



The female presence in Lager through the eyes of cousin Levi: a reading of Lilith, by cousin Levi

A presença feminina no Lager pela ótica de primo Levi: uma leitura de Lilith, de primo Levi

Edson Sousa Soares

E-mail: e.sousasoares@yahoo.com.br

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes to conduct a reading of the short story entitled *Lilith*, from *Primo Levi's 71 short stories* (2005), in order to analyze aspects of the narrative. The main topics of this study are: the suffering in the Nazi concentration camps, the survival pacts, the testimonial accounts, the oppression, the violence, the resistance, the religiosity, the ancient Hebrew storytelling, the creation myth, and the presence of fear that has pervaded the popular imaginary for centuries, such as the devil, personified in the female figure, among other investigations. Furthermore, we seek to analyze the chapters *Night of Valpurgis and Fire-Fatigue*, from Goethe's *Faust* (1815), in order to establish possible dialogues between these narratives.

Keywords: Testimony, Fiction, Lager, Resistance, Lilith.

1 INTRODUCTION

Primo Levi is the witnessing voice of the 20th century, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. He is the author of the works: *Is This a Man?* (1947), *The Truce* (1960), and *The Drowned and the Survivors* (19078), which make up his memorialistic and testimonial work. In the area of fiction, his main works are: *The Star Key* (1978), *If not now? When?* (2005), *Natural Stories (Storie naturali, 1966)*, *Vice of form (Vizio di forma, 1971)* and *Lilith (Lilit 1981)*, *Primo Levi Asymmetry and life: articles and essays 1955-1987*(2016). Valle (2017) assures that Primo Levi's fictional writings, despite being considered, at first, pure entertainment and fantasy, never fail to be subtly related to the author's political performance, translated by his testimonies, especially, regarding the catastrophic events related to a possible return of barbarism. The author also points out that Levi's works of fiction are permeated with reflective memory and involuntary.

In this sense, scholars, theoreticians and critics of testimonial literature, specifically accounts of the holocaust, have pointed out in their writings a writer Primo Levi's personal commitment to fight historical revisionism and holocaust denialism. As a survivor of the extermination camps, he asserts that there are, from the actual beginning



of the actions of the Nazi forces against the prisoners, goals of the 20th century German high command to completely erase the monstrosities practiced by the military groups that comprised the Nazifascist Axis. Levi (2004) assures that:

[...] the SS entertained by cynically warning the prisoners: "whatever the end of this war may be, the war against you we have already won; no one will be left to testify, but even if someone escapes, the world will not give him credit. There may be suspicions, discussions, historians' investigations, but there will be no certainty, because we will destroy the evidence along with you (LEVI, 2004, p. 09).

The excerpt from the narrative above demonstrates the testimonial voice of Levi, who tells us that such goals were practiced, throughout the Second World War, by the Nazi forces against the imprisoned groups. Furthermore, it is verified through the soldiers' speech that history is never told by minorities, because when some accounts are exposed, they often have little credibility. In this sense, we understand Primo Levi's personal engagement in projecting himself as a testimonial writer, on behalf of the memory of those who did not have the opportunity to narrate.

In this view, Seligmann-Silva (2003, p. 57) explains that the literature of testimony repositions literary historiography and the traditional definition of literary genres, deconstructing them by adding elements previously exclusive to fiction. In this sense, "keeping the past alive in the present" becomes an engagement for the awareness of the death of the other.

2 TRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVE

The short story entitled *Lilith*, from *Primo Levi's 71 short stories* (2005), has Primo and his friend Tischler as its main characters, while those in the background are: the Kapo, the master builder and a young girl of unidentified nationality. However, she is associated by the main characters with Lilith, Adam's first wife. In addition, there are other characters who assume the role of protagonists and appear, throughout the narrative, in other overlapping stories, such as the symbolic figures of Lilith, God, Adam, Eve and Shekinah.

