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Anatoly Kuznetsov, Author of *Babi Yar*: The History of the Book and the Fate of the Author

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Abstract: This Introduction to the special issue devoted to Anatoly Kuznetsov, author of *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel*, dwells on the different aspects of the book's importance, surveys the life of the author as intertwined with the history of this book, suggests a way of reading his other work in the light of Babi Yar, and notes the contributions of the articles collected in this issue.

Keywords: Kuznetsov, Babi Yar, Holocaust, Soviet literature, censorship, memorialization

In 1966, a sensation was produced in the literary world of the Soviet Union when Anatoly Kuznetzov's narrative entitled *Babi Yar: Roman Document* (literally, Babi Yar: A document-novel) came out in the widely circulating Soviet journal *Iunost* (Youth). The shock waves of this literary event crossed the no-man's land between the usual literary audiences and the broader public; they also crossed the borders of the Soviet Union – translations were published in more than 30 countries. It is largely owing to that narrative, in its initial and later forms, that "Babi Yar" became a generic name[1] for what is now known as "the Holocaust by bullets" in Eastern Europe (see Desbois 2008), the way Auschwitz became a generic name for the industrial production of death in Nazi extermination camps (see Epelboin 2015, 2; and Kovrigina's article in this collection, 2023). Though the first journal edition and the book-publication that followed were harshly censored, the fact of their coming out in

1 "Babi" in "Babi Yar" is the most frequently used transliteration of the toponym in the West. I use it in this introductory essay, following the title of the 1970 edition of Kuznetsov's book, translated by David Floyd. In her article in this issue, written in the midst of Russia's war against Ukraine, Victoria Khiterer uses the Ukrainian form of the toponym, Babyn Yar. I give the Ukrainian versions of the toponyms in parenthesis after mentioning the locations for the first time.

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the USSR was perceived, somewhat prematurely, as signaling a retraction in the Soviet policy of repressing the memory of the specifically Jewish catastrophe in the Second World War. Kuznetsov points out on the first pages that people of different nationalities were killed in Babi Yar, yet his book is riveted on the two days, September 29 and 30, 1941, when not just any "peaceful Soviet citizens," in the Soviet-period language of memorial sites, but those of Jewish nationality (more than 30 thousand of them – and more would be brought there later), were massacred in a Kiev (Kyiv) suburb, within the earshot of their townspeople. Until the end of the German occupation, about 100,000 people of various nationalities were murdered at the same place – the massacre of Jews prefaced the massacres of other ethnicities and their oppression and enslavement by the Nazis.

It is to Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar*, its content, genre, and reception history, that this special issue of *Eastern European Holocaust Studies* is devoted. The present introductory essay mainly concentrates on the author's fate interconnected with the fortunes of the book; the tracing of this interrelationship will include references to the subjects and thoughts of the five research papers that follow.

1

Kuznetsov's work was not the first to memorialize the mass murder of Jews at the Babi Yar ravine on September 29 and 30, 1941. Earliest testimonies came from war correspondents after Kiev was won back from the German forces, usually with only indirect indications that the victims were Jews. There was Ilya Ehrenburg's poem "Babi Yar," written in 1944, and published in the first issue of the influential journal *Novy Mir* for 1945 — a poem whose last line, which can be glossed as "We have come to you, not we – the ravines," prophetically prefigures the 1961 collapse of the dam sacrilegiously built on the site, with the mudslide killing over a thousand people. There was also Lev Ozerov's poem "Babi Yar," published in his 1947 collection (see Clowes 2005, 161–64; Kovrigina 2023). An episode set in Babi Yar, emphasizing the standard heroic gestures of some of the victims (e.g. young girls singing "The Internationale" just before being shot) was included in Ehrenburg's 1947 novel *The Storm*, which, quite ahead of its time, juxtaposed this massacre with a scene within the Auschwitz gas chamber (see Toker 2013). This very juxtaposition, however, also emphasized the fictionality of the episodes – the novelist's psychologically and politically self-defensive attempts to imagine, reconstruct, the unimaginable. Moreover, Ehrenburg avoids placing the murder of Jews at the center of the concerns of his novel, published on the very eve of Stalin's moratorium on Jewish subjects: the plot is riveted on the love story between a Russian communist,

ultimately a war hero, and a young Frenchwoman, eventually a member of the Resistance.

