– So, hi, everybody. And hope everybody's well. I'm going to focus as I know that Trudy, you know, has given her wonderful lecture on the history and the context of Babi Yar, and Dennis on the Shostakovich Symphony. So what we had agreed was that the three of us would focus on different aspects because it's such an important moment, not only in Jewish history or Holocaust, the period of the Holocaust, but globally in all our opinions. So it's worth having a look just at little bit about Yevtushenko, the poet, and obviously the poem itself and what happened with the poem, and the actual details of the poem. So it is three sessions devoted to one piece in a sense, but to look at it from the historical, the memorial, the memory, the factual, the music, and the actual words, you know, the literary value of the artist as well, because it's an extraordinary piece of work. The music, it's an extraordinary, horrific event, obviously in Jewish and human history, as everybody knows. So I'm not going to go into that in much detail and I'm not going to talk about the symphony 'cause obviously Dennis has wonderfully dealt with that. To focus specifically on the poem and Yevtushenko, who led a very interesting life, It's nowhere near as complex and as fraught with, you know, the extreme horror that Solzhenitsyn, and others of Solzhenitsyn generation went through. So it's quite different from when we looked at "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" and "The Gulag Archipelago" of Solzhenitsyn. And obviously, you know, the preview in the context of the other Russian authors of before. But there is still an obsession or a passion, and Yevtushenko with what is a Russian poet, because he very much sees himself as Solzhenitsyn does, as Tolstoy does, Dostoevsky, Gorky, the others we've looked at. The great Russian writers of the last 150, 200 years. As a Russian writer, a Russian poet, And that's important because the distinction between Russian identity and grappling with the assimilate more of the west, or move more towards what they would call a Slavic or Russian identity, obsessions with the land, with the Russian Orthodox Church, with the history, the Tsars, the 1860s emancipation of the peasants, and so on. So it's an entirely different set of obsessions. But because he's obviously writing in the second half of the 20th century, particular Babi Yar, the poem, but it's still focusing with on those areas so much. What is it to be a Russian writer in his period, which is rarely the post-Stalin period, the '60s, '70s, '80s, and then going to live in America in the '90s, the 2000S, and so on, living between the two. So underneath it all, is this question of the Russian identity of the writer, assimilate more of the Western ideas of human rights, social justice, democracy, and so on. Freedom, at least before the rule of law, or assimilates a different kind of history, you know, which is really coming out of empire and the rule of the Tsars, and then the horrors of the Stalin era and the terror, and so on. And the communist period.

So Babi Yar, the poem, situated itself written in, published in 1962, and it locates itself about, you know, what's, it 15, 17 years after the end of the war. And that's really, really important because it's

part of the '60s generation globally, but it's the part of the Khrushchev Thaw, as it was called historically in Russia at the time. Stalin dies in the mid '50s, and then Khrushchev takes over and there's a thaw. There's an opening up Solzhenitsyn book is published, "The Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," and his poem is published, and Shostakovich can actually write the music to the poem as well. And it's allowed, basically. But it's a complicated life. So to look at it very briefly, first is a bit of a bio I'm going to look at. Then I'm going to play a clip of Yevtushenko reading his own poem in English, and a little bit in Russian as well. And then there's a fantastic BBC interview with Yevtushenko that I have. I'm just going to play a couple of minutes clip from that interview also. So we just get a sense here of his life overall. And you know, this is him getting onto the front page, the cover, rather, the Time Magazine. He becomes huge in the west, absolutely huge after the Babi Yar poem. On the top left is, he is on the left, the taller, and on the right with glasses is Shostakovich, obviously working together on the 13th Symphony. On the top right, he is standing on the right, obviously Yevtushenko. And on the left is Louis Armstrong. Trying to just get a, give us a sense of, you know, some of the areas this guy's life traversed. The bottom is obviously him in the early '70s with President Nixon. And, you know, going to the White House, being received, we get a sense of how huge he was in his period, in his era. Bottom left is a younger Yevtushenko performing Babi Yar, because he, in a sense, is one of the very early performance poets. He performed it in Russian, first of all, in Russia, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg, elsewhere, and then in the West. So he performed it so often with a sense of dramatic theatricality and that's important. So he reached audiences, not only who were interested in poetry or who could read in Russia, but also audiences way beyond that. So bringing back the idea of the speaking or the performing poet, which goes way back to ancient times in Africa, Greece, and everywhere. And you, when we listen to him reading it, we get quite a different sense of so many of the emotions that go into this poem. So he's born in a town called Zima, which is in Siberia. And he, in his own memoir, he says his family were a peasant family, but with a little bit of noble descent, and I'm paraphrasing. His grandfathers, and this is very important for him, were both arrested during Stalin's purges and they were called enemies of the people, and sent to the camps and killed, 1937. And that both his grandfathers on his mother and father's side. His own father was a geologist and his mother a singer. So he comes from what I guess we would call middle class, perhaps slightly lower middle, but middle class family in his own context. 1951 to '54, he studies at the Gorky Institute of Literature in Moscow. But he leaves before finishing because he's so frustrated with, we can imagine what they had to study under the totalitarian at times. In 1957, he's expelled from the Soviet Union Literary Institute. And the word that is attached in his file is he's expelled for exhibiting too much individualism. He was labelled, and I'm quoting, "Yevtushenko is the head of the intellectual, juvenile delinquents of his class." His poems were called, quoting again from

