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Gdanskie Czasopismo
Humanistyczne

The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

2016 nr 6

Jednak Książki. Gdańskie Czasopismo Humanistyczne
eISSN 2353-4699

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Publikacja finansowana ze środków na utrzymanie potencjału badawczego Wydziału Filologicznego Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Wersja elektroniczna jest wersją pierwotną czasopisma.

JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI

GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE

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EDITOR'S NOTE

INTRODUCTION

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Although Holocaust studies is a thriving research area, boasting many important recent publications and projects, a truly broad, interdisciplinary perspective is still felt to be lacking. Hence, the current issue of "Books Now" is meant as an opportunity to look at the theme of the Shoah in as diverse and wide-scoped contexts as possible. Our authors write not only about the genesis, essence, or events of the Holocaust, but also about the influence of that monstrous genocide on the history of humankind, and its role and place in shaping the reality of our lives today. They discuss the Holocaust as a decisive phenomenon in transformations of multiple aspects of our contemporary world: from politics to ethics, from norms of behaviour to religious beliefs, from art to mass culture, from philosophy to dreams. Special attention has been paid to representation of the Holocaust in literature, because, as we believe, literature is still the most important medium of diagnosing and influencing human souls.

Our contributors represent various academic disciplines: anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, literary studies and other. We hope that due to its interdisciplinary nature, the current issue of our journal will bring many interesting observations on the role of the Holocaust in the past and in the present-day world.

JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
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STUDIES

MAKING SENSE OF THE HOLOCAUST IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND: THE REAL AND THE IMAGINED, THE CONTRADICTIONS AND THE PARADOXES

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Introduction

There are numerous voices from among senior scholars in our generation that tell us that it is impossible to make sense of the Holocaust. The Holocaust has altered the basic understanding we have of humanity. How to identify its causes poses almost impossible challenges for the writing of history – because the enormous scale and intensity of the genocide are completely outside the continuity of ordinary historical development. The Holocaust is also a European problem, because it is a tragic and ominous legacy of European civilisation, and testimony to its greatest failure. And, in addition, it is a Polish problem, given that the Holocaust largely unfolded on Polish soil.

The sheer magnitude of those events – the terror and the suffering experienced by the unarmed victims, the brutal murder of huge numbers of children, the stupendous loss of life and the destruction of entire Jewish communities, the industrialised death camps, the forced ethnic cleansing and repopulating of previously multi-ethnic towns and villages, and the devastation of the local Jewish heritage – the sheer magnitude of those events that we collectively term 'the Holocaust' is simply too much for us to make sense of.

My experience as a foreigner in Poland in listening to people speaking about the Holocaust has overwhelmingly been an awareness of numerous discourses and multiple contours of memory. There is no unanimity or shared vision, and it is impossible to generalise – whether on the philosophical challenges, the historiographic challenges, the European challenges, or the Polish challenges. Frankly, given the immensity of the Holocaust especially as seen from Poland, I do not think it could be otherwise.

But here in Poland there has been a particular problem, because this unmastered and probably unmasterable past has been overlaid by at least two other factors since the end of the war more than seventy years ago. One is the basic fact that Poles themselves also experienced colossal suffering during the war; the other was that during forty years of communist rule the entire historical record was falsified, so that in the public discourse the Holocaust largely disappeared into the generalised crimes of the fascist German occupation. Only in recent years, since the end of communist rule in 1989, has the Holocaust become part of the normal curriculum in Polish schools and the whole subject opened up for research in a spirit of free enquiry by a new generation of historians undertaking scholarly re-examination of narratives which had been sensitive if not taboo. These past 25 years have proved to be an exceptionally fertile period of time, marked by the appearance of numerous specialist monographs and important historical debates, whether for example over the representativeness and typicality of Poles who risked their lives to save and rescue Jews during the war, or who, on the contrary, participated in the mass murder of Jews such as in the town of Jedwabne and elsewhere in north-eastern Poland in 1941 (for a key survey article of scholarly work during this period, see Polonsky 2007; the debate in Poland over Jedwabne was one of the most prolonged and far-reaching of any discussion of the Jewish issue in the country since the Second World War, and for an extensive English-language collection of articles from the Polish debate see Polonsky and Michlic 2004). For me as an anthropologist, coming to Poland on brief visits throughout this period, the subject has been hugely interesting – as if I have been privileged to observe from the inside the fluidity and multi-dimensionality of thinking about this unmastered and unmasterable past. During these 25 years, the scholarly world in Poland has developed, as elsewhere in Europe

– collective knowledge of the historical facts of the Holocaust has filtered into a wide range of academic approaches. Indeed, what we now have is a chorus of voices, a chorus of very different scholarly approaches within the broad field of Holocaust studies which derive from a wide range of perspectives and intellectual disciplines.

This chorus of voices brings with it important issues for us to consider. Young people in other countries, far removed from the Polish issues and far removed from scholarly conferences such as this, usually either know very little about the Holocaust or else become deeply emotional about the basic historical facts when they first encounter them. This is especially true if they are first-time visitors to the Auschwitz museum, and especially true also for Jewish visitors there. The Jewish world has largely constructed for itself a distinctive outlook regarding the Holocaust that relies on a stable narrative of the events based on historical antisemitism; it has masked out or turned its back on any uncertainties, it has smoothed out inconsistencies, and in general it presents what it believes is a coherent understanding of the subject. Over-simplified views of the Holocaust are similarly to be found in some of the educational programmes prepared for the very numerous groups of schoolchildren who are brought to Poland from across Europe. Scholars of Holocaust studies, however, are deeply aware of other realities, and we come to the subject with other strategies and perspectives. We know how to listen to different scholarly opinions, and so we hear the chorus of voices. We acknowledge incoherence, we struggle with the intellectual problems – we doubt, we hesitate, and we theorise.

But for many Jews, even seventy years later, the Holocaust is often still too raw for them to be reconciled to, alongside the controversies over Polish-Jewish relations during those terrible times which continue to rumble, not far below the surface. There is not, and cannot be, a quick fix. The reduction of a particularly long and distinguished Jewish civilization in Poland to what is perceived as a desolate, silent, melancholy landscape of ruins requires patient, sensitive attention and may take generations. But that sad landscape of ruins in present-day Poland is largely in the Jewish imagination. It is not entirely real, in the sense that it cannot easily be physically seen by the average foreign Jewish visitor. But for such people it is, nevertheless, entirely real.

Meanwhile, let me say that for me as an anthropologist there is quite a different landscape. What can be observed here is a landscape of contradictions, paradoxes, and a host of difficult questions – cultural questions, theological questions, museum questions, among many others. Cultural questions – for example, how far will reflections on the Holocaust encourage the development of a pluralist, tolerant, and multi-dimensional post-communist Polish identity, with new contours of memory and an openness to pan-European dialogue? (For an important statement about these challenges, by the senior scholar responsible for establishing the Holocaust

studies unit at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, see Mach 2009). Theological questions – for example, are Jewish victims to be understood as actually having been martyrs for their faith, and if so, what are the implications? Where was God in Auschwitz? Museum questions – for example, has enough memorialisation been done here in Poland? Has too much been done? Where is memory located, and where should it be located? Is the balance right in Poland as regards the need for the remembrance of the victims as opposed to the need for education? These are all complex and pressing issues, on which there are earnest debates. There is no quick fix to settling such matters, no final solution to such problems. It is of course a very large subject, and I can cover only a few issues here. All I can do is to dip my toe in the water and offer some descriptive material regarding just two examples of how people make sense of the Holocaust in the Polish context – Auschwitz and Jewish Kraków.

Auschwitz

The site of the former concentration camp at Auschwitz has been a Polish state museum since 1947. A first-time visitor would normally assume that the museum presents one single coherent history of the place, based on the bland 'historical facts' that have been assembled by the museum's historical specialists. In fact, the permanent exhibition installed at the museum in 1955 put the focus on Auschwitz as the key representative site of *Polish* national martyrdom during the German occupation. It quite deliberately marginalised *Jewish* victimhood there, and certainly made no attempt to cover the history of the Holocaust as such (Huener 2003). The historical distortions were introduced during communist times, but they have slowly been corrected since 1989, and visitors are now informed about a much wider range of historical facts – in particular, that Jewish victimhood at Auschwitz, amounting to about 1.1 million people, constituted 92% of those murdered there, as against about 75,000 Christian Poles, together with smaller numbers of Sinti and Roma Gypsies, Soviet prisoners of war, as well as communists, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others. [These figures come from a landmark, authoritative study by Franciszek Piper, then head of the Auschwitz museum's historical research department (Piper 1991); for a recent survey article about the negotiation of shifts in interpretation of Auschwitz as a heritage site, see Webber 2016]. Presenting these numbers should not undermine the importance of Auschwitz as a symbol for Poles or for Gypsies or for Russians; but the emphasis is clearly tilted nowadays towards Auschwitz as a place of *Jewish* martyrdom, as delivered to the visitors through the exhibitions and guides, as well as on the informational signs that are to be found throughout the site, which since 1995 have included information in Hebrew, as well as in Polish and English.

However, in addition there are a dozen or so 'national exhibitions' housed in former barracks, presented by various European associations of former Auschwitz prisoners or other national agencies, in order to give their own Auschwitz narratives. In fact each of them clearly presents a different perspective on the importance of Auschwitz in the context of their own particular national circumstances during the Second World War. Through these national exhibitions, visitors can absorb the idea that there is in fact a specifically Hungarian narrative of Auschwitz, a specifically Dutch narrative, a Sinti and Roma narrative, a French narrative, and so on. These narratives are all structured quite differently, telling quite different stories, identifying quite different heroes and villains, displaying quite different photographs, and in general demonstrating the very different ways that the history and meaning of Auschwitz are to be understood.

So the question of whether there is a single master narrative of Auschwitz that would help visitors make sense of the Holocaust is not at all straightforward to answer. However, there are at least two other narrativisations or frames of reference which add yet further complications. One of them is of course the standard approach of humanist educators – that Auschwitz has the key emblematic role to remind the world of the importance of human rights and of the dangers of intolerance, fascism, xenophobia, and state-sponsored violence in general. The immense scale of the atrocities committed at the Auschwitz concentration camp is to be read in the context of the capacity of humanity to undertake genocide; and so this approach sees Auschwitz not at all in terms of a Polish or Jewish or Hungarian narrative but in terms of a universalist meaning – for example, stressing the universal slogan of 'Never Again!' and therefore bracketing Auschwitz together with other instances of genocide elsewhere in the world, in a transnational cross -referencing of historical atrocities. UNESCO put the Auschwitz site on its World Heritage List in 1979 precisely for this reason – because it was concerned with crimes against humanity in general and the struggle for world peace and security.

But against all of that there is also a fourth kind of narrative that is found at this place, namely the personal memories of Auschwitz survivors. Tour leaders of Jewish groups regularly bring a survivor with them, so that at specific points along the visitor route they can tell their own stories in addition to the explanations and commentaries given by the official guides. The realities presented by the survivors are quite different from what the guides have to say: they derive from their personal experiences and their personal emotions. They speak about what Auschwitz was 'really' like; and it is these personal encounters with the subject which is how the Holocaust is conventionally presented in the Jewish world, especially in Israel, even at its main Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. Survivors cannot in any case offer a global view of the historical facts about the Holocaust as supplied by the guides, since such facts were not available to them at

the time; all that was discovered by historians researching the subject only after the war was over. But survivors are routinely relied on as speakers at the main commemorative events, such as the large ceremony in January 2015 marking the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Some of them are excellent speakers – even seventy years on, they still can present their Holocaust experiences very powerfully, as raw events; and they can also add their optimistic comments on their hopes for the future following the defeat of the genocidal perpetrators, something which is of course totally beyond the scope of the historians, who are limited to describing the original historical facts.

In short, what is actually to be found in Auschwitz today are four broad kinds of memory, four kinds of histories, reliant on quite different methodologies and rules of evidence. There is thus no overall coherence how Auschwitz is understood at the site. On the contrary; there are multiple perspectives, a chorus of voices available there regarding the story it has to tell. It certainly is not at all made clear by the museum guides whose history should prevail, in whose history Auschwitz is or should be located, or whose memory it belongs to. German history? Jewish history? Polish history? European history? World history? It is an ethical dilemma. The museum exhibitions make no explicit attempt to encourage visitors even to ask these questions, although implicitly it does suggest that Auschwitz belongs to all of these, and much more. The Holocaust is both a Jewish catastrophe and a universal catastrophe at the same time. Both approaches are of course necessary, and so the challenge for the memorialization of the Holocaust is to look both ways simultaneously, even if there are moral and intellectual contradictions.

And so here we get to the heart of the matter that I would like to focus on in this essay. The coexistence of these alternative narratives and alternative histories is an uneasy one. Sometimes they are simply contested, as for example when Israeli tour groups try to refuse the services of an official Auschwitz museum guide and thereby contest their pedagogic credentials, or – more famously – when in the 1980s Jewish leaders protested about what they saw as the 'dejudaisation' of Auschwitz (an Auschwitz without Jews), as demonstrated in their eyes through the existence of a Carmelite convent at Auschwitz, which was indeed eventually removed from the site. But most of the time, most people would simply acknowledge, in a non-confrontational manner, that different people see Auschwitz differently and would not be concerned about the contradictions and the paradoxes, if they are even aware of them – that issue is for us as scholars to deal with, not for the ordinary Auschwitz visitor.

I'm all in favour of the contradictions and paradoxes. The reason is that they are highly productive and probably go to the heart of what genocide is all about: ordinary peacetime

morality, underpinned by neat, conceptually familiar categories of explanation, is out of place here. For example, even the apparently simple generalised category of victimhood is not without problems: there were Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz (such as the Sonderkommando) who were forced into collaborating with the murderers and in that sense could be said to have facilitated the mass murders themselves. The existence of such multiple approaches and alternative narratives point to the fundamentally subversive character of the historical Auschwitz, something which profoundly influences how Auschwitz is presented and understood today.

On the one hand, Auschwitz is a cemetery, the largest cemetery in Europe, and probably the largest cemetery known to humanity. On the other hand, Auschwitz is a place of atrocity; the place was never intended to be a cemetery or to be treated as one. It certainly is not at all presented today as a cemetery, for example with more than one million tombstones. The result is that Auschwitz is a cemetery, but at the same time it is not a cemetery. Or take another example. One the one hand, Auschwitz is conventionally understood by most people today as the key symbol of the Holocaust, although during the first forty years after the war the place was presented as the key symbol of the horrific brutality suffered by Poles during the German occupation. Maybe, when contemplated from a distance, Auschwitz is indeed a convenient shorthand symbol. Encountered close-up, however, Auschwitz is not just a symbol – it is a real place. It certainly awakens people to the concrete historical realities: by visiting Auschwitz, people can gain a strong sense that Auschwitz really existed, that mass murder really happened there. Visitors commonly say they have come to see 'Auschwitz', not 'the Auschwitz museum' – as if in some sense the site is still so totally authentic that it possesses its original character, whatever that may be. They can say that they are visiting 'Auschwitz' because of the simultaneities: Auschwitz is both a symbol and not a symbol at the same time. But Auschwitz as a symbol of the Holocaust does not in any case tell the whole historical story of the Holocaust, and in fact it distorts it. What cannot be seen at Auschwitz are all the things that happened to the Jews before they ever even arrived at the death camp: all that has to be imagined. I mean the discrimination; the humiliations; the ghettoisation; the random shootings; the imprisonment; the torture; the process of the deportations; the deaths from hunger, disease, and the strenuous forced labour; the murder by shooting in nearby forests; the heroic deaths through resistance of some kind; and so on. All that has to be imagined at Auschwitz, which in any case tends to focus on the methods of the perpetrators rather than the suffering of the victims. Too much of their Holocaust narrative is hidden from view at death camps such as Auschwitz.

I pass on now to some further difficulties. On the one hand, Auschwitz is preserved as a museum, under the authority of the Museums Department of the Polish Ministry of Culture;

but of course it is not at all an ordinary museum, and it is not usually understood by visitors as a museum. What is the 'real' Auschwitz, and where – within the territory of the Auschwitz museum – is it physically located? Is it to be found in Birkenau's wide open spaces and ruins, where so much has disappeared, or is it in the many different museum exhibitions inside the well -maintained, freshly repainted brick-built barracks of the original camp of Auschwitz I? Indeed, that part of the Auschwitz museum is relatively sanitized, even aestheticized. In Auschwitz -Birkenau, however, the landscape is hard to read. Much of it is in ruins, but the ruins exist as ruins for several quite different reasons. Some of these ruins, of course, simply express the passage of time since the end of the war. However, one of the gas chambers and crematoria is in ruins because it was destroyed during an uprising by Jewish prisoners of the Sonderkommando in October 1944. Meanwhile the other main gas chambers are in ruins because they were destroyed by the Germans a short while later – as the end of the war was approaching, the Germans intended to destroy the evidence of their crimes; but although they started that work they did not succeed in dismantling them completely before the camp was liberated by the Red Army. And then after the liberation, as local society tried to return to ordinary peacetime, there was a great shortage of ordinary building materials, and so many of the former prisoner barracks in Birkenau fell into ruin because they were dismantled by local Poles who were in need of building materials. So the landscape of ruins at Auschwitz represents a complex history. The ruins do not all have the same meaning. On the contrary; they derive from the deliberate interventions of Jews and Germans and Poles, as well as the passage of time. Meanwhile (contrary to what visitors imagine), the barbed wire that surrounds many of these ruins is not original – it has been restored by the museum.

In other words, these ruins of the past are thus hard to read, and are full of paradox and contradiction. The existence of these four kinds of ruin, side by side, confuses the issues. It is a multi-dimensionality that is not really relevant to the narrative the museum wants to tell; and so, in an effort to renew its credibility as the guardian of this heritage, the museum has recently launched a major fundraising initiative to make further restorations and prevent further deterioration. After all, the museum has restored the watchtowers and the two important entry -gates (one at Auschwitz I and one at Auschwitz-Birkenau), as well as the railway line (so very important in the history of the Holocaust), and there are ponds in Birkenau into which human ashes were dumped. There are also large amounts of the prisoners' personal belongings on display in the museum's showcases, such as the collection of shoes, suitcases, and children's clothes. Visitors routinely take photos of these things; it is clearly good for the visitors' imagination of a former concentration camp and death camp to see it surrounded with barbed

wire and watchtowers. But in restoring all these elements, perhaps the museum has ended up creating a place which is too top-heavy with its visual exotica? The question remains whether all these surviving realia really do appropriately represent the historical Auschwitz as the authentic epicenter of evil, whether the need for the tourist gaze at these visual exotica should indeed be taken as decisive. What difference would it make to the meaning of the site if the ruins slowly sank quietly into the ground? After all, no original structures remain at all of the death camp at Bełżec, which since 2004 is now completely covered by a very large memorial. In what way is meaning dependent on the survival of the original historical artefacts? The memorial at Bełżec is architecturally very powerful, suggesting that meaning can certainly be attempted even after the physical realities are gone.

In thinking about how people make sense of the Holocaust in contemporary Poland, it is instructive to pause for a moment in order to make a brief comparison between present-day Auschwitz and present-day Bełżec. They are completely different in their histories – for example, there were fewer than ten people who survived Bełżec, as compared with the estimated 200,000 people who survived Auschwitz (Piper 1991: 92; as he notes, it is a very high figure as compared to other death camps, though it includes prisoners who were transferred to other camps). The significant result that Bełżec is not at all well known compared with Auschwitz. There is only one published survivor's testimony from Bełżec, just one (Reder 2000, first published in Kraków in 1946). Before the new memorial was built at Bełżec in 2004, the place was just an empty field, with just a couple of small monuments. In effect, what there was at Bełżec, for 60 years after the war, was simply nothingness. So here comes the question: could the empty field of Bełżec have become the symbol of the Holocaust, or is it that Auschwitz became the symbol, not just because it had the largest number of victims and a huge number of survivors, but also because of the sheer physicality of the post-war site? Auschwitz is understood as authentic because it looks authentic; and the museum's restoration programme today is intended to make sure that Auschwitz will continue to look authentic. But because of its physicality it encourages people to focus too literally on what is there rather than meditating on what Auschwitz destroyed and the nothingness it created – to let people's imagination turn to a powerful sense of the incomprehensibility of the mass murders. In other words, not all Holocaust sites say the same thing; on the contrary, they may differ substantially from each other in their capacity to awaken visitors to imagine the historical realities of the Holocaust. Perhaps the imagination cannot really feed on nothingness; or perhaps it can. But these two voices from what has been left behind of the death camps in Poland, those of Auschwitz and Bełżec, once again remind us that there is no single reality here; there is a chorus of voices.

To sum up about Auschwitz before I move on. The Auschwitz site is characterized by numerous contradictions – as an emblematic site of 'undesirable heritage' or 'difficult heritage' (for these concepts see Macdonald 2009), it is simultaneously a symbol, a cemetery, a museum, and a place of 'dark tourism' (Lennon and Foley 2010) that continues to attract huge numbers of visitors (according to the museum's annual report posted on its website, visitor numbers reached over 1.7 million in 2015). Different people move through the site with different mental landscapes, and they see different things there. Auschwitz is also a pilgrimage site, especially for religious Jews and Catholics wishing to meditate or to say prayers in memory of the dead. And it offers itself as a powerful setting for the enactment of important memorial events. Ceremonies are held annually on 27th January, the date of the liberation in 1945. At the important anniversaries, such as the fiftieth or sixtieth anniversary of the liberation – or most recently at the seventieth anniversary – vast crowds attend the ceremonies, including numerous heads of state as well as Auschwitz survivors. Auschwitz-Birkenau is physically transformed into a theatrical stage -set, where rows of seating are provided at the main monument in Birkenau, alongside the railway tracks and the ruins of the gas chambers. It is an exceptionally powerful architectural environment. In 2015, for the seventieth anniversary, the ceremony was held inside a tent that had been erected immediately in front of the main entry-gate. Through the use of curtains and special lighting effects, the watch-tower became that afternoon a theatrical prop – the building was of course perfectly real but it was made to function as if it had been specially made as a theatrical backdrop. The double identity of the watch-tower that day was perhaps a clear statement of the multi-dimensionality of this very complex place. The first such massive event in Birkenau was in 1979, when the Pope came to visit; an estimated 300,000 people were present. An altar and gigantic cross had been specially erected, transforming the site into a public Christian setting suitable for the Pope's celebration of the Mass. The homily which he delivered there stressed Poland's wartime sacrifice, which he framed as an integral part of the conscience of contemporary humanity and the Christian commitment to human rights; but he also specifically paid homage to Jewish suffering at Auschwitz (Huener 2003: 212–225). That was then. Today's 27th January anniversary ceremonies are secular rituals, where instead of Christian symbols huge overhead television screens dominate the scene, and the event is relayed on television around the world. The speeches today emphasise Jewish victimhood. Poland's wartime sacrifice is still there, but it has receded into the background. So Birkenau continues to present itself as a setting for quite different cultural enactments of the imagined meanings of the Auschwitz memory. The setting 'explains' and animates the various performances, permitting a theatrical unpacking of the historical imagination in the public space.

In reviewing the multidimensionality, contradictions, and paradoxes of present-day Auschwitz, what emerges is not at all a stable, coherent picture, but rather, as befits a place of such complex heritage, a jumble of many different styles of meaning from many different sources – a colourful collage blending together reality, dreams, memories, and political visions of all kinds. The ideas presented in the main speeches at the big ceremonies are often tangled and chaotic, without any evident need for chronological sequence. On the contrary, past, present, and future coexist here unselfconsciously. Almost by definition, in any speech which emphasizes the relevance of the past, there is no boundary of any importance between the historical and the contemporary. Episodic, disconnected moments from the historical facts, from survivor memories, and from national histories are linked up with present-day spiritual messages or political visions for the future that claim an integrated view. In one sense it is simply disorder, reflecting the basic truth that Auschwitz memory is divided and fragmented. In another sense, when looked at in this way, the cacophony is in fact an extremely potent mixture, allowing in a sense of the subversive character both of the genocide itself and its aftermath. Inasmuch as the genocide tore the previous world to pieces, it is not inappropriate that the memory is pieced together from the fragments that were left behind. There is no single narrative, nor a holistic outlook on what happened. If Auschwitz is inclusive of so many different identities, as a symbol, a cemetery, a pilgrimage site, a museum, a place of 'dark' tourism, and a theatre, there is not, and probably never can be, just one single authority to whom Auschwitz morally belongs. Meanwhile, in the perspective of the victims, the entire genocidal enterprise is fundamentally incomprehensible and meaningless. The Auschwitz memorial site is thus in this sense a very strange place – and, in terms of its mission, understandably so. But it is this chorus of voices which we as scholars should listen to, indeed speak about, and bring multi-ethnic groups of students to study. I think that it is only by acknowledging the cacophony of voices and multiple narratives that one can begin to make sense of the Holocaust. Poland is the perfect place to do that, because Poland is where these narratives co-exist most strongly. Holocaust museums, even concentration camp museums, in other locations do not present the complexities as Poland can.

Jewish Kraków

In the time I have remaining to me for this lecture on making sense of the Holocaust in Poland, I would like to move slightly further afield intellectually and say something about Jewish Poland today. In fact it is a key element of the subject, since the Holocaust is always, at the very least, a sub-text in the encounter with Jewish Poland. Before the Holocaust, Poland had been the

centre of the Jewish world for several centuries. There were established Jewish communities in as many as 1,200 towns and villages in this country. Nearly all of them were destroyed in the Holocaust – and in present-day Poland there are only about ten Jewish communities to be found. It is a gigantic task to find appropriate ways to memorialise this vanished population, but since the transition to democratic government in 1989 many kinds of Poles are doing what they can to meet up to the challenge in many places across the country. Part of what they are doing involves the attempt to make sense of the Holocaust, and once again it is often multi-dimensional and brings with it the full range of contradictions and paradoxes.