The text is narrated in the first person by the main character Primo, referring to the author Primo Levi, and by the character Tischler, who establish a dialogue throughout the narrative. Regarding the space that pervades the whole narrative, there is a symbolic representation of the historical context about the existence of the Nazi concentration camps in the first half of the 20th century.



In reference to time, it is verified that the narrative embraces the psychological time when it presents the inner experiences of the characters as the memories, the immersion in a fictional universe from the stories told by Tischler and the enchantment in front of the female presence. Levi (2005) makes, through fiction, a contextualization of the ancient Hebrew storytelling associated with her experiences in the Nazi extermination camps and reported in her memorialistic and testimonial works. All this, in a short space of chronological time during a rainy period that interrupted the routine work on the *lager*.

Throughout the dialogue, Tischler assumes the narrative voice and tells four versions of the story of the symbolic figure of the character Lilith, namely: Lilith described as a rebellious woman who claimed equal rights with Adam, was not heeded, and blasphemed. Thus, she became a she-devil, flew away like an arrow and went to settle at the bottom of the sea. In the second version, Lilith appears as the she-devil who has the power to enter the bodies of men, and, if this happens, they become possessed, and it is necessary to perform a religious ritual to repudiate the she-devil. In the third version, she is the glutton for human semen, and in the fourth, Lilith is related to the Shekinah and appears as God's lover. Thus, the figure of the creator appears as a sinner and the cause of all human suffering.

Levi (2005), through the character Tischler, shows the relevance of narrating the old stories, as Walter Benjamin defends the importance of telling, of narrating the popular tales, as well as the travel narratives that were orally transmitted from father to son. Tischler who, throughout the narrative, has this function of retelling the stories, shows a concern about the possibility that these practices of narrating will disappear. Huston (2010), in turn, points out that the narrative is a form of survival, because the fabulous is the result of our internal and external experiences permeated with sensitivity that are concretized via language apparatus, that is, through speech.

3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVE

In the short story *Lilith*, Levi (2005) brings, through fiction, a symbolic representation that goes far beyond the act of storytelling, for we have as the narrative space the Nazi concentration camp. In addition to the winter climate with the presence of rain and mud, there is the subtle presence of the figure of the "Kapo", who is directly responsible, in the absence of German soldiers, for maintaining discipline among the inmates and for supervising the forced labor, even with the power to apply disciplinary



sanctions, through physical force and even extreme violence.

Following the main thread of the narrative, there is also another space that, for the purposes of this analysis, will be named topophobic, which the narrator specifically describes as iron pipes five or six meters long and one meter in diameter in height. In other words, it would only be possible for humans to enter this place crawling or crawling, as the narrator explains: "Our meeting on four legs, almost canine, made him happy: I wish it would rain like this every day!" (LEVI, 2005, p. 290).

In this perspective, we understand that the narrator makes references to everyday experiences, lived in the period when he was in the Nazi concentration camps, because the need to shelter from the rain in a pipe, as suggested by the narrative, configures itself as a resistance strategy employed by prisoners to survive the mistreatment and slave labor imposed by the Germans. Regarding forced labor, Levi (2004) explains:

Much has been written about labor in the *Lager*; I myself described it in my own time. Unpaid, that is, slave labor was one of the three objectives of the concentrationary system; the other two were the elimination of political opponents and the extermination of the so-called inferior races. By the way, the Soviet concentrationist regime differed from the Nazi one essentially by the lack of the third term and by the predominance of the first (LEVI, 2008, p. 104).

This excerpt enables the reading, critical reflection and understanding of Primo Levi's narrative, since there is a blend between memory, testimony and fiction. Still on the search for survival, in the dialogues established between the narrator and his friend Tischler, who coincidentally was turning twenty-five that day: "[...] said that we should celebrate the date, since we would hardly celebrate the next birthday. He took half an apple out of his pocket, cut a slice and offered it to me: in a year in prison, that was the only time I ate a fruit" (LEVI, 2005, p. 290).