the same file of the KGB, "His poems were pygmy spittle," that's obviously a loose translation from the Russian. He was often banned from travelling, travelling around in Russia of the Soviet Union, and obviously travelling to the West. But because his Babi Yar, the poem, was published in English in the early '60s, it got out. And he got a lot of praise from poets as diverse, or writers as diverse as Robert Frost, Pasternak, and others. 1962, he wrote a poem called "The Heirs of Stalin." This poem here, to come to you in a moment. And although Stalin obviously been dead for a number of years already, he felt that the legacy obviously still dominated Soviet life. And he directly addresses the Soviet government, imploring them to make sure that Stalin will never rise again and Stalinism will never rise again. Before he publishes this, before he even sends it anywhere, he sends it to Khrushchev. Khrushchev reads it and approves it for publication.

So it's the role of the writer, the role of the poet, and the president of a country. We see the link from going back to Tolstoy, and others in the 1800s. And we see that link coming through in the position of the poet, the writer, the Solzhenitsyn as well, the poet, the writer, the artist in Russian culture. And in some ways, perhaps, you know, I don't know, I don't want to draw artificial parallels with, you know, some of the great writers from the west, but would they be called? Would they be read? Or just to get that link of the president reads it and approves it so it's not censored and it can be published. Coming from South Africa, obviously one knows that only too well that kind of extreme attention to fascist detail. 1963, he's allowed out, it's all during the Khrushchev Thaw period. Goes to West Germany, France, and elsewhere in Europe. He was ordered to return to the USSR, and there, times had changed. The KGB were reasserting the influence over the Khrushchev era, with led by Yuri Andropov. I'm sure many people remember head of the KGB at the time, then became head of the country. And it's in their file, he was accused of acts of treason, to be expelled from the writers union, banned from travelling abroad for several years. But interestingly, in the '50s and the '60s, he became one of the most well-known poets in the Soviet Union, because he managed to get his poems out, because they were accessible to many people and because he would perform. And the idea of the performing poet, and we're going back now to the late '50, well, to the early '60s, really, you know, in his own culture, getting out more and more. We imagine these incredibly dark totalitarian times. 1963, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize, primarily because of the Babi Yar poem. KGB chairman at the time, Andropov, reports him in, it's a special report, which has been found in the files of the KGB, where Andropov has a special meeting of the communist poet bureau. And I'm quoting here, "On the anti-Soviet activity of the poet Yevtushenko." This is the level of extreme detail to words on a page written by this poet in these times. We understand in the Stalin era, but obviously afterwards. 1965, he co-signed the letter of protest against the absurd, ridiculous trial of Joseph Brodsky. He also co-signs the letter against the Warsaw packed invasion of Czechoslovakia in '68. So

he's part of this, but he's not as directly involved as what we would perhaps call a dissident in the spirit of Solzhenitsyn It's the Solzhenitsyn line, which is dissident, eight years in a Stalinist Siberian labour camp, which determines everything, and "The Gulag" is written in, you know, everything, et cetera, et cetera, comes out of that horror. And Solzhenitsyn is part of that era of writing. Yevtushenko, I wouldn't say hasn't, I wouldn't like to make a simplistic diagnosis in a way, but he doesn't have it as hard because the era of the Khrushchev Thaw in the '60s is a thaw, it is perhaps the best word for it. A bit of an easing, in terms of censorship, and the obviously, the horror of the Stalinist period. And then afterwards the poem gets out and Babi Yar becomes absolutely internationally famous. I showed you he met Nixon and others, he meets, you know, Louis Armstrong, all these other, this is all during the '70s now. He's able to travel at times, go in and out, he banned, unbanned, his work is banned, unbanned, et cetera.

Then he finally, in 2000, jumping to get, 'cause I want to get onto the poem, 2007, he took a job at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma. He's a professor and he was teaching literature, you know, politics, and so on. And based partly in America and partly in post-communist Soviet unit 2007 or Russia. It's interesting because he was accused of, and this comes from a phrase written by a journalist in the New York, in a New York newspaper who asserted quoting again, "Yevtushenko's politics have always been a complicated mixture of bravery, popularity, and vulgar accommodation with the dictatorship of his time." So populism, bravery, and vulgar accommodation with dictatorship. In essence, to put it bluntly, was he a collaborator, quietly or not? When the files came out, as I'm sure many people know from east, the old East Germany, approximately one in five were regarded as, let's say informers, if not active collaborators. One of the great playwrights and west and east German poets, who I admire enormously, Heiner Muller, who in Germany itself was regarded as a successor to Brecht, there was a foul found in the equivalent of the East German KGB where he was apparently a mild, quiet part-time, at least, informer. So, but if it one in five are, one can imagine the kind of society one is living in, of being denounced, of being, you know, of being watched surveillance. One can imagine what Stalinist terror has, if you like, morphed into with this extreme obsession with surveillance, observation, informing, denouncing, never known can I trust the person I love? Can I trust my brother, my sister, whoever, you know, whatever the teacher, anyone? Then the same writer goes on in this, in the New York paper, "The writers who had briefly flourished under Khrushchev Thaw, went in two different directions. First, there was the Solzhenitsyn direction, and they were, they had to go into silenced opposition. Yevtushenko and his era went into a more rewarded collaboration period." So there's this, and we know this coming from South Africa, and I'm sure many people know it everywhere. You know, it's not just simply Cowboy and Indian, collaborate or don't, inform or don't. There's a grey zone where there's a bit of