For reasons of space, I shall restrict my comments here to present-day Jewish Kraków. It is a place which is both real and imagined, at the same time. There are real, functioning synagogues still standing, used by a tiny community of only a few hundred people; but for many foreign Jews, probably most Jews of the world, Jewish Kraków is essentially in ruins. Poland is imagined as one enormous Holocaust graveyard, where nothing Jewish is left, certainly nothing of a living Judaism of any importance. The post-Holocaust Poland of this Jewish imagination lies desolate and is physically in ruins. There are some small synagogues in Kraków that really are in ruins, and one can occasionally glimpse fading pre-war inscriptions in Hebrew which in their own way as fragments also directly document a Jewish world that is in ruins. The 60,000 Jews of Kraków were uprooted from their homes during the Holocaust, forced into a ghetto across the river, and then taken away to be murdered. But many of the buildings they left behind have remained, largely intact – or at least sufficiently intact as to be capable of being restored. Jews have lived in Kraków for seven hundred years, and Kazimierz is remarkable for being able to offer a real sense of such a very long Jewish past. Virtually nowhere else in Poland, virtually nowhere else in Europe, other than Venice or Prague, is it possible to see an entire Jewish quarter, dating in part from medieval times, still standing, including a number of major synagogue buildings and two relatively intact Jewish cemeteries. Visitors who come to Kazimierz with their imagination of a Jewish world that is in ruins can be shown what is surely an extremely depressing post -Holocaust sight – the outward spectacle of a Jewish town but with hardly any Jews. Making sense of the Holocaust in such an environment strongly suggests the sense of an absent presence, or the presence of absence.

One can also find in Kraków several memorials marking original Holocaust sites. For example, there are two surviving substantial fragments of the wall which surrounded the ghetto across the river; there is a Holocaust monument in the square used by the Germans as an Umschlagplatz or deportation site next to the former ghetto, and there are Jewish monuments at the site of the former concentration camp in the neighbourhood of Płaszów, where

commemorative ceremonies take place each year on the anniversary of the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto in 1943, attended by many hundreds of local people.

These three features of Kraków – ruins, the presence of absence, and physical reminders of the Holocaust – coexist uneasily. The parallel with what I have been saying about Auschwitz immediately springs to mind. What can be found in the 'real' Jewish Kraków thus includes the greatness of the past, the awareness that that past does not exist anymore, and a historical consciousness of the horrors of the Holocaust which brought that past to an end.

Given that semantic complexity, what, then, does the real Jewish Kraków consist of? Which part of it can be taken as representative of the present day? It is a complicated matter also because the realities have changed so much since the end of the war, and they are continuing to change. It is hard to generalise. At one extreme, much has been disappearing; on the other hand, at the other extreme there has been a magnificent, conscious effort by different municipal and foreign agencies since 1989 to publicly restore the memory of the local Jewish past as an expression, perhaps, of healing and remembrance – as if to say that Jewish Kraków belongs not only to Jewish history but also is an integral part of the history of Kraków itself, and indeed of Polish history. For example, at least four synagogue buildings have been thoroughly renovated, including their magnificent painted interiors.

Renovating synagogues of course adds to the semantic complexity, however. The tiny Jewish community of Kraków does not actually *need* more synagogues, although occasionally a renovated synagogue will be used for prayer services (especially when large groups of Jewish visitors arrive in the city, as part of a Jewish heritage tour). So yes, a renovated synagogue does in some sense become an active synagogue once again, although many Jews will also understand such places as a kind of Holocaust memorial (that is, in memory of the Jews who once used to pray there). But otherwise it is understood as a museum whose cultural meaning belongs only to the past, as part of the local heritage – something which is demonstrated by the fact that it is a place for which tourists have to buy an entry ticket. The renovated Tempel synagogue in Kazimierz is an interesting case, as it is large enough also to be used sometimes as an ordinary concert hall. The building is therefore a synagogue but also an active museum holding its own concerts. Another example of this kind of ambiguity is the restoration of the historic tombstones of the old Jewish cemetery established in the sixteenth century, undertaken as a conservation project by the city council in the 1990s. There is no doubt that the finely carved tombstones in this cemetery are beautiful and worth preserving, but the effect of the restoration has been to turn the old cemetery into a museum, or in effect a lapidarium. For Orthodox Jews, whose heritage it also is, the cemetery is not at all a museum or lapidarium. For them, it has true sanctity

– it contains many graves of very distinguished rabbis and scholars, who over many centuries made Poland a world centre of Jewish spirituality. And so, especially on the anniversary of the death of those rabbis, they come on pilgrimage to the cemetery in order to pray at those graves and reconnect with the sanctity they feel there. They may be quite unconcerned with the artistic beauty of the tombstones – at least, that is not why they have come.

There is an uneasy coexistence between such multiple roles. Of course many people would neither notice nor care. But there are indeed moments when the contradictions and paradoxes rise to the surface. One obvious instance arises from time to time on Jewish religious festivals, when it is unclear if Jewish ritual regulations governing synagogues actually apply in such buildings that have become museums. A larger issue relates to the opening of kosher-style restaurants, Jewish bookshops and other Jewish-themed shops, complete with new signage in Hebrew or Yiddish, enabling tourist agencies to promote Kazimierz as if in some sense its Jewish identity is somehow alive and well. The complicated truth is that at one level it really is – there has been an extraordinary revival of Jewish life taking place here since 1989. Kazimierz is simply buzzing today with Jewish cultural events of all kinds, including special lectures, discussion groups, klezmer concerts, and film and drama evenings. Certainly some local Jews come to such events, but they are attended principally by people who are not Jewish. In particular, for the past 25 years there has been an annual Jewish Culture Festival, which is the largest of its kind in Europe today. Janusz Makuch, the organizer of the festival, and himself not Jewish, is thus in the curious situation of directing a Jewish culture festival for other non-Jews in a former Jewish neighbourhood that today is considered by many Jews a Jewish ghost town. The interesting thing is that he says that this is in fact his mission – to facilitate the performance of Jewish culture in a country which is the world's largest Jewish graveyard, as a way of both honouring the dead and demonstrating Jewish survival (as quoted in Gruber 2002: 47). It's a very clear statement about the paradoxes of making Jewish memory in present-day Poland; and once again, the Holocaust sub-text is clear. There is certainly a nostalgia for the Jewish culture that has otherwise been lost from the Polish landscape and a desire to find ways to celebrate it and bring it to life. It may be, in part, a fashionable, exotic form of entertainment, but behind the nostalgia also rests the awareness of the Holocaust past and a genuine, deepening interest in the history, culture, and religion of the vanished Jews of the city, who before the war amounted to as much as 25 per cent of Krakow's population.

Whose history is it, anyway, and how should it be told in the public space? There are multiple types of memory at work here, in relation both to observable reality and to the imagination. In a manner reminiscent of what I was saying before about Auschwitz, physical

space may be deeply ambiguous in its meanings. Different people move through the city with different mental landscapes of the place, depending on whether they are local people or tourists – or whether they are Jewish pilgrims returning to their place of origin, in search of their roots or otherwise attempting to reconnect with their imagined past. Especially for the foreign descendants of survivors this is a visit to a country which is indeed familiar to them from their family memory, but it may not exist in real space at all, let alone Polish space. Like all pilgrims, such Jews arrive in the city, usually from far away, and then go from memorial place to memorial place, ignoring the space in-between – because it is of no intrinsic interest to them; such spaces are not what they have come to see or to experience. Like all pilgrims, they see things which are not physically visible and are not even signposted, and they *ignore* many things which are actually there and which *are* signposted, and which are for example the things that the tourists focus on. This is what I mean by saying that different people walk in different mental landscapes on their routes through the city.

Much has been written about the mental landscape of foreign Jewish visitors who usually arrive with a mythologised, demonised view of an antisemitic Poland, and who may return home with such stereotypes intact, even if they will today not encounter much by way of actual antisemitism. These visitors, especially those from Israel, focus their visits on the idea of Poland as the main setting of the Holocaust, which they understand as having taken place in this country with the full support and indeed cooperation of the local population; and so they spend their time here at the former concentration camps and death camps, rather than learning about or being inspired by the colossal spiritual and cultural achievements of Polish Jewry over many centuries. The Polish Foreign Ministry is in despair over such people. The surviving synagogue buildings in Kraków, some of them several hundred years old, are massive structures built in a grand style, clearly demonstrating that the Jews of Kraków historically felt very much at home here – if only the foreign Jews would develop the mental space to recognise any of that. The massive new Jewish historical museum in Warsaw, which opened only in the autumn of 2014, does fully describe competition and conflict between Jewish Poles and Christian Poles over the centuries; but it also insists on showing that there also was a broad spectrum of Polish – Jewish relations. Coexistence also included cooperation and normal friendly relations, and all that also has to be included in the historical narrative. In the Holocaust section of the museum in Warsaw, the spectrum of Polish attitudes to the Jews is an essential component of the historical facts that are presented there – certainly most Poles, for one reason or another, may have been indifferent to the fate of the Jews, but there was a spectrum ranging from betrayal at one extreme to the willingness to help and rescue Jews (even at the risk of one's life) at the other extreme. Once

again, we are back to the issue of the need to represent the cacophony and articulate the chorus of voices – that is our job as scholars. In the words of Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the chief curator of the Warsaw museum's core exhibition, the aim is to present all the voices – "not one voice, the voice of the historian, but many voices, a chorus that is sometimes in harmony, sometimes dissonant" (2014: 34).

Let me give one final example from Kraków before I come to my conclusion. Perhaps the clearest example of the multi-dimensionality of Jewish Kraków is the use of the urban space of Kazimierz as a theatrical stage-set for the enactment of memory. The main street in Kazimierz is regularly used as a 'theatre of memory' for at least two kinds of performance. At one of them, ceremonies are held for the March of the Living – this is an annual event on Holocaust Remembrance Day designed to enact a Zionist narrative of Jewish history and to promote Jewish identity, and in particular an attachment to the State of Israel, among Jewish youth worldwide. Large groups of participants are dressed in blue-and-white uniforms, which are the colours of the Israeli flag, and indeed often hold Israeli flags, at ceremonies that are intended to demonstrate Jewish survival after the Holocaust. But the same space is regularly used for a different imagined meaning altogether – for the open-air concert of Jewish music marking the finale of the annual Jewish Culture Festival – in other words, as a theatrical stage-set for a *Polish* celebration of Jewish culture. Both these kinds of events are thus enacted in a 'theatre of memory', using the same urban space, where the architectural environment of the synagogues in this street are perfectly real but at the same time re-casted as props for a stage-set. These are two different cultural enactments of the imagined Jewish Kraków, by two different agencies of memory, though both of them are intended to restore the Jewish presence in a setting otherwise dominated by the sense of Jewish absence. The actual buildings are in that sense treated as if they were actors, 'explaining' the theatre, animating it, demonstrating that the theatre really belongs to the setting, and in this way being made meaningful as part of Jewish memory. On such occasions it is as if the historical imagination of Jews or about Jews is being almost literally unpacked here in the public space.

In reviewing all this material, what emerges cannot be described as a stable, coherent picture of an imagined Jewish Kraków, but rather a jumble of many different kinds of spaces and their respective meanings. Is Jewish Kraków a relic, a cultural treasure, a reminder of the death and destruction, a place where spirituality still hovers, or a celebration of the Jewish culture that once existed here? In truth, it is all these meanings together, at the same time, including the present-day Jewish revival. Perhaps one can suggest that reality can in a sense be compared to a television provider offering multiple channels: many programmes are available and can be seen, but one can tune in to only one of them at a time. Many Jews, returning to reconnect with their

roots and reclaim their past, tune in to their pre-programmed channel and then both recognise and fail to recognise what they see before their eyes. They may find the house where their family used to live long ago – but it isn't the 'same' house as the one that has been imagined in the family memory: so much of the environment has changed that in fact it may now be unrecognisable. What is today real is contradicted by what has been imagined; and what has been imagined is contradicted by what is today real. But the contradictions are themselves an integral part of such a journey, which by definition is tangled and chaotic, all overlaid by awareness of the great disaster. It is best understood as disorder – divided and fragmented. Past, present, and future coexist here unselfconsciously: memories from childhood coexist alongside later fantasies. As one can see from the memoirs, the encounter with the past is characterised more by episodic, disconnected moments than by the unfolding of an integrated experience. Perhaps this is why there is so much confusion about the Jewish past in Poland, especially among people who have come just on a brief visit to the country. I am not at all sure that making the trip to Poland really does help them genuinely make sense of the Holocaust.

In this context, a post-modern view of fragments needs to be properly acknowledged – the idea that Jewish life is in pieces, literally in pieces, after the Holocaust. Building up a picture of Jewish religion and culture out of the fragments which still survive in Kraków is in this view either an illusion, or it should be recognised for what it really is – a partial view, not at all anything that can approach a holistic view of pre-war Jewish life or of the Holocaust that brought it to an end. In the real world, different people put spiritual values and ordinary vernacular styles beside each other, and blend together whatever cultural symbols, episodic past encounters, quotations, and clichés come to mind. The memoirs and testimonies, of both Auschwitz and Jewish Kraków, are vital to understanding what is in people's imagination. A synagogue may still really be there, part of the real Kraków, but it cannot have any of those historical and emotional meanings for visitors without the knowledge of what this place once represented in the past. The curious thing is that such knowledge can survive in the imagined Kraków, even if this synagogue no longer exists. The imagination can assume it is still there, whether it actually is or isn't. But for that one needs the memoirs, the historians, and the museum people: one needs all these people who tell each generation about the past. This is how these two approaches to the past and the present – the reality and the imagination – may in fact often inform each other, even in dreaming about the future, and so they need to be read together.

Conclusion

The issues I have been describing in this text were very much in my mind when I curated a permanent photographic exhibition called *Traces of Memory* at the Galicia Jewish Museum here in Kraków on the subject of the Jewish heritage; and in conclusion I would like to mention just a few words about it. It is not at all a historical exhibition using old black-and-white photos arranged chronologically, but rather a portrayal of *present-day* realities using colour photos, and specifically to show the simultaneity of contradictions and paradoxes as they exist today. My purpose was both to acknowledge the existence of simplistic popular stereotypes or single-issue subjective memories of the imagined past, and also to challenge them. To achieve that objective, the exhibition is arranged in terms of five themes which together articulate a multi-dimensional view of the subject – in other words, that today's realities express profound diversity in their meanings. So yes, there is a section showing ruins (in fact it is the opening section), but to avoid giving the impression that the ruins of the past are all that there exists of Jewish Poland, the following section directly contradicts that – by showing photos which offer glimpses of the pre-Holocaust Jewish world that existed here and that can still be seen today (for example, synagogues or Jewish cemeteries that are in perfect condition). The Holocaust is in the centre of the exhibition – but the exhibition's narrative does not either begin with the Holocaust nor does it end with the Holocaust. What follows the Holocaust section are photos showing the both the erasure of memory in recent decades and also the opposite of that, i.e. the attempts that have been made at memorialisation; and the last section consists of portraits of the wide range of people who are involved as memory-makers – for example, scholars, politicians, Holocaust survivors, souvenir dealers, pilgrims, tourists, students, and simply ordinary local people. These five themes are intended to represent the chorus of voices that coexist with each other today. What they point to is that it is certainly true that in Poland today one can find ruined synagogues and concentration camp museums, but it simply is *not* true that that is *all* that one can find here; there is also active memorialisation, and there is also Jewish revival here. So, once again, the contradictions and paradoxes form the central message. This is why a view on the Holocaust from contemporary Poland is indeed interesting and instructive.

It's a fairly unconventional approach for a museum, but my argument is that it is based on the need to be honest and inclusive about the realities (for details of the Traces of Memory exhibition, see the companion volume (Webber 2009); for a full-scale academic study, by a former director of the museum, see Gerrard 2012). Honouring and commemorating the victims of the Holocaust includes the celebration of their Jewish culture. Janusz Makuch, the director of

the Jewish Culture Festival, is certainly right: performing Jewish culture here by definition honours the victims of the Holocaust and keeps their memory alive. Elsewhere people might think that these are two quite different things, but not so here in Poland – they are two related aspects of the multi-layered and multi-dimensional realities. Among the different voices that interlock with each other and need to be heard are the voices of the Holocaust dead and the voices of the Jews who created a great civilization here.

To finish now on a more abstract way of putting all this – in making sense of the Holocaust there is bound to be problems, contradictions, and questions. There cannot be, and should not be, a fixed interpretative scheme or some kind of unified, well-integrated, and stable history. It has to be a struggle, a constant challenge, and perhaps an overpowering sense of inadequacy in understanding the catastrophe. In this context, the real and the imagined need to be read together, even if they sometimes function as polar opposites. If all we are doing is to smooth out inconsistencies, and mask out or turn our backs on doubts, hesitations and uncertainties, we may not have grasped how totally subversive is a genocide or how very differently different people actually cope in trying to make sense of a deeply problematic past. We need the 'difficult questions' that disturb the tranquillity and coherence of an otherwise stereotyped view of things. After all, academic scholars are independent voices, as consultants and intermediaries between the Holocaust establishment and the public, contributing many perspectives in an interdisciplinary manner. The job of scholars is to challenge preconceptions, mystifications, stereotypes, and simplifications – in effect, to question common assumptions and so to problematize the subject. It may often be an uncomfortable place to sit, especially if we can glimpse only from far away what the survivors describe so vividly. So we must at all times endow our work with a sense of humility, especially in thinking how to make the transition from the vast and overwhelming detail of the history of the Holocaust to general issues of wider relevance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is the revised text of the introductory keynote lecture given at the international interdisciplinary conference "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World", organized by Prof. Wojciech Owczarski (University of Gdańsk) and Prof. Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs (Centre for Holocaust Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków), held in Kraków in April 2015. I am grateful to Professors Owczarski and Ambrosewicz-Jacobs for the kind invitation to deliver this lecture.

ABSTRACT

Making Sense of the Holocaust in Contemporary Poland:
The Real and the Imagined, the Contradictions and the Paradoxes

This article, written from an anthropological perspective and based on extended personal fieldwork by the author, consists of a detailed discussion of two places of Holocaust memory in present-day Poland: the memorial museum at Auschwitz and selected Jewish sites in the city of Kraków. The principal argument is that both the Auschwitz museum and Jewish Kraków have meanings which are multi-layered and multi-dimensional. For example, Auschwitz means different things to different people; some of those meanings are particularist (relating to the histories of different victim groups), some are universal. Similarly, the character of Jewish Kraków is understood not only in relation to the physical presence of a former Jewish quarter (now substantially restored), but also in relation to the overpowering awareness of ruin and the absence of Jews. The investigation and analysis of common interpretations of these two places reveal that they rest on numerous contradictions and paradoxes; the real and the imagined, usually understood as polar opposites, may in fact coexist in people's minds. In a sense it can be described as a 'chorus of voices', all of which need to be heard and acknowledged. But these voices are not always in harmony; on the contrary, what often comes across is dissonance or cacophony. In other words, there is no fixed interpretative scheme, no unified or stable approach. Nor, perhaps, should there be, in approaching something so totally subversive as genocide. The job of the scholar, in representing and problematizing how people make sense of the Holocaust in such contexts, thus requires the recognition of ethnographic inconsistencies and uncertainties, and in consequence to challenge preconceptions, mystifications, stereotypes, and simplifications.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust, contemporary Poland, Auschwitz, Auschwitz museum, Jewish Kraków, the real and the imagined, Galicia Jewish Museum, memory and memorialization

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

STUDIES

THEORY OF HISTORY VIS-À-VIS TWO WORLD WARS AND THE HOLOCAUST

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The present paper was directly inspired by the publication of the Polish translation of Raul Hilberg's monumental work *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961) in 2014. The translation *Zagłada Żydów europejskich* is, as the publisher, Piotr Stefaniuk, claims, "the most complete authorial edition" because it was enriched with "additions and corrections made [by Hilberg] since the recent edition of the book in English in 2003" (Stefaniuk 2014: IV). This work cannot possibly be ignored not only by a historian but also by a philosopher engrossed in theoretical grappling with problems posed before the humanities and social sciences by the phenomena of totalitarianism and genocide in its paradigmatic form of the mass murder of the Jews. We owe it to Hilberg that a part of the history of reception of the work became Arendt's well-known reportage *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil,* it is especially the misunderstandings around its interpretation, documented by Hilberg, of the role of Judenraete (Jewish Councils) in the German Nazi machinery of the Holocaust that influenced the critical reading of his own views. (On the essence of his views on the subject and about what differs him

from Arendt Raul Hilberg writes in his book: Hilberg 1996). Yet another objection should be noted here, namely that his source materials were confined to German documents – altogether, this resulted in both the books being closely scrutinized in Israel for many decades: *Eichmann*... was first published in Hebrew in 2000, and *The Destruction*… in 2012 (see. e.g. Zertal 2005). In the first edition of *Eichmann*…, the author masked the borrowings from Hilberg anyway, in the *Postscript* to the second edition she admitted her debt she owed him (Arendt 2006: 282). Without his work, such important interpretations of the Holocaust as for example the one proposed by Zygmunt Bauman would not have surfaced.

Hilberg's work, read again today, provides an unusual opportunity to ask a more in-depth question about what is new at all that the two World Wars and the Holocaust contribute to the methodology of history or, rather, to the self-awareness of history as a scientific discipline? What do they change in the perception of significance and function of historiography in culture? The objective of this article is a tentative reconstruction of a possible answer to these questions, a reconstruction based on the ground of some theoretical approaches that demonstrate my interests and competencies. It is by no means a systematic or comprehensive subject study.

These questions require some explanations and specifications. They do not concern interpretation of the relevant events – *I do not therefore ask about the uniqueness of the Holocaust* and I do not take part in the discussion held by its professional theorists such as, for example, Dominick LaCapra or Berel Lang. Secondly, I assume that these are problems to be handled by a philosopher exploring the theory of science: in part two I am therefore interested in the positions of the authors who are most influential for the contemporary theory of social and humanistic research: Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricoeur. The point is why their opinions about the "turnaround" in the theory of history after The Second World War are not confirmed in the recent, general serious studies I know in this field: the fact that there is no agreement among the experts is an additional encouragement for me to grapple with the subject. Apart from those general studies in theory of history by, for example, Krzysztof Zamorski and Donald R. Kelley, there are others, but extremely monothematic, usually written – again – by professional Holocaust historians, focused on the relation between the Holocaust and methodology of history (see e. g. Stone 2012). It is also Hilberg as an author of some unique and at the same time universally applicable meta-historical reflections who will help me in this endeavor as late as the last part of the present text. And thirdly, it is impossible to settle the issues in question without first recapitulating the socio-cultural context in which history as science found itself both after The First World War and The Second World War. Accordingly, this article is organized into two main chronological parts.

Science is thus assumed here as contextually understood, according to which it is a specific cultural practice – in today's parlance also: discourse – determined by the activities of persons who pursue and teach it, forming "scientific – or, in other words, interpretive and discursive – communities" within particular research traditions and research institutions together with the functions and social, political and moral interests that they implement. The approach also assumes a relationship between theory of (historical) knowledge and the theory (and practice) of power: the state and authority. History, as a modern science arisen in the nineteenth century, interferes in the disciplinarily managed modern socio-political reality, it participates in the work of legitimizing and constructing it. The contextualization of history is illustrated by its condition after The First World War – the trauma of it became the cause of the cultural "turn" to memory…

The First World War and the Turn to Memory

The literary expression of the "turn" to memory, which began the cultural career of the term, indisputably became Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, a voluminous work published in 1913 -1927. Of greater importance for social theory, including the theory of history is the term *collective memory*, coined at the same time, which was systematically studied by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) in his work *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925). The concept of memory as a social construct challenges its previous meaning connected with the Cartesian and Bergsonian concept of the mind, which represents memory as a bridge that leads to the sanctuary accessible only to us (Ankersmit 2001: 159). It rejects the perspective of modern rationalist philosophy based on the concept of the subject experiencing himself as the transparent "I", existing in the successive states of the mind and living in the world that is just as comprehensible and ontically stable as the Self is. And this world can be originally accessible only to an individual, therefore individual memory takes logical precedence over collective memory. This concept was the binding one earlier, prior to the radical change that took place following the "Great War". The change also includes the redefinition of memory which ceases to be perceived as mental powers entirely controlling private reality and it begins to be understood as a disposition co-shaped by social context.

This process is recorded by historical sociology, according to which memory begins its career with the process of democratization or privatization of history: traditionally, the word "history" was reserved for studying the collective past while "memory" applied to how we remember our individual personal past. The semantic correction of these concepts, both in their

public/popular and specialist uses, would be made because of The First World War and its groundbreaking significance for social perception – or: human experience – of the world in the dimension of the present and the past. The concept of memory loses its former individual connotations, the ability to recall past events is discovered as a reliable mechanism of social control applied by modern institutions of power, which also have science at their disposal. The interment of the dead and the duty to commemorate them became the responsibility of state commissions and public organizations specially established for the purpose already during or right after the war. For example, in 1919 in Berlin Der Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (People's Association for Care for German War Graves or German War Graves Commission) was set up – similar associations being established at the time in other parts of the country: in Bayern, Westphalia, or Lower Saxony. The aim of the Association was to create "people's community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*) through honoring the fallen soldiers. From 1922 it organized annual celebrations of the National Day of Mourning (*Volkstrauertag*) (the National Socialists changed the name of the holiday to "Day of Commemoration of Heroes [*Heldengedenktag*]) with the intention of unifying the Germans at the graves of the fallen over party boundaries, and religious or social divisions. Two Sundays before the first day of Advent the Germans still pay tribute to the victims of both World Wars and Nazi terror and persecutions.