Apart from war-time poetry, newspaper reports, and some early post-war literary representations of the Holocaust in the Eastern territories of the USSR, information about it could have trickled down to the media audiences from the accounts of the Nürenberg and Darmstadt trials, as well as the trials of Nazi collaborators.

The ban on Jewish subjects in Soviet literature (at its height in 1948–1953), was removed in the years of Khruschev's "Thaw," which saw, among other things, the publication of Sholem Aleichem's works in Russian translation (1959–1961), the 1960 translation of the *Diary of Anne Frank* with Ehrenburg's preface mentioning the six millions, Icchokas Meras's novels and short stories about the Holocaust in Lithuania, published and translated into Russian throughout the 1960s, and *Poety Izrailia*, a 1963 collection of translations from modern Hebrew poets (including Bialik's poems about the Kishinev pogrom of 1903), edited by Boris Slutsky. The change in the official policy towards the theme of the Jews in literature was largely motivated by the pretense of allowing a nominal Jewish cultural life that would have no dependence on the young state of Israel.

In 1961, the publication of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem "Babi Yar" in the leading literary newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta* was a major literary event – not least because the subject of the Holocaust and Jewish history in general was sympathetically treated by a non-Jewish poet; this would also constitute part of the appeal of Kuznetsov's narrative. While a number of Russian nationalists attacked Yevtushenko for the poem,[2] numerous Jewish readers learned it by heart, the way Itsik Fefer's poem "Ich bin a yid" ("I am a Jew") was learned by heart by Jewish soldiers in the Red Army during the Second World War. It is now well known that, during his visit to Kiev, Yevtushenko had been told about Babi Yar at the very site by Kuznetsov, his former fellow student at the Gorky Institute of Literature. Later, similar hair-raising discoveries of other killing sites were recorded in Andrei Voznesensky's 1965 poem "Zov ozera" ("The call of the lake") and his 1986 poem "Rov" ("The ditch").

Kuznetzov's account of Babi Yar, by contrast to its precursors, was based on first-hand experience. As Arleen Ionescu's article in this issue shows, it contains several kinds and levels of witnessing: an eye-witness testimony about the procession of the condemned through Kiev streets is combined with an "ear-witness" testimony, the sounds of shooting that reached the author's house from Babi Yar, as well as with the second-hand "flesh-witness" (Harari 2009) testimony, such as a

2 On Yevtushenko's standing as part of the *shestidesiatniki* (people of the sixties) generation of Soviet intellectuals and on the history of the publication and reception of his "Babi Yar," see Estraikh 2022, 251–75. Yevtushenko's poem is the text of the vocal part of Dmitri Shostakovich's 1962 Symphony 13.

reproduction of Dina Pronicheva's harrowing experience of her entrapment in Babi Yar and her miraculous escape from among the corpses in the ravine, and Vladimir Davydov's account of the Syrets concentration camp, whose doomed inmates were forced to disinter and burn the corpses of the victims in 1943; it is also punctuated by the orders of the German occupation authorities and texts from the Ukrainian collaborators which Kuznetsov read as a child and examined in the Kiev archive in 1965. Ionescu compares the forms of witnessing in Kuznetsov's book with those of Ziama Trubakov, one of the few surviving participants of the break-out from the Syrets camp, and shows how their evidence is reciprocally supportive, with the exception of details (such as the number of the fugitives) that may have escaped personal memory or awareness (Ionescu 2022).

In her article in this issue, Marina Balina notes, among other things, that Kuznetsov's account of his work, at age 13, in a makeshift slaughterhouse that produced sausages of horseflesh is a symbolic distanced replacement of direct eye-witness exposure to the killing of the victims in Babi Yar (Balina 2023). Directly or obliquely, Kuznetsov's book deals with almost every aspect of the horror of Babi Yar. The one mental operation that it does not perform is an attempt to imagine the inner experience of the victims. In that sense, Marianna Kiyanovska's 2017 collection of poems *Babin yar. Golosami* (*Voices from Babi Yar*, 2022; the literal translation of the title is "*Babi Yar. In voices*") can be read as a gap-filling companion piece to Kuznetsov's narrative.[3]