The lack of nutritional food for the body was also a strategy employed by the Nazis in the slave labor camps, for Levi tells that, besides the gas chambers and the crematory ovens, hanging practices, hunger was also one of the main factors that directly contributed to loss of life, for without adequate food, with the imposition of the rules, forced labor and extreme violence, it would be difficult for the prisoner to survive: "[...] experience shows that one hardly ever lasts more than three months" (LEVI, 1947, p. 231).

From this dialog, besides the female figure, the telling of ancient Hebrew stories



that permeate the dialog throughout the narrative subtly appears. After the silence caused by the tasting of the tasty apple slice, the narrator is also touched by the female presence "[...] it was rare to see a woman up close, and this was a tender and fierce experience, which made us prostrate" (LEVI, 2005, p. 290).

This scene, preceded by the sharing of the apple, seduces and ravishes the two men, who are entranced by the image of the woman softly braiding her hair and humming. The seductive scene, in a second moment, seems to shake with greater intensity the character Tischler, since, according to the narrator, he: [...] turned around and for a long time stopped to contemplate the girl. She had just finished braiding her hair, settled into the tube, and hummed, shaking her head" (LEVI, 2005, p. 290).

This impulse is confirmed in the next scenes: "It's Lilith," Tischler told me suddenly. Do you know her? Is that what she calls it? No, but I recognize her. She is Lilith, Adam's first wife. Don't you know the story of Lilith? We can see that there is a resumption of the biblical writings about the figure of the creator, specifically, the emergence of the world, the first inhabitants, and the Judeo-Christian faith, for the narrator, when questioned about the story of Lilith and manifesting a lack of knowledge, is consequently labeled an "unbelieving" Epicurean.

In this perspective, Levi does not fail to subtly take up again one of the issues that permeates the entire historical cultural context in which Jewish people are labeled as anti-Christ, to the point of being persecuted by governments and suffering rejection by society in different cultures, in view of the fact that anti-Semitism is a recurring phenomenon in time and space.

Reading, music, and storytelling in hostile environments, such as Nazi extermination camps, in our view, were also both resistance strategies and means of survival. About this, Primo Levi, in "*Is This a Man?*", specifically in the chapter entitled "Ulysses' Song", appropriates his cultural repertoire, especially that coming from literature, when he teaches his mother tongue to a fellow prisoner, using verses from the Divine Comedy, a classic of universal literature, by Dante Alighieri:

Be careful, Pikolo, open your ears and your mind, I need you to understand:

"Considerate la vostra semenza:

Fatti non foi a viver come bruti,

ma per seguir virtúe e conoscenza." *

It is as if I also heard it for the first time: like a touch of dawn, like the voice of God. For a moment, I forgot who I am and where I am.

Pikolo asks me to repeat these verses. How good he is: he has understood that he is helping me. Or perhaps it is something else: perhaps (despite the poor translation and the trite and hurried commentary) he has received the message,



realized that it refers to him too, it refers to all men who suffer, and especially to us: to us-two, we who dare to discuss these things [...] (LEVI, 1947, p. 167-168).

In this sense, it is verified that literature manifests itself even in the hostile environment, since the narrator states that reading provided him with a moment of overcoming his non-human condition. Mauro (2012), in turn, assures that: "Dante's verses assume here, therefore, in the universe of the concentration camp, the value of a political and human act, a collective affirmation of the values that the system intended to destroy" (MAURO, 2012, p. 38).

In this fiction, Levi names the character Tischler as a storyteller and poetry reciter, for it was he who "now and then, at night," in that catastrophic environment, provided the group of prisoners with pleasant moments of entertainment, as the narrator points out: "no one applauded, everyone with their eyes on the ground; but when he finished, we all asked him to start again" (LEVI, 2005, p. 290).