Similarly, since 1919 the British and the Commonwealth citizens have solemnized the celebrations of Remembrance Day of 11 November – in 1918 the Germans signed the act of surrender, which meant a ceasefire, hence comes another name of this national holiday: Armistice Day, or Poppy Day: red poppies as the symbol of the blood shed in the battlefields of Flanders. After World War Two, the Remembrance Day was devoted to the victims of both Wars, and today also to the victims of subsequent armed conflicts in which the Commonwealth countries were involved. The memory of The First World War victims is still commemorated by the French, for whom it was a "terrible shock":

> It remained, Jan Baszkiewicz explains, in their collective memory, which defined their attitudes and reactions throughout the period of 1918-1939. It determined the pacifism of the French society and impacted the course of war events between 1939 and 1940. In all cities, towns and villages in France there were monuments with long lists of names of those fallen in the war (Baszkiewicz 2004: 530).

What determined the change in the approach to memory, a change significant in historical and civilization terms, was the paradox of the situation of that time. We should bear in mind that according to the latest estimates over 10 million soldiers were killed during The First World War,

in France alone 1.4 million people were killed and over 4 million were wounded. The sociologists write: "Paradoxically, just as the effect of war was felt more brutally than ever among civilian populations, the tasks of consolation were made more public than ever before." As a result, they conclude that "the memory of the war was refashioned into a sacred experience which provided the nation with a new depth of religious feeling, putting at its disposal ever-present saints and martyrs, places of worship, and a heritage to emulate." (Olick, Robbins 1998: 119).

History as a science, especially in the dimension of social practice – traditions and research institutions, publications, scholarly debates at mass media forums – faces the task of participation in those processes of commemorating, and consequently, of shaping the collective identity: the losers and winners in the war, the nation states emerging in its aftermath, they all demand novels to honor the fallen and to seek justification for the present in their sacrifice. The story or "narration" as Charles Taylor explains, "is one way of gathering time. It shapes the flow of time, 'de-homogenizes' it, and marks out kairotic moments like the Times of revolution, liberation, 1789, 1989," (Taylor 2007: 714) but also the war which combines *kairos* (a happy moment of gaining freedom) with *trauma* (shock and injury).

De-homogenization of the flow of time caused by The First World War is particularly manifested in its work of destroying chronology: it shortens the twentieth century by two decades because it is with that war that the nineteenth century actually ends. The armed conflict is in a sense a culmination of all major civilization processes that arose in the world in the century preceding it (conflict). The "Great War," so called in the 1920s and 1930s, is the direct product of industrial revolution, it introduces advanced lethal technologies – combat gases, tanks, and military aircraft – but it is also a product of modern mass society equally molded by science and technology and the mass media, ideas and ideologies. All these development trends of the nineteenth century can be roughly described by means of two opposing logics/dynamics: technological imagination *versus* historical imagination; instrumental reason – oriented towards changes, connected with rationalization processes in the Weberian sense – *versus* hermeneutic reason oriented towards tradition and duration (Heller 1999). In the climate of dominance of natural sciences extending into social thought, as a result of which such disciplines as modern sociology and economics emerge, there also reactively develops humanist metareflection resulting in the rise of inter alia modern history; in pursuit of discovering universal laws of nature, justification is sought for exploration of the human world; it is in it that attempts are also made to discover universal laws governing historical processes and providing a development impulse to a particular, historical reality. In the theory of historiography, these opposing logics of research procedure come to the fore as idiographism and nomotheticism: the chronicler of the

contemporary dispute over the limits of scientific cognition was Leopold Ranke, who wrote inter alia the following in his *History of the Popes: their Church and State* already in the 1830s:

> In the history of a nation or power, there is no problem more difficult than that of appreciating correctly the connection of its particular relations with those of the world in general.
>
> It is true that the individual life of a nation is determined by causes peculiar to itself, inherent in its nature, and displaying a characteristic consistency through all ages. But each community is subjected to the action of general influences, by which its progress is powerfully affected.
>
> In this conflict of forces it is that the character presented by modern Europe may be said to have its basis. Nations and States are separated eternally on certain points of their existence, but at the same time are knit together in indissoluble community. There is no national history of which universal history does not form an important portion (Ranke 1901: 3).

If The First World War is the climax of the conflicts rocking nineteenth-century Europe, if it became a landmark, a turning point in the course of history of not only Europe but also the world, then, like Ranke does, one should ask what it changed in writing of history, what the new marriage of *separate existence* and *general regularities* would consist in? What did the memory of the war, transformed into "sanctified experience", into new rites of secular religion, change in the scientific and social perception of history? These are the questions in the understanding sociology or philosophy of culture: the two perspectives, however, elucidate the semantic context for the theory of historiography. One of the best-known answers to these questions – in today's humanities – is given by Walter Benjamin a century after Ranke. It reads:

> Experience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it is continuing to fall into bottomlessness. Every glance at a newspaper demonstrates that it has reached a new low, that our picture, not only of the external world but of the moral world as well, overnight has undergone changes which were never thought possible. With the [First] World War a process began to become apparent which has not halted since then. Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent--not richer, but poorer in communicable experience? (Benjamin 2006: 362).

I repeat: to the German philosopher and culture critic the "Great War" "began the process" of challenging the significance of human experience. The process is associated with radical changes in the shape of the external and moral world that "had never been thought possible before": after war devastations "nothing remained unchanged", we have a different world than the one people formerly knew, about which they spoke with confidence, in the

conviction that things were like they said they were. A model of such communication is realism in the nineteenth-century literature: it presents the world in direct, precise, faithful, "real" terms (one could put it this way), because it speaks of *things themselves* – in relation to all forms of human activity: military, economic, political, moral operations. Benjamin says that the war began to cut the umbilical cord linking us with reality: we break away from the real, we cease to experience it while we are more and more dependent on its cultural representations, on the "floods of books" filled with linguistic clichés and popular beliefs. We become more and more reflective, dependent on sign systems, self-contained, unable to talk about experiences – "grown silent". The accuracy of this diagnosis of the society affected by war cataclysm was in a sense confirmed already during the war (in 1917) by the sociologist Max Weber, when he described the phenomenon that he called "chase after 'experiences'" (adding, incidentally: "the really fashionable value in Germany nowadays"), the chase, he believes, "can to a very large degree be the result of a diminished ability to live up to the inner demands of 'everyday existence'" and "owing both to the increasing rationalization and intellectualization of all spheres of life and to the increasing subjective importance attached to the individual to all his manifestations of life (which often seem extremely trivial to others)" (Weber 2012: 321). Weber, admittedly, does not directly associate these phenomena with war but he speaks about the society which is plunged into a war: then, naturally, an individual life and individual histories *fall in value*.

Critical social theory recognizes a paradox: the poorer we are in communicable experience, the more we desire it in the rationalized organization of life, which gives us uncertainty instead of certainty, and instead of foundations – the fragility and transience of existence. Inhabitants of scientific civilization, who perceive the world according to abstract models, have problems with everyday existence, chronically accidental, and that is why it is unable to live up to the demands of theory. They lose their maturity, ability to find their way in the human affairs; consequently, they act with less and less recourse to their practical reason, otherwise called conscience, and confine themselves to chasing monological experiences. With their maturity, they also lose the ability to narrate. This is how Benjamin sees it.

But that end of the narrative turned out to be its new beginning – the beginning of work on memory. In the interwar decades, memory becomes the object of historical studies, on equal terms with sources such as documents, archives, or historical monuments. Furthermore, collective/social memory also co-determines the way of understanding this research – it is the state that commissions research on what it and its citizens remember and have to remember to continue to exist after the great trauma. Much later, at the end of the twentieth century, the humanities, which chose inter alia Walter Benjamin as their cult hero, modern history as

a scientific discipline was treated as an instrument of violence and of excluding the marginal and the local from historical consciousness. Overcoming of the modernist paradigm resulted in the renaissance of small narrations. In this process memory began to correspond to what was marginalized in the past by the dominant community which needed an official history, learned and publicly celebrated as an ideology, a tool to legitimize power, rule, and to mold public discourse (Ankersmit 2001: 159). But that is another story.

World War Two and the Question about Theory of History

There is no general agreement about the groundbreaking significance of the kairotic-traumatic narration about The Second World War for the theory of history. Krzysztof Zamorski who has recently surveyed the positions on history as a science, distinguished three paradigms of understanding it: historicism, history as a social science (the Annales school concept), and postmodernism. In this last stage of development of the theory of history, in terms of which the achievements of inter alia Hayden White are described, the Polish scholar does not point to any connotations of the theory with The Second World War or with the Holocaust (Zamorski 2014). A similar way of thinking is expressed by the eminent US historian of ideas, Donald R. Kelley, frequently cited by Zamorski. The author (Kelley) of the three-volume history of historiography writes the following:

> The Second World *War*, like the *First* and no less traumatically, shattered *many* lives, and yet in methodological terms it had limited impact on the theory and practice of history, at least among the victors. (…) As with the *first war there were many careers* which, *however disrupted***,** *displayed continuity* from the *1930s (…)* to the 1950s, with historical scholarship in general remaining in *many* of the old institutional and methodological channels (Kelley 2006: 138).

Kelley uses statements with large quantifiers, he writes in a handbook-like style thereby tending to oversimplify, which may actually be unavoidable in the grand project he had undertaken. It is puzzling that he expresses practically no opinion about the history of the Holocaust in the volume cited, although he writes about scholars who are the classics of the genre, i.e. above-mentioned Hayden White, but also Dominick LaCapra or Frank Ankersmit (he omits to mention the great Holocaust historians: Raul Hilberg and Saul Friedländer). It is strange because it is inter alia these authors who believe that the event, symbolically called Auschwitz,

was of crucial significance for understanding *historical research in general*. I would add Paul Ricoeur here and will name only some examples of the terms for Auschwitz which they apply: it is to be then an "exemplary situation", "where not only the limits of representation in its narrative and rhetorical forms, but the whole enterprise of writing history, are open to discovery" (Ricoeur 2006: 254). The exemplar or "instantiation, illustration, sign, or singular epiphany" – as LaCapra defines Auschwitz – of the transhistorical, theoretical concept or concern such as sublimity, the differend, or the split, abject subject" (LaCapra 2004: 111), or describe Auschwitz in different terms as: "the paradigm" of limit situations (White 2004: 113), or – ultimately – "the limit case of historiographical theory" (Dintenfass 2000: 19).

One can therefore be confused when, in view of Kelley's foregoing enunciation, these kinds of declarations about historical writing will be referred to. They are not just hollow declarations because there is thorough research behind them, for example like that contained in one of the major studies of historiographical problems in world literature: in Paul Ricoeur's monumental work entitled *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2000), where he is asking "how the problems posed by the writing of the event 'at the limits' called Auschwitz are exemplary for a general reflection on historiography" (Ricoeur 2006: 349). And he answers (using detailed arguments earlier): "They are so insofar as they themselves are, as such, problems 'at limit'" (Ricoeur 2006: 260). The confusion described here is further complicated by the opinion of yet another giant of the contemporary humanities, German philosopher, according to whom after 1945 occurred the "historically enforced transition to a higher reflective level" in the theory of historiography, and it "has not simply affected the ideological premises of German historiography; it has also intensified the methodological awareness of the dependence of every historiography on its (historical) context" (Habermas 1988: 39).

It is not only historical reality that "imposes" the manner of comprehending it, including a scientific way, but also the other way round: the way of thinking adopted in a scholarly discipline also impacts the socio-political "context", which it co-creates – cooperates with it. This relationship, as we will see, is not a causal link, it is far more complex. Scientific reason does not control practice – it is involved in the world flood of events.

Ricoeur's and Habermas's positions require writing out and explaining. Before I do this, however, I will, for the formality of argument, include several remarks on the contextual determinants of the science of history after The Second World War.

Political Context

The impact of theory on praxis is a certain regularity identified by modern historiography aware of its "scientificity" which consists in critical and revealing investigation free from authorities and mistrustful of overt documents and "self-evident" data. From its beginning, science of this kind had to be in conflict with the existing, traditional socio-political order. Conflict was the inevitable result of critical, inquiring thought penetrating – in the hope of finding the historical truth – all classified sources, whether private or state files, whose "secrecy directly stemmed from the desire of the ruling social groups to shield their allegedly due privileges from criticism" (Pomian 1992: 73). This is what Krzysztof Pomian writes about the struggle of modern historical science with feudal institutions, a struggle which, he believes, became part of "the general process of breakdown of the traditional order" (Pomian 1992: 73).

This must have been a similar situation with the humanities in the twentieth century, facing socio-political transformations that inevitably took place whether after The First World War, which has been discussed above, or, more intensely, after The Second World War. After 1945, social sciences become part of the work of reflection on the unprecedented scale of The Second World War barbarity and feel obliged to participate in defining Human Rights in order to erect a barrier to any totalitarian power. These sciences overlap therefore with new socio-political practices providing them with the conceptual framework. This also happens in the case of the process of building the European community, which, as German sociologists vividly write today, "builds upon the devastations of The Second World War, the Holocaust and Stalinist totalitarianism" (Beck, Grande 2007: 34). These are the events that mark, they believe, a watershed in Europe's collective identity. The same authors go on to say:

> It is no accident that the institutionalized European cosmopolitanism which fosters respect for difference can be traced back to the Nuremberg Trials in 1945-1946. The latter went beyond national sovereignty for the first time and established new ways of comprehending the historical monstrosity of the murder of the Jews in legal categories, namely, in terms of "crimes against humanity" (Beck, Grande 2007: 34).

The reasoning which consists in combining the memory of the war victims with the European perspective also defines the program line of institutions responsible for making so -called historical policy in contemporary Germany. But this is a sideline. What is more important for us who try to show the original changes made by the war in the way or ways of thinking

about history as a scientific discipline is to remind us that the concept of "the crime of genocide" was to be a legal instrument in the international arena, one that serves to prevent next "final solutions." It appeared in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (New York, 9 December 1948), aimed against persons perpetrating "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (For the text of the Convention see: https://treaties.un.org/doc... See also: Hilberg 2014: 1502-1503). The Convention, which did not, of course, protect the world in the second half of the twentieth century from crimes of this kind, is still in force, and it is impossible to estimate how many potential criminals were discouraged from their reprehensible plans by the prospect of inevitable punishment. Its definition of genocide is the basis for today's sentences passed by the International Criminal Court in The Hague (established in 1998). Anyway, it is a fact (I repeat after historian Jan Baszkiewicz) that it is the reflections consequent upon The Second World War that result in "the overwhelming career of the philosophy of Human rights, which is expected to protect justified rights of individuals and minority groups from the State even if it is strengthened by the support of the majority" (Baszkiewicz 2009: 161). Theoretical and political studies in this philosophy are made in feedback. Academic historiography also takes part in this interaction. The above-cited sociologists confirm the condition of its (history's) new self-knowledge as follows:

> Academic historiography can no longer adhere unquestioningly to the distinction between the national and international. This way of operating has become untenable in Europe with the end of the old polarity of the East – West conflict. With this, something qualitatively new entered European historical space. In the newly unfolding European space of memory, which breaks with insularity of methodological nationalism, the national horror of the destruction of the Jews and the national wars and expulsions can no longer be studied in national terms but call for a systematic change in perspective, specifically, a Europeanization of perspectives (Beck, Grande 2007: 132).

Creating the collective memory of The Second World War events is a task and a challenge facing the theory and practice of historical research just as it faces socio-political theory and practice. The awareness of these interrelationships must influence academic historiography – both in the aspect of its methodological characteristics (research problems, epistemological and anthropological assumptions), and the formal ones as a cultural practice (institutions, systems of funding research, etc.) – which begins to perceive itself in relation to the processes of integration of national societies rather than in relation to building their separate differences, negative identities, based on the pattern: "we" are not "them". An element of this discipline identity is becoming a belief that the desirable integration of societies cannot be a normative one, that

cannot be effected according to the abstract, *a priori* adopted theoretical models: it would then follow the pattern of totalitarian thinking, genetically linked to technological civilization. Science which confines rationality only to discursive thinking and removes the data provided by practical reason (so-called power of judgment) from the cognitive sphere (discredits them as "subjective") becomes dogmatic and comes to serve political power reduced to ruling. Rather than 'obey' practice, it controls it, cannot become involved, feel the significance of some matters, be sensitive to suffering, etc. In contrast, critical theory can do all these.

The Ethical Turn

Critical reason rejects dogmatism in science and its accompanying repercussions – a vision of society confined within politics. This way of thinking came to the fore inter alia in the German public debate known as *Historikerstreit*. It is said that the Historians' Debate, which went on between 1986 and 1987, did not contribute to enriching the knowledge of the past, to discovering any new, previously unknown facts or ways of interpreting them. But it did contribute to what was called "the ethical or normative turn" in historiographical theory, a turn whose visible sign was the figure of *historian-public intellectual*, who combines, as the American historical theorist, Dominick LaCapra puts it, the *subject-positions* of scholar and critical intellectual/theorist (LaCapra 1996: 217).

The debate was actually begun by Jürgen Habermas in 1986 in his polemic in the leftist "Die Zeit" against the views of neoconservative historians: Ernst Nolte, Michael Stürmer (at that time the two published their texts in the rightist "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung") and Andreas Hillgruber. The discussion was accompanied by other events, important for the German public sphere of the time, and being part of the political strategy for the normalization of collective memory capable of dealing with the Nazi legacy – the strategy adopted by the Christian Democratic government headed by Helmut Kohl, who came to power in 1982 under the banner of "spiritual-moral change" (Mazur 2013: 223-229). This was about establishing the museums of history of Germany: in Bonn, it was the *Haus der Geschichte,* in Berlin – the *Deutsches Historisches Museum*. The atmosphere was thus conducive to discussion on the subject fundamental for Germany's new identity, and it can today resemble our Polish public debate and its accompanying events that made up the so-called "historical policy" under president Lech Kaczyński, with the participation of so-called "musealists" (a circle associated with the 1944 Warsaw Rising Museum and the then Mayor of Warsaw, i.e. the late president Lech Kaczyński). Right-wing historians and

journalists are trying to revise the recent history, showing German Nazi crimes in a broader context: "Was the Gulag Archipelago not primary to Auschwitz? Was the Bolshevik murder of an entire class not the logical and factual prius of the 'racial murder' of National Socialism?… Did Auschwitz in its root causes not originate in a past that would not pass?" (Nolte 1993: 18 -23). Questions of this kind are an introduction to comparative history, which strips the studied events of their uniqueness, and thereby the participants in those events – of their perpetrator status. Nolte's reasoning also renders the general idea that spurred a left-wing Frankfurt School philosopher and intellectual to express his opinion. I am not interested in the course of the Historians' Debate, well-known and widely described, or in the details of presented arguments, I will only confine myself to Habermas's position because it has two references: on the one hand, the local, so to say, reference to the condition of history as a discipline in post-The Second World War Germany (it is the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge); on the other hand, however, its significance has a far broader range – one of the greatest philosophers in the second-half of the twentieth century, who specializes in studies on the theoretical foundations of social sciences, has something significant to say on the theory of history as a science in general, regardless of its national origin.

Until 1945, Habermas believes, the self-understanding of German historiography was dominated by thinking characteristic of historicism, emphasizing its subservient functions towards nation and the state: these consisted in establishing the sense around which there would form a national consensus, historical awareness, the vision of tradition which was in fact a "substitute for religion" (Habermas 1988: 38). The Second World War, Habermas claims, destroyed this identity of history as a science, imposed on it the necessity of different self -knowledge – a self-knowledge that also demands its interference in the public sphere, ultimately in political decision-making; the difference being, however, that it would no longer be interference for only one vision of history and one vision of the present; on the contrary, the new methodological awareness allows "plurality of views on history", that is why it serves to remove the existing, conventional identities, and restrictions on human freedom and happiness with them. According to Habermas, the historians who came to the fore after 1945 should be aware of that and thereby pursue their discipline as a *critical social science*, which means non-dogmatic, rejecting all closed interpretations of history. The new methodological awareness of history admits of pluralism of such interpretations, reflecting the "structures of open societies" (Habermas 1988: 38). And such a society, in Habermas's view, is the Federal Republic of Germany. Habermas therefore expects history (as a science) to be involved in this practice for the sake of emancipation – the freeing of individuals and social groups from the condition of any

enslavement, and dissolution of all substantial forms of domination and their accompanying injustice. That is why the science in question will have to use such categories of "need", "suffering" or "unnecessary suffering" (Habermas 1974: 280) because it is them that should protect it from the destructive intention of controlling social practice, from imposing on it the alien criteria of rationality, good, true, right behaviors. Social science thus understood and free from these intentions is a product of *non-dualistic cognitive theory*, which abolishes the theory/praxis distinction, and is inspired here both by Marxist dialectics and the so-called linguistic turn in social philosophy, the turn being co-authored by Habermas himself. If the purpose of science should be "good theory" (Hudzik 2014), then it may only mean the creation of "true" consensus – this solution is suggested by social theory referring to linguistic philosophy – or a "satisfactory" argument towards specific social interests (Habermas 1974: 279-280), and this is already a case of Marxist legacy. "That process of scientifically enlightened communication to be institutionalized in the political public sphere – as the philosopher writes – would set into motion a sociotechnical dissolution of all substantial forms of domination – and would maintain this dissolution itself in the permanent reflection of the citizens, for the sake of their emancipation" (Habermas 1974: 278). Critical scientific reason, also in the historiographical area, thus loses its innocence, known as *objectivity,* it takes root, is institutionalized, in the *political public sphere*, and becomes its integral part rather than an external, non-binding opinion of an observer/analyst of the political scene. Criticism is leveled both at the vision of conventional society consolidating the existing relationships between power and social domination, and at the modern State managed by technocrats. It creates open, post-conventional society, it participates in eliminating all forms of ruling, domination, and social injustice through molding reflective citizens capable of liberal creation of political will. Within its cognitive sphere, the critical reason has therefore interests, acts of involvement, sensitivity to suffering, the will to emancipate, etc.

This is distinctly a political-science vision of history as a science – a practical theory involved in creating social consciousness of the so-called constitutional patriotism – according to Habermas, both science and patriotism "has unfortunately only been able to develop in the German Kulturnation since – and because of – Auschwitz" (Habermas 1988: 39). Science and politics are two discourses or theories, languages and cultural practices in one, which, preserving their autonomies, meet in the *public sphere*, the space of critical discussion, exchange of views and knowledge, outside of the state control. One could not therefore radically separate the spheres of occupational activities from public ones in particular, and this is a conclusion by Dominick LaCapra – one could not "define history in purely professional, objective, third-person terms under the aegis of a strictly differentiated or even autonomized paradigm of research" (LaCapra

1998: 67). It follows from Habermas's argument "that only a narrowly positivistic self-definition could wall professional historiography off from such problems as the public role of memory and mourning" (LaCapra 1998: 67). In concluding these remarks, let me note that LaCapra is one of postmodern rebels in the field of history, critical of the rigors of academic research, which certainly differentiates him from most of his German colleagues, especially the participants in the debate in question, not to mention Habermas himself. Donald R. Kelley gives him the following reference saying that from the standpoint of historian's craft, LaCapra's formulations leave a little to be desired, and they seem to some extent to encourage us to abandon historical search and entrust our fate to literary (and cultural) criticism LaCapra largely practices himself (Kelley 2006: 249).

The Historians' Debate points out the dubious issue of thinking in terms of binary oppositions – theory/praxis – and consequently, the hybrid character of social roles of "the intellectual/public historian", as well as the hybrid, i.e. theoretical-pragmatic character of science itself, impacting the public sphere, and, mutually, receiving stimuli from there in the form of systems of institutional, ideological or worldview expectations/requirements. Habermas attributes the *intensified methodological awareness* of historiography's dependence on the context to reflection on Auschwitz, to recall his words from the above-cited article in "Die Zeit". "Intensified awareness" does not describe a qualitative change in the theory of historiography – it refers to a quantitative change measurable on the scale of the sharpness of methodological awareness, in which a conviction is advanced that the past as the object of historical research is something mobile, non-objective, unstable, and finally, which is possible, something that still continues to be. One of the best-known statements concerning the understanding the Holocaust past, which still continues, is that by the sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman in the late 1980s, i. e. about fifty years after the event. The sources of failure of scientific research on the Holocaust lie, in his view, in the nature of the studies seeking to be objective, which requires neutralization of the attitude of a researcher-analyst (historian, sociologist) (Bauman: 1989). However, even in this last variant of understanding the past extended over the present, the charges of presentism are not admitted, i.e. presentism associated with the use of the conceptual apparatus contemporary with the researcher, or with yielding to political interests or ethical convictions. It is believed that interpretations of texts or events from the past, if they should be essential for historical understanding – "understanding how this could have happened" – cannot be free from determinants of this kind. There are no *simple representations* of the real.