2

As noted above, the Babi Yar ravine is, in fact, one of the many killing ravines or forests of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, yet it is the best known. One might recollect that, in *The Gulag Archipelago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn accords less attention to the labor camps in the North-Eastern territory, Kolyma, because, he says, shocking his readers, "Kolyma was fortunate" (Solzhenitsyn 1978, 130): a number of gifted writers, first and foremost Varlam Shalamov, survived to tell the story of the slave-labor gold mines and other industries of that permafrost region.[4]

3 See Kiyanovska (2017), Kiyanovska (2022). In her preface to the Russian translation of the selection of poems from this volume (Kiyanovskaya 2018), Polina Barskova notes that other Ukrainian poets, Mykola Bazhan, Savva Golovanivsky, Ivan Drach, and Moisei Fishbein, have also written on Babi Yar. Barskova points to Kiyanovska's jolting combination of masterful rhyming and disruptive syntax as a means of rendering trauma.

4 Solzenitsyn mentions Evgeniya Ginzburg, Olga Sliozberg, Nadezhda Surovtseva, and Nadezhda Grankina beside Shalamov. When writing his "experiment in literary investigation" he was not yet aware of the Kolyma stories of Georgy Demidov (see Toker 2020).

In the same sense, one could say that Buchenwald was "fortunate" – its story was told by survivors, including Eugen Kogon, David Rousset, and Jorge Semprún. There were, of course, several talented writers who survived to tell us about Auschwitz – Primo Levi, Ka-Tzetnik, Tadeusz Borowski, Charlotte Delbo, and Otto Dov Kulka, among others. Of all the numerous concentration and extermination camps run by the Nazis, it was Auschwitz with its gas chambers that became almost a common name, a synonym of the Holocaust, especially in its quasi-industrial aspect. Nevertheless, the memoirs of Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, as well as of the less deadly but longer lasting labor camps in the Soviet North and in Kazakhstan, belong to the corpus of "concentration-camp" literature (see Toker 2019); records of the Holocaust on Soviet territories are, rather, what Annie Epelboin and Assia Kovrigina have called "the literature of the ravines."[5] Of these ravines, makeshift forest graves, and trenches, Babi Yar was the largest and least man-made facility. The other best-known sites are "the Ninth Fort in Kaunas; Ponary [Paneriai – L. T.] near Vilnius; the Rumbula Forest near Riga; Maly Trostyanets near Minsk; … Drobitsky Yar near Kharkov; and Bogdanovka in Transnistria" (Arad 2008, xv). There was also the antitank trench outside of Kerch, memorialized by Ilya Selvinsky's poems (see Shrayer 2013), Yet in terms of collective memory, Babi Yar was the most visible, visualized, and harrowing atrocity: thousands of Kiev Jews had to walk the city's streets, amid jeering, abuse, and looting, though also some subdued compassion, on the way to their death. Most of the victims hoped that they were just to be deported, either to "Palestine" or to some outlying ghetto, while in accordance with the Nazi plans, they would disappear as if the earth had swallowed them — which it did: in the stories of 20th century atrocities, figures of speech are often grimly realized. In Solzhenitsyn's sense, one may say that Babi Yar was almost "fortunate" in comparison with the more systematically obliterated killing sites: it was survived by Pronicheva, who literally rose from the mass grave, as well as by some other individuals who managed to escape. It came to haunt the imagination of a number of talented writers, especially those with personal links, real or vicarious, to the victims. Though the subject got further treatments on the eve of *glasnost* in Aleksandr Borshchagovsky's 1984 play "Ladies' Tailor" ("Damskii portnoi," the basis of the 1990 film starring

5 Epelboin and Kovrigina emphasize that whereas the Jews of Western Europe were mostly deported to be killed elsewhere, far from the eyes and ears of the local populations, on Soviet territories the killings took place in the vicinity of their habitations (Epelboin and Kovriguina 2013, 29–42), a faster and cheaper method which also expressed the difference in the Nazi attitudes to West European and East European nations. It is believed that the ensuing industrialization of the process of murder was partly motivated by the trauma of the *Einsatzgruppen* perpetrators; this idea is dramatized in Jonathan Littell's novel *The Kindly Ones*, based on the author's study of multiple historiographical and memoiristic sources.