Thus, the author establishes a dialogue between his fictional writings and his memories, because both provide elements that make it possible to understand that the means of survival and resistance strategies are also manifested in the telling of stories, in narrating, in reciting poems, in music, in reading, in providing spectacles, and in fable making. In these experiences of contact with the arts, many times, the oppressed find a moment of escape from the situations lived in limit contexts, as in the scene in which Levi (1947) relives the verses from Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, since this experience is potentiated to the extreme, in such a way that he says he seems to have heard it for the first time: "[...] like the voice of God. For a moment I forgot who I am and where I am" (LEVI, 1947, p. 167-168).

From this perspective, it is understood that from the imprisoned groups emerge those who have talent, cultural and artistic knowledge, and the ability to express art, even in a limiting situation. These artistic expressions, in addition to engendering forms of survival and resistance, also contribute to the collectivity, since they constitute a force of resistance. In this view, the scholars Lerner and Borges (2012), assure that:

The poems, songs, and drawings that have reached our days have always seemed to us that they could be thought of as a sign of resistance from Jewish prisoners to preserve their level of sanity and even humanity, also benefiting a large part of the ghetto population that enjoyed them. Many of the songs were taken from memory and sung by the prisoners in their transports to other ghettos and camps, reaching a large number of Jews in the different concentrationary milieus (LERNER and BORGES, 2012, p. 87).



This passage refers to the art produced by survivors during the holocaust, which is represented by different artistic means: children's drawings, poetry, chronicles, short stories, songs, testimonial accounts, among other expressions. The authors argue that the prisoners, faced with extreme oppression, sought as a force of resistance and survival to sing during their displacements and experiences in the different Nazi concentration camps. This position is in line with the narrative of Levi (2005), because the narrator tells us that in the *lager*, in everyday life, Tischler, besides telling stories and reciting poetry, also sang sometimes.

In relation to the creation myth, approached by Levi in the short story, we verify that this theme is already explored by literary criticism, therefore, it will be a secondary focus of this analysis. However, a thorough reading of these studies, besides allowing us to reflect critically, contributes directly to the understanding of these narratives that historically go through the biblical writings. Eco (2007, p. 90) in *The Metamorphoses of the Devil* discusses the various facets that the figure of the *devil* assumes in different cultures. The author points out that:

As for the Hebrew culture, which directly influences the Christian one, it is the devil, taking the form of a serpent, who tempts Eve in Genesis and in the tradition, interpreting some biblical texts that seem to refer to something else, as in Isaiah and Ezekiel, he was present at the beginning of the world as the rebellious Angel that God precipitated to hell (ECO, 2007, p. 90).

In this theorization, Eco provides us with elements to understand that there is a negative sanction to the hero who falls into the "siren song"¹, when he surrenders to seduction. If, in Levi (2005) there is only an escape from the reality of extreme oppression experienced in the *lager*, in Goethe (1987), there is a tragedy caused by Faust's slip when he surrenders to the seduction of the devil. About this, Lima (2009), summarizes:

The first woman, Eve, who was ensnared by the evil enemy who appeared to her in the form of a serpent. Eve could not resist the temptation, awakened by the devil, to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, disobeyed the only order imposed by the Creator. She sinned, induced Adam to sin as well, and as punishment God drove them out of the Garden of Eden. However, God told the serpent that he would put enmity between her offspring and the offspring of the woman (LIMA, 2009, p.51).

¹ According to Florencio (2018, p. 86), in most medieval writings, woman is: "an inferior being to man and, thanks to her power of seduction, the source of man's ruin and disgrace". The author approaches: "the figure of the Siren as the type of the antitype that woman comes to be. In this way, just as she is a dangerous, seductive being, who can, for this reason, lead unwary sailors to ruin, in the same way a woman can lead even the most chaste of men to perdition.

According to the author, there is an unfolding of this myth, such that the descendants of man, as children of the Creator, would kill the serpents, since the serpent



is, in Judeo-Christian civilizations, symbolically and culturally associated with the figure of the devil. In this sense, the author brings a messianic explanation in which the woman would be destined to bear the son of God, who would defeat the Devil.