collaboration, there's a bit of informing. You're not quite sure, is there this one this, or that one that, or why when I meet somebody at the university, they're saying this or that, or later in the army ex yeah, and so on. It goes on and on. And then we discover that in this grey area is human nature at its worst because these are informers in some way, but never really big timely informers, never any big shots. Were they actually informers? Or was there something trumped up against them to make sure that they would collaborate or inform? You know, one doesn't know. So, and there's no evidence to prove that he was an informer and it's years since the end of the, you know, the fall of the Berlin War. There's no hard evidence. So, he has become known in contemporary way by some, let's put it more sceptical or harder, hard edged scholars, as the naughty child of the regime. You know, he could be put up with tolerated but not really, you know, not really a problem. And Joseph Brodsky, the exile poet, had this phrase about Yevtushenko, who signed a letter to help stop this absurd trial against him. "Yevtushenko throws stones, but only in the directions that are semi officially sanctioned." Does he have evidence? Is he not? Does it matter? Is he, you know, where does he position himself on this broad scale? 2007, world Congress of Russian Jews nominated him for the Nobel Prize for literature for the poem Babi Yar.

There is a writer of the 2000s in Russia, who also wrote just after he wrote Babi Yar in the '60s and going to the '70s. And this Russian poet is an anti-Semite, but was very important, I'm not going to name him, was very important at the time. And he called Yevtushenko a traitor to his own people because he called out Soviet anti-Semitism with the poem Babi Yar. Not because he's revealing one of the most horrific tragedies of human history, but because he's calling on the Soviet authorities. What are you doing about your own anti-Semitism? Why did you cover it up and not let the story out? You knew it in 1943, '44, when the Red Army went into liberate Kiev during the war. Why was it covered for all those years until he writes the poem, gets it published in '62? So he's attacked and this guy, I'm going to name it, Alexei Markov, goes on and says, "What kind of a Russian are you, Yevtushenko? You have forgotten your own people." And I think that phrase is so important because we go all the way back to this question of Russian identity. What is it to be your own people? What does it mean? Where's the fine line between patriotism and excessive nationalism? Where's the fine line between a believer in a certain identity with human rights values, or just the truth of human history, Jewish history of the war? "What kind of Russian are you, Yevtushenko?" If "you have forgotten your own people." It's the kind of phrase that a writer would come up with. It is so attacking and vicious when one really thinks about it. 'Cause the assumptions inside it, is that you have to conform to a certain set of ideas of what it means to be a Russian writer with the adjective Russian before the word writer, always. But as I say, he's part of that whole identity, internationalists or westerners, or more Russian, as we would say. Which one? And I think we see it played out through Putin and through

so many of what's going on today, everywhere. Is Russia part of the west, isn't it? Was it a total illusion? I think Madeleine Albright spoke about it in her book, that she saw the truth in Putin immediately she met him. She had no illusions whatsoever. You know, that he would become the kind of person who he had he has, and others. So, these writers are straddling this assimilationist debate of Russian identity. Okay, this is briefly the poem here before I go into Babi Yar. This is "The Heirs of Stalin," which Khrushchev allowed to be published. "Some of his heirs tend roses in retirement, thinking in secret their enforced leisure will not last." It's an amazing phrase, "thinking in secret their enforced leisure will not last. Others from platforms, even heap abuse on Stalin but, at night, yearn for the good old days. No wonder Stalin's heirs seem to suffer these days from heart trouble." It's an amazing one line, he gets it. "No wonder Stalin's heirs seem to suffer these days from heart trouble." Guilt, shame, fear, worry, going to be revealed. "They, the former henchman, hate this era of emptied prison camps and auditoriums full of people listening to poets. The party discourages me from being smug. 'Why Care?' Some say, but I can't remain inactive. While Stalin's heirs walk this earth. Stalin, I fancy, still lurks in the mausoleum." You know, when one starts to tease out, it appears deceptively simple. Deceptively ordinary, almost. But it's so beautifully crafted, obviously the translation, it's so beautifully crafted that for me, some of the phrases just burn in. You know, when you read it again and again, and we see that it's simple, it's not simplistic. Okay, to go on to Babi Yar. And as we all know, this was the last two days of September, the 29th and 30th, 1941, and the Nazis slaughter nearly 34,000 Jews in the ravine called Babi Yar. Yar is the Ukrainian-Russian word for ravine. 'Cause tributaries, little rivers would run in that area. Just outside the capital, Kiev, shot everyone. 20 years later, almost, it's 20 years later, when it takes a poet to go there to see what is there at the ravine, at Babi Yar, and to write a poem. It takes a poet to challenge the might of the Soviet totalitarian system, to challenge the way that history and memory are recorded and written, to take on an extreme totalitarian culture, to take on the history of the world, and of course one of the most horrific events in Jewish history. And he's not Jewish, as we all know. So he wrote it in '61 in Kiev. He goes there and he met a writer, who I'm going to bring up now. This guy here, Anatoli Kuznetsov. And he wrote this remarkable book called "Babi Yar: A Document in the Form of a Novel." He was, he observed, he saw what happened, and he was an eyewitness, let's call it, in today's language. And he, Kuznetsov, documented, put it all together, wrote this book in the form of a novel. But it's of course a fictionalised or it's an historical account mode. But he's writing from his own personal perspective in the tradition of Solzhenitsyn and others that I spoke about last week, combining historical facts with philosophical thought and personal experience of being an eyewitness to the horror. So it's in that tradition of writing a novel, a book. And Yevtushenko went with Kuznetsov to Babi Yar, and he was shocked. No monument was the first thing. No sign of respect, no sign of

