would be completely inappropriate given that the Shoah had rendered the very idea of individuality completely void: “Die Undarstellbarkeit des Faschismus aber rührt daher, daß es in ihm so wenig in seiner Betrachtung Freiheit des Subjekts mehr gibt. Vollendete Unfreiheit läßt sich erkennen, nicht darstellen” (Adorno “Minima Moralia” 148). [The impossibility of portraying Fascism stems from the fact that in it subjective freedom no longer exists. Absolute lack of freedom cannot be represented]. It was precisely the individual consciousness that was denied in the death camps and the imposition of agency in the process of representation would inevitably lead to a distortion. In the camps the victims were robbed not only of freedom and individual choice, they had also been denied that ultimate aspect of human dignity, namely individual death; the Shoah was, to use the words of DeKoven Ezrahi, “the unceremonious mass production of death” (83); this must be reflected in the representation, failure to do so will result in a breach between the artwork and the subject of representation. It is in this regard that certain genres within figurative discourse have intrinsic difficulties when it comes to the representation of the Shoah, to cite but one example — the dramatic genre. The basic premise upon which drama rests — human agency, individual motivation, the choice of one course of action over another — simply cannot be met. Drama depends on the freedom of its individual characters to choose, to opt for various courses of action. In the death camps, however, the concept of choice was simply not available to the camp

inmates. Tragedy, as one of the main dramatic genres is particularly problematic. As Howe writes: “In classical tragedy man is defeated, in the Holocaust man is destroyed” (Howe 190). In tragedy this defeat is usually associated with a certain sense of grandeur, this is of course completely inappropriate when the subject of representation is systematic mass murder; there is no grandeur here. Given these insurmountable barriers it is not surprising that drama has yielded fewer individual works about the Shoah than the other major literary forms (Lang 131).

Adorno’s pronouncement must also be examined within the context of his thoughts on culture in the wake of the Shoah. His writings in this regard are simply indispensable for a contextualisation of his pronouncement:

“Auschwitz [hat] das Mißlingen der Kultur unwiderleglich bewiesen. Daß es geschehen konnte inmitten aller Tradition der Philosophie, der Kunst und der aufklärenden Wissenschaften, sagt mehr als nur, daß diese, der Geist, es nicht vermochte, die Menschen zu ergreifen und zu verändern. [...] Alle Kultur nach Auschwitz, samt der dringlichen Kritik daran, ist Müll“ (“Negative Dialektik“ 360). [Auschwitz has demonstrated irrefutably that culture has failed. That it could happen in the midst of the philosophical traditions, the arts and the enlightening sciences says more than just that these failed to take hold of and change the people. All culture after Auschwitz, including its urgent critique, is rubbish].

Adorno is addressing the question of what ‘culture’ could possibly mean after the absolute failure of culture. The Shoah, a systematic, mechanical annihilation of a specific group ‘selected’ on the basis of alleged biological traits and perversely organised with bureaucratic efficiency, was “a mockery of the very idea of culture which had survived into the twentieth century” (DeKoven Ezrahi 1). What credibility could cultural and artistic discourse possibly have, having themselves emanated from the very same ‘culture’ from which Auschwitz had sprung; as Steiner writes: “We now know that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day’s work at Auschwitz in the morning” (ix). The fact that the heinous mass murder of millions had been carried out within the framework of a society at the peak of cultural and artistic achievement meant that the legitimacy of artistic discourse, after this ‘culture’ had gone so catastrophically awry, was suddenly called into question. Adorno argues against the idea of Auschwitz as being an admittedly unpleasant but nonetheless temporary glitch

in an otherwise progressive culture. Auschwitz, rather was part and parcel of the civilising process *itself*:

“Millionen schuldloser Menschen — die Zahlen zu nennen oder darüber zu feilschen, ist bereits menschenunwürdig — wurden planvoll ermordet. Das ist von keinem Lebendigen als Oberflächenphänomen, als Abirrung vom Lauf der Geschichte abzutun, die gegenüber der großen Tendenzen des Fortschritts, der Aufklärung, der vermeintlich zunehmenden Humanität nicht in Betracht käme“ („Erziehung nach Auschwitz“ 49). [Millions of innocent people — to wrangle over the figure is in itself inhumane — have been systematically murdered, this was no superficial phenomenon, it is not to be seen as an aberration from the otherwise progressive tendencies of progress and Enlightenment and supposed steady perfection of humanity].