Regarding the fear of the devil, Delumeau (2009, p. 354) explains that the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity, especially in Western Europe, brings as heritage demonic images and concepts. However, there is an intensification of horror, in proportion to the strengthening of the power of the church, as this fear facilitates the process of domination of the masses.

Melo (2009, p. 26), in turn, explains that fear is described in the Bible when the devil tempts Jesus. For this author, the devil takes on several facets:

[...] the devil walks among men offering his services as he did to Jesus: then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. He showed him all the kingdoms of the world and its riches. And said unto him, I will give thee all these things, if thou wilt kneel before me to worship me (p. 26 - 27).

This diabolical proposal, seductive to humans, was promptly refuted by Jesus, in commitment to the Christian faith directed toward the Creator. This biblical passage is widely known by Christians and celebrated as Satan's defeat, as he tried to interfere with Christ's mission.

The mysterious woman also appears in the writings of Goethe (1987), in the work entitled *Faust*. The character Faust represents, in modern times, a successful scientist who experiences conflicts with himself. In search for power, money, and intellectual knowledge, he decides to make a pact with the Devil, a contract that must be sealed with human blood, according to the character Mr. Mephistopheles. So, even with some resistance, Faustus signs with a drop of blood. For the purpose of this analysis, we stopped to study passages in *Night of Valpurgis and Fire-Fatu*, specifically, in the dialogues between Faust and Mephistopheles:

[...] Faust
Who is that?
Mephistopheles
Look at her carefully! Lilith is.
Fausto
Who?
Mephistopheles
Adam's number one wife. Beware of the beautiful braid,
Who only adorns it to the side; When some young man reaches for it,
So soon the prey no longer lets go (GOETHE, 1987, p. 183- 4).

In the excerpt, we can see that Levi maintains an intertextual dialogue with Goethe. Since in both the representation of the female figure happens as an apparition,



there are dialogues permeated by questionings, enchantments and even raptures of men before the beauty of the girl. In relation to the symbolism of hair, the narrative suggests that the braid, for example, works as a characteristic element of this feminine enchantment.

In Levi (2005, p. 290), the girl appears, during a rainy period, 'wrapped in black cloths'. The scene is described by the narrator: "[...] and looked at us smiling; she scratched under the collar of her coat with provocative indolence, then let down her hair, combed it very calmly and began to braid it" (LEVI, 2005, p. 290). After that, she settled into a tube and hummed while gesturing her head. In this passage, there is a game of seduction between Lilith's humming and braiding her hair in which the characters Primo and Tischler are enraptured by watching her.

This game of seduction also happens in Goethe (1987), in the passage where the character Faust, initially warned by Mephistopheles to take determined: "Be careful with the beautiful braid [...]" (p.184). Later, induced by Mephisto himself to dance with the girl: "[...] Well, today we don't rest;/ New music; so! let's get into the dance" (GOETHE,1987, p. 184). During the dance, the couple dialogues:

Fausto:

(dancing with the young woman)

A beautiful dream I once had, I stood on an apple tree,
Two apples I spied, so beautiful. I climbed the tree for them.

The Beauty

Already the apples on the vacation stems Of Eden's garden you longed for.
How much joy I feel in me, To have equals in my garden (GOETHE, 1987,
p. 184).

In this passage, we can see that Faust, when waltzing with Lilith, also has an experience permeated with sensitivity. A kind of reverie, for he reveals having experienced a beautiful dream, which resumes the myth of creation, the supposed fruit of sin, the tree of knowledge, whose serpent seduced Eve, who took the fruit to Adam, inducing him to sin. In the dialogue, the female lyric self emphasizes, "the apples of the garden of Eden you longed for" (GOETHE,1987, p.184). Thus, the lyric subject expresses joy, for having equal fruit in her garden. In this context, the author dialogues with Hebrew writings about the figure of the Creator, especially the supposed revolt of the creature.