Auschwitz, History, and the Power of Judgment

Let's return to Paul Ricoeur. The fundamental problem with writing about the event which he and many other scholars generally term "Auschwitz" stems from the character of the event, that is from the fact that it is "at limit". Incidentally, the terms "limit situation" and "limit experience" were introduced by Karl Jaspers (Jaspers 1971). Ricoeur defines the "limit" of event or experience through its incommensurability with daily human experience or, in other words, by its inhumanity (Ricoeur 2006: 175). In his professional career the historian experiences firsthand, in a way, the limits of written communication which coincide with the limits of the language or of our/human form of "normal" treatment of the world. He therefore experiences the existence of some incommunicable "remainder", something that lies "on the other side" and cannot be included in the world of life. The naming and describing of this "remainder" would mean its elimination. And this is also the case with Auschwitz: writing about it encounters the limits of human language and understanding of the world. "The World of Auschwitz lies outside discourse just as it lies outside reason" – Ricoeur cites Georg Steiner's words (Ricoeur 2006: 256-257). How then should one represent that which demands/requires representing but cannot be named or comprehended? And how can one at all seek to achieve "the greatest clarity" in this undertaking? It is the clarity of thinking and argument that will be the criterion for academic research, if one should believe Karl Jaspers, the author of the concept of the *limit experience* crucial for the present discussion. He would define history as science in the wider sense, which, he claims, "includes any clear understanding obtained through rational and conceptual means". And he goes on: "Thinking so understood does not provide insights into matters hitherto unfamiliar, but clarifies what it is I really mean, want or believe. Science in this broader sense is identical with the area of lucid self-knowledge" (Jaspers 1959: 12). This is one of the possible, actually very accurate, definitions of the methodological specificity of the humanities which use understanding and interpretation.

But this means that the problem that the historian has with Auschwitz touches upon the essence of so defined scientificity of his discipline: clear thinking and judgments about the past, and the genuineness of their formulation, in short: the essence itself of critical thinking. The boundaries/barriers/aporias that are in the way of fulfilling these criteria for historical research define at least three problem areas indicated by Ricoeur. Firstly (I am citing one by one and trying to explain), it is "the impossibility of neutralizing the differences in position of witnesses in the interplay of scales" (Ricoeur 2006: 260) – because, as I understand it, they are not credible in the sense that they are permanently indeterminate, ambivalent, oscillating between detached

observers (and that is why always morally sharing the guilt in some way), active heroes opposing brutal violence, and passive victims, the lines between the perpetrator, witness and victim being blurred.

An illustration: it is impossible, within one article, to document such abstract claims by means of historical sources, this would require a far more extensive study. For example, to show what the foregoing "impossibility of neutralizing the differences" in the position of witnesses specifically consists in, I will quote an entirely randomly chosen excerpt from only one account based on the interview with an SS soldier:

> But whilst he [Groening] might have agreed in a theoretical way with the collection of lies that constituted the Nazi propaganda against the Jews, it was quite another thing to be involved in their mass murder. And crucial to the way Groening adjusted to Auschwitz was his immediate decision to separate method from theory. When he saw SS 'sadists' brutally clearing the arrival ramp of lost children, the sick and the elderly, he went at once to complain to his superiors and asked for a transfer (which was denied). But he didn't think of complaining about the fact that mass murder was taking place – instead he complained only about the way it was happening. He said to his boss that 'if there was a necessity to exterminate the Jews, at least it should be done within a certain framework'. Groening accepted the decision of the Nazi leadership that the Jews were a threat and had to be 'diminished'; I suspect he even agreed with the policy. So he concentrated his efforts on ensuring that, on the rare occasions he witnessed it, the process was completed in as ordered a way as possible (Rees 2008: 19-20).

The SS man was thus an observer, sometimes even involved, because he took the opportunity of expressing his half-opposition, let's put it this way, but he was essentially not involved, as a desk official only organizing the order of work in the mass murder factory, while the victims were actual perpetrators…

Return to Ricoeur's arguments. The second illustration of the "limit phenomenon" of Auschwitz, which he provides, is "the impossibility of summing up in one all-encompassing history the reconstructions backed up by heterogeneous affective investments" (Ricoeur 2006: 260) – it is impossible to build an overall narrative on this event because there are no mutually comparable sources of information from persons on the basis of whose accounts a *consensus* about its course could be reached: individual accounts on the subject are not only inconsistent but also mutually untranslatable. Read the interview with the SS man once again and think about the "protagonists" in this account: himself, his colleagues, Sonderkommando prisoners, and those cleared off the arrival ramp… The impossibility of coherent, all-encompassing narration means that the theory of historiography will adopt an anthropological assumption, according to which a human individual cannot be fully understood (Pomian 1992: 284). Finally, the third

aporia in historical research, according to Ricoeur, is "the unsurpassable dialectic between uniqueness and incomparability at the very heart of the idea of singularity" (Ricoeur 2006: 260 -261) – the dialectic means here a contradiction without prospects for a possible synthesis: the uniqueness of Auschwitz cannot be complete because one would have to be silent about it, while every manner of speaking about it involves the use of concepts, thereby universalizing it. But this is a trivial observation, a conclusion resulting from the old dispute between comparative and idiographic history – the latter would have to be a dull description of events, detail by detail, moment by moment. What then should the case of Auschwitz contribute to this – third – observation? Nothing new, because it presents nothing but "limit", a classical, so to say, situation of the trap into which the historian falls, between the necessity – moral demand – of representing the past event, explaining it in rational terms as well as explaining his own attitude towards it: "what I really mean, want or believe", and the experience of exhaustion, impropriety, inadequacy and finally disproportion of linguistic forms available to the historian: conceptual frames, narrative types, rhetorical figures. Words change into slogans, stereotypes, they become ossified, lose their meaning, may be filled with diverse content. Auschwitz therefore faces its historian with the horrendous absurdity and meaninglessness of the event, which not only frightens him, or, more euphemistically, deprives him of clear thinking, but also does not allow him to explain its uniqueness. A historical description, as has been said, has to contain general concepts, and these bring with them the moment of universality and construction. Owing to them, the event loses its singularity, becoming similar to others. Hence Ricoeur's conclusion noted at the beginning of this discussion: studies on Auschwitz/Shoah allow the historian to see "not only the limits of representation in its narrative and rhetorical forms, but the whole enterprise of writing history" (Ricoeur 2006: 254).

Historical writing as such cannot be codified then. It would therefore have to be some genre of art, the art, however, that does not consist in the rules of poetics, correct production – *techne*. If so, art should rather be understood as studying the past, basing on the sense, or, more precisely, on this real judgment: "what I really mean, want or believe" – otherwise called *power of judgment*. As Ferdinand de Saussure once said, "history is no narrative, but a selection of accurate facts" (cited after Bourdieu 2014: 173). And selection is a province of the power judgment. This kind of cognitive power is governed by the sense of the logic of orders of historical events, the logic that evades the disjunction of either "the truth of facts" or "the truth of reason", in other words: either uniqueness or repeatability, contingency or necessity, singularity or universality, facticity or fiction. Historical reality, opened to judgment, is then no longer characterized by identity or contradiction, it has to be rather a domain of similarities and differences – the field of

connections between the same and the other. It is only differences and similarities that are attributed (given) to the power of judgment. This is the general conceptual pattern of the epistemology and ontology of the science of history presented here.

I need to make a digression. The application of dichotomous thinking in historical research is not a speculative invention. It can be easily used in modern historiographical theory, which originated from the Renaissance, and whose representatives also treated their work as art identified, however, with rhetoric, or, as the ancients did – with *techne*, with describing the past according to the rules. They consistently sought the rules defining the rationality of the description, and its beauty and truth with it, in ancient times. From that time on nothing new or better would emerge in the art of the word in general, and in particular, in its application to historiography: this is what the humanists assumed, believing that in antiquity "the human capabilities reached the absolute maximum" (Pomian 1992: 41). When describing the past, there is nothing else they can do but imitate the compositions and elevated style of the ancient authors. The so conceived understanding of history in esthetic terms resulted in a prolonged dispute lasting until the late eighteenth century ("although, as Krzysztof Pomian writes "its echoes still reverberate here and there even today") (Pomian 1992: 43), between "historians" who practice historiography and "antiquarians" concerned with source research. Underlying this dispute was an epistemology built on the opposing treatment of two aspects of the historian's work: literary and cognitive. Throughout the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries this dichotomous thinking gained momentum, ultimately resulting – particularly owing to Leopold Ranke and his school – in "de-rhetorization" of history (Zamorski 2014: 121), i.e. in the removal of history outside the area of historical research. In this process the so-called paradigm of historicism develops, i.e. research procedures consisting in the linguistic analysis of the source texts, combined with their criticism: heuristics (external criticism) and hermeneutics (internal criticism), and oriented towards constantly discovering new facts. The result of this approach is descriptive (ideographic) historiography (Zamorski 2014: 109-113), declaratively free from rhetorical figures. Rhetoric becomes synonymous with the irrational and the contingent, while source research with the rational and the necessary. But the criteria for their rationality are non-scientific, they derive from the object of research, or ultimately from institutions: the most valuable type of sources is here primary sources in the form of official acts (Zamorski 2014: 111).

In the research into it, the phenomenon of Auschwitz described by Ricoeur is no longer subject to such binary oppositions; nevertheless it demands *discovering and analyzing facts*, but also *judging them*. *Judging* changes the character of research and transforms it into studying – to use Pierre Bourdieu's term – "the encounter of two histories" at one temporal point, which itself is

the history incarnated in bodies and history objectified as structures (Bourdieu 2014: 174). This observation is accurate about the reality open to the power of judgment: the structures are institutions, socio-historical objects and their related specific logics: norms and rules of action, speaking, necessities, indispensable restrictions that we always experience only at some specific moment, in the coincidence of random events. Consequently, we can no longer say that there are different points of view on history which (history) should essentially continue to be the same. This description is about "the encounter" of divergent histories that cannot be agreed upon for some higher sense, while the historian, rather than offer synthetic presentations produced by interpreting the same in differences, is required to affirm coincidence, or, to put it differently, the art of grasping *contingent rationality*. Historical reality, characterized in ontological terms as *contingent rationality,* cannot be comprehended as a whole, it is the object of thinking by something infinite, whose elements cannot be captured in one act. And the historian is aware of them when adopting a research approach, or, to use Bourdieu's terms, *habitus,* as "a definite manner of constructing and understanding practice in its specific logic" (Bourdieu, Wacquant 2001: 107), consisting in *selecting accurate facts*. Studying them is a specific kind of creation marked by the scholar's "socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu, Wacquant 2001: 113) rather than a matter of imitating ready -made narrative and rhetorical forms of historiography, as the humanists would have it, or of discovering facts, whether individual, as proponents of historicism argue, or social as the "Annales School"-related authors of the paradigm of history as a social science maintain. Both of them – supporters of historicism and of the foregoing school – satisfy the criteria for so-called *modernism* in historiography, a position that recognizes, in general, that the past is the object of scientific cognition, i.e. cognition that does not treat sources as authorities, and criticizes them, being guided by the idea of objectivity, or acquiring verifiable and intersubjectively communicable knowledge. In this approach, the past is known in the same way as cultural phenomena are. "In either case, as Krzysztof Pomian explains, one can use repeatable, codifiable procedures, which allow everyone who can use them to arrive at the same conclusions" (Pomian 1992: 264).

Historical science, which identifies historicity as the domain of *contingent rationality*, and adopts the *power of judgment* as the most effective and adequate vehicle for reaching it – the past, cannot be codified. It uses the type of cognition in which the boundaries between the subject and the object, between the historian and the past event, are blurred.

The Hilberg Case

Epistemology, reconstructed on the basis of the reflection on theory and research practice by French scholars Ricoeur and Bourdieu, recreates we could say, the model of *performative history,* a science that assumes that the past exists insomuch as it continues to be *reenacted* by its historian -performer, insofar as it continues to exist in him, in his unique manner of knowing it. The historian's thinking may therefore appear to be artistic creativity, which cannot obviously be entirely identified with art announcing the demise of scientific research under the banner of "the past belongs to us and we can (freely) change it". Creative thinking, free from a nihilist scenario, would have in that case to consist in activating mental powers in chronically indeterminate proportions – often described in literature on the subject with the metaphor of *play* – between discursive cognition, i.e. thinking consisting in reasoning (criticism and analysis of sources), and non-discursive, associated with imagination as the ability to imagine phenomena, situations, states of affairs; it is a capacity subjectively determined by the state of mind: emotions, sensitivity… Or to put it differently, this time using Raul Hilberg's methodological reflection: this is about the mode of research procedures that can be described as the *play* between striving to directly present the truth about the past event (Hilberg sought to examine literally every document that could give him any clue to any of the cases he was interested in or wanted to investigate [Hilberg 2014: XXV]), and the infinitely free thinking about how it happened (Hilberg observes that in order to reconstruct the event [Holocaust], whether in film or in books, one has to be a consummate artist, because this picture is a creative act in itself and for itself [Hilberg 1996: 83]); (the play) between the intellectually and morally binding grasping of reality, and being engrossed with the possibilities itself of representing it – the search for a linguistic form for it (Hilberg says he had to control his work, dominate it the way Beethoven molded his music; Beethoven's *Appassionata* showed him that his thousand pages could not shout, that he had to suppress the ringing and resonance, and very seldom relax control [Hilberg 1996: 85]).

In this way of presenting the past there is resemblance to the work of art which, on the one hand, is rooted in actual experience, while on the other hand it is undertaken as an experiment showing different viewpoints on history. The structure of the historian's thinking resembles what in the modern humanities rooted in Kantian philosophy is called *judgment of taste* or *esthetic judgment*. This judgment has a cognitive sense: the sense of knowing and recognizing – in that which is acted out, represented, and presented – the truth of things, events, and persons and oneself, the one to whom the truth is presented: the viewer, observer, researcher, here: the historian. Here, cognition therefore also embraces the expression or manifestation of, to repeat Jaspers's formula

once again, *what I really mean, want or believe*. And it is this model of cognition that can be found in Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*. The book shows the writer grappling with the matter of the past, the work of the historian that can be described precisely as the *play* of linguistic and methodological conventions, of expressing and designating, manifestation and argumentation, decisions and choices in these aspects/dimensions, made by the scholar who seeks to *understand* the past, based on the artifacts it has left, i.e. chiefly documents. It is this *play,* defining the *habitus* – a special manner of understanding research practice – that allows the author to ultimately render that *contingent rationality* of past events, to *touch* their limit status – *touch* can be one of the possible, I am not sure whether the most fortunate, metaphoric illustrations of the play which is about the play itself, some kind of movement of thinking. To stop or grasp it, agree on conflicting standpoints or on *subject-positions*, as has been said, is impossible: one cannot harmoniously reconcile the general and the individual, neutrality and involvement, facticity and fiction. There is no combination that could comprise all these elements at once, combine them into a totality – there is no one truth about the Holocaust or the whole knowledge about it. Thus Hilberg, on the one hand, explicitly owns up to scientism, which dominated in social sciences at American universities in the 1940s when he was a college student: he assumes the position of an observer, avoids judgments, he removes, as he claims, "accusatory terms like *'murder'*, as well as such exculpatory words as *'executions'*, which made the victims into delinquents, or *'extermination'*, which likened them to vermin" – he introduces "charts and numbers, which added an air of cool detachment to [his] writing" (Hilberg 1996: 87-88). At the same time, on the other hand, the same author understands and practices historical research as a branch if artistic creativity. This is what he writes about his experiences as a Holocaust historian:

> The artist usurps the actuality, substituting a text for a reality that is fading fast. The words that are thus written take the place of the past; these words, rather than the events themselves, will be remembered. Were this transformation not a necessity, one could call it presumptuous, but it is unavoidable. It is applicable to all historiography, to all descriptions of a happening (Hilberg 1996: 83).

There is no actuality then, there are only linguistic representations of events. Language is a universal medium of all thinking, a form of relation to the world, which the historian utilizes. What is unique is particular statements – uses of language. This distinction is not very original, however, it draws upon the well-known structuralist distinction between *langue* and *parole,* authored by de Saussure. But this is not what Hilberg has in mind – in his *non-dualistic theory of cognition*, he also breaks the binary schema of structuralism: mental structures/the phenomenal

world. The metaphor of *play* conveys reality, to which its own truth is given owing to representation. Truth does not exist outside representation, nor can the historian go beyond his representation, he is unable to do so even when he cannot actually name something, assign the right word to a thing, when he stops at the level of the form itself, arrangement of words, sentences and chapters: even the composition element is not "without significance", it does not remain silent and takes on additional semantic/representational functions. Hilberg recollects the progress of the creative process, which accompanied the writing of *The Destruction of the European Jews:*

> I grasped for an overall symmetry. Beethoven had sketched the finale of his Eroica symphony by pairing what he placed first with what he put down last, then what followed the first with what preceded the last, and so on in candelabra fashion toward the middle. I had done something very similar with my twelve-chapter work. The first chapter was thematically reflected in the last. The second was matched with the next to the last, ant the third with the tenth. The longest of my chapters was the one on deportations. It was the andante of my composition, with a theme and multiple variations that mirrored the special conditions under which deportations were carried out in each country (Hilberg 1996: 85-86).

Historical events that arouse terror – *mysterium tremendum* – make one realize the limit of all written communication; that which is "beyond the limit", the unsaid "remainder", therefore enters the semiotic world through the structural, composition element. The meaning of the "remainder" is non-verbal, residing in the rhythm of the narrative, in the moods and emotions it evokes, and it enters the "play" with cognition, discursive thinking, here: with criticism and analysis of sources – texts and documents. The subject of this play, the play that by definition is a presentation, *playing something*, of one's own sense and own goals, is the abovementioned *power of judgment*. Its judgments are not about *cognitive truth*, i.e. the truth that can be proved through reference to reality "alone": no external, non-linguistic context of play sets its objectives or tasks. Writing of history, understood as *selecting accurate facts*, is done in relation to and among its other representations, more or less a*ccurate* in the meaning: adequate, precise, profound, mature, not without reason, appropriate for the situation, even "truthful". In the judgments measured by the scale of accuracy what matters is better – sharper, more precise, thorough, mature, etc. – *understanding* of past events. As such, in respect of their logical value, these judgments cannot thus be binary – true/false, they must be always unclosed, dialogical, open to other judgments – other voices read from the past: factual descriptions and objective (impersonal) narration are accompanied for this purpose by sentence patterns showing the mechanism for "selecting

accurate facts", rendering the essence of performativity of historical research. These are the patters like "one day…", "[XY] may have been involved/been the issue", "it appears that…", "this usually took place in the following way...", "this is illustrated by the following story…", "an eyewitness account reads…", " the reason why [X acted so and so] is not known," etc. These types of expressions and syntagmatic relations enable the reader's interference, open him/her to other histories, other possible courses of events. A historical study is then like a work of art, produced from the reflection on real experience, at the same time chronically experimental, open to interpretations, allowing complementary inquiries and varied solutions… The artwork that excites us, teaches non-conformism and detachment from standard thinking and judgments identified with the "good form" of academic studies … All this was brought home to Hilberg by the Auschwitz phenomenon.

Conclusions

Reflection on history as a science, connected with two World Wars in the twentieth century, owes its appearance within the culture of memory to the trauma of The First World War. Inspired by this context, theory exposes memory as the collectively developed ability to recollect the past, detrimental to individually experiencing and communicating it (the past), i.e. in a narrative form. The theory of historiography owes, however, to The Second World War a new, other than before, self-understanding and conceptual imagination which could be generally described by means of a series of mutually connected research approaches and categories such as a) critical social theory, parting with the historicism paradigm as well as dogmatism in science, b) ethical turn, c) non-dualistic historical epistemology and ontology accompanied by the following concepts: *contingent rationality, power of judgment, play*, (presenting the past as an) *artwork,* and *performativity*. Not all the elements appear together in one research project – they have been reconstructed in my article *ex post*. This reconstruction takes into consideration many different – from the historical point of view, apparently not all – attempts to create a new methodological consciousness of historical science towards war and the Holocaust. It seems that even if the placing of Hilberg's work within the series of the theoretical transformations were evaluated/denounced as a certain overinterpretation, then regardless of the degree of its accuracy it could – my interpretation – still preserves its heuristic value and inspire new conceptual associations and connections in considering the theory of historiography. Without drawing such a conceptual map one may appropriately conclude – as many in fact do – that The Second World War had "a minor influence" on this academic discipline. And this is not true.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Theory of History vis-à-vis two World Wars and the Holocaust

The author poses two questions: Is there anything new that the two World Wars and the Holocaust introduce to the methodology of history or rather to the self-consciousness of history as a scientific discipline? What do these events change in the way we perceive the importance and function of historiography in culture? The article consists of introductory remarks, main text and conclusions. Key considerations are divided into six parts: 1. The First World War and the Turn to Memory, 2. World War Two and the Question about Theory of History, 3. Political Context, 4. The Ethical Turn, 5. Auschwitz, History, and the Power of Judgment, 6. The Hilberg Case. A reconstruction of the methodological consciousness of history is carried out on the basis of the research categories and attitudes proposed by such authors as Habermas, Ricoeur, Jaspers, and Bourdieu. Using some of these ideas, it culminates in the interpretation of Hilberg's theory of historiography. The ideas are, among other things, the following: critical theory, ethical turn, power of judgment, non-dualistic epistemology and ontology.

KEYWORDS

Theory of history, history as a science, world wars, the Holocaust, critical social theory, ethical turn, power of judgment, Jürgen Habermas, Paul Ricoeur, Raul Hilberg

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

STUDIES

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN: ADIAPHORIZATION IN THE HOLOCAUST AND IN THE SOCIETY OF CONSUMERS

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Rather than a picture on the wall, the Holocaust has been regarded by Zygmunt Bauman as a window which helps to catch glimpses of things that might otherwise remain invisible. In this case, one could say, his book *Modernity and the Holocaust* is one of the corridors into the room in which the window is located. To continue with metaphors, one could, however, find the author's books, their contents and "the corridors" shifting in time, having recently lead towards a new, but nevertheless overlapping with the previous one, window – one of consumerism – which exposes another aspect of the social reality, once again permeated by the principle of adiaphorization – adiaphorization which was one of the main features of the cultural situation exposed by the Holocaust, as Bauman noted.

In other words, adiaphorization is one of the thematic links between Bauman's conception of the Holocaust and his conception of the consumer society. The relation between the two is in a way parallel to the relation between solid modernity and liquid modernity, the features of which the Holocaust and the consumer society respectively are. Therefore, to elaborate on what

adiaphorization in Bauman's social theory is, it is worth analysing the relation between Bauman's conceptions of the two characters of modernity.

The first one is mainly portrayed in *Modernity and the Holocaust* – a book which had been often referred to, and sometimes still is, as the thinker's greatest work – especially until his "liquid turn" in 2000. Interestingly, that year Peter Beilharz published his book *Bauman: Dialectic of Modernity* and tagged *Modernity and the Holocaust* as Bauman's major work – however, surprisingly (or maybe not), in the same year Bauman published his book *Liquid Modernity* (2000), which considerably changed the scenery of his social conception, and a few dozens of books on liquid modernity has since then made it much more difficult to answer the question which Bauman's book(s) might be the major one(s). *Liquid modernity*, *Consuming Life*, *Does Ethics have a Chance in the World of Consumers?*, *The Art of Life*, *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age* – those are just a few of his 21st century books that the article focuses on for referring to his conception of consumer society, and these books include overlapping ideas – sometimes even sentences or entire paragraphs – and are sometimes as liquid as the content of his theory of "liquid modernity".

These two characters of modernity feature overlapping, but simultaneously very different characteristics, in the 21st century poetically embodied into very opposite-like adjectives of liquid and solid. Modernity as such is one of the key problems in Zygmunt Bauman's works, but in different centuries it was treated by him slightly differently – the terms changed. Phenomena that before the liquid turn were named as "modernity" and "postmodernity", were later on metaphorically baptized by the writer as "solid modernity" and "liquid modernity". If one retrospectively applied the new terms to Bauman's writings before the liquid turn, one could probably refer to his 1989 year book as simultaneously both *Modernity and the Holocaust* and *Solid Modernity and the Holocaust*. Unlike the users of postmodernity term, and similarly to Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, the thinker retains partial identity of the two periods and eventually names two phases of modernity instead of using the incommensurable or temporally subsequent, potentially glued to many unrelated theories, couple of terms "modernity" and "postmodernity".

Modernity, which in the 21st century he has called "solid modernity", is for Bauman the cultural trend of instrumental rationality – a dreadful outcome of which the Holocaust in solid modernity was. Contrary to statements on the abnormality of the Holocaust, the writer states that "[t]he Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization, and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilization and culture" (1999c: x), and it thus shows what might be considered to

be "normal" in such society. He then analyses the conditions of how this happens and arrives at the notion of the phenomenon of adiaphorization.

In other words, when speculating over the fact of the Holocaust, Bauman engages with the concept of adiaphorization, which he borrows from other contexts (just like he has all in all borrowed fragments from a multitude of different theories, complementing them into a Baumanian whole). In Ancient Greek language and in the Stoic doctrine, "adiaphoros" meant something that was outside of interest. However, when using the term, the author more often than not refers to the Christian tradition, according to which "adiaphoros" is a sphere of moral questioning being treated as something that is "out of question" at a certain situation. All in all, most of the definitions the author provides for the term "adiaphorization" refer to contents of "moral indifference". For instance, "adiaphoros" might be explained as a sphere outside of the rules of conduct which must be controlled by the Church – that is, it is an unregulated space where a person is free of sin to do something in one way or another.

In a similar fashion, as Bauman noted, in the social reality of modernity (that is, in solid modernity), "an action that is admitted into the class of genuinely social actions" (Bauman 1999c) must serve in a certain way that must not fail to meet the criteria of goal-pursuit orientation, and the ones that do fail are not considered to be of importance. Unlike in the Christian tradition, where things might have been divided into ones that are morally important and ones that are not, in solid modernity with its strict apparatus of order and disambiguity, things might be divided into the instrumental ones – the ones that matter – and moral ones – the ones that do not.