acknowledgement, even. All he saw were lots of trucks unloading, in his own phrase, "Stinking garbage from endless trucks." He went back to the hotel. Kuznetsov had told him all about the, you know, what had happened. He didn't know anything really, before he goes back to his hotel in Kiev. He wrote the poem in about 4.5, 5 hours. That's it, done. He then wrote much later in his memoirs, "Most of my poetry up till then had been based on love and tenderness, or on shame. Shame, I realised, came to dictate my poem, Babi Yar." I have a student at the moment, a PhD student who's doing a remarkable project on shame and how it works in art, and in theatre, and literature, and how the notion of shame works in culture. And is that the only time that our conscience gets pricked or not? On an individual level or on a social, on a societal, historical level? It's not the old thing of guilt. And according to the psychologist, shame is seen more as a social emotion. Not so much a personal, you can steal a suit from somewhere, but nobody sees you, you don't really feel ashamed. But if you steal a suit and as you walk out, a little child looks at you in your hand, shame comes in. So he talks about shame a lot in his memoirs and it what drove him with his poem. He also said it's not a political poem, it's above politics. Human suffering is way more, and this sense of human suffering that Becker talks about after the second World War as well, the sense of suffering and the meaning of the words suffering, and words matter and you know, it's all too often bandied around, what is it to suffer? "We get it, we have to write about it. We cannot forget," he argued in, often in, against the Soviet authorities, who were endlessly harassing him. When he recited Babi Yar for the first time in public in Russia, he wrote, he says in his memoir, "It was an avalanche of silence. I was shocked." Let's remember, he's not Jewish, so he is writing this and Russians, most of whom are not Jewish, who are listening to him, are stunned into an avalanche of silence. After his first reading performance, a lady, an elderly, very elderly lady with a cane, walked slowly up to him and she just said to him, "And this is accurate," she said, "I was there, I was in Babi Yar." And she told him, she'd one who'd been one of the survivors who'd crawled out from under the mountain of dead bodies. And then they went on about what the poem had meant, et cetera to her. In terms of the larger debate, the poem was also, as I said earlier, a strong, powerful criticism of anti-Semitism everywhere. And we don't have to even talk about how often, how much it's reared, it's vicious head again. It's almost like drooling fangs. You know, when you look at people who are anti-Semitic, and it's an attack on anti-Semitism globally. It's an attack on Soviet, on Russian anti-Semitism of his own people. And I say that phrase his own people because he's accused of not writing for his own people. From the quote I gave earlier. He also attacks the Soviet regime and in the Khrushchev era, so-called thaw, for covering it up. And as we know, it was part of the simple binary narrative given by the Soviet regime at the time in the, after the war, 50 years into the '60s, still is of the great patriotic war. And obviously so many millions of Russians died, you know, obviously in the war. So it is the great patriotic war, but the way it's portrayed in the mythical

narrative, which purports to speak to the history, is that it's about the Russians, not about the Jews. And that is the crucial distinction. So when he was attacked, he's attacked not only for revealing a horror of the wall, it's more because he's seen as anti-Russian, because he's pro Jewish, or rather, he's simply revealing a horrific event, that happened in Russian history and German history, and Ukrainian history. So it's the Jewish component that he is attacked for, really. And that's what's going on.

