Drawing from contemporary discourses in the ever-growing field of affect study, this paper will trace the relevance of one specific affect, pudore (Fr. pudeur), in Italian Holocaust literature. In a narrow sense, this affect pertains to physical concealment (through gestures and clothing) as well as self-protection from an individual's exposure in a socially charged situation. Moving from the bodily to the literary level, from the physical to the rhetorical, pudore raises questions of revealing and concealing, telling and not telling. Paradoxically, pudore is at once an embodied affect as well as an affect that – at the narrative level, through tropes of reticence and avoidance language (including euphemism, understatement, and irony) – can prevent emotions from being represented or at least disguise them. The role of such a key corporeal-affective disposition will be discussed with textual examples from the memoirs of several survivor-writers, paying special reference to the works of Primo Levi.

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