In other words, in the case of the reflection on the Holocaust, the author draws his readers' attention to the effects of bureaucracy and social organization that allowed social cleansing, killing groups of people, considered as "weeds", to be performed just like any work with goods would be instrumentally performed at a factory – with rational aims and limitations on one's view, with a narrowed focus concentrated on a certain piece of work imposed and with no moral elements that might be of disturbance.

Furthermore, following the line of Emmanuel Levinas, a twenty-first-century philosopher, Bauman emphasizes the overall limiting impact of society on morality. According to him, there are certain procedures in society as such – and particularly modern society – that help barbaric and seemingly uncivilized social situations as the Holocaust happen in a civilized modern world like something that had already latently lied within it. As the philosopher states in his famous speech on the social manipulation of morality,

> All social organization consists … in neutralizing the disruptive and deregulating impact of moral behaviour. This effect is achieved through a number of complementary arrangements: (1) stretching the distance between action and its consequences beyond the reach of moral impulse; (2) exempting some "others" from the class of potential objects of moral conduct, of potential "faces"; (3) dissembling other human objects of action into aggregates of functionally specific traits, held separate so that the occasion for re-assembling the face does not arise, and the task set for each action can be free from moral evaluation. Through these arrangements, organization does not promote immoral behaviour; it does not sponsor evil, … yet it does not promote good either … . It simply renders social action *adiaphoric*… – neither good nor evil, measurable against technical (purpose-oriented or procedural) but not moral values (1999a: 215).

In Sophia Marshman's words on Bauman, there is "a distinct Levinasian strand in his thinking, that human solidarity and a sense of responsibility for the others are dependent upon proximity" (2008: 81). In his book *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Bauman attempts to show that in the social factory of the Holocaust, the Levinasian face of the Other was put in a position behind the wall of indifference – in a so called "neighbourless position" (Bauman 1999c: 123) – and left alone, as something that does not relate to the others. According to Bauman, bureaucracy enabled certain actions to be split into unconnected fragments, each performed separately, thus creating framed identities of different social groups. As the thinker provokingly notes, such distancing results in "the improbability of all outside interference with the bureaucratic process; unaffected groups are unlikely to rush to the rescue of the targeted category, as the problems, faced by the two sides, cannot easily find a common denominator" (1999c: 12). To facilitate that, a category of people that is to be taken out of the gardening-state by the social engineering, seemingly "must be effectively 'sealed off': either removed physically from the context of the daily life and concerns of other groups, or separated psychologically by overtly and unambiguously discriminating definitions" (Bauman 1999c: 123). Thus, as Marshman puts it when referring to Bauman and his diagnose on the Holocaust, the "victims were dehumanized by their definition as 'weeds' as superfluous or 'unworthy' lives. They then stood at a conceptual distance from the rest of society" (2008: 77). In other words, they stood in a morally indifferent – that is, adiaphoric – space outside of the socially defined area of responsibility.

However, the Levinasian line, woven into Bauman's social conception, states that responsibility cannot be propelled by society in any way, and the only effect society has on morality is negative, therefore even the "socially defined area of responsibility" that Marshman refers to is something that would not fit in Bauman's view of the conception of responsibility he finds in Levinas' texts and adapts in his theory. In other words, not only does Bauman state that society does not help the morals, but he also refers to a kind of 'either/or' when regarding morality and society.

In contrast to "most powerful and persuasive cases for the necessity of society" (Bauman, 2009: 47) which emphasize the positive effect of society on morals (the author often alludes to Hobbes, Durkheim and Freud's conceptions as examples of regarding society as a necessary constraint on individual freedom and egoism in the name of a civilized togetherness), Bauman bases his social conception on a Levinasian view of society, regarding society as a necessary medicine for alleviating the infinity of morality. According to Bauman, "society is indispensable, but not to suppress your evil instinct, but to limit your responsibilities" (Bauman et al., 2014: 223) – that is to silence the silent appeal of the Face. Thus, the philosopher states, adiaphorization as moral indifference is what happens every time the moral party of two is invaded – that is, always when one finds oneself in society, when "the Third" comes and breaks into your infinite responsibility for the Other – in other words, simply always (unless you're a Saint). Bauman's conclusion is that society as such restricts moral impulses, as the latter ones, based on his interpretation of Levinas, are pre-social.

In this way Bauman provides an explanation on why moral impulses are likely to be always seen as unnecessary obstacles and disturbances – both by society as such and especially by a solid modernity society with its focus on order and belief in the grand narrative, unanimous disenchantment of all illusions and instrumental ways to achieve that one day.

However, at the liquid turn in 2000, the cultural tendencies that Bauman diagnoses are in the process of changing, and thus at the threshold of the 21st century the thinker arrives at the concept of "liquid modernity". Since the publishing of Liquid modernity, the central topic of his books has been shifting towards the issue of consumer society. Consequently, an addition to Bauman's views on (solid) modernity and the Holocaust, similar conclusions on adiaphorization might be also found in his 21st century writings – that is, in this fourth phase (to use Shaun Best's counting system) of writing – texts on liquid modernity which is found in the nowadays process of privatization and deregulation. As Bauman notes, "today the major source of adiaphorization is no longer bureaucracy, but consumer market" (Bauman et al., 2014: 221), as "[u]nder the deregulated/privatized regime, the formula for 'relief from responsibility' has remained much the same as it was in the earlier stages of modern history. … The outcome is not much different from the 'adiaphorizing' effects of the stratagem practised by solid modern bureaucracy. … The collateral victim of the leap to the consumerist rendition of freedom is the Other as object of ethical responsibility and moral concern" (Bauman, 2009: 52-53).

In other words, despite the Levinasian drop of optimism in Postmodern Ethics (Bauman, 1995) and Bauman's explicit belief that postmodernity, which, according to him, is modernity without its illusions, might free morality of modernistic constraints of rules, including ethics and,

possibly, overcome many of the obstacles for the moral impulse to reduce some of the borders between people, and despite the drop of hope in In Search of Politics (Bauman, 1999b) and Bauman's belief in global politics, what he finds in liquid modernity and describes in his books, such as Consuming Life (Bauman, 2006), are yet neverending new forms of adiaphorization and social inequality that keep being diagnozed in his books with such titles as Wasted Lives (Bauman 2003), Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age (Bauman 2011) and many others.

In Bauman's writings on the social reality of liquid modernity one can find a portrayal of adiaphoric split between groups of people, and surprisingly (or maybe not), it is in a few essential aspects similar to what one can find in the contents of Modernity and the Holocaust. Conceptions of certain groups of people as weeds in the solid modern social engineering project proliferate into a variety of new metaphors in Bauman's writings after the liquid turn. However, despite the changes, a distinct consistent line of the idea of moral indifference runs under the metaphors in the writings of both periods.

In one way or another, one can notice that the thinker's texts refer to moral indifference and socially legitimate dehumanization of 1) certain groups, 2) other individuals and (especially in the cases described in the liquid modernity writings) 3) oneself that are propelled by the prevalent social tendencies. Bauman himself doesn't categorize adiaphorization that way, but the descriptions of situations that are found with reference to adiaphorization can be divided into these three cases.

First, focus on groups and their relations is one of the key axes of the author's social conception – to start with his youth period works on social utopia and such social groups as classes, and to continue with his recent works on the underclass and collateral victims of consumerism. Basically, throughout all his writing, according to The Bauman institute director Mark Davis, „Bauman maintains a basic Marxian dualism between priviledged and underpriviledged, but reformulates them in various ways" (2008a: 4). Due to that, one can find diverse forms of group dualism in both Bauman's writings on modernity (solid modernity ant the Holocaust, retrospectively) and liquid modernity (and consumer society). And even though the characters of modernity shift in form and content, all in all they thematically capture the problem of social distancing between groups of people. As Mark Davis puts it, "Bauman's sociology often can be seen as interpreting social life in terms of two sharply distinct social conditions… . I here employ the term 'will-to-dualism' to capture a simple tendency within Bauman's work to view the social life in terms of a basic Marxian dualism between 'borgeois' and 'proletarian' or, in lay terms, between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' … , the 'postmodern pure' and the 'postmodern

dirt'; the 'free consumers' and the 'flawed consumers'; the 'seduced' and the 'repressed'; and, the 'tourists' and the 'vagabonds'" (2008b: 142).

For instance, Bauman describes liquid modernity as an overlap of globalization and individualization, both of which make mobility the new freedom (Bauman, 1998), and draws attention to the contemporary social situations of different paths of different groups of people within the processes of globalization. While some people become more globalized, the others become more localized. As some people in the contemporary world are free [in terms of freedom as priviledge (Bauman 1988)] and able to choose, the others find the globe moving under their feet and are thrown into globalization as vagabonds. Thus while physical distances are turning out to be social distances (it depends on your wealth and status whether Australia is far from Europe) and less restricted for some people, others become even more confined in their space and time – both physically and socially; and lots of various ways deepen the split between groups in certain oppositions – and this can be found both in Bauman's solid modernity and liquid modernity conceptions.

In addition to dualism in groups, one of the central problems in the philosopher's (liquid) sociology and social philosophy is a question of dualism between separate individuals – where there is no the Levinasian party of two, or no dialogue between what Buber would call I and Thou, but there is lack of interaction with the Other in liquid society. On the one hand, the antagonism between two individuals, which appears when a face is effaced, is what Bauman finds, again, both in the Holocaust and in the consumer society. On the other hand, in the latter form of society, a certain consumeristic logic transforms one's outlooks into viewing another person as a commodity – something you would make use of until you find something/someone better.

And this is where new aspects of moral indifference are revealed – in the fourth phase writings of Bauman – and where previous solid modern contents of the conception of adiaphorization are complemented by a metaphorically enriched conception of liquid modernity and consumer society. And although new forms of adiaphorization that are prevalent in liquid modernity do not show that the same principles were not peculiar to solid modernity (such as commodifying oneself, viewing one's identity as a thing to sell, to attract, to seduce etc.), new metaphors, descriptions and the method (if one can call a hermeneutic way of theorizing a method) that Bauman starts using after the liquid turn, reveal new aspects of adiaphorizationand allow the research on Bauman's conception of adiaphorization to be taken into another level, with new conclusions to add.

Consumer society, according to Bauman, is an existential social mode of consuming for the sake of consuming, leading to endless "pursuit of happiness" (Bauman, 2008), when it's not the happiness that is important but the pursuit of it. In consumeristic social situations it turns into exchanging iPhones 4 to iPhones 5, solid employees into flexible and zero-drag ones, friends into numerous Facebook friends, old loves to new ones and so on – in his liquid modernity writings Bauman deploys plenty of situations and metaphors to describe consumeristic tendencies towards other individuals and even oneself – for instance, when one engages in the art of life and falls into perpetual creation of one's identity as a well advertised commodity and frames oneself within subjective fetishism.

All in all, all the three categories of adiaphorization – moral indifference towards a group of people, towards an individual and towards oneself – reveal subjects treated as objects, and a certain epistemic tendency. In addition to the thinker's definition of adiaphorization as moral indifference, it would be adequate to treat adiaphorization not only as moral, but also epistemic indifference (however, it is important to note that Bauman does not like such systematization of what he has left asunder). None of the multiple examples that Bauman provides when capturing the processes of solid modernity and liquid modernity would contradict adiaphorization being also epistemic indifference. Both in the Holocaust and in the consumer societies all cases that refer to adiaphorization reveal various forms of social expulsion of humans not only outside of the area of morality, but also outside the area of cognition – in one aspect or another. In contrast to Bauman's idea of morality as a presocial issue, adiaphorization is a completely social phenomenon – a painkiller that makes social existence together possible. And despite primacy of ethics before ontology and epistemology in case of morality, moral indifference is a social case, and there's no contradiction in interpreting adiaphorization as not only moral, but also epistemic indifference. Multiple metaphors, such as "invisible", "inaudible" etc. are used by Bauman for describing the walls which separate subjects who treat each other as objects, people as commodities, humans as weeds in a social engineering and gardening project and so on.

Why, in case of the Holocaust, is it important to state that adiaphorization is not only moral, but also epistemic indifference? Because that would help to explain Bauman's message in between the lines of his conception of the Holocaust.

With the help of the description of the consumer society in dozens of his twenty-first -century books, through the means of metaphors, a certain method that became both more explicit and more developed after the liquid turn, is more and more often exposed and legitimised. As Mark Davis puts it, Bauman's writings have become as liquid as the liquid modernity he writes about. Perhaps due to that there's a need for a new label for what he does

– and Bauman's commentators have been enthusiastically creating new terms to label him – such as "liquid sociology", as Mark Davis suggests, or "humanization through metaphors", as Jacobsen and Marshman offer. According to the latter ones,

> Bauman is attempting a kind of *humanization through metaphor*. Put simply, Bauman uses metaphor as a device to recall us to our common humanity, as a means of reawakening our sense of responsibility for the Other and of human possibility … . Metaphors are not only conceptual devices – they are potentially reality -shattering and agenda-changing social acts aimed at presenting an image of how the world 'ought' to be or 'should'/'could' be. Therefore, metaphors play a crucial role in Bauman's practise of moral sociology (Jacobsen and Marshman 2008: 21-22).

In other words, with the help of "humanization through metaphors" Bauman, apparently, intends to awaken his reader's moral impulses (that is, pre-social impulses) in a societal state – not with the help of a Face, but by his books; that is, via cognitive, epistemic means. However, it is done implicitly, not explicitly; both theoretically and practically – as expressive/impressive language and metaphor is something in between the social and the pre-social, something close to the Face, something, that can capture the sharpness of such event as the Holocaust and open one's eyes with regard to the Other in the social reality of consumer society.

On the one hand, it's impossible to affect one's morality through social means, according to Bauman. However, on the other hand, the moralizing tone of the author's texts is quite obvious and verbalized by a variety of his commentators.

The idea of adiaphorization as moral indifference and Bauman's conception on the pre -sociality of a moral impulse show a dramatic abyss between his Levinasian presumptions on the one hand and Marxistic presumptions on the other hand. The convergence of individual morality and the impact of macro forces of society is a certain clash.

All in all, is morality a dialogic phenomenon when facing the Face, before any ontology or cognition (comparisons and generalizations) and can it be influenced by society only in a negative way, or is there any epistemic way of awakening morality? Bauman would explicitly deny the latter option when asked; but his method of "liquid sociology" and "humanization through metaphors" talks in between the lines and tells us more than Bauman himself does.

To conclude, Bauman's conception of adiaphorization is consistent. However, within two periods of his writings it differs. The adiaphorization that is described with references to the consumer society reveals new aspects of adiaphorization that is described when referring to the Holocaust. It might be regarded as not only moral indifference, but also epistemic indifference.

The new way of writing, which shows Bauman engaging in the language of metaphors, transcends the "either/or" boundary between morality and society, and allows a certain conclusion to be made: Bauman's book *Modernity and the Holocaust* is not only a technical scientific version of why the Holocaust happened, but also an epistemic mean to awaken the reader's moral impulse which might have been neutralized by adiaphorization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Zygmunt Bauman: Adiaphorization in the Holocaust and in the Society of Consumers

The article aims at drawing parallels between the Holocaust and the consumer society through the phenomenon of adiaphorization. To Bauman, the historical event of the Holocaust is of utmost importance to humanity, especially for tackling the problems of morality, moral indifference – in other words adiaphorization – and society. However, Bauman's social theory contains distinct elements of Emanuel Levinas's conception of morality and embraces a notion of adiaphorization as a feature of social organization as such – independently of shifting cultural contents. When analysing the society of consumers that is found in the times of globalization and individualization – i. e., liquid modernity – Bauman finds that its cultural tendencies to efface the face dehumanize and treat other people as means towards ends – in other words, placing the Other outside of one's moral horizon – are similar to those that were used when extinguishing people's lives in Nazi concentration camps. Both the Holocaust as an epitome of adiaphorization in solid modernity and consumerism as an epitome of adiaphorization in liquid modernity are treated in Bauman's works as the most conspicuous cultural cases of adiaphorization. However,

a shift in method when theorizing on the consumer society after the liquid turn allows additional aspects in his theory of the Holocaust before the liquid turn to be noticed. Due to that, it is argued in the article that "adiaphorization" might be explained as not only "moral indifference", but also "epistemic indifference", and that within conception of the Holocaust Bauman engages in efforts to affect his readers by awakening their morality, as "humanization through metaphors" helps him step over the boundary between theory and practice when he engages in "liquid sociology".

KEYWORDS

Adiaphorization, the Holocaust, consumer society, moral indifference

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

STUDIES

DIFFERENCES IN DENIALS OF THE HOLOCAUST: COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO CASE STUDIES

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Introduction

Holocaust revisionism is a controversial topic not only for people in Europe but all over the world, due to the scope of the Holocaust, which affected most societies (Antoniou 2007). Nonetheless, the discourse on the Holocaust tends to account for each targeted population differently. For example, the Roma population has not received substantial attention from the historians for the atrocities perpetrated on their population (Kapralski 1997), while the Jewish victims are recognized in the literature and in the general public (i.e. Lipstadt 1993). The fact is that more Jewish people were murdered during the Holocaust than Roma people (Smith 2012). However, in percentages the difference was not as significant. Smith (2012) argues that the Roma were discriminated against all over Europe and that is why the Roma genocide happened in the first place; the nomadic lifestyle of Roma was too different to accept for European societies; therefore, they were not protected by the countries and became an easy target. Additionally, Roma people oftentimes lacked education so they could not share their testimonies in writing, but Smith (2012) also states that there is a shortage of

available literature on the subject, which further implies a lack of interest. The explanation, as to why the Roma genocide lacked interest from the public, is as follows: "Right after World War II it was not explicitly stated that those who were persecuted based on their race were also Romanis, because the Nazi theory that Gypsies/Romanis are asocial fractions of the society was more or less accepted" (Schuester 2012). The author further notes that the attempts to try people accused of the crimes against humanity of the Roma population were not successful.

The objective of this qualitative study is to establish what the differences are between the two denials: the denial of the Jewish genocide and the denial of the Roma genocide. The underlying question to be answered is: what constitutes Holocaust denial? This paper will be structured as follows: first, the denial of the Jewish genocide will be introduced through two cases, which were termed as the "denial milestones" in this study. The Jewish genocide denial milestones are: 1) two globally-known authors who denied the Holocaust in connection to the Jewish population; and 2) the emergence of Laws against Holocaust denial, which is supposed to be "an 'insult' to every Jew in Germany" (Bayzler 2006: 3). Subsequently, the milestones of the Roma genocide introduced are: 1) the denial of the Roma Holocaust by the Czech National Party and by Jiří Gaudin; and 2) the status of the Roma genocide in the countries that are members of the European Union, specifically in the Czech Republic.

The findings of this qualitative study show that while the ideologies of the deniers of both genocides are related to one another through supremacist views, the stance of the international community and the entities within it differs in connection to the Jewish and Roma population.

Literature Review

Several authors of literature on genocide denial address Holocaust denial (e.g. Lipstadt 1993, Shermer and Grobman 2000, Cohen-Almagor 2013). Holocaust denial is usually described as the promotion of facts, which deny the history of the Holocaust (Cohen-Almagor 2013). Cohen -Almagor (2013) enhanced the definition by explaining that Holocaust denial may be viewed as hate speech, due to its nature of denying mass killings. Lipstadt describes Holocaust denial in a way that is closely related to denialism in general, she states: "The attempt to deny the Holocaust enlists a basic strategy of distortion" (Lipstadt 1993: 2). Furthermore, she continues by saying that "truth is mixed with absolute lies, confusing readers who are unfamiliar with the tactics of the deniers" (Lipstadt 1993: 2). Therefore, Holocaust deniers and any individual who resorts to denialist tactics rely on the lack of knowledge of the fraction of society they aim to manipulate.

Shermer and Grobman (2000) claim that the denial of Nanking atrocities is similar to Holocaust denial in the methodology and tactics the deniers use. Interestingly, the authors clarify the fact that Holocaust denial and Nanking denial developed independently of one another. The authors deduce: "… we contend that such historical denial is a form of ideologically driven pseudohistory, which adopts techniques designed to undermine historical claims that do not fit with present ideologies and beliefs" (Shermer and Grobman 2000: 237). Hence, the authors argue that there are underlying tactics, which are used in connection to denying history, which are not dependent on specific historical events.

Shermer and Grobman (2000) admit there is a difference between denial and the revisionism of history. Hence, there are several interpretations and views of historical events, which are studied and investigated. However, a further difference lies between historical revisionism and the Holocaust revisionism. While many events in world history are still subjected to investigation and interpretation, the Holocaust, even though still studied, is a historical fact and its existence can no longer be questioned. The Holocaust revisionism is a creation of "pseudohistory, whose purpose is the denial of the past for present political or ideological reasons" (Shermer and Grobman 2000: 238). While historical revisionism is "the modification of history based on new facts or new interpretations of old fact" (Shermer and Grobman 2000: 238). Different aspects of the Holocaust can still be interpreted in new ways; nevertheless, the history of the Holocaust cannot be modified anymore, because the evidence does not leave space for doubt (Samelson 1999).

Method

This research deals with two case studies, which belong to a larger phenomenon of Holocaust denial: 1) Holocaust denial in connection to the Jewish population, and 2) Holocaust denial in connection to the Roma population. While these two phenomena seemingly go hand in hand, many Holocaust deniers focus specifically on denying the impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish population. This approach to the topic of Holocaust denial may provide a clearer understanding of the "Jewish uniqueness" (Churchill 2003: 27), since the comparison will allow for particular patterns to appear in the context.

Due to the nature of this study, it is crucial to compare the attitudes of individuals who deny the Jewish Holocaust and those who deny the Roma genocide. The questions the current study is consequently trying to answer are: 1) whether the two groups are treated in the same manner by the international community in connection with the Holocaust; and 2) what are the

common patterns of Holocaust denial in both of the types. The analysis will be conducted in terms of text and case analysis. The method will be focused on examination of terminology used in connection to each case, and the argumentation of the authors to capture the discourse on the topic. The language devices will be especially beneficial in the debate on the Roma genocide denial.

The text provides a source of data, which will be studied to determine logical connections among the possible denial aspects, which construct an account that can serve as an argument in the social reality. This unique account will be examined to provide initial answers to the research questions. An account is defined as "a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior – whether that behavior is his own or that of others, and whether the proximate cause for the statement arises from the actor himself or from someone else" (Scott and Lyman 1968: 46).

The data for this research was obtained from Internet sources. The data analysed consist of Arthur Butz's book and speeches, and David Irving's statements and speeches that are available on the Internet. In connection to the second case study, the work of Jiří Gaudin was analysed in order to investigate his method of the Roma genocide denial, and two articles from the Czech mass media were analysed for the statements of the Czech National Party. Furthermore, the legal materials were studied in connection to the laws against Holocaust denial and the status of Roma population in the European Union.

Internet sources are relevant in connection to a qualitative study, since cyberspace is an ever-changing location, in which new data is offered on a daily basis. Since Holocaust denial is a specific topic, and many publishers are reluctant to publish books by the Holocaust deniers, the free nature of the Internet allows for free expression of the most controversial opinions. For example, Taylor (2005) argues that the decreasing number of Holocaust survivors may cause an increased number of publications, which claim that the Holocaust never happened. The author also identifies the spread of the Internet and its relative freedom of expression as one of the driving forces behind the expected rise in numbers of deniers (Berg 2005). The impact of the Internet on Holocaust denial is discussed by several scholars (Bennett 1997, Berg 2005, Lasson 2007, Weaver, Delpierre and Boissier 2009). Bennett (1997) recognizes the Internet as one of the biggest driving forces behind Holocaust denial, asserting that the user-friendliness of websites leads to the spread of the views of the deniers.

The choice of the Roma genocide denial was made because of the availability of the data and the EU's recent recognition of the Roma genocide. Due to the large number of murdered Roma during the Holocaust this topic has been gaining substantial attention from the media,

especially due to its controversy and the status of Roma in Europe (Aktuálně 2011b). The case of recognition of the Roma victims by the EU was chosen because of the delayed reaction of the Union to this major topic, and the Czech Republic was examined due to the recent development of events in Lety u Písku, and the provocative suggestions made by the Czech National Party (Spitzer 2006).

Analysis

Denial of the Jewish Genocide

The first case study deals with denial of the Jewish genocide. One of the most important milestones in the Jewish Holocaust denial history has been the stance of two internationally -known Holocaust deniers – Arthur Butz and David Irving. Arthur Butz wrote *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* in 1976. In this research, his work is identified as denying strictly the Jewish Holocaust since the subtitle of his book is *The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry*. Stern (1993) writes about several scholars and teachers, who were influenced by Butz's work to such an extent that denial of the Jewish Holocaust made it to some lectures and classrooms in the United States of America. Furthermore, Butz claimed that the international community terrorizes the revisionists of the Holocaust, and therefore hinted that freedom of speech is threatened if measures are taken to stop Holocaust denial. It may be argued that Butz's book became "a classic" for Holocaust deniers, due to the strength of language that Butz uses in connection to the Holocaust, and the reactions his statements cause. The author states: "A recognition of the amazing crudeness and clumsiness of that effort [an effort to "misrepresent" what happened in the Dachau camp], and the ludicrous nature of the 'evidence' put forward, will prime the reader quite suitably for our analysis of the central part of the hoax, the Auschwitz lie" (Butz 2003: 70). Hence, Butz's work may be identified as one of the milestones, due to the fact that he is frequently referred to by the new age revisionists, and his book has certainly become one of the major pieces on Holocaust denial.