And we go back to that question of Russian identity. It's the great patriotic war. It was about the Russians, not about Jews or even Christians, or this or whatever, all of it. It's about one thing. "You're right, I was not afraid, because I had already been expelled from the literary institute and other Soviet Union institutes and organisations. I was expelled all the time." Then Shostakovich called him, and the music, and the symphony, and in his own words, "It made the poem a hundred times stronger." And it made it obviously global as we know. Okay, so this is working with Anatoli Kuznetsov, the context out of which this poem comes. I want to show a couple more things before I go into the actual poem itself. This is, first of all, this is an aerial photograph taken by a German reckon reconnaissance plane over the area of Babi Yar, where they are deciding where they will commit this horrific act of evil. So we zoom from the large picture, from the aeroplane, we go down. These are some of the bullet cases left over, which were found. This is a picture and it's incredibly hard, and I apologise for showing it, but I feel we have to. This is in the poet's imagination. This is what he can imagine. This is what he feels. It's a picture taken as the Nazis did. A lot of pictures of the Einsatzgruppen that Trudy spoke about, the so-called action squads. The basically, the murderers of so many of the Jews, throughout whole of Eastern Europe plus the whole of the old USSR. This is a Nazi officer talking to Ukrainian woman. This is after the slaughter. And these are Russian prisoners of war and Ukrainian collaborators, in the words of Anatoli Kuznetsov, helping to "clean up the ravine." And they're also looting and stealing bits and pieces of clothing, and whatever else they find. I want to compare that picture with this. In trying to get a sense of how do we represent memory of history, Jewish history or Second World War history, how do we represent it? How do we try and show it when we are involving art, not only historical fact, or the interweaving of art and history, art and memory? This is what it would really have looked like. A sunny day. Remember it's the end of September. Blue skies, these are the people here, and these are two Ukrainian women talking to the Nazi officer who's been involved in all this mass horrific slaughter.

Compare that to this picture. And the black and white images, grainy, that we know, compared to colour. I don't want to go into the whole discussion artistically about these kind of choices. Just to alert us, because I think it's an important difference. And for Yevtushenko to try and find words to his imagination, standing at the site, trying to

imagine what happened, what went on. This is a picture of some of the clothing and belongings that were looted and that were left over afterwards. There's a closeup of some of those items as well. Remember the first time I ever went to Yad Vashem, and there was that one small glass case, just of a four year old's shoe, found in Auschwitz, you know, and how to represent these things visually and through memory, not only to maximise emotional effect, but to somehow personalise the huge history of the horror and the slaughter. This is a map of the known massacre sites done by the Einsatzgruppen throughout eastern Europe and the Soviet Union of the time. And all those dots represent areas where Jews, primarily 98% Jews, were taken and shot in ravines, in ditches, in forest, wherever. These are all the sites that have been, that were recorded to a certain point. This is a picture of this Kiev itself. So we see suburbs, this is how close it is, Babi Yar. It is 15, 20 minute drive from Kiev itself. It is so close. And there's something about the scale that brings this poem and this event into such horrific immediate focus and hard to activate or mobilise memory in people getting to understand what they might read in a history book and how poetry and art can really work with memory. This is today. This was much, much later, when finally there was a Jewish memorial set up because originally there was nothing. Originally there was only a, a notice that was put up to the Soviet citizens who were killed during the war. No mention of the Jews. This came much, this came decades, decades later. The menorah. This is a picture from when the Russian army came to liberate Kiev. And those are Russian soldiers standing on the top left and they excavated one of the parts of the ravine. I'm sorry to show this, but I think it's so important, not only about a poet's imagination, but it's the truth. And a poet has, a writer has to go to the truth, and the writer has to know it before he or she can try and do something with words in a poem, in a film, in a novel, whatever. We know these things, we've seen them before, but we link it now with Yevtushenko, with Babi Yar, with what had happened there. Ukraine being in the news so much nowadays. For me it becomes such an important and powerful set of images. I'm going to read the poem first briefly in English, and then I'm going to play you him reading it himself because his English is, it's not entirely understandable all the way through. "No monument stands over Babi Yar. A steep cliff only, like the rudest headstone. I am afraid. Today, I am as old as the entire Jewish race itself. I see myself an ancient Israelite. I wander over the roads of ancient Egypt. And here, upon the cross, I perish, tortured, and even now, I bear the marks of nails. It seems to me that Dreyfus is myself. The Philistines betrayed me – and now judge. I'm in a cage. Surrounded and trapped. I'm persecuted, spat on, slandered, and the dainty dollies in their Brussells frills squeal, as they stab umbrellas in my face. I see myself a boy in Belostock. Blood spills, and runs upon the floors, the chiefs of bar and pub rage unimpeded and reek of vodka and of onion, half and half. I'm thrown back by a boot, I have no strength left, in vain I beg the rabble of pogrom to jeers of 'Kill the Jews, save our Russia!' My mother's being beaten by a clerk. O, Russia of my heart, I

