

**Title:** A Time for Trauma: Narrative Time in Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*  
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One of the most interesting and effective devices in this powerful and disturbing memorial to the Stalinist Gulag is the way in which a strange, unsettling, and even hostile prison-camp universe is created by narrative time. The unnatural movement of time warps the apprehension of reality by Shalamov's *zek* and severs him from the rest of the world beyond the barbed wire. The Gulag survivor's attempt to understand and record his experience occurs within the matrix of the alien physical 'laws' of the camps and the inescapable complications of memory.

In his book *Story Logic*, David Herman suggests that narrative attempts to fully reconstruct traumatic events such as those relating to the Holocaust or personal tragedies may ultimately fail. His analysis of such narratives concludes that they are "polychronic," that is, they entail a "fuzzy temporality" where time is not chronologically organized and does not always flow forward. Polychrony, he argues, may reflect the experience of trauma and the act of remembering more faithfully than chronologically organized narratives.

This paper will discuss Shalamov's structuring of time in *Kolyma Tales* in the context of trauma literature, as well as the literary devices he uses to create the temporal layers of the text.