Berman (1988), in turn, explains that in *Goethe's Faust* tragedy (1987), the



character Faust is also ravished by the female presence, a young girl named Marguerite whom he associates with Lilith: "What a feeling of calm envelops me./ Of order and complete satisfaction!/ What prodigality in this poverty./ And in this prison, ah, what rapture!" (Goethe, s.d, p. 2691-94, apud Berman, 1988, p. 53). For the author, this encounter is voyeuristic, in which Faust appropriates the female body and ends up destroying it, even if, at first, he did not outline such an intention. Since, given the context, he is the victim of demonic manipulation.

Still on Fireworks:

[...] Faust

Mephisto, along with us,
Don't you see a beautiful, pale maiden? Slowly she creeps towards us,
With bound feet and her walk. I confess it, I think she resembles my good
Margaret (GOETHE, 1987, p.186).

In this fragment, such rapture is confirmed, since Faust confesses that this mysterious woman resembles his girlfriend Marguerite. However, he is warned by the devil himself: "Leave it alone! / This vision is bad for you, [...] Each one sees in her his well-beloved (GOETHE, 1987, p,186-187)". Strategically, Mephistopheles aims to keep Faust as far away as possible from his girlfriend, from human feelings, as he leads him into adventures with nefarious creatures: witches, demons, the so-called Witches' Sabbath.

In this sense, the scholar Silva (2021), revisiting Lilith, discusses the mystical figure in which Faustus appears dancing with the young enchantress. This representation of discord in the garden of Eden coming from a woman is traditionally associated with the devil.

Therefore, Lilith assumes different representations: sensual woman, serpent, witch, she-devil, monster, among other representations.

The author quotes passages from *Night of Valpúrgis*, from Goethe's Faust (2003), in the translation by António Feliciano de Castilho:

FAUSTO Who could that be?
MEPHISTOPHELES You don't know her! Look, it's Lilita. FAUST Hein!
What Lilita?
MEPHISTOPHELES
Lilita da Costa; don't you remember?
the first wife of Adam de Barros.
Beware of you with her gentle hair, that there is no more charm in it. Woe to
the young man who gets entangled in them; he'll never run away again.
(GOETHE, 2003, p. 219-220 apud SILVA, 2021, p.64).



In this version of Castilho (2003), we can see that this fragment reinforces the notion of the power of seduction engendered by both literary criticism and by theoreticians and historians about the Creation myth, especially the female figure personified as a demon. Thus, the lyricist warns: "Beware of you with her gentle hair, that there is no more charm in them. Woe to the young man who entangles himself in them; he will never escape" (GOETHE, 2003, p. 219-220 apud SILVA, 2021, p.64). It is also verified that hair becomes a fundamental element of female seduction.

Levi (2005), in that rainy context, also makes reference to the first inhabitants of the world, Adam and Lilith, because the narrator, while observing a tractor performing the tasks of clearing the snow, uses the metaphor of clay. In this sense, he makes an association of the clay that: "would immediately stick to the back of the instrument - like Adam and Lilith, I thought." (LEVI, 2005, p. 292). According to the narrative, this clay, which refers to the process used by God in Creation, can also be associated with human frailty, since man is symbolically part of the representation of sin.

In the version where Lilith is described by Tischler as the female who appropriates human semen, he states that she is a she-devil with powers to beget evil spirits. According to Kabbalistic writings, these children of Lilith always appear at the wakes of their human parents to claim inheritances. In accordance with this narrative, it is cultural to have rituals in which the Rabbi makes seven turns around the coffin to protect the dead man from the possible sons of the she-devil. Thus, we read in Levi (2005): "[...] But it may be that you leave here, that you survive and that you see at certain funerals a Rabbi and his retinue going seven laps around the dead man: well, he is making a barrier around the dead man [...]" (LEVI, 2005, p. 292).