Innokenty Smoktunovsky), Anatoli Kuznetzov's *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel* (Anatoli 1970a) is still the major literary work about Babi Yar. In this issue, Victoria Khiterer's article (Khiterer 2023), which presents the state of current research on the betrayal of the Jews of Kiev by Ukrainian collaborators and on the cases of their rescue by the righteous among their neighbors and friends, uses Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar* as supporting evidence, thus also pointing to its reliability as a historical account. By contrast, Yulia Ilchuk's article in this issue (Ilchuk 2023) emphasizes the constructedness of this narrative in terms of its conceptualizing agenda.

3

Anatoly Vasilievich Kuznetsov, Ukrainian on his mother's side and Russian on his father's, was born in Kiev in 1929, and lived with his family in Kurenyovka (Kurenivka), a suburb, within two miles of the Babi Yar ravine. His father, a rather typical Soviet success story, started as a blue-collar worker and member of the Soviet *militsiia*, took advantage of the opening up of higher learning institutions to working people with insufficient secondary education, and became an engineer. He moved away to Gorky, where he formed another family.[6] Anatoly's mother was a hard-working schoolteacher. His early education was considerably influenced by his pious maternal grandmother, who instilled a yearning for humanistic values into the boy but did not make him a Christian believer. In the early fall of 1941, when he was 12 years old, German forces occupied Kiev, and immediately started persecuting the city's massive Jewish population.[7] The boy watched thousands of Jews walk to an assembly point not far from the Jewish cemetery, where they had been commanded to report with luggage that they could carry, as if for deportation, though there were incomprehensible details in the order. He later heard the sound of shots coming from the direction of the ravine. Two years later, at the age 14, he started jotting down his memories about the event, and, with his mother's encouragement, eventually used these notes in composing his most important work, *Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel*.

This book was written after Kuznetsov had already become a famous Soviet writer, often credited, along with Anatoly Gladilin, for launching the genre of "youth tale" (eventually to be developed by Vasily Aksyonov), as well as with

6 He would reunite with Kuznetsov's mother in his old age, see Kuznetsov 2005, 137.

7 Details are given in *The Complete Black Book of Russian Jewry* (Ehrenburg and Grossman 2002, 3–7). The account of the murder of Kiev Jews, before and in Babi Yar, is the first chapter of this book. The child Kuznetsov noticed the early persecution in the days preceding the massacre.

promoting the "confessional" mode in Soviet fiction. His first success came with his 1957 novel *Prodolzhenie legendy: Zapiski molodogo cheloveka*, set at the construction site of the Irkutsk Hydroelectric Power Station, first published in the journal *Iunost* and then in book form. The novel was translated into English within the Soviet Union as *Sequel to a Legend: From the Diary of a Young Man* (Kuznetsov 1959), and later also published in the USA as *The Journey* (Kuznetsov 1984). Kuznetsov was unhappy with the censored form in which this book first came out — in this issue, Asia Kovrigina's article (Kovrigina 2023), devoted to the Western reactions to Kuznetsov, tells, among other things, the story of the sequel to the *Sequel*, in which a former Gulag prisoner, Paul Chaleil, attempted to supply what may have been in the novel and may have been expunged from it.

There followed short stories and collections. Yet when Kuznetsov graduated from the Moscow Gorky Literature Institute in 1960, he was denied a residence permit in Moscow (where, he was told, there were too many writers anyway) and was given an apartment in Tula. In 1964 Khrushchev was deposed, and a refreezing of the cultural "Thaw" gained momentum, darkening his creative prospects.

Kuznetsov's mother had cried when she read his notes written at the age of 14; she encouraged him to tell the story of what he had seen in his childhood under the German occupation. In the spring of 1965, to complete *Babi Yar*, he went to Kiev where he met some of the survivors and collected the texts of the partly remembered documents in the archive. The revisiting of the past gave him tormenting nightmares; he came close to a nervous breakdown (see Matveev 2020). The book was born in pain.

Books have their fate, as the second-century grammarian Terentianus famously declared. When the manuscript was submitted to *Iunost*, it underwent such massive shortening that Kuznetsov snatched the typescript from Editor Boris Polevoi, tore up the pages, and stuffed them into garbage bins in the street. However, the journal was interested in the publication for reasons of its own (or, as Kovrigina's article in this issue suggests, because of Polevoi's own vivid interest in the subject). The editorial office had kept other copies, and the censored narrative was serialized in September and October 1966, as "a journal version" (rather than as "a shortened version," according to the promise made to the author). Even in this shape, it was a great and immediate success.