Butz presented anti-Zionist views in his book, such as: "The 'justification' that Zionists invariably give for driving the Arabs out of Palestine always involves the six million legend to a great extent" (2003: 330). The fact that the author put the word "justification" in quotes implies that the justification provided is false, and an irony. Another important word in his statement is "legend". Therefore, the usage of two such specific features means that his work is not objective, and free of his personal emotions and connotations. The author's book cannot be perceived as

a scientific work, since the language he uses is of an emotive nature. He argues that the Jewish population abuses the "myth" of the Holocaust to enhance their position in the international community.

According to Zimmerman (2000), David Irving is a Holocaust denier, who has an advantage of the ability to reach a broader audience, due to his international impact. The scholar started as a historian, who investigated the Third Reich, and did not speak of the Holocaust to a great extent; he offered an alternative explanation as to what happened to European Jews. At first, through these explanations, he denied the Holocaust indirectly; however, later in his career claimed that no gas chambers in Auschwitz were used to murder human beings (Zimmerman 2000).

The judge who tried David Irving claimed, "Irving is anti-Semitic. …He is content to mix with neo-fascists and appears to share many of their racist and anti-Semitic prejudices" (The Guardian 2000). Hence the Judge, Charles Gray, explicitly revealed that Irving's views and opinions are offensive, racist and anti-Semitic, as they are targeted to humiliate the Jews and to minimize the suffering they went through during the Holocaust. Irving's claims have a supremacy undertone; a reporter who interviewed Irving at his house noted that after complimenting Irving's mug, he said: "Well, it is an Aryan cup" (Hari 2009). This statement alone implies that the Aryan race is supreme to other races, due to the fact that Irving answered the compliment with an explanation of why he believed the mug was beautiful. Hari (2009) also notes how Irving was "shaken" from an encounter with a Jewish man who claimed to be a former classmate that he went out of his way to check whether there were truly Jewish people at his school. The fact that Irving was as emotive as "shaken", shows how strong Irving's reactions to Jewish people are.

Hall (2012) links Irving to another of the Holocaust denial milestones, and that is the laws against Holocaust denial, as practiced in Europe. While it may be argued that such laws also take into consideration the extermination of all targeted populations, the European Union only recognized the Roma genocide in 2011 (Šefčovič 2011); nevertheless, the laws have started appearing in Europe since the 1980's. Even though Irving was tried on the basis of denying historical facts, and his presence was claimed as unwanted in several countries all over the world, Irving remains one of the most known names in connection to Holocaust denial, even though he has admitted to changing his mind about the Holocaust saying that: "I admit that in 1989 I had denied Nazi Germany had killed millions of Jews. …The Nazis did murder millions of Jews" (Hall, 2012). It is important to observe that Irving only spoke of the Jewish genocide.

Bazyler (2006) describes the rigid stance Europe took against the Holocaust revisionists and other genocide deniers. However, since the Holocaust originated in Germany, the laws are

aimed at eradication of Nazi and neo-Nazi ideas. The common issues in laws against Holocaust denial are anti-Semitism, with no specification on the background ideology, but also racism and xenophobia, and hate speech and hate crimes arising from those. The aforementioned author specifically states that in Germany "in 1985, Holocaust denial was outlawed as an 'insult' to personal honor (i.e. an 'insult' to every Jew in Germany)" (Bazyler 2006: 3). Nonetheless, Bazyler does not provide a source from German Criminal Code that would specifically state that denial is offensive only to the Jewish population. On the contrary, German Criminal Code, Section 130, states that incitement to hatred is committed by: "Whosoever publicly or in a meeting approves of, denies or downplays an act committed under the rule of National Socialism of the kind indicated in section 6 (1) of the Code of International Criminal Law, in a manner capable of disturbing the public peace shall be liable to imprisonment not exceeding five years or a fine". (German Criminal Code 2009). The Code of International Criminal Law defines genocide in section 6 as:

> For the purpose of this Statute, 'genocide' means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 2011: 3).

Bazyler's interpretation of these laws had nothing to do with Germany's official stance. Hence, it may be concluded that these laws aim to protect all victims equally, and are not discriminatory towards the Roma population, but the interpretation of these laws by different scholars might have other implications.

Denial of the Roma Genocide

The second case study investigates holocaust denial in connection to the Roma population. The denial of the Roma genocide does not attract much academic attention, as the Holocaust is in most cases linked only to the Jewish population (Churchill 2003). Kapralski claims that the atrocities, which were perpetrated on the Roma population during the World War II are "neglected in historical writings and had not received the proper attention of historians" (1997:

276). Not surprisingly, the European Union only officially recognized the Roma genocide in 2011, more than 60 years after countless Roma were killed by the Nazi regime (Šefčovič 2011).

The Czech National Party provided a clear example of denial of the Roma genocide, as they attempted to build a memorial in Lety u Písku, which would state that the Roma who died there of natural causes, and that the camp was run by Germans, even though it was run by Czechs (Spitzer 2006). The camp in Lety u Písku was called a "Gypsy camp", this camp has gone through internment of 1309 individuals, out of which 326 did not survive this action (Genocide of the Roma 2014). Many of the prisoners from this camp were later transferred to Auschwitz (Holocaust CZ 2013a). The chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic claimed that this action by the Czech National Party, renaming a concentration camp "a labor camp", is a first step towards Holocaust denial (Spitzer 2006). The case of Lety u Písku was surrounded by controversy from the beginning, due to the fact that a pig farm was built at the spot of the camp. One member of the National Party, Petr Eliáš, claimed that: "If someone died there it was because he behaved like a pig, did not wash himself etc." (Pokorný 2006). Eliáš's accusation that Roma are unclean may be derived from the ritual distinction between "clean -žuže" and "unclean-degeša" tribes of Roma, therefore, this primary distinction may be the cause of the allegations that Roma are unhygienic, since degeša Roma are known to engage in jobs, which are perceived as not clean (Frištenská and Víšek 2002). However, Eliáš did not take into account the conditions of the camp, as he stated that the lack of hygiene was a fault of the Roma. The way Eliáš compared Roma to pigs, may be tied together with the Nazi comparison of the Jewish people to different kinds of insects. Such names are voiced in order to humiliate or degrade certain individuals. The memorial was later built in order to remember the Roma killed in the Holocaust and did not follow the suggestions provided by the Czech National Party. Another "Gypsy camp" was located in Hodonín u Kunštátu (Holocaust CZ 2013b) where a pig farm was also built (Aktuálně 2011a).

Jiří Gaudin, another member of the National Party, published *The Final Solution to the Gypsy Question*". Gaudin seemed to be cautious about the Roma genocide topic, when he claimed:

> The first transport to Auschwitz from Moravia came on the 7th of March. Until the end of war, 4.500 Gypsies died in this and other Nazi concentration camps. In the disciplinary camps in the Protectorate most of the gypsies died because of the lack of hygiene and typhoid epidemic. Due to the epidemic hundreds more Gypsies died in the Protectorate (Gaudin 2009: 13).

This statement deserves closer attention; first of all, the offensive term "gypsy" is used in the whole piece. However, the author capitalises the word each time, which is likely done to shift attention to this specific terminology. Even though he talks about the Czech Republic and the Protectorate, in the first sentence of the statement it is not specified where the 4.500 Roma died. It may be argued that since the sentence is unclear and does not identify particularly that he is speaking of the Czech Roma population that the author himself denies the Roma genocide, because the number of murdered Roma in Europe is much higher (Hancock 2005). The question, whether the location was omitted on purpose, remains unanswered. Gaudin does not even indicate that the Roma were murdered; the strength of the author's language is mild, and he claims they "died", while adding that many of individuals died of the lack of hygiene.

The Council of Europe released an Overview on the Recognition of the Genocide of Roma and Sinti (Pharrajimos/Samudaripen) and On the Officialisation of the Date of 2 August as a Commemoration Day for the Victims of World War II in Member States of the Council of Europe (further Overview) in April of 2013. This Overview deals with official recognition of Roma and Sinti genocide in Europe. Interestingly, in Armenia, Roma population is not included in the official statement on the Holocaust. Furthermore, the Overview cites Ministry of Foreign affairs that claims that the Holocaust was "the attempted murder of the Jewish people by the Nazi Germany regime" (The Council of Europe Overview 2013). Similarly, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Lithuania also recognize only Jews as victims of the Holocaust. On the other hand, several European countries recognize the Roma genocide: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. The Council of Europe either lacks information on other countries, or the status of Roma victims is not specified. Many of the countries, which officially recognize the Roma genocide, did so countless years after the Holocaust ended (European Green Party 2011).

As established above, the Czech Republic officially recognizes the Roma genocide, known under the name "Roma Holocaust" or "Porrajmos" [The Council of Europe Overview 2013; "'The Devouring' is the term that the Roma use to describe the Nazi regime's attempt to wipe their people off the face of the earth" (Spritzer 2006)]. Furthermore, the Czech Penal Code no. 40/2009, §405 states that those who publicly deny, question, approve of, or justify Nazi, communist or other genocides, or other crimes committed against humanity, will be punished by imprisonment from six months to three years. Jiří Gaudin, a member of the National Party, was sentenced to an imprisonment for 14 months; however, he was suspended for two years. The crime Jiří Gaudin committed was "inciting racial hatred" (Lehane 2010) through his publication

The Final Solution to the Gypsy Question. The Czech Supreme Administrative Court later suspended the activities of the National Party in 2011 not based on their discriminatory views towards the Roma population in Lety u Písku (Pokorný 2006, Spitzer 2006), but on the lack of financial reports provided (Česká Televize 2011).

Holomek (2008) argued that the denial of the Roma Holocaust was institutionalized in the Czech Republic, due to the existence of the Act 261/2001 Coll., which is an act on providing of one-tire-shot financial payment to the participants of national revolt of liberation, political prisoners and to the people in case of race or religious belief collected to the military working camps and on change of Act Nr. 39/2000 Coll. (Collection of Czech Legal Statutes 2001; Act Nr. 39/2000 Coll. On providing one-tire-shot financial payment to the members of Czechoslovak foreign armies and allied armies in years 1939 to 1945). Although several Roma individuals in the Czech Republic were supposed to be able to obtain the financial payment, the Czech Social Security Administration provided a list of requirements, which were claimed "impossible" (Holomek 2008) to fulfil, because of the need to be proclaimed as a political prisoner by the Czech Ministry of Defense. However, the Czech Supreme Administrative Court decided that the genocide of the Roma population is an indisputable historical event; therefore, the Roma population should not be required to fulfil unachievable conditions in order to receive the financial support (Holomek 2008).

Discussion

It may be concluded that the individuals who are directly associated with Holocaust denial usually attempt to express their opinions in an objective and scientific way. However, their argumentation tends to lack the logical flow, and the deniers generally offer false data. As presented on the case of Arthur Butz and David Irving, both authors have strong ideological backgrounds and openly deny the existence of the Holocaust as perpetrated on the Jewish population. The deniers of the Roma genocide, as introduced in the case of two members of the Czech National Party, use offensive language. However, they seem to be more careful in connection to directly denying the murders of the Roma. While Irving and Butz supposedly attempt to educate the public, and, in the case of Irving, purify the reputation of Nazis, the Czech neo-Nazis deny the Roma genocide due to unknown reasons. And finally, the available literature and speeches in connection to the Jewish Holocaust denial are supposed to enhance historical revisionism and enhance individual's public status. On the contrary, Gaudin's *The Final Solution to the Gypsy Question* was supposed to offer an actual solution to the presence of Roma in the Czech

Republic. Therefore, even though Gaudin did not directly deny the Roma genocide in his study, he encouraged violence through it, which is a trait not commonly seen in the tactics of the Jewish Holocaust deniers.

The belated recognition of the Roma victims by the members of the European Union suggest that, while the members might not have denied the Roma genocide in a direct manner, they did not pay substantial attention to it. It may be argued that the denial of the Roma genocide might arise from "not investing the effort to know the facts of the genocide of another people" (Charny 2003: 31). This type of denial might be relevant since the primary factor is the fact that the Roma genocide is inherently the "unnoticed genocide" (Smith 2012). Therefore, while some individuals choose to deny the Holocaust based on the lack of empathy towards certain groups of people (Charny 2003), the European states ignored the scope of the Roma genocide, since the numbers of murdered Roma were available (US Holocaust Memorial Museum 2012).

The analysis of the two case studies points to the fact that the Roma genocide is treated inherently different than the Jewish genocide. The deniers of both share some common characteristics; a common pattern of adherence to a supremacist ideology is recognized in connection to known deniers. Interestingly, the Roma genocide is treated differently in the international community. The atrocities committed on the Roma population are often called the "forgotten genocide" (Smith 2012). While Charny (2003) assesses that indifference to genocides towards other peoples may be considered as genocide denial, it may be argued that omitting non -Jewish victims has a more complex reasoning and deserves a study of social circumstances, before claiming it simply is denial of the Holocaust.

These inconsistencies may be results of the ever-present discrimination against the Roma and the Jewish populations in Europe (Bunzl 2005, Schneeweis 2015), as well as historical ignorance and lack of knowledge. This conclusion is based on the fact that legal non-action maintained by supposedly objective and ideology-free actors, such as the EU and its members, clearly demonstrates that the status of the Roma population is still not stabilized across Europe. These consequences do not form the Roma genocide denial by themselves, but they do constitute further discrimination of the Roma and promote historical ignorance.

It is crucial to further investigate how and why are both populations being revictimized in order for the general public and the policy makers to implement policies that would prevent further revictimization that promotes discrimination, anti-Semitism and racism. Recommendations for future research on Holocaust denial include a study on stateless nations and the effects a stateless nation may have on international recognition of particular victims.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Differences in Denials of the Holocaust: Comparative Study of Two Case Studies

Denial of the Holocaust is a topic that is largely discussed and attracts public attention to this day. However, the language used when debating historical revisionism is oftentimes limited to the Jewish victims and survivors, while other groups, which were targeted during World War II, are regularly omitted from the discourse. The objective of this qualitative study is to establish what are the common patterns of two types of Holocaust denial – denial of the Jewish genocide and denial of the Roma genocide – and how these are treated by the international community. The findings of this research indicate that the deniers adhere to similar ideologies that result in questioning the existence of the Holocaust. The international community poses as an interesting case as the Roma genocide is not denied; however, its existence has been largely unacknowledged until a recent slight turn towards more equal treatment of survivors and victims in several countries.

KEYWORDS

Genocide, Holocaust, denialism, historical revisionism, Jewish population, Roma population

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

STUDIES

THERAPEUTIC DREAMS IN AUSCHWITZ

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In 1973, psychiatrists of the Kraków Medical Academy sent out to former prisoners of Auschwitz camp a questionnaire about dreams. 147 persons replied. Four years later, the authors summarized the prisoners' responses (Jagoda, Kłodziński and Masłowski 1977). The responses constitute immensely rich and diverse material, which inspires multiple interpretations. On 579 pages of manuscripts (which I recently received from the Auschwitz -Birkenau Museum Archive), the former Auschwitz inmates describe the dreams they had during the Nazi occupation, in prisons, in the camp, after liberation, as well as later in life. They report nightmares and enchanting visions. They write about their attitude towards dreams. They give accounts of the daily camp ritual of dream interpretation performed by "professional" diviners.

In this article, I decided to focus on one selected aspect of camp dreams, namely on those dreams which seem to have a therapeutic function.

From 208 accounts of camp dreams, I selected those from which it followed that a particular dream had some kind of a positive influence on the dreamer: on his or her mood, frame of mind, faith in the possibility of survival and liberation, or even his or her health condition. My only criterion in ascertaining such an influence were the clear and unequivocal

declarations of the dreamers themselves. Thus, I took into consideration only those dreams which the dreamers openly described as helpful in one way or another. I identified 51 such dream accounts (almost 25% of all camp dreams).

It is impossible to determine a common feature which would characterise all therapeutic dreams and at the same time distinguish them from the rest. What one can discern, however, are three dominant groups of such dreams. I called them "caring" dreams, "freedom" dreams, and metaphorical dreams.

The most numerous category (comprising fourteen dreams) are the "caring dreams", i.e. those in which the dreamer experiences care or support from his or her relative or some other figure, often a supernatural one. Four cases featured the appearance of Virgin Mary. The caring role was assumed also by an angel, St. Theresa, Winston Churchill, the dreamers' closest relatives or friends. The most common and, one could say, "model" version of these dreams consists in the caring figure simply announcing the dreamer that he or she would survive the camp. This can be exemplified with the following dream account:

> I dreamt about the figure of the Holy Mother of God in white robe with a blue ribbon… . She smiled at me and said: "Don't worry, you will survive this hell". … I have always been a believer, though sometimes "at odds" with religious practice. This dream, however, was strongly present in my unconscious, and in tough moments in the camp I "clung" to it as my only life saver.

Sometimes the dream vision is more complex, full of symbolic elements:

> I dreamt that I was walking towards a small river with very turbid waters. On the other bank, my eldest brother was coming towards me; he had already been dead when I had this dream. Both of us stepped into the water at the same time; my feet were sinking into the mud, the river was deep. When we met in the middle of the river, my brother handed to me a huge, fiery fish. I was screaming, terrified: "Stachu, I can't carry it, I can't carry it". And he calmly replied: "You'll carry it, you'll carry it". When [later] I was down with typhus …, his words consoled me in my illness, gave me hope that I would survive typhus. And indeed I did.

The helping effect of this dream does not result from the interpretation of symbolic elements (as is the case in what I call metaphorical dreams), but solely and directly from the consoling words of the dreamer's brother.

In "caring" dreams, dreamers adopt a passive attitude: rather than initiating actions or interactions, they simply benefit from the actions of other dream figures. It appears that those

Auschwitz prisoners who considered their situation hopeless and were completely overpowered by helplessness awaited effective help only from the outside, from others; they were not able to look for it in themselves, in their own resources of psychic strength. In this respect, the "caring" dreams illustrate Calvin Hall's hypothesis of continuity between dream content and the dreamer's waking-life situation (Hall and Nordby 1972). At the same time, however, such dreams fulfil the compensatory function described by Carl Jung: they bring out aspects of the dreamer's psyche underrepresented in his or her waking life (Jung 1974). Ernest Hartmann, who authored perhaps the most important of all recent theories of dreams, argues that the continuity principle and the compensation principle do not have to be mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are often concurrent, and complement each other (Hartmann 2011: 82-83). This, I believe, is what happens in "caring" dreams. The prisoners pray, reminisce about their loved ones, they feel helpless, and dream of a saviour – and all this is directly reflected in the content of their dreams. At the same time, however, in these dreams they confront their own inner power, one whose voice they would not be able to acknowledge in the waking life. After all – if one rejects the possibility of real intervention of supernatural powers – it is none other that the dreamer him – or herself who speaks in the dream, convincing oneself that he or she still has enough strength to survive the camp. Since in waking life this seems unbelievable to Auschwitz inmates, their dreams must resort to external figures of authority, such as Virgin Mary or their close relatives. Only in such form can this message be accepted by the dreamer. Dream constitutes an excellent means of facilitating the dreamers' opening to possibilities which they did not suspect in themselves. It may be assumed that this happens thanks to a mechanism which Hartmann calls "hyper -connectiveness". Comparing the effect of dreaming to the effect of psychotherapy, Hartmann writes:

> Dreaming … is a spontaneous state of extremely free association in which our associations are not bound by the usual waking rules, and self-criticism is greatly reduced (2001: 134).

The diminishing of self-criticism and enhancement of connectivity between ideas and products of imagination seems crucial for the therapeutic effect of "caring" dreams.

The power of such effect is proved in the following example. Like all his fellow prisoners, a man suffered hunger and thirst. For several nights in a row, he dreamt that his mother came to him and gave him milk to drink. After waking from these dreams, every time he felt the taste of milk on his lips, and he was not hungry. Such dream accounts suggest that "caring" dreams not only influence the dreamer's mood, but they can also have physical consequences. Someone may

say that this is a matter of autosuggestion. Indeed – but we must remember that such autosuggestion would not have been possible if had not been aided by dream.

The second important group of therapeutic dreams comprises "freedom" dreams – a name often mentioned by the inmates themselves. In these dreams the dreamers find themselves in their native neighbourhood, at home, or among their loved ones, or they are simply aware of being outside the camp. I identified thirteen such dreams. They seem to operate on a very simple basis: after waking, the dreamers feel happy, because they were given the opportunity to meet with their family, return to the places they loved. Here is one of such dream accounts:

> Not infrequently, there came to pass pleasant dreams of my pre-war life: family life, studying in middle school; then I used to wake up relaxed and happy.

Prisoners tried to keep this feeling of happiness as long as they could:

> For a certain period of time, sometimes even several days, these freedom dreams allowed us not to feel the nightmare of camp life so acutely, this was some kind of inner absorbing look into images evoked by the dream, which one waned to keep in memory.

Thus, the tasks of dream is to take the dreamer into a different reality. The "inner absorbing look into images" does not invite self-analysis or give insight into the dreamer's situation, nor does it suggest a way of rescue; it simply allows him or her to forget about the here and now and live for a moment in a different world.

It needs to be noted that "freedom" dreams do not always have a therapeutic effect! The questionnaires feature many accounts which show that such dreams can be destructive. After waking, the dreamer feels despair and acute longing for family and freedom. Hence, the question arises as to the factors which determine why such dreams benefit some people and are harmful to others. I will refer here to my recently conducted research on the dreams of elderly people locked in nursing homes. All nursing home residents who dreamt about the olden, better days (their time of youth, their family, their home) unanimously declared these dreams to be helpful and mood -elevating. None of the respondents felt regret or even nostalgia for the happy past after waking from such dreams. My conclusion is that in hopeless situation, when one cannot expect the improvement of one's fate, the only effective form of therapy may be to shift one's attention from the present to the past (Owczarski 2014: 275). Perhaps this might solve the puzzle of the

varied effect of "freedom" dreams in the camp. Paradoxically, the prisoners who still had hopes of surviving reacted to such dreams with despair: they were terrified by the thought that their hope was just a dream. The prisoners who did not have any hope, on the other hand, found consolation in such dreams; for them, it was an escape from the hell of the camp life. Should this have been the case indeed, one could say that "freedom" dreams had a therapeutic effect on those dreamers who most needed it.

The last group which I would like to present here comprises metaphorical dreams. I identified eleven of them. Rather than saying something directly (like the "caring" dreams), they require interpretation by the dreamer. What is interesting, though, is that such interpretation is not developed in the course of strenuous mental effort undertaken after waking, but rather, in a sense, is given in the dream itself: the dreamer immediately grasps the meaning of his or her dream. This is exemplified in the following dream account:

> I dreamt that I was crossing completely demolished, broken bridge suspended over deep, dirty, frighteningly rough water. As I walked, broken boards kept slumping from under my feet. There were holes on my way, and it seemed that I would fall into the abyss, down into the water, but I gripped some ropes tied above, and the fear of falling into the depths ultimately forced me to gather my strength, and, after hard effort – I did cross. When I woke up, this dream gave me great solace and the faith that I would survive.

A similar situation recurs in a number of variants: risky passage down a narrow path, using one's last strength to clamber out of a well, and so forth. An inmate who dreamt about driving a tractor along a narrow embankment writes:

> Having overcome this obstacle, I woke up with my heart pounding. After this dream I couldn't get back to sleep. I associated this dream with my road to freedom, and indeed this is what it looked like.

Thus, auspicious future manifests itself to the prisoners in a metaphorical way, but one can say that the power of these metaphors lies in the fact that they are "alive": they cause strong emotions already during dreaming, they are understood, but at the same time experienced by the dreamer.

Much has been written about the role of metaphor in dreams. Montague Ullman described dream as "a metaphor in motion", indicating the dynamic and creative nature of dream images (Ullman 1969). Hartmann emphasised the role of emotions in the process of development of dream metaphors (Hartmann 2011: 49-59). Especially relevant for my considerations are Bert

States's findings, contained in his book *The Rhetoric of Dreams*. States understands dream "as a process of thought, instead of as a product" (1988: 139). Unlike the literary metaphor, dream metaphor is, he believes, "simply thought in transit, nothing formed but something forming, never an identity but always a passage. […] It is not, then, something *used* by the dream, but the way of dreaming itself" (1988: 144). According to States, the essence of dream metaphor is its effect rather than its meaning. Meaning "might be fund by an analyst or an interpreter, but that has nothing to do with the mode in which the image is experienced" (1988: 134).

It is precisely the "experiencing" of the metaphor that seems to bring the therapeutic effect of the dreams of Auschwitz prisoners. In contrast to the two previous types, the metaphorical dreams involve the dreamer's activity: rather than waiting for a "carer" or escaping into the world of memories and fantasies, the dreaming subject must use his or her own capacities to overcome a threat or enter a friendly space. Thus, the dream does not so much act as a good omen, but as an opportunity allowing the dreamer to experience his or her own strength.

In her article *Dreams as a Source for Holocaust Research*, Barbara Engelking writes: "In order to understand broad psychological aspects of the Holocaust experience, we need other sources than «objective» documents presenting just the events. Dreams are among such sources" (2013: 43).

Theraputic dreams among such sources seem to be especially important. As can be seen, the operating mechanisms of therapeutic dreams in the camp were quite diverse. Regardless of these differences, however, such dreams often proved to be *the only* effective help in the hell of Auschwitz.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Therapeutic dreams in Auschwitz

The aim of this article is to answer the question whether the dreams of Auschwitz prisoners had a therapeutic function. The author selected 51 dreams (out of 208 dreams reported in 1973 by former Auschwitz inmates) from which it followed that a particular dream had some kind of a positive influence on the dreamer: on his or her mood, frame of mind, faith in the possibility of survival and liberation, or even his or her health condition. The author found three dominant groups of such dreams: "caring" dreams, "freedom" dreams, and metaphorical dreams, and described their helping effects.