In the dialogue, Tischler says that there is a strange story in the books of the Kabbalists: Before God created man and immediately tried to find him a woman to be his companion, He, considering that it was not good to be alone, took Shekinah as his companion, that is, his own presence in Creation. In this way, Shekinah became God's wife and the mother of mankind. According to the narrator, when the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, it was the moment when they were scattered and were enslaved. In view of this, "Shekinah became angry and separated herself from God and came with us into exile" (LEVI, 2005, p. 292). The character Primo agrees: "I confess that I too have thought that at times, that Shekinah too was enslaved and that perhaps she is here, among us, in this exile within exile, in this house of clay and pain" (LEVI, 2005, p.292).



In this perspective, Levi (2005, p. 292), through metaphorical language, names the Nazi extermination camp as 'house of clay and pain'. In this way, it is possible to reflect on human fragility, especially in the limit context, since clay is the foundational element used by God to create man. However, clay can also, on the one hand, be associated with the practices of the experiments that the Nazis carried out on humans during World War II. On the other hand, it can symbolically refer to the fragility of man, who came from dust and, in the context of *lager*, was easily eliminated by man himself, that is, was again turned to dust.

In the end, Levi (2005) subverts the logic of discourse, through literary creation, by showing that God himself surrendered to the seduction of the devil, by making Lilith his mistress: "So God, as happens to so many people, became alone and, not knowing how to resist loneliness and temptation, took a mistress: you know who? She, Lilith, the she-devil, and that was an unheard-of scandal". (LEVI, 2005 p.292). From the narrator's point of view, this is the origin of human suffering, because as long as the Creator is in sin, humanity will suffer. In this context, the arrival of a savior is expected, who will put an end to Lilith and to human suffering. Consequently, the prisoners of the death camp will be liberated.

In *Is That a Man?* the narrator subtly criticizes the Creator, for he believes that God was also silent in the face of the monstrosities practiced by the Nazi-fascist axis against humanity: "Today I think that no one should mention Divine Providence, since there has been an Auschwitz; but there is no doubt that at that hour the memory of the biblical salvations in extreme misfortunes passed like a wind through everyone's mind" (LEVI, 1947, p. 231). The narrator, seeing himself defeated by the Nazi forces, complains about the absence of human and even divine interventions that could put an end to the horror of the *lagers*. Thus, Levi dialogues between the fictional text and the testimonial narrative.

As a survivor of Auschwitz, Levi (2005) tells that, as predicted by Tishler, he witnessed a funeral in which the rabbi performed the ritual protection of the dead body: "And it is inexplicable that fate should have chosen an epicurean to repeat this pious and ungodly fable, made of poetry, ignorance, and reckless ingenuity, and of the hopeless sorrow that grows over the ruins of lost civilizations" (LEVI, 2005, p. 293). Thus, in the short story, the factual experience of the narrator confirms the precepts of Tischler's mythical narrative, so as to unite the two accounts present on the surface of the textual fabric.



This analysis allowed us to verify that in the short story *Lilith*, Levi (2005), through fictionalization, makes a contextualization of his experiences lived in the limit environment, specifically, of the holocaust, with the telling of ancient Hebrew stories, because there is a mixture of human suffering in the Nazi concentration camps with storytelling. Therefore, Levi (2005), as a survivor of Nazi monstrosities, appropriates literature to narrate his memories, to bear witness, either through the accounts, or through fiction.

In this mix between testimony and fiction, it is understood that the prisoners, faced with violence and oppression to the extreme, adopted as survival and resistance strategies: music, poetry recitation, literature, storytelling and listening to stories, among others.

Specifically, in the short story *Lilith*, the author brings as a symbolic representation the Creation myth, which depicts the actions of the Creator, the temptation of the Devil, and Christian sin. Thus, in Levi (2005), we have the representation of the appropriation of art not only as an escape from the reality of the extreme violence and oppression experienced in the *lager*, but as an aesthetic of resistance, since the space of the catastrophic environment is represented by Levi's (2005) 'house of clay and pain'.



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