know that you are international, by inner nature. But often those whose hands are steeped in filth abused your purest name, in name of hatred. I know the kindness of my native land. How vile, that without the slightest quiver, the anti-Semites have proclaimed themselves the 'Union of the Russian People!' It seems to me that I am Anne Frank. Transparent, as the thinnest branch in April, and I'm in love, and have no need of phrases, but only that we gaze into each other's eyes." I'm going to read that again, "And have no need of phrases, but only that we gaze into each other's eyes. How little one can see, or even sense! Leaves are forbidden, so is sky, but much is still allowed – very gently. In darkened rooms each other to embrace. 'They come!' 'No, fear not – those are sounds of spring itself. She's coming soon. Quickly, your lips!' 'They break the door!' 'No, river ice is breaking...' Wild grasses rustle over Babi Yar, the trees look sternly, as if passing judgement . Here, silently, all screams, and, hat in hand, I feel my hair changing shade to grey. And I myself, like one long soundless scream above the thousands of thousands interred, I'm every old man executed here, as I am every child murdered here. No fibre of my body will forget this. May 'internationale' thunder and ring when, for all time, is buried and forgotten the last of anti-Semites on this earth. There is no Jewish blood that's blood of mine, but, hated with a passion that's corrosive. Am I by anti-Semites like a Jew. And that is why I call myself a Russian!" I'm going to play him reading it. He reads the first stanza in Russian and then the rest in English. No monument stands over Babi Yar. A drop sheer as a crude gravestone. I am afraid. Today I am as old in years as all the Jewish people. Now I seem to be a Jew. Here I plod through ancient Egypt. Here I perish crucified on the cross, and to this day I bear the scars of nails. I seem to be Dreyfus. The Philistine is both informer and judge. I am behind bars. Beset in every side. Hounded, spat on, slandered. Squealing, dainty ladies in flounced Brussels lace stick their parasols into my face. I seem to be then young boy in Byelostok. Blood runs, spilling over the floors. The barroom rabble-rousers give off a stench of vodka and onion. A boot kicks me aside, helpless. In vain I plead with these pogrom bullies. While they jeer and shout, 'Beat the Yids. Save Russia!' Some grain-marketer rapes my mother. O my Russian people! I know you are international to the core. But those with unclean hands have often made a jingle of your purest name. I know the goodness of my land. How vile these anti-Semites without a qualm, they pompously called themselves the Union of the Russian People! I seem to be Anne Frank, transparent as a branch in April. And I love. And have no need of phrases. My need is that we gaze into each other. How little we can see or smell. We are denied the leaves, we are denied the sky. Yet we can do so much. Tenderly embrace each other in a darkened room. They're coming here? Be not afraid. Those are the boom sounds of spring. Spring is coming here. Come then to me. Quick, give me your lips. Are they smashing the door? No, no, it's the ice breaking. The wild grasses rustle over Babi Yar. The trees look ominous, like judges. Here all things scream silently, and, baring my head, slowly I feel myself turning grey. And I myself am one massive,

soundless scream above the thousand, thousand buried here. I am each old man here shot dead. I am every child here shot dead. Nothing in me shall ever forget! The 'Internationale,' let it thunder when the last anti-Semite on the earth is buried forever. In my blood there is no Jewish blood. In their callous rage, all anti-Semites must hate me now as a Jew. For that reason, I am a true Russian!

- Okay, I want to play a short excerpt from an interview that the BBC did with Yevtushenko, and we will see there's just a couple of minutes here, where he's talking about an interesting moment with, in terms of the poem. What I feel very powerful with, when he reads it, and obviously he's reading it in English, is that we can feel the rage, the bewilderment, incomprehension, the shock, the fear, the anger, the fury. There are so many emotions caught and I think he's trying to capture it in English, second language, as he's reading. The other thing is one of the signs of amazing poets, very often, is how they combine, and Dylan does this, and then Cohen, and many others, are they combined mythology with the historical event. You know, talking about Anne Frank and Exodus from Egypt. Other things combining many different images from the history of myth together with the history that happened. Okay, this is the interview with the BBC.

- Participated this planned crime for to council this thing. I think that if he's Christian, he has repent before his death about it.

- [Interviewer] How aware were you of the deep criticism that you were subjected to because of the poem that accused you of and I quote, "Distorting the great patriotic war, forgetting about the tragedy of the Russian people, perverting the ideas of internationalism and patriotism." One person wrote such a regular plenary session of the Russian Union of writers. Quote, "our people will wipe Yevtushenko from the face of the earth." How aware were you of these deep criticism?

- Of course I couldn't say it was very pleasant, but I did expect it. But it was compensated by incredible support of so many people. For instance, I never been attacked. Only some hooligans, they scratched with something hid under my little car. That was only, but nobody attacked me physically on the streets or something. But I remember how some members of basketball team of Moscow University, they came to me, they were, they surrounded me for probably a couple of weeks as my body guards. And some people, as mom said to me, I didn't know about it that time. She, afterwards she confessed me. But in the some nights some people was sleeping or staying under my stairway, staircase of my home, just guarding me, being my unknown guard. I didn't know. But I didn't notice them. But some insult, yes, you know, because if you are insulted by anti-Semite, it's not insult. It's a great, in my opinion, it's a great appreciation. Above all is very funny what happened with my mom. When she was 80 years old, she was working in kiosk, near railway station in Moscow. And some anti-Semites, who invented

versions the time hid the Jew. I have different bloods but not Jewish, absolutely not Jewish blood. But they just crippled, morally crippled people, because they couldn't understand what someone could understand sufferings, so other nationalities like his own sufferings. And they came, they began to said, "You Jewish bitch go back to your Israel with your bastards ." And she said to me, laughing about, smiling about it, she said, "You know," I said, "Why you laughing?" It's pretty unpleasant. She said, "No, I was very happy because you know, as a mother I don't idealise you. I know all your defects like nobody else. But you know, I was very proud. I thought if such a bastard hate so much my son, he worth something."