KEYWORDS

Dream, therapy, the Holocaust, concentration camp in Auschwitz

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

STUDIES

ARE TRIPS TO AUSCHWITZ THE PANACEA FOR A HISTORY SICK SOCIETY? A CASE STUDY OF HOLOCAUST TEACHING: THE ITALIAN MEMORIAL TRAINS TO AUSCHWITZ

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My paper will focus on a specific case study of Holocaust teaching, the Italian Memorial Trains to Auschwitz, which have become a very popular phenomenon, still unparalleled in Europe. After a short introduction on this phenomenon, some of the most relevant key-aspects of these educational projects will be discussed as well as some issues relating to Holocaust teaching in Italy in general. Namely, the main argument will be that memorial trains are an example of deterioration of Holocaust teaching. Why should historical knowledge of the Holocaust be facilitated, if not even conveyed, by collective trips to mass murder sites? It is worth raising this question.

In Italy, unlike many European countries, the Holocaust is not a mandatory topic in the national curriculum. Therefore, its teaching depends almost exclusively on teachers' personal initiative and motivation.

Since the implementation in 2000 of an Italian law establishing January 27th as National Holocaust Remembrance Day, school trips to the Nazi concentration camps have been constantly growing. In particular, over the last two decades the attention devoted to Holocaust in relation to memory culture and public debates has also increased considerably (Gordon 2012). As a matter of fact, year 2000 marked a watershed in the Italian approach to the Holocaust, pushing the expansion of memorial trips to a new level and making Auschwitz, the main if not unique destination of these visits, not only the symbol of the genocide of the Jews but also the essence of evil.

Until a certain time, visiting a memorial site has been considered only a step within a broader teaching on World War II and on the genocide of the Jews – i.e. an option among many other pedagogical tools. According to the latest trend a trip to Auschwitz today is considered not only as a "present-day rite of passage" (Cywiński 2014), but as a stand-alone goal. In other words it is seen as the best methodology to teach this topic to youngsters and also as a crucial educational tool to raise awareness about its lesson, under the slogan: "Never Again!"

Given the growing success of the Italian Memorial Trains as educational projects for schools and therefore their strong connection with the way history is taught, it is worth questioning how teachers respond to the major challenge they are faced with: combining good history teaching with the moral lessons of Auschwitz.

Let me first give you some background information and some figures about this phenomenon that every year involves thousands of students and hundreds of teachers and plays a significant role in ranking Italy fourth in terms of numbers of visitors to Auschwitz, with about 84.350 visitors per year (according to 2014 Auschwitz Memorial Report).

The first memorial train to Auschwitz was organized in 2002 by Tuscany region (for a review on this project, see the website of Tuscany Region: http://www.regione.toscana.it/storiaememoriedel900/giorno-della-memoria). Five hundred students boarded the train, accompanied by their teachers, some local politicians, members of associations of deportees and also some survivors of Auschwitz and of other concentration camps.

The project goal stated by the organizers was the following: "To remember the Holocaust not only as a massacre of Jews but also as a warning against cruelty and human indifference, that exist still today, and to let people have a first-hand experience leading younger generations to develop effective antibodies against racism" (Fortini 2011).

Only a few years later, in 2005, the example was followed by other cities: Milan and Turin in conjunction with the Former Fossoli Camp Foundation organized their own memorial trains to Auschwitz. Each train, carrying from 500 to 700 students left Italy for Poland on January

25th and reached Auschwitz on the 27th – the day the camp was liberated, establishing a symbolic link between the past, the liberation of the camp at the end of the Holocaust, and the present – the arrival of young visitors who promised to serve as "bearers of Holocaust memory". In 2010, it became clear that it was necessary to schedule different departures and arrivals of the trains in order to avoid overcrowding and poor visiting conditions at the Auschwitz Museum. From that year on, Memorial trains have been regularly leaving Italy between January and March. All of the organizers agreed on choosing trains not only as a simple means of transport, but also as a useful pedagogical and emotional tool deeply affecting the participants during their journey. The words used by some of the organizers in their official speeches about the choice of travelling to Auschwitz by train are extremely meaningful:

> Slowly travelling across Europe by train, as if we were almost forced to take the victims' route… (Pasquini 2009. Lorena Pasquini is in charge of the project named "A Train to Auschwitz", funded by Centro Studi Officina Memoria of Brescia together with CGIL and CISL [national trade union centres]).
>
> Thanks to the time needed to reach Poland it is possible to leave behind one's own daily life and routine, this is something, which would be impossible to do with a shorter travelling distance (Association DEINA of Turin, organizer of the project named "A Train to Auschwitz").

Within a short space of time, these initiatives enjoyed broad consensus in strong connection with the basic assumption stating that commemorating the Holocaust is both a moral obligation and a moral lesson. A secondary goal being that of developing through the visit to Auschwitz a deep sense of responsibility and critical citizenship in younger generations.

Under the clear catch phrase of **"standing together"**, Memorial Trains have been rapidly transformed into a political cause, and the transmission of memory has been turned into an unchangeable institutionalized model. Given the great success of these projects, some public bodies that had never been interested in such initiatives started to allocate resources to such projects for sponsorship and research purposes. It is worth mentioning that the rental cost of a train to Poland is of about 130 to 150 Euros per train, plus the individual participants' fees, ranging from 100 to 300 hundred Euros.

In recent years, the mayors of Florence, Milan and Turin as well as other local politicians, trade unionists, famous writers, actors, musicians, journalists, photographers and school directors have joined the students in boarding the memorial trains. Last but not least, survivors took an active part in these trips in order to pass on to youngsters their experiences in the Nazi concentration camps. The fact that most of them were not Jews and did not survive Auschwitz

but other concentration camps, like for instance Mauthausen or Gusen in Austria where thousands of Italians were deported as political opponents, was not considered by the organizers as a problem. The testimonies on the evil and pain suffered in the camps, the civic and moral message on human values and, more globally, retracing the past and underscoring its links with the present have always prevailed over historical coherence and consistency.

The trip obviously carries strong symbolic but also political meaning. The obligation to remember, stressed by public organizations, is aimed at arousing a feeling of belonging to the international community: "Youngsters need to feel part of a project, they have to 'work' on memory. If they are actively involved, they can react with a high level of maturity. Therefore, they develop a feeling of belonging to a community, a feeling that probably is lacking in their daily lives" (Luppi 2015). In other words, travelling together to Auschwitz on the Memorial Train is a clear sign of association with those who stand for remembrance and act against the return of Fascism and barbarity. Some organizations go even further and define their Memorial Train as a sort of **lay pilgrimage**, precisely for its evocative power:

> The Memorial Train is neither just a mere travelling experience nor a common school trip, it is a lay pilgrimage, a space for knowledge, a journey through history and memory… We define it as a lay pilgrimage precisely for its evocative power, because it must be a tool for one's outrage with the aim to promote an actively engagement in daily life and to cause a radical change of ourselves (Alotto and Forte 2015; Oliviero Alotto and Roberto Forte are currently in charge of the Terra del Fuoco Association of Turin, Italy, i.e. of the project named *Il Treno della Memoria*).

A special mention needs to be made about the Memorial Trains promoted by Terra del Fuoco and Deina, two very active and left-wing youth organizations of Turin. Unlike other projects based on students' recruitment through schools and the mediation of teachers that follow specific preparatory training and join the journey, Terra del Fuoco and Deina promote the so-called "informal education" principle and directly address youngsters, tapping into non -schooling channels, and offering a peer-to-peer educational model. The educators who join the trips are usually people of the same age. Instead of mainstream history classes, the organizers prefer other activities considered to be closer to the sensitivity and language of youngsters such as: videos, images and visual tools in general, group discussions, role plays and simulations. According to them this approach is not only more suitable to young people's needs but also modernizes history with respect to traditional educational methods. For these reasons, since 2005, memorial trains to Auschwitz have been spreading like wildfire throughout Italy. It is self

-evident that regardless of the nature of the organization, public or private, Memorial Trains are extremely appealing to young audiences.

The promotion of this experience as "unforgettable", "unique" and "deeply emotional" as well as the promise of a group adventure in the search for the meaning of life through the Holocaust, has unintentionally made Memorial Trains compete with mainstream history classes, which are doomed to be considered as out-dated, boring and completely unattractive.

Official statistics are not available yet, but the total number of students having boarded memorial trains from 2005 to 2014 can be estimated at around 50.000. Not even massive logistical difficulties have stopped the projects. The Italian Railway Company's decision to stop renting the trains for this purpose did not discourage the organizers from carrying out their projects. For three years, Italian students have been leaving for Poland by bus up to the Austrian border and then from Austria by train. As a matter of fact, it has become evident that the attraction of Memorial Trains seems limitless and meaningless.

In short, Italian Memorial Trains seem to belong to a broader context, i.e. the tendency among educators, politicians and the general public to approach the Holocaust from a moral perspective, according to which the genocide has the power to convey relevant lessons both to youngsters and to adults hopefully leading to the creation of a more tolerant society, free of the evils of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

I am not sure that the main objective of teaching the Holocaust or any other historical event should be to have students learn universal and contemporary lessons. Before dealing with any human rights and moral issues, shouldn't we try to teach first and foremost the historical facts? The connection between teaching and educating is given, as well as the idea that history is learnt to understand the past and to raise questions for our present. Nevertheless, in my view, the Holocaust should be considered in a historical rather than a moral framework.

There is no evidence of the fact that travelling across Europe to visit Auschwitz with the aim to get from the visual experience some relevant lessons for humankind can provide a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and its complex history and in particular of the specific Italian responsibilities of the Fascist regime in the persecution of the Jews.

There are two key questions that in my opinion express at best the crucial issues which should be raised on how Italy teaches the Holocaust through pedagogical projects like the Memorial Trains. The first question is about the danger of distorting the past in the search of a universal meaning. It is not only naïve to believe that the Holocaust happened because people made the wrong moral choices but it is also historically wrong (the German sociologist Harald Welzer, for example, has emphasized in his paper "Who is a Perpetrator? The Changing

Construction and Interpretation over Time" that the National socialist morale gradually elevated the extermination of human beings to the state of a moral duty; Welzer 2009). Moreover, approaching Auschwitz as an example of violation of human rights with the aim to teach empathy, tolerance and individual responsibility is indeed a worthwhile mission but it runs the risk of disconnecting the history of this genocide from its context and therefore of dissolving its specificity (Bauer 2010).

In other words, this approach focusing so much on the moral issues potentially may lead to overlook the historical reconstruction of what happened (when, how and why did the extermination of the Jews happen?) with the aim to curb the historical narrative in favour of a moral and universal lesson. We should ask ourselves if we really need Auschwitz to fulfill this goal. Unfortunately, both world history and our presence can provide many examples of crimes against humanity. It may not be surprising to note that many programmes behind the Memorial Trains are written in a vague and artificial language which bring all victims groups under one umbrella with no particular distinction made for Jewish victims. One can read that Auschwitz was the place where "human beings of all nationalities and ages were murdered, innocent people who died in the gas chambers, men women and children". So, in the name of the universality of the Holocaust as a human tragedy, the word Jew never (or seldom) appears in the text, implying that all of the victims of the genocide were not only Jews but everyone targeted and persecuted by the Nazis. A general, mixed humanity that has no face, no name, no specific fate and could be anyone at any time in history or in present time. As the Italian Holocaust Remembrance Day is devoted to all victims of Nazism, one may also read in the Memorial Trains' programmes that the Holocaust is not intended as just the Jewish tragedy but as the persecution and the annihilation of a range of victims. Defining the Holocaust as a universal history is certainly true, but only provided that we do not minimize the historical facts and the historical truth. The main consequence of this major feature of Memorial Trains, i.e. the powerful and universal meaning of the Holocaust as overall warning and rhetorical device, has overwhelmed some fundamental issues.

The second key question raised by this panacea-like use of such visits is the following. The lack of sufficient historical knowledge provided by the Memorial Train Projects makes it difficult for young people to achieve a clearer understanding of a complex history. Teaching Auschwitz to students only as a symbol of the Holocaust may overlook the fact that actually this concentration and death camp complex was very different from any other mass murder site for Jews like Treblinka, Bełżec or Babi Jar where almost no selection took place. Concentration, torture and criminal experiments, forced labour, mass killings and murder of the Jews in the crematoria of

Birkenau were all different Nazi policies addressing different categories of prisoners. However, all of them addressed the Jews who were often targeted with parallel and often simultaneous methods of annihilation. Students should learn more not only on the broader context of the persecution and the genocide of the Jews, but also about the specific role played by Auschwitz in the Final Solution. Finally, they should also get more accurate knowledge on the complex historical narrative of Auschwitz which includes different and parallel Nazi policies that need to be carefully explained.

Most of students tend to emphasize in their reports the size of Birkenau as an immense place where the Jews were murdered. This clearly shows that they have not understood neither the complicated history of the camp nor the difference between the extensive concentration camp area where inmates of all nationalities and categories starved to death and the small killing area of the crematoria where the great majority of the Jews arriving there from all over Europe were immediately murdered by gas (in many students' reports on their visit, it is quite clear that most of them did not understand that Auschwitz had two simultaneous functions because it was at the same time the largest centre for mass extermination of the Jews and the largest Nazi concentration camp for prisoners of various nationalities). Because what they see in Auschwitz Museum, the victims' artifacts, is so powerful, and conveys a false impression that students (as most of the ordinary visitors) are not able to differentiate between Auschwitz I and Birkenau despite the efforts of well-trained guides to tell them otherwise.

Furthermore, due to the lack of sufficient historical knowledge of the Holocaust as a complex phenomenon, young participants of the Memorial Trains seldom know that Italian Jews – unlike other Jewish communities – were not deported to Auschwitz from the ghettos and they were not forced to wear the yellow star. Even if such examples provide only a brief insight into their knowledge level, they may be potentially meaningful.

In addition to this insufficient understanding of the role played by Auschwitz in the Final Solution, another matter worthy of discussion is whether Holocaust teaching should only focus on the ultimate destination, the gas chambers and the crematoria at Birkenau, i.e. devoting little attention to the first stages of the persecution which were not initiated by the Nazis but by the local government in Italy as well as in many other countries. Obviously, putting Auschwitz at the core of the teaching program, runs the risk that any other event of this history may seem less serious or interesting, for instance the enactment, in September 1938, of an anti-Semitic legislation by Fascist Italy that deprived the Italian Jews of their civil and political rights. Although there is no straight line from the racial laws to the gas chambers, it is undeniable that the Holocaust started with a legal persecution. But if teachers and educators take this for granted

and they do not explain carefully this preparatory phase, the exclusion, the humiliation, the feeling of being rejected by fatherland that Jews had, the youngsters will not achieve a detailed understanding of a complex history.

The mistake is actually misunderstanding. Although the preparatory work is sometimes accurate and scheduled on quite a long period before and after the visit of the camp complex, i.e. the classes and workshops that students attend before boarding the Memorial Trains, this training is inevitably insufficient. As to the choice of the topics to be taught, this is strongly influenced by the need to prepare the visit to the Holocaust site. Therefore, the preparatory work cannot include the teaching of the Holocaust in its full complexity. In other words, taking part in a Memorial Train Project does not necessarily mean that this can replace a traditional history class at school.

Most teachers complain about the lack of time and they consider the Holocaust to be particularly difficult to teach. Boarding a Memorial Train and rely on the organizers of such projects seems to be an easy option. This seems to explain partially that both pedagogy and methodology would need more accuracy, because most teachers involved in the Memorial Trains Projects tend to have a passive attitude arising from their choice to leave their educational responsibility in the hands of the organizers, therefore renouncing to coordinate themselves the learning process of their students. Even the choice of the historical content of the training programme is not made directly by the teachers.

Another major weakness stems from believing that Holocaust learning should be a sensory experience through the visit of a site of extermination of the Jews in order to feel what happened there, to touch history and to see with one's own eyes. I do not want to question the popular belief according to which walking along the train tracks at Auschwitz-Birkenau and seeing from a close the barbed wire, the ruins of the crematoria and the rests of the victims, brings a whole new level of comprehension and empathy for those who suffered horribly. However, I would like to state a question why many teachers and educators believe that the visual experience helps their pupils to understand a historical event and even to understand it much more than just reading books or attending history lessons. Why has all this become like a sort of intolerant dogma that is not possible to criticize unless one risks to be accused of being a memory enemy? Leaving aside the fact that history teaching does not mean obviously taking students to visit all places in the world where the events of the past took place – and this may sound trivial but it is not in the case of Holocaust – what does the majority of people think it will learn about the murder of the Jews by visiting Auschwitz? Annette Wieviorka, one of France's leading historians of the Holocaust,

writes that "there is nothing to see in Auschwitz-Birkenau unless one knows what there is to see" (2008).

Visits organized by all Memorial Trains are lightning visits. Few hours are devoted to Auschwitz, the museum, and Birkenau. Students must strictly follow a guide, a teacher or the tour leader to avoid getting lost. So, immersed in a slow-moving stream with many other people visiting the place at the same time, young visitors are not in control of themselves and of their time. Finally, what they see is not what they thought they would see and their expectations may be totally disappointed. Another relevant question is the following: how much horror people generally need to perceive in order to understand that an event really happened? What we can see at Auschwitz is residual objects, not people. Most students are in tears when they are shown glasses, shoes and human hair belonging to the Jews who were murdered in Birkenau. But behind these glasses there is nothing to be found about the Jews as human beings, as the individuals they were before the Holocaust. Should not teachers ask themselves what precisely do these artifacts teach their pupils about the history of the people who once used them? Beyond affection, what does our knowledge of these objects have to do with our knowledge of historical facts? Teachers and educators should be more aware about the fact that on one hand their pupils are explicitly asked to identify with the victims – in many Memorial Trains projects the youngsters are asked to remember the name of one victim of the camp, pronounce it during the official ceremony together with the dates of birth and death – and on the other hand, identification is impossible because the presence of the victims is evoked through their absence – one sees footless shoes, eyeless lenses etc. – or by the perspective of their perpetrators at the moment of their destruction.

Therefore, most organizers of these collective trips seem not to be aware that "Visiting Auschwitz is an indirect learning experience; it is about making a physical connection with absence. How can one give a voice to absence?" (European pack for visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. Online at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/remembrance/archives/Source/Publications_pdf/European_Pack_en.pdf). How can we deal with the paradox that the lives of Jewish communities are recalled primarily through the images of their death? (Young 2001).

Conclusion

Based on the premise that prior learning is vital, but visiting an authentic site helps to deepen the understanding of this learning, the Memorial Trains are a good example to raise relevant

questions about the way Italy (but not only Italy) has been teaching history and namely the Holocaust. I do not mean to suggest that students should stop visiting the Auschwitz complex with the memorial trains. However, my feeling is that the organizers of these trips put too much pressure on the contemporary relevance of the lessons of the Holocaust that are expected from a visual experience of Auschwitz (even if rapid and with a huge group of visitors) and consequently on the power of transforming the young visitors into good citizens and "bearers of Holocaust memory". A double pressure that can be more of a moral burden than a pedagogical opportunity.

In my view, Memorial Trains' main achievement is having successfully succeeded in gathering mixed groups of youngsters and adults around a high moral and political ideal likely to generate a sense of national identity (protecting democracy and human rights from the resurgence of barbarity, racism and dictatorship). In this sense, I deeply share the common opinion that finds these projects as a really involving and very unforgettable experience, at least for most of the participants (see the results of a survey conducted in January 2011 by the CDEC Foundation of Milan [Jewish Contemporary Documentation Centre] among hundreds of students who had taken part in the year before to a memorial train to Auschwitz. Online: http://www.cdec.it/home2_2.asp?idtesto1=1248&idtesto=940&son=1).

Anyhow, although generally considered a positive for of civic education, I am not sure whether we can look at the Memorial Trains as a good example of Holocaust teaching just because of this unbalance between ethical and political militancy (turning young Auschwitz visitors into good citizens) and quality-based historical Holocaust education aimed at students, which should go beyond the simple journey preparation. We should question whether an emotional experience can really be said to constitute learning about the Holocaust. Moreover, we should be more aware about the fact the symbolic language that is utilized in many educational projects on the Holocaust like the Memorial Trains conveys at the same time the horrors experienced by the victims of Auschwitz and their meaning for visitors' present. Students who are taken to visit Auschwitz have to cope not only with their emotional responses but also with several problems as for example "the difficulty of reconciling mythical representations of Auschwitz with the reality" (European pack for visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum). Moreover, they are asked on the one hand to keep memory of the past alive and on the other hand to comprehend the Holocaust as active memory, i.e. to make sense of what they have learnt and seen in relation to their own lives. Though, learning history, understanding the past and getting relevant lessons for the present are different tasks that need time much longer than the preparation for a visit to the site. As Oren Baruch Stier points out: "The struggle to represent

the Holocaust is therefore a struggle for adequate and appropriate modes of transmission. What kind of language, what vocabulary, suits the task?"(Baruch 2003: 25).

To sum up, the Italian society is experiencing a paradox of which it does not seem to be fully aware. On the one hand, the decline in history teaching, strongly affected by the heavily cut in history classes imposed by the latest reforms of national education. On the other, everything likely to turn history from a study experience into a sensory experience to be seen and touched is getting more and more popular. Within this context, the Holocaust seems to be losing ground as a subject to be thought in a classroom and is increasingly becoming something to experience. Therefore, a train trip to Auschwitz with hundreds of other young people of the same age becomes a unique appealing experience that cannot compete with more traditional history teaching methods. This is the reason why I think it is plausible to talk about a *history sick society*, which is not able to teach its past but claims to re-enact it by subjecting it to needs that are not always consistent with the studied topic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Are Trips to Auschwitz the Panacea for a History Sick Society? A Case Study of Holocaust Teaching: the Italian Memorial Trains to Auschwitz

My paper will focus on the Italian memorial trains to Auschwitz, which have become a very popular phenomenon, still unparalleled in Europe. Namely, I will argue that they are an example of deterioration of Holocaust teaching by analyzing the three key following aspects:

1) Is the primary goal of this initiative teaching history or promoting moral education? Believing that a site visit is enough to generate a meaningful civilizing impact on the visitors means trivializing Auschwitz. On the one hand, the preparatory work for a trip there cannot include the teaching of the Holocaust in its full complexity. On the other hand, any content selection will obviously influence the students' historical perception.

2) Both pedagogy and methodology would need more accuracy because most teachers taking part in these projects tend to have a passive attitude arising from their choice to leave their educational responsibility in the hands of the organizers, therefore renouncing to coordinate by themselves the learning process of their students.

3) The use of an unsuitable language not only results from a lack of precision in defining the historical facts (mixing of political deportation, forced labour and extermination of the Jews) but also leads to a universally moralizing effect of the Holocaust. In particular, the use of a too general vocabulary (including terms like: human beings, victims, innocent people) risks overlooking and minimizing the specificity of the genocide. Such a language prevents students from understanding that the Holocaust victims were the Jews and that they were murdered just because they were born Jews.

Given the great success of the memorial trains initiative and its strong connection with the teaching of history, it is essential to consider how teachers respond to the major challenge they are faced with: combining good history teaching with the moral lesson of Auschwitz.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust Education, Italian Memorial Trains, Use Abuse Auschwitz

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

ESSAYS

THE PROBLEM OF KITSCH IN THE CONTEXT OF HOLOCAUST FICTION: JONATHAN LITTELL AND BERNHARD SCHLINK

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This paper aims to discuss the problem of kitsch within a broader framework encompassing the issues and limits of representation in the case of fictional works dealing with the Holocaust. In the last decades, the reading public and critics have been confronted with novels whose literary project is both ambitious and controversial: the attempt to shed a more nuanced light on the perpetrator's psyche, to explain and understand its inner workings and motivations. Prominent examples are Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* (*Les Bienveillantes*, 2006) and Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* (*Der Vorleser*, 1995), which have both been awarded important literary prizes, achieved international acclaim and become best-sellers, translated into more than 20 languages, yet they also sparked significant scandal. The harshest critics (mostly in Germany and Israel, understandably) have issued condemnations on grounds of

kitsch, lack of aesthetic value and moral relativism. In the following, we would like to outline the main points of the debate, drawing both on reception data and on scholarly papers, whilst investigating the various (and often fuzzy) assumptions which seem to be related to the kitsch concept within the context of Holocaust.

Littel and Schlink: guilty of *kitsch?*

Littell's *The Kindly Ones* has been generally well-received in France and was even awarded two of France's most important literary prizes, the Grand Prix du roman de l'Académie française and the Prix Goncourt (2006). The voice of Claude Lanzmann, the filmmaker who directed the Holocaust documentary film *Shoah* (1985), is more of an exception. The vigorous condemnation of the novel in his reviews in the *Journal du dimanche* and the *Nouvel Observateur* seeks to vilify it as a "vénéneuse Fleur du mal", a "venomous Flower of evil" (2006).The German reception in the literary sections of the leading newspapers (*Feuilleton*) has been however mainly negative. An interesting outline and discussion of this reception is offered by Wolfgang Asholt, who comes to the conclusion that the university critics seem to have been the only ones capable of "an objective appreciation of the novel" (2011: 221). The reviews published in the literary sections of the main newspapers seem to have been, on the contrary, marred by emotional reactions due to the difficulties of the German process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past).