Yet Kuznetsov was in turmoil, exacerbated by further fights with the censorship, when not only was he not able, despite temporary and partial permissions, to restore the omitted passages for book-publication but was even forced to add artificial links instead of the omitted materials. There was also the issue of entanglement with the KGB: before traveling to France in 1961, he had to sign a commitment to report to the KGB (during the so-called stagnation period, those who wished to travel abroad, especially if not with organized tours but

individually, had to meet this condition). This was the way hundreds of people all over the Soviet Union sold their souls: by a seemingly vacuous signature they made themselves vulnerable to further pressure from the KGB; many would later attempt to deal with this stain by the belief that they had managed not to harm anyone specific by the required reports. This entrapment must have been one of the reasons why life in the Soviet Union became intolerable for Kuznetzov; the other major reason was his inability to publish his works unscarred by censorship, or to make some of them known at all (he buried his manuscripts in a forest near Tolstoy's Yasnaya Polyana). The story of his defection is well known: he claimed the need, as it were, to feel the "atmosphere" while working on Lenin's early political activity around the preparation of the congress of the Social-Democratic Workers' Party in London. Permission was granted, and in 1969 he traveled to England, with microfilm copies of his works concealed in the lining of his jacket. In London, he managed to escape his KGB "carer," contacted the journalist (and his future translator) David Floyd, and applied for political asylum. Soon afterwards, he published a statement in the *Sunday Telegraph*, explaining his decision, confessing, as he later also did in a filmed interview with Morley Safer, that in order to be allowed to travel he had asserted his loyalty and value as a KGB informer by concocting a false report that Yevtushenko and other Soviet writers and artists were planning to establish an underground journal for works inimical to the Soviet State. The public confession was meant to protect the denounced writers, the friends whom Kuznetsov had thus exposed to danger; it was meant to atone for his use of them. Nevertheless, it placed Kuznetsov in a problematic light. As his son Aleksei has noted (Kuznetsov 2005, 90–91), the confessional mode of his prose extended to his conduct after emigration, which complicated the expedience of self-fashioning. In her article in this special issue, Marina Balina reads *Babi Yar* as, among other things, a Bildungsroman that represents a childhood trauma and its consequences (Balina 2023). Her analysis may provide an indirect comment on the various aspects of wartime experience in Kuznetsov's life – in particular, on his doing what it might take to survive, justifying his choices ex-tempore, but remaining tormented in retrospect. This pattern seems to extend to Kuznetzov's adult life as well.

Within a year after his defection Kuznetsov published an uncensored version of *Babi Yar* where the passages omitted by censorship were printed in italics (in bold in Floyd's 1970 English version) and his own later comments in square brackets. This interesting graphic transformation of the book had, however, a side-effect: the readers' attention was partly diverted from the testimony about Babi Yar and about Kiev under German occupation to issues of censorship, to a lesson in what kinds of statements and narrative details were unacceptable in Soviet media. The typographic experiment also enhanced a thematic strand of the

book, namely the parallels between the Soviet and the Nazi regimes – parallels carefully avoided by Ehrenburg in *The Storm* but clearly drawn in Vasily Grossman's novel *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn' i sud'ba*), whose typescript was, in consequence, confiscated by the KGB in 1961.[8]

4

After the initial impact of the book in 1966, and of the complete "Tamizdat" version in 1970,[9] *Babi Yar* gradually lost the interest of the public; this stage of its history is probed in Kovrigina's article in this issue. Partially this was due to the fact that Kuznetsov had not published any new book after his defection. He is known to have avidly read Joyce, Kafka, and other writers whose works had not been accessible to him in the Soviet Union, and may have been discouraged by not being able to write modernist prose. But the heyday of modernism had been over by the 1970s; this was already the period when different varieties of documentary prose where gaining momentum. Judging by his November 17, 1973 statement on Radio Liberty, where he gave weekly readings, he had become convinced "that no literary fantasy can really compete with life in terms of invention": his real success with the readers came not from his inventions but rather when he "described, directly and without changing anything, what had really happened in life"; that his best works, or the best parts of his works, were produced when his "role was reduced to two simple things: to see and describe as forcefully [*iarko*] as possible" (Kuznetsov 2005, 111; author's translation). Particularly impressive works, drawing on direct experience, would include not only a documentary narrative such as *Babi Yar* but also fictional stories, such as Kuznetov's "The Extra" ("Artist mimansa," first published in *Novy mir* in 1968; see Anatoli 1970b), a version of the Russian traditional representation of the "little man," based on Kuznetsov's observations made when he worked as an extra in the Kiev Opera Theater.

