



# The Pawnbroker: A Novel

*Edward Lewis Wallant*

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## **The Pawnbroker: A Novel** Edward Lewis Wallant

For most of us, remembering the Holocaust requires effort; we listen to stories, watch films, read histories. But the people who came to be called “survivors” could not avoid their memories. Sol Nazerman, protagonist of Edward Lewis Wallant’s *The Pawnbroker*, is one such sufferer.

At 45, Nazerman, who survived Bergen-Belsen although his wife and children did not, runs a Harlem pawnshop. But the operation is only a front for a gangster who pays Nazerman a comfortable salary for his services. Nazerman’s dreams are haunted by visions of his past tortures. (Dramatizations of these scenes in Sidney Lumet’s 1964 film version are famous for being the first time the extermination camps were depicted in a Hollywood movie.)

Remarkable for its attempts to dramatize the aftereffects of the Holocaust, *The Pawnbroker* is likewise valuable as an exploration of the fraught relationships between Jews and other American minority groups. That this novel, a National Book Award finalist, remains so powerful today makes it all the more tragic that its talented author died, at age 36, the year after its publication. The book sold more than 500,000 copies soon after it was published.

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