– I'm going to hold that there with talking about his mother being so proud at the age of 80. "You know, that if people hate him, he must be something." And also that phrasal uses, that "they're morally crippled, these anti-Semites, and they can't see that somebody else can understand other people's suffering," or another person's suffering. But really understand it, as a writer needs to project into someone else's head, and try and understand from their point of view and write it from their point of view. And he's trying to bridge both, obviously in the poem. The last thing, it's a fascinating, it's an hour long interview. This whole interview. This is a travelling exhibition of memory and we all know, you know, the connections with art and memory, and historical events. This is Cindy Jackson, an American, very interesting American artist. And she created this travelling memorial piece of art to Babi Yar. I leave it open to everybody what anybody might make of it or not. And to end with a brief phrase from Shostakovitch, "We must never forget the dangers of anti-Semitism and we must keep reminding other people every day the infection is still alive, and who knows if it will ever disappear. Yevtushenko's poem astounded me when I read it and thousands of people were astounded. Many had recently heard about Babi Yar, but it took Yevtushenko's poem to make them aware of it, to make them feel it. First the Germans, then the Russians, then the Ukrainian government tried to destroy the memory of Babi Yar. But after Yevtushenko's one poem, it became clear to me that it would never be forgotten. That is the power of art. People knew about Babi Yar before Yevtushenko's poem. But they were silent, complicit. His poem, when they read it, the silence was broken, they could be silent no longer. Art destroys silence." Shostakovich. Okay, thank you very much, everybody. And I'll hold it there and we can do some questions if you like. Not just yet.

Q & A and Comments

Okay, from Ina, "When the poem was published, Yevgeny became a hero for all of us. Before we left the Soviet Union in '89, we went to Babi Yar to touch a stone. There was no Jews mentioned in inscription."

Absolutely. That's amazing, Ina, that's remarkable. Thank you so much

for sharing that. Yeah, Jews only mentioned when that last statue that I showed was put up with the menorah. Dennis, "Afrikaans poet known as were flourishing at the same time."

It's interesting, Dennis, that you mentioned that, because one thinks about what was happening in the early to mid '60s in the western world, South Africa, in the western world, and in Vietnam, you know, everywhere. What so many events and many things. And this is happening for this one poet. Gene.

Q: When did the Russian public first learn about Babi Yar?

A: Well, the Russian authorities knew when the Russian army liberated in late 1943, early '44, they liberated Kiev. So in '43, sorry, but that would've been the Russian leadership or Russian army. Actual public, I can't put an exact date on it, because word would've got out in all ways through ordinary soldiers who had been there and seen 'cause they had to excavate it like in that one picture showed. So families would've got to know through the soldiers, there would've been reporters, others, journalists. And then there would've been grey area. Can they publish? Word would've gotten out in some way, but not in a major way. Like you know, when Eisenhower went, you know, to the camp.

Louise. "Can't shame be non-social in the personal and private sense of an individual's acknowledgement of a gap between values and a deed or thought that violates?"

Yeah, I was just interested in reading some psychologists, some contemporary ones, I don't know if it's true or not anyway, or it's real, are they made the distinction between guilt being personal and shame being social, as an emotion induced by the group to keep the group conforming to the, to whatever the group idea is. To the one narrative, not allowing much dissent or disagreement, and how mechanisms of shame can be used to keep people scared or keep people conforming.

Susan. "At one shoe." Ah, yeah, it was remarkable, Susan. Thank you. Tanya. "But Putin bombarded the memorial in the first days of the war." Yep, absolutely, we all know that.

As you're saying, Tanya, the missile hit. Susan. "It's like how close Majdanek is to Lublin."

Yep. Elena. "After the war, the Soviets wanted to bury the site under a landfill. The massacres site was filled with liquid waste or nearby brick factories."

Thank you. Exactly, spot on. I was just describing what Yevtushenko saw when he went there with trucks unloading garbage.

Stan. "In 1979 while on a tour of the USSR and visiting refuseniks, I did a group of American tourists in my group to Babi Yar when our Soviet tour guide said it was not included in the tour." That's so interesting, Stan. First time I ever, thank you for sharing. First time I ever went to Germany many, many years ago. I was hitchhiking around as a young, yeah, many, many years ago. And it took a bus tour of Munich and they were all laughing in German and English. "Oh, that's where the gas is manufactured. That's where the gas is," you can imagine the rest. It was my introduction, but it's not everybody's experience obviously, just happened to be mine arriving in Munich, as yours, Stan.