The writer's son, Aleksei Kuznetsov, notes that when in 1991, on the 50th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre, he managed to organize two memorial meetings in

8 The text survived because copies were kept by L. Dominikina, Grossman's friend from student days, and the poet and translator Semyon Lipkin (see Chandler 2006). Georgy Demidov's manuscripts were likewise confiscated by the KGB, 20 years later – not only from his apartment but also from those of his friends, keepers of copies – the KGB had learned its lesson. After the start of the *perestroika*, with the help of Aleksandr Yakovlev, Demidov's daughter succeeded in retrieving these manuscripts.

9 Since Kuznetsov was already living in England, the 1970 edition of his book may not entirely fit the definition of *Tamizdat* ("publication-there"), except in the sense that it had been *smuggled out* of the USSR (On *Tamizdat* see Klots 2023.).

honor of his father, the event in Kiev received massive attention from the media and the public but hardly filled half a hall in Moscow (Kuznetsov 2005, 90). Aleksei Kuznetsov also believes that part of the reason for the waning of Kuznetsov and his main book's fame was caused by his not having produced any new books in emigration (Kuznetsov 2005, 91) before dying of a heart attack in 1979, aged 50. Yet he also believes that work done in preparation for the Radio Liberty broadcasts would actually have formed such a book.

In any case, Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar* inspired D. M. Thomas's fictional reworking of the massacre in his 1981 novel *The White Hotel* (to the point of triggering controversial allegations of plagiarism) and may have been among the sources of the Babi Yar episode in Jonathan Littell's 2006 *Les Bienveillaintes* (*The Kindly Ones*, 2009). Jews who lived in Kiev (many of whom attended annual memorial meetings at the Babi Yar site, both before and after *perestroika*), preserved Kuznetsov's book, as well as Yevtushenko's poem, as part of their cultural identity. For them, Kuznetsov was inscribed in the pavements of the city, even if not as literally as Joyce in Dublin, or Ibsen in Oslo.

The modest numbers of the Moscow audience at the meeting of 1991 must have been caused by the fact that Kuznetsov was but one of the many writers whose names were "returned," re-mediated in the Soviet Union after the start of *glasnost*; this was felt differently in his home-town Kiev, especially after Ukraine's declaration of independence in August 1991. A monument to Kuznetsov, by the sculptor Volodymyr Zhuravel, was unveiled in Kiev on September 29, in 2009, the anniversary of the beginning of the Babi Yar massacre. This extraordinarily appropriate and impressive artwork is discussed, among other things, in Marina Balina's paper in this issue.

Despite the difference in the "remediation"[10] of Kuznetsov between Moscow and Kiev, the *glasnost* marked a new stage in the history of his book. Several post-Soviet editions of *Babi Yar* came out in Russia. Interestingly, the 1991 edition published by Zakharov in Moscow does not keep the typographic distinctions among the three constituents of the text. As a result, the book reads in a much more unified fashion: the game with the censorship and the resulting insights into the fashioning of the Soviet discourse no longer distract the reader's attention from the book's testimony and the author's intense emotional and intellectual processing of what he had lived through and seen.

To some extent, the interconnection of the fates of *Babi Yar* and its author makes it possible to reread Kuznetsov's earlier books in relation to his *Babi Yar*.

10 I use the term "remediation" in the sense given to it by Astrid Erll, that of mediating images and stories again and again, across different media, in a process of creating and maintaining cultural memories (see Erll 2019, 229n3, 240).