The fact that centuries of Enlightenment culture failed to predict and prevent the forces of fascism is an implacable indictment of that culture. Adorno was writing against the tide of a complacent restorative mindset in post-War Germany. He writes with a note of sarcasm: “Der Gedanke, daß nach diesem Krieg das Leben „normal“ weitergehen oder gar die Kultur „wiederaufgebaut“ werden könnte — als wäre nicht der Wiederaufbau von Kultur allein schon deren Negation, — ist idiotisch. Millionen Juden sind ermordet worden, und das soll ein Zwischenspiel sein und nicht die Katastrophe selbst? Worauf wartet diese Kultur eigentlich noch?“ (Minima Moralia 64). [The idea that after this war life could go on as normal, that culture can be resurrected — as if the resurrection of culture would not itself be its own negation — is idiotic. Millions of Jews have been murdered and this should be an interlude and not the actual catastrophe? What exactly is this culture awaiting?]. Adorno criticises the prevailing self-satisfied idea among the German people of having come to terms with their recent past. That which took place was not a critical analysis of the way the majority of the German people accepted and indeed willingly participated in the demonic regime but rather a process of wilful forgetting; an attempt to normalise the past in an effort to legitimise West German democracy and its “economic miracle”. Adorno is at pains to reiterate that all cannot simply be made good again; he derides the hollow and complacent restorative tendencies in post-war German society.

The sentence, which concludes the passage quoted above takes on absolutely *crucial* significance in the light of so many misinterpretations of his earlier pronouncement and reveals the dialectical tension of his reflections:

“Wer für Erhaltung der radikal schuldigen und schäbigen Kultur plädiert, macht sich zum Helfershelfer, während, wer der Kultur sich verweigert, unmittelbar die Barberei fördert, als welche die Kultur sich erhüllte. *Nicht einmal Schweigen* kommt aus dem Zirkul heraus; es rationalisiert einzig die eigene subjektive Unfähigkeit mit dem Stand der objektiven Wahrheit und entwürdigt dadurch diese abermals zur Lüge“ (Negative Dialektik 360, my emphasis). [Whoever calls for the resurrection of this guilty and shabby culture becomes its accomplice, while whoever denies culture directly promotes the barbarism which culture revealed itself to be. Not even silence gets us out of this circle, since in silence we simply use the state of objective truth to rationalise our subjective inability, thereby once again degrading truth into a lie].

The aporia facing the post-Shoah writer comes explicitly to the fore: those who call for the resurrection of this culpable ‘culture’ become inextricably implicated while those who deny culture are also reprehensible. Adorno was *not*, however, calling for an end to art after Auschwitz, and nowhere is this stated more overtly than in this passage, nor does the dialectical tension come more explicitly to the fore than at this juncture; the incapacity to represent the events cannot be used as grounds for the abandonment of art. To remain silent, and to rationalise this on the basis of the recognition of subjective inability to represent the horror, is but a self-complacent delusion: the idea of so much as recognising one’s inability is a lie in itself because Auschwitz has literally liquidated the *very idea* of the autonomous subject. This self-complacent (delusory) recognition of subjective inability is also a detraction from the impossible but nonetheless crucial necessity of reflection on the *horror itself*: the dialectical tension can be summed up as follows: we cannot truly reflect upon our incapacity, we must reflect upon it, the horror cannot be reflected upon to any meaningful degree, it must be reflected upon; the horror cannot be represented, it must be represented. In this passage Adorno succinctly presents a paradigmatic case of extreme aporia, which leaves no room for resolution.

Adorno reflected deeply upon the moral peril involved in the artistic rendering of the suffering of the victims; the first problem was the poison lying at the core of the German language itself: “Kein vom Hohen getöntes Wort, auch kein Theologisches, hat unverwandelt nach Auschwitz ein Recht” (“Negative Dialektik” 360). [No word tinged from on high, not even a theological one has the right to exist after Auschwitz unless it has undergone a transformation]. Adorno is of course referring to the decay at the core of the German language as a result of its



abuse and misappropriation under the National Socialist regime; as Steiner writes: “Use a language to conceive, organise and justify Belsen; use it to make out specifications for gas ovens; [...] Something will happen to it. [...] Something will happen to the words. Something of the lies and sadism will settle in the marrow of the language (101). The German language had lay at the core of a perverted ideology, at the heart of which was to provide *Lebensraum* [Living space] for those worthy of life while *Unwertes Leben* [Those unworthy of life] were targeted for extermination. The language at the core of this perverted ideology had been, as Bauman writes “fraught with images of disease, infection, infestation, putrefaction and pestilence”. The Jews had been spoken of as “bacilli, decomposing germs, or vermin” (71). The German language had been used to shroud the most barbaric crimes in equally barbaric euphemisms: ‘Endlösung’, [Final Solution] ‘Umsiedlung’, [resettlement] ‘Selektion’, [selection] ‘Sonderbehandlung’, [special treatment] for example had been used to euphemise crimes of unimaginable magnitude. To cleanse a language after such abuse was seen by Adorno as a nigh impossible task. The second danger was the *potential* of every artwork to give pleasure and to diminish the horror of the event:

Das Übermaß an realem Leiden duldet kein Vergessen. [...]. *Aber jenes Leiden* [...] *erheischt auch die Fortdauer von Kunst, die es verbietet*; kaum wo anders findet das Leiden noch seine eigene Stimme, den Trost, der es nicht sogleich verriete. [...] Aber indem es trotz aller Härte und Unversöhnlichkeit zum Bild gemacht wird, ist es doch, als ob die Scham vor den Opfern verletzt wäre. Aus diesen wird etwas bereitet, Kunstwerke, der Welt zum Fraß vorgeworfen, die sie umbrachte. Die sogenannte künstlerische Gestaltung des nackten körperlichen Schmerzes, der mit Gewehrkölbchen Niedergeknüppelten, enthält, sei’s noch so entfernt, *das Potential* Genuss herauszupressen. [...] Durchs ästhetische Stilisationsprinzip [...] erscheint das unausdenkliche Schicksal doch, als hätte es irgend Sinn gehabt; es wird verklärt, etwas von dem Grauen weggenommen, damit allein widerfährt den Opfern Unrecht [...] (Adorno “Noten” 125 my emphasis). [Extreme suffering tolerates no forgetting. *This suffering demands the continued existence of the very art it forbids*. It is in art alone that suffering can be voiced without being immediately betrayed by it. However, by transforming this suffering, despite all attempts at irreconcilability and severity, into an artwork it is as though the deference owed to the victims were violated. The so-called

artistic rendering of the naked physical pain of those beaten down with rifle butts contains, the *potential*, however remote, that pleasure can be squeezed from it. By means of the principle of aesthetic stylisation the unimaginable fate of the victims appears as having had some kind of sense, it becomes transfigured, the horror is softened and this alone does a great injustice to the victims].

Adorno holds deep reservations concerning the possibilities of this forbidden and at the same time obligatory art. To derive any form of aesthetic pleasure from the victim's experience was for Adorno a complete distortion of that same experience. Not only would representation in aesthetic form as a matter of course shear away some of the horror, but the principle of aesthetic stylisation might attribute a sense of meaning to the fate of the victims in the sense that senseless mass murder would be given meaningful *form*. Adorno feared that by means of this 'principle of aesthetic stylisation' the suffering of the victims would be transfigured into an aesthetically rounded narrative, thereby not just attributing sense to a senseless massacre but also downplaying the horror of the event. This aesthetic principle of form was what particularly concerned Adorno: "Wo vom Äußersten, dem quallvollen Tod die Rede ist, schämt man sich der Form, so, als ob sie an dem Leiden frevelte, indem sie es unausweichlich zu einem Material macht, über das sie sich verfügt" ("Negative Dialektik" 597). [Where the subject is agonizing death, form is shameful, as though it sins against the suffering, which it inevitably reduces to a material that can be disposed of]. The transformation of the events of the Shoah into meaningful *form* leads to a falsification of events. Representing the horror within an ordered and coherent *formal* structure runs the risk of attributing a sense of meaning to the senseless massacre. Adorno writes: "Das ästhetische Prinzip der Form ist an sich, durch Synthesis des Geformten, Setzung von Sinn, noch wo Sinn inhaltlich verworfen wird" ("Ästhetische Theorie" 403). [The aesthetic principle of form always means the attribution of meaning, even when meaning is rejected in content]. Moreover, formal coherence offers the *potential* for aesthetic pleasure, which in the case of physical annihilation is completely inappropriate. It is, however, again explicitly clear that Adorno was not calling for silence in the light of these insurmountable barriers; the dialectical tension of his thought comes yet again to the fore: the suffering of the victims *demands* the continued existence of that art, which it *simultaneously forbids*.