Gail, thank you so much. Yeah, it's a very powerful, as you say, "Sombre reading of Yevtushenko himself." Everyone can imagine him reading this hundreds, if not thousands of times in Russian. And this is in English, second language, so one can imagine. But I think it increases with age and time. The effect and the power, you know, not rest until the anti-Semite is buried and many of the other phrases.

Q: Who put the memorial in Babi Yar?

A: Well the first one was the Ukrainian and Soviet authorities during the communist era. And then afterwards, I don't have to check that, we put that menorah in.

Susan, thank you, thank you. Mara, thank you. Selma, thank you. Anita. Yeah, his reading is brilliant. There's also a reading of him doing it in that same BBC interview. One can get it, it's an hour long, the interview, and he reads the whole thing in Russian 'cause the BBC interview asks him to read it in Russian and, but you get similar emotions to the ones that he does in English, but without any of the music or the visual backdrop.

Elena. "For 10 years, the waste was accumulated in the ravine, until heavy rains in '61, pumping station at the dam failed and the liquid mud was unleashed, destroyed everything in its path." Hmm, thanks for that. Really helpful.

Judy, thank you. The last anti-Semite must be, his actual word is "the last anti-Semite must be buried." "If only you knew how wrong he was." Exactly, antisemitism is thriving again, although in different translations, Judy are right. Some use the word killed and some use buried. "Anti-Semitism, certainly thriving again," as you say.

Thanks, Judy. Barbara, thank you. Sarah, thank you so kindly. Joan, thanks. Nicki, thank you. Evron, thanks so much. Beverly, Judith, you are being so kind to really appreciate. Carol, thank you.

Then Marlene. "My husband was a sucker analyst and published a paper

focusing on dissociative behaviour, was because he couldn't tolerate being shamed, i.e. his behaviour after he leaves the cave and announces his name aboard the ship. Remember he lived in a shame society."

Yep. And it's fascinating what they call theory of shame coming back in amongst various theorists in psychology. Anyway, now. But it is interesting as a contemporary concept, how shame works and how some people just are so narcissistic. They cannot be shamed. They just laugh if off for they don't care. I think it was Shostakovich, who also in a letter to Yevtushenko says, "Morality and conscience and shame are sisters." If I remember, I'll check it exactly in one of his letters.

Marla, thank you. "It's a very personal story." Thank you Marla for sharing that. Diane. "I was also on a tour supposedly to go to Babi Yar." Okay, let's cut here. Yeah, I think, is that all of it? I'm sorry, this just jumped.

And let me just go back. There we are. Mary, thanks for your comment. Marion.

Q: Was Anatoli Kuznetsov a relative of Edward? His prison diaries were published in the '70s.

A: Very good question, I don't know. Great, I'll try and find out.

Stuart, thank you. Betty. "In a dense forest on the way to Treblinka, we stopped in a monument recognising the Poles has suffered the same fate as the Jews of Babi Yar, even more. Many years later, the Polish government acknowledged that the murdered Poles were all Jews."

Yep, same thing, the same narrative pushed by the Russians. That it was the great patriotic war and it was Russians versus the fascist Nazis. So the, you know, everything gets reduced to a binary, goodies and baddies, and it's not accurate. Yes, and the Poles publish exactly the same.

Cynthia. "I listened to your talk, thank you." Thank you so much for your comments, Cynthia. Barbara. "My mother had a non-Jewish friend from Kiev. She asked a friend if she knew about Babi Yar. She said she never heard of it." Yep, I can imagine. It's about how memory can be used to erase memory. And you know how history is told, nevermind taught, but how history is told or written, and how artists try and deal with memory and how easy it is to erase it. Milan Kundera, the great Czech novelist, brilliant writer, you know, "The Unbearable" and "The Book of Laughter and Forgetting." He talks about the erasure of memory, you know, and how it works in a society and that's how the lie gets set up. Rose, thank you. Robert.

Q: What happened to the memorial now in the war?

A: Yeah, the Russian sent a missile. I don't know if it was totally demolished, but certainly was attacked.

Barbara, thank you. Thank you, Dina. Yeah, that's same about the Russian bombardment. Marla, your personal story, thank you. And Diane. "Tour supposedly to go to Babi Yar." And then let's cut the rest of your comment.

Sonya, thanks to, oh, that's very kind of you. To Trudy, Dennis, myself, for this week. "Very painful," absolutely. "But it's burned indelibly into our memory." Thank you so much for saying that, Sonya. We made the choice because it's just too important an event to not look at. And the fact that it was, how it was handled historically is truly fantastically as explained. And then how it was handled by Shostakovich as a symphony, which Dennis fantastically did. And then I thought, you know, the three of us thought,

"Okay, then I'll bring in the literary side of it, the poem itself." Okay, thank you so much, everybody. And thanks again, Lauren. And hope everybody takes care and can have a really good August.