Indeed, his first major work, *Prodolzhenie legendy* (*The Journey*) is a kind of autofiction. The first person protagonist-narrator is called Tolya, the familiar diminutive of the author's own first name. He goes to the Siberian construction site of the Irkutsk Hydro-Electric Station at approximately the same age when Kuznetsov worked at the Kakhovka Hydro-Electric Station on the Dniepr (Dnipro) river. Kuznetsov was sent to Irkutsk already as a member of the editorial board of the *Iunost*, and many of the characters are based on real people whom he had encountered there. Though Kuznetsov deliberately distinguishes the protagonist from himself by giving him a Moscow rather than a Kiev provenance and by making his mother a seamstress rather than a teacher, the protagonist-narrator's painful uncertainty about his path in life, as well as his systematic accounts of what he got to eat, can be illuminated by Kuznetsov's own experience as a starving adolescent in occupied Kiev and his underprivileged status in post-war years. There is an otherwise inexplicable sadness in his attitude to life, an otherwise inexplicable tolerance of thieves and a tendency to view corruption as more or less in the order of things, even if he goes through the motions (mandatory for a Soviet positive hero) of resisting it. And yet, his melancholic view of reality undergoes a check when he is surprised by the kindness of the workers to himself and to each other (something that the author was not much used to in Nazi occupied Kiev) and, in particular, when he watches the triumph of the giant project, the rerouting of the river Angara. The majestic construction may strike one as a therapy for memories of the gradual ruination of Kiev and of Kuznetsov's own Kurenyovka, especially at the end of the occupation, when his family's hut endured a series of blows and invasions. Perhaps those memories account also for the regret that he feels when the new Angara basin flood destroys, as planned, the territory where he had walked and dined at the workers' canteen.

The vitamin pills that the protagonist buys in a drugstore near the construction site are dated March 1952, a year before Stalin's death – for the protagonist their production date is "long ago." In 1952 Kuznetsov himself was still a second-rate citizen because of having lived under the German occupation; only after Stalin's death were the doors of higher-education institutions opened to him. The protagonist of *The Sequel of the Legend/The Journey* is spared this experience, and his failure to become a student is explained by poor matriculation grades. Yet the sadness is carried along from life to fiction, where there is something very real about it. The cast of characters does not contain any Jews, by contrast to Yevtushenko's 1965 poem "Bratskaia GES" ("The Bratsk Hydroelectic Station"): in 1956, when the novella was being written, the mild backlash against Stalinist state antisemitism was only beginning.

5

Kuznetsov defected to England at the height of his Soviet success, but, in a passionate reversal from self-censorship and compromises with censorship, he proclaimed that his uncensored real works would be published under a new name: A. Anatoli. In the Soviet Union, after the initial flurry of condemnations, he and his name were erased from all media until *glasnost* and *perestroika* got under way. In independent Ukraine, his contribution to testimony on Kiev's troubled 1940s was recognized but also (dis)placed into contexts by rival texts, scholarly, memorializing, and intermedial. One of the most important events in this process was Sergei Loznitsa's 2021 documentary film *Babyn Yar: Context*. Yulia Ilchuk's essay in this collection (Ilchuk 2023) compares the director's handling of the footage and photographs with the methods of Kuznetsov's book.

The first line of Yevtushenko's poem, "In Babi Yar there are no monuments," is no longer true, though the first Soviet-era monument to the "Soviet citizens and prisoners of war" murdered in the ravine was erected not in response to that poem but as late as 1976; the victims being Jewish was first indicated on the 1991 monument placed on the site after the declaration of Ukraine's independence. Memorials to victims of other nationalities and groups have since been built on the site. They were not damaged by the Russian bombing in 2022, but the area of the television station struck by a missile had also been part of the killing site of 1941–1943 (the erection of that television tower was one of the ways in which the Soviet authorities restricted the possibility of paying tribute to the victims at the site).

One of the recent public events pertaining to the memorialization of Kuznetsov and his work was reported in Nic North's article published in *The Jewish Chronicle* of September 1, 2022 (North 2022): crowdfunding donations have poured in for a headstone over Kuznetsov's modest grave at Highgate cemetery in London. Evidently, whatever press Kuznetsov may have received in the media over the decades, a multitude of ordinary readers have remained grateful for his literary and historical writing and appreciative of the painfully complex ideological phenomenon represented by his life. More evidence of this can be found in such events as the discussion of Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar* and of Yevtushenko's poem at the 2023 meetings commemorating the massacre at the Sinai Free Synagogue at Mount Vernon, NY, and – in particular – in the 2023 reprinting of his book, with a preface by Masha Gessen, by Vintage Classics.

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