Adorno's own qualifications of his original pronouncement assume critical importance in the light of so many misinterpretations. All too often, however, these

qualifications have in turn either been ignored or decontextualized. The one most commonly cited is that which has come to be known as Adorno's "Widerruf"; the alleged 'retraction' of his original pronouncement. Aside from the fact that to read the passage in question as a retraction is to argue that he 'retracted' something he had never actually stated to begin with, nowhere in this passage does he come even close to recanting his original pronouncement; quite the opposite. His supposed 'retraction' is to be found in the following passage: "Das perennierende Leiden hat soviel Recht auf Ausdruck wie der Gemarterte zu brüllen, darum mag falsch gewesen sein, nach Auschwitz ließe sich kein Gedicht mehr schreiben" ("Negative Dialektik" 355). [Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as the tortured person has to scream; thus it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz poetry can no longer be written]. When read in isolation like this alongside the decontextualized original pronouncement, then it does indeed appear to be a retraction. However, the sentence, which immediately follows quite simply invalidates any such interpretation:

Nicht falsch ist aber die minder kulturelle Frage, ob nach Auschwitz noch sich leben lasse, ob vollends es dürfe, wer zufällig entrann und hätte umgebracht werden müssen. [...], drastische Schuld des Verschonten. Zur Vergeltung suchen ihn Träume heim wie der, daß er gar nicht mehr lebte, sondern 1944 vergast worden wäre ("Negative Dialektik" 354). [Not wrong is, however, the less cultural question, whether after Auschwitz living is possible at all; whether it's at all permissible to him who by chance escaped but should have been murdered; this is the drastic guilt of him who was spared. As revenge he is plagued by dreams that he no longer lives but rather was gassed in 1944].

Any argument, which claims that Adorno retracted his original pronouncement, can be immediately refuted in the light of this qualifying sentence. Adorno was not just questioning the possibility of art in the wake of the Shoah but rather questioning *existence itself*, thereby not retracting his original words but rather superseding; the spheres of art and culture are subsumed under the all-consuming notion of existence. Far from retracting his statement he widens the scope of his reflections from art after Auschwitz to the right to existence itself. The verb "dürfen" in the original German text denotes permission; Adorno is not writing about a physical ability to live on but rather raises the issue to moral grounds. He broadens the scope of his deliberations to the question of survivor's guilt to demonstrate that any notions of simply moving on after the catastrophe are delusory. He is at pains to reiterate that those who had survived the

camps had done so merely per chance. In the death camps, after all, it had merely been a perverse question of statistics; survival for one had been secured at the cost of the life of another. Adorno writes: “Die Schuld des Lebens, das als pures Faktum bereits anderem Leben den Atem raubt, einer Statistik gemäß, die eine überwältigende Zahl Ermordeter durch eine minimale Geretteter ergänzt, (...) ist mit dem Leben nicht mehr zu versöhnen (“Negative Dialektik” 357). [The guilt of a life, which is secured at the cost of another, where, statistically speaking there is minimal number, rescued at the cost of an overwhelming number murdered; this guilt is irreconcilable with living]. Another passage which assumes critical significance is one in which Adorno makes explicit reference to his earlier pronouncement: “Während die Situation Kunst nicht mehr zuläßt—darauf zielte der Satz über die Unmöglichkeit von Gedichten nach Auschwitz—bedarf sie doch ihrer (Ästhetische Theorie 374). [While the situation does not permit art—*this* is what was meant by the sentence concerning the impossibility of art after Auschwitz—it nonetheless demands it]. Yet again Adorno makes the dialectical tension of his argument explicitly clear: post-Shoah art is not permissible but simultaneously indispensable.

In this paper I have attempted to restore Adorno’s pronouncements to their argumentative context. Adorno called neither for silence nor for an end to art. Rather he calls for a form of art, which bears witness to its predestined failure, artworks which present the fact that the “unrepresentable” exists. Adorno’s dialectic emphasises the indispensability of that which it simultaneously deems impossible, it demands the pursuit of that which it deems inevitably futile. The recognition of the impossibility of art after Auschwitz is constantly tied to an insistence on its indispensability. Adorno’s reflections are not to be seen merely as operating on an abstract level of theoretical thought; rather his writings can be seen as concrete reflections on the possibilities and limitations of post-Shoah art. He does not simply bemoan the failure of culture; rather, while making abundantly clear that culture’s complicity is irrefragable and acutely aware of the onus which Auschwitz has placed on language, he simultaneously emphasises the obligation to utterance rather than an insistence upon silence. It is exclusively within the aporetic and dialectical matrix, which has been highlighted in this paper, that Adorno’s deliberations on the representation of the Shoah can be understood.

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