The kitsch-condemnation as well as all other critiques are exemplarily concentrated in Iris Radisch's review (2008), the subtitle of which runs as: "Littell's *The Kindly Ones* intends to explain why the perpetrators have killed but ends in repugnant kitsch." From the beginning, Radisch is intent on clearing a misunderstanding. As the emphasis on the perpetrator's voice and not on that of the victims constitutes a burning issue for many critics, she is quick to stress that Littell's narrative choice to offer the reader over 900 pages of first-person narration is not a contentious point as far she is concerned: "The unusual perspective of this ambitious novel is not the issue. It is on the contrary its eminent chance to escape the Landser-kitsch, the docu-thriller and the noble porn into which the book repeatedly threatens to descend" (2008)[*]. For Radisch, the main issue is that "the book … is a disturbing work on the Nazi myth". Moreover, the issue of guilt and responsibility is eschewed, as it is placed under the old Greek conception of "fate". However, the critic feels the need to add an aesthetic condemnation to this ethical judgement and at the end of the review squeezes in a couple of paragraphs about the "style" of the novel which

[*] Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German belong to us.

also falls short, assuming "a turgid, primitive sound when Aue indulges in homosexual, incestuous or anal-erotic fantasies" (Radisch 2008). The ending is particularly harsh as it denies any merit or importance whatsoever to Littell's work, which is scornfully brushed aside as a more or less useless piece of junk: "There remains one last question: Why should we, for heaven's sake, still read this book by a bad writing, poorly educated idiot, troubled by sexual perversion and committed to an elitist racist ideology and an archaic belief in destiny? I have to admit, meschersamis français, that to this issue I have not yet found an answer" (Radisch 2008). No less vehement are the voices condemning Schlink's *The Reader*. An overview of the reception of the book in German and English-speaking countries is offered by Katharina Hall's "Text Crimes in the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Case of Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser/The Reader*" (2013), summarizing the two key crimes of which the text stands accused: "[C]rimes against the history and memory of the Holocaust" and "crimes against literature" (2013: 193). If Frederic Raphael's judgement in *The Times Literary Supplement* holds water, the novel has no place in literature, unless one wants to see literature bereft of all meaning. In a polemical article published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (2002), Willi Winkler quotes him and two other British writers and literary scholars, Jeremy Adler and Gabriel Josipovici, who have harshly dismissed the book as cultural pornography, to make a case against *The Reader*. Most relevant to our discussion, the scathing review reaches its apex when the novel is ascribed the name *Holo-Kitsch*.

The aesthetics of Holocaust-Kitsch

What are, however, the meaning and implications of the term *kitsch* when used in the context of Holocaust? This proves to be a very difficult undertaking, for kitsch as an aesthetic concept remains very difficult to investigate despite the numerous attempts made in this regard in various disciplines. With the postmodern turn things have become increasingly complicated as clearly dichotomic definitions such as that outlined by the art critic Clement Greenberg (1939), which conceptualizes kitsch in terms of fakeness, imitation (through simplification and stereotyping) of high culture by low, popular forms of art for the sake of profit have gradually become less (if at all) functional. The blurring of frontiers between high and low, and the purposeful embracing of kitsch as a challenging self-conscious device by postmodern artists have made the aesthetic condemnation of a work of art on grounds of kitsch very problematic. The association between Holocaust and kitsch complicates the matter even further. In the last decades many have complained about what has come to be perceived as a true "Holocaust fashion",

instrumentalizing the Holocaust for literary and cinematic public success. This new phenomenon is accompanied by an increased number of fictionalized approaches belonging to authors of the so-called "post-memory" generation (the generation after the War) and by a vivid interest in the portrayal of the perpetrator (the focus on the witness/victim had previously been the norm). Both novels discussed in this paper fall into this category. The first to draw attention to and attempt to investigate this phenomenon is the eminent Israeli historian Saul Friedländer, whose 1984 essay remains the pivotal work on this topic. While not always rigorous in his approach, Friedländer manages to identify a specific frisson as the common denominator of many works emerging in the late 1960s and the 1970s, which started the trend of a new discourse on fascism (the label proved to be a catchy one as it is still widely used today in Holocaust Literary Studies): the juxtaposition of the themes of death and the kitsch aesthetics rooted in a "certain kind of simplified, degraded, insipid but all the more insinuating romanticism" (1984: 26, 39). The fascination that this kind of (according to Friedländer, dangerous) mixture exerts upon contemporary sensibility is also explained by the connection the historian sees, following Hans -Jürgen Syberberg, the director of *Hitler: A Film from Germany*, between kitsch and myth:

> Kitsch is a debased form of myth, but nevertheless draws from the mythic substance--a part of its emotional impac--the death of the hero; the eternal march, the twilight of the gods; myth is a footprint, an echo of lost worlds, haunting an imagination invaded by excessive rationality and thus becoming the crystallization point for thrusts of the archaic and of the irrational (1984:49).

Functioning as a "vehicle of coherence", the myth permits the coagulation of two opposite spheres, the harmony and love for cosiness and order bathed in sentimentality (which characterizes the petit bourgeois taste) and the horror of death, apocalypse and a specific kind of longing thereafter. Even if he does not always clearly differentiate between form and content, Friedländer's analysis offers equally important, albeit rather sketchy insights into the formal aspects of the new discourse. To the "overload of symbols" and the "baroque setting" coupled with a "mysterious atmosphere of the myth and religiosity enveloping a vision of death announced as a revelation opening up into nothing" (1984: 45) corresponds, on the stylistic level, a certain kind of language:

> A first glance reveals that this language is one of accumulation, repetition, and redundancy: a massive use of synonyms, an excess of similar epithets, a play of image sent back, in turn, from one to the other in echoes without end. This is not the linear language of interconnected argument nor of step-by-step demonstration;

> this is, under a less immediate but no less systematic and no less effective form, the circular language of invocation, which tirelessly turns on itself and creates a kind of hypnosis by repetition, like a word that is chanted in certain prayers, a dance that persists in the same rhythm unto frenzy, a call of the tom-tom, or quite simply, the heavy music of our parades, the muffled stomping of marching legions (1984:50).

The Kindly Ones **and** ***The Reader*** **as examples of Holocaust-kitsch**

Reading *The Kindly Ones* and its critical reviews against this conceptual background provides us with a key to better understanding the issue at stake. What critics have amassed under the kitsch -label could be summarized as follows:

1. the use of numerous Nazi clichés (for example the superior, highly educated and refined intellectual in the Nazi hierarchy);

2. endless and (unnecessarily) repetitive scenes focusing on atrocities, and rooted in a deeply-embedded fascination with goriness, which makes the novel a literary equivalent of the "splatter aesthetics of contemporary action and horror films" (Kuon 2012: 40);

3. pornography and vulgarization of minutiously researched and realistically depicted historical matter with obscene graphic details, as in the famous scene of the engorged penis (which has become the main contentious point of Littell's depiction of the execution of the two Jewish Judges, Wolf Kieperand and Moshe Kagen in Ukraine, 1941). These aspects also give rise to a certain type of lack of truth, of pretense: as Peter Kuon puts it, quoting Lanzmann, "with reference to people who really existed and events that actually took place, he creates something that seems absolutely authentic" (Kuon 2012: 33) but is not;

4. the combination of the two: gore aesthetic and pornography – which has led the German critics to use the term *Gewaltpornographie* (pornography of violence) and the English speaking critics to bemoan repugnant *death porn* (Bukiet 2009). Subjecting the historical background to fictionalization through this particular lens generates a subtle manipulation of history and it is precisely therein that, for certain critics, lies the threat posed to the public: the reader may become a victim of a certain "fascination with violence" (Manoshek 2008).

Indeed Littell's book seems to be the perfect example for Friedländer's new discourse, as, in almost all points, it conforms to the criteria worked out by the historian: it offers a synthesis of kitsch and death, an aestheticized play "on all the facets of horror" (Friedländer 1984: 95) and it puts all "the shoddiest aspects of erotic imagination" (Friedländer, 1984: 39), an expression Friedländer borrows from Foucault, under the sign of Nazism. Moreover, it certainly displays,

thematically and stylistically, that baroque "overload" forged by means of accumulation, repetition, excess and redundancy and it uses myth (in this case, the Greek myth of Orestes) to coagulate the separate lines of the plot, Aue's personal story and the collective story of war and crime.

However, and this is perhaps the crucial point of Friedländer's analysis, the aesthetics of the new discourse on fascism originates and it is in fact proper to Nazism itself, to the aesthetics and *Weltanschauung* of the Third Reich (the paper by Jonathan Jones, on the occasion of the first public exhibition of Adolf Hitler's art collection in Weimar, 12th July 1999, is a case in point). At its core lies the never-resolved tension between everyday petty bourgeois sensibility and monstrosity, as Friedländer puts it: "[O]n the one hand, the approachable human being, Mr. Everyman enveloped in kitsch; on the other, that blind force launched into nothingness" (1984: 72). It is exactly the coexistence of these two impossible to reunite facets in Littell's portrayal of Aue that has bewildered the critics and attracted a lot of negative comments. Peter Kuon for example sees in this failed synthesis a lack of "aesthetic coherence": "the narrator is thereby further conceived of as a modern 'Everyman' who approaches the reader as 'human brother' and, finally, as a grotesque, slapstick character... The blending of these narrative perspectives has given form to a contradictory, aesthetically-questionable, but nonetheless (or rather, as its very consequence) successful monstrosity" (Kuon 2012: 44). In the light of Friedländer's analysis however, this paradox, far from representing an unsuccessful literary ploy, reveals its true significance precisely because it echoes the reality of an impossible conglomerate, the "irreducible anomaly" (1984: 120) of Nazism itself: "In this contradictory series, it is not one thing or another that is decisive by itself; it is their coexistence that gives totality its significance" (1984: 131).

In Bernhard Schlink's case, the kitsch aspects involved in the controversy about his best -seller novel *The Reader* seem to be of a more conventional type. They mostly concern the (scandalous) couple of adolescent Michael Berg and former SS camp guard Hanna Schmitz, whose erotic rituals revolve around showering, having sex and "consuming" classical literature (Hanna, as it later becomes evident, uses the boy who reads to her from famous works of world literature, to fulfill her hunger for fictions as she is illiterate herself). Aiming to offer serious insights into philosophical, ethical and philosophy of law-related matters, the novel actually gives itself up for easy, immediate consumption, unlike the great literary works belonging to the traditional literary canon to which it alludes, is one of the often-heard reproaches: "The author, by the banality of his vocabulary, the sugar of his eroticism and the blandness of his brevities, asks nothing of us in the way of hard work" (Raphael 2009). Frederic Raphael's devastating accusations summarize the main aspects of kitsch: easy profit-seeking, pretense and manipulation

of the reader through sentimentalism, while sparing him the effort of an authentic confrontation with the difficulty of great art (as Greenberg writes, "[kitsch] pre-digests art for the spectator and spares him effort, provides him with a shortcut to the pleasure of art that detours what is necessarily difficult in genuine art", 1939: 44). The novel shows, Raphael argues, how "trash can be dressed as art, or 'mercy', admiring it means subscribing to the same virtues of vulgarity and its daimon, smirking fame" (Raphael 2009). Used in this way, though, kitsch remains an "exclusionary and classist" concept, serving to "stigmatize art that does not conform to an aesthetic canon as determined by elite arbiters of taste" (Maltby 2012: 53), and equating 'serious art' with 'difficulty' is rather controversial. On the contrary, postmodernism has led to "the abandonment or curtailment of elitist claims", allowing for kitsch to be called art and for art to exploit popular culture (Hoffmann 2005: 51). Beyond the pornographic qualities of the sex scenes, it is the juxtaposition of the love affair with the Holocaust story itself which seems to have also sparked the kitsch attacks, as in the case of Ruth Klüger's verdict of "cannibalization": Schlink exploits, according to her, the Holocaust trauma to seduce the public for easy commercial success (Klüger 2000: 51).

The Kindly Ones **and** ***The Reader*** **or kitsch as a device of postmodern fiction**

The problems arising for a writer who intends to deal with the psychology of fascist perpetrators are intricate. Taking into account Friedländer's theory, then the main question would be: how should (could)the author attempt to make the fascist kitsch aesthetics come alive in fiction without endangering the artistic value of her (his) own work and without succumbing to the spell of this frisson (as the "new discourse" seems to have done by mirroring the Nazi imaginary uncritically, according to Friedländer)?

Littell's solution – and, to our eyes, a successful one – lies in the conscious embracing of this kitsch, pushing it to the extreme. As, for kitsch to be kitsch, it has to remain "on the whole, completely unselfconscious and without any political or critical edge" (Felluga 2011), otherwise it either morphs into *camp* or serves, by its purposeful hyperbolization, as a fictional device of postmodern-like parody or satire. We read therefore kitsch as being an essential part of the novel's aim of critically interrogating the horrendous past and challenging the reader's views on evil and human nature. Daniel Mendelsohn is one of the few critics who also argue that "the "kitsch" is in fact integral to the novel's moralizing projects" (Mendelsohn 2009).Very few critics, again, seem to have approached the novel from a postmodern perspective (especially in Germany where postmodernism is rather frowned upon). Exceptions are Susan Rubin Suleiman's paper,

"When The Perpetrator Becomes A Reliable Witness Of The Holocaust: On Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*" (2009) and Scott M. Powers's study, "Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones*: Evil and the Ethical Limits of the Post-modern Narrative" (2011). This also, undoubtedly, because the novel's meticulous realism seems very far from postmodern fictional games, as Michael Mack notes: "The hyperreality of Littell's novel is of course not that of 19th century realism, but it is certainly removed from the playful accounts of fantasy and bricolage that characterize much of postmodern theory" (Mack 2014: 206). Hyper-realism, which assumes the realist conventions and subjects them to parody, is nevertheless one of the modalities of choice for historiographic metafiction, as Linda Hutcheon successfully argued. The postmodern reading allows for a different interpretation of other so-called "flaws" of the novel, not only the kitsch issue. The lack of plausibility becomes a self-referential tool to expose the monstrous anomaly of a historical reality which in itself defies the boundaries of what human beings could have construed as plausible and Aue is not a realist character but a symbol, as Littell has repeatedly stressed. Consider the bitter irony of Kurt Kister's rhetorical question, in one of the few positive reviews the novel received in Germany:

> On the other hand, what is this rather German question of plausibility? Was it plausible that SS -Einsatzgruppen, police reservists and members of the Wehrmacht, as well as German soldiers killed tens of thousands of men, women, children in the ravine of Babi Yar in September 1941? Was it plausible that those everyday murderers from the shooting range of Dachau in the spring of 1942 gathered after the job in the same bars where we drank beer thirty years later as high school students? (Kister 2008).

Similarly, the inconsistencies between Aue's position as chronicler and autobiographer become a conscious play between a reliable historical witness and an unreliable narrator, a narrative tool which represents an innovation for Holocaust fiction and is, according to Susan Rubin Suleiman, one of the accomplishments of the novel:

> This procedure, which lacks plausibility historically, is extremely effective as fiction. Littell's contemporary readers cannot simply read Aue's narrative as an unmediated account; as I read, I am aware of the author behind the narrator and of the literary choices he is making. Seeing things this way introduces a degree of "derealization" into the narrative, since we are aware of the author's manipulations, the way we might be aware of the camera's movements in a film. But I see this derealization as adding a metanarrative dimension to the novel's realism, marking this novel as a postmodern work rather than a classically realist one (2009: 9).

The same argument about the conscious use of kitsch as a postmodern device can be made for *The Reader*, as in the case of Littell's novel. Similarly (again), few critics and scholars have approached the book from this point of view, perhaps discouraged by the 'easy realism' which is the stylistic mark of the novel. Joseph Metz makes a particularly detailed and carefully-crafted claim: the erotic "compendium of male fantasy clichés and movie scenarios" as well as the "entire tropic inventory of images popularly associated with Nazism, ranging from the uniforms, leather straps, sadomasochism" etc. would not represent an uncritically assumed kitsch aesthetics but "an inventory of positions or stances equivalent to topoi, a series of social scripts to be read from, Vorleser-style", which "raises the question of the extent to which *Der Vorleser* might be read as a type of postmodern discourse" (2004: 301-313). The question may be answered affirmatively, yet there seems to remain an "irresolvable aporia", in Metz's opinion, as a successful mediation between "the very different, finally irreconcilable, imperatives of post-Holocaust and postmodern discourse" might prove impossible (2004: 318).

The crux of the matter lies here in a different aspect of kitsch: the writing off of all that is unsettling, the downplaying of all tragic matter which leads to a particular kind of "whitewashing", as Friedländer puts it, a "rationalization that normalizes, smooths, and neutralizes our vision of the past" (1984: 102). Appealing to the sentimentality of the reader and hiding the true horror of history behind its postmodern mechanisms seeking the relativization of historical truth, the novel has been accused of minimizing the question of guilt and responsibility (for a refutation of these claims, see: Niven 2007). This could be seen as a gesture of exorcism similar to the "complex manoeuvres" executed by the Nazis themselves, as Friedländer argues, in order to "neutralize their own actions" (1984: 102). That the kitsch condemnation is combined with an ethical dimension becomes apparent in Jeremy Adler's already quoted statement about Schlink's *Kulturpornographie*: the novel is cultural pornography because "it pretends to offer new moral insights" but in fact ends up on questionable ethical ground. The accompanying simulation connotation is also part of the canonical kitsch definition, as Baudrillard points out (1998: 111): "To the aesthetics of beauty and originality, kitsch opposes its *aesthetics of simulation*: it everywhere reproduces objects smaller or larger than life; it imitates materials (in plaster, plastic, etc.); it apes forms or combines them discordantly; *it repeats fashion* without having been part of the experience of fashion." Even more explicitly, in Littell's case, Kuon argues that "kitsch as an aesthetic category and falsehood as a moral one are intertwined" (2012: 39).

Between aesthetics and ethics

It seems therefore appropriate to read the kitsch objections analyzed in this paper as rooted not only in an aesthetic dismissal of the works, but also in a certain ethical uneasiness or downright rejection. Kitsch implies in this sense a preoccupation with a twofold taboo: on an aesthetic level, kitsch represents a taboo against "high" literature or "good, serious art"; on ethical level, it refers to a representational taboo which still lies at the core of all discussion about Holocaust fictionalization (see: Boswell 2014).

The ethical conundrum might in fact be projected onto the aesthetic judgement: a case in point is offered by the reception of Herta Müller's *The Hunger Angel* (*Schaukelatem*, 2009). The label "kitsch" was attached by some voices to this novel depicting horrendous events in a Soviet concentration camp from the perspective of a Romanian German deported to Ukraine (based on conversations between the author and her friend, the poet and Gulag survivor Oskar Pastior). This work of fiction belonging to a Nobel Prize laureate famous for her difficult metaphoric style is rooted in the poetic prose of German Expressionism, offering an antipode for both Littell's bemoaned 'lack of style' or 'bad writing' and Schlink's 'easy realism'. And yet Iris Radisch, who is so vehement in her Littell critique quoted in this paper, writes a devastating attack on Müller's *The Hunger Angel*, based on the same kitsch-argument. In her *Zeit* review entitled "Kitsch or world literature?" ("Kitsch oder Weltliteratur", 2009), she sets out to demonstrate what the rhetorical question had already revealed: that Müller's poetic techniques of high metaphorisation, surprising word combinations, repetitions, exaltation (*Überhöhung*) and intensification create a "perfumed", "tasteless" and "formulaic" text, even if they worked so well in her other books to the point of becoming her globally praised signature style. The issue, Radisch writes, is a lack of cohesion between poetic vocabulary and over-stylization, on one hand, and gulag trauma, on the other. However, one could hardly argue that Müller's other novels are filled with happy stories: they chronicle traumatic events under the Ceaușescu regime, her experience of oppression and exile. The difference in the case of The Hunger Angel seems to be mainly related to the fictionalization taboo, especially when the first-person perspective is used: as Radisch puts it succinctly, "Gulag -novels can't be penned based on second hand memories" (2009).

What is rejected here is the attempt at poetic innovation in a postmemorial text (broadly understood as a text written by a person who was not a direct witness to the traumatic events). As Agnieszka Izdebska and Danuta Szajnert point out in their analysis of similar Polish novels, such a critique is often aimed at narrators who, taking over the "ethically privileged position, previously occupied by a witness-victim" (2014: 139), display their unconventional language

creativity, thereby producing "fancy and affected kitsch" (2014: 148). The Polish literary scholar and Holocaust survivor Michał Głowiński sheds light on a new aspect of the Holocaust-kitsch problematic:

> Since not only works which use schemes and conventions of popular art are kitsch, kitsch is sometimes a composition which ostentatiously expresses the distance from them, the one which represents something what we could call modern mannerism, a composition whose rich and sophisticated artistic outfit is nonfunctional and does not provide the vision of a world which was a true nightmare (Izdebska and Szajnert 2014: 140).

The kitsch-label would in such cases imply self-indulgent mannerism, despite the work's difficulty and seriousness, corroborated with the representation taboo (for postmemory generation authors at least) – while in Littell and Schlink's cases the critics fail to accept (and in many cases even to identify) kitsch as a post-modern device, thereby judging the works as unworthy of pertaining to the 'high' ranks of 'serious' art.

The problem regarding the limits of representation concerns, from the point of view of those who embrace an "ethos of anti-representation" (Elie Wiesel, Levinas, Claude Lanzmann etc.), all fiction, generally speaking all art forms. Lanzmann, among others, sees "an absolute obscenity in the project of understanding", citing Primo Levi's account of the Auschwitz guard who told him, "there is no why" (Lanzmann 2011:9). Yet, the case of postmodern fiction as it is made in this paper is a particularly thorny issue even for the moderate voices of those who accept Holocaust representation. While allowing for the controversial position of the perpetrator to become a possible narrative choice, they still demand that certain conditions be fulfilled: respect for historical truth, decent restraint and explicit ethical condemnation of the Nazi ideology etc. The failure of many critical commentators to acknowledge the fact that both von Aue and Michael Berg represent the prototype of the unreliable narrator, characteristic of much of postmodern historical metafiction and their simplistic equation of author and narrator reveals either a surprising blindness regarding the mechanisms of fiction or (as we believe to be the case in most situations), a desire to subject the narrator, in the case of Holocaust fiction, to the same concerns as the historian. As Cynthia Ozick claims, in the case of the Holocaust the "rights of Imagination" should be restrained in the favour of those of history. Otherwise, "in the name of the autonomous rights of fiction, in the name of the sublime rights of the imagination, anomaly sweeps away memory; anomaly displaces history" (1999). In the postmodern historical fictions dealing with the Holocaust, these critics complain, the "reverence" surrounding the Holocaust,

the effort to "hold the Holocaust separate–separate from language, separate from cliché, separate from the always already compromised field of aesthetics, separate from other mass murders" (Hallberg 2009) has come under attack, and the main culprit is postmodernism itself:

> This movement is called postmodernism, and in abler hands than Littell's, it may yet prove itself capable of finding new ways to speak about the unspeakable. And yet it's worth remembering that its direct forerunner, Friedrich Nietzsche, called not for the abandonment of all values, but their revaluation. The example of *The Kindly Ones* suggests that that revaluation becomes more difficult, not less, in the absence of something to rebel against. When nothing is sacred, there can be no sacrilege (Hallberg 2009).

Yet, one feels compelled to insist, far from being specific to the discourse critical of postmodernism, the combination of aesthetic and ethical judgement, as apparent in such claims and central, as we have shown, to the kitsch problematic, has been controversial ever since literature, history and philosophy have established themselves as different ways of dealing with reality. As Steinberg Gould rightly points out in her paper "Schlink's *Der Vorleser*: Literature, Cruelty, and Narrative (Un)reliability", arguing against the trend of ethical criticism and aesthetic moralism, "even Plato realizes, in his attack on the poets, that if we read literature as the moralist suggests, there can be no literature" (2014: 4-5). Also surprising, to put it mildly, at the turn of the 21st century, after a long tradition of charges brought against literature (Baudelaire, Flaubert and Wilde are just a few famous examples of such trials), is the fear exhibited by many critics regarding the danger posed by such works of fiction: seen as a weak creature, easily prey to demonic 'seduction', unaware of fictional traps and unable to assume a critical stance, the reader has to be protected against the 'fascination of evil' (or even compassion towards, whichever might be the case) such novels would exude. Petra Rau sees in this "patronizing" attitude a "rather Catholic pronouncement" (2013: 100), yet the case against poets as corruptors of youth, accompanied by the concern for a morally 'useful' literature itself goes back to no other than Plato himself. The accessible style and the 'pre-digestion' of content, characteristic of kitsch, ensure that the "naïve reader" is rapidly contaminated by the "colossal virus" and "taken hostage" (Kristeva 2007). The two seem to go, from a modernist perspective, hand in hand: only the naïve, uneducated (and thus insensitive to the difficulties exhibited by great art) spectator can be a victim of kitsch, argues Greenberg (1939: 44). Such a presupposition, more or less consciously embraced, seems to explain, in our opinion, in the case of both novels, on one hand the accusations of kitsch, on the other the concern for the moral damage suffered by the reader construed as devoid of "agency, responsibility or judgement" (Rau 2013: 100).

Instead of this rather prescriptive intent to limit literary autonomy (in the case of author and, subsequently, reader), we believe that one should concentrate on the possibilities that such recalcitrant postmodern texts open up for the dialogue between contemporary public and history. Gerhard Hoffmann's investigation of the various techniques of which American post-modern fiction makes use (first employed by the pop artists of the sixties) shows how the aesthetics of kitsch plays an essential part in what can be defined as both a critical gesture and a renewal of imagination. By playing with kitsch and parody, such texts return, in a first step, to 'reality', while exhibiting the fact that that reality/past/history "has become a product of consumption and of the fiction-producing media" – and yet, in a third step, they use "this faked return for the replenishment of subject matter and creative energy" (Hoffmann 2005: 51). Of course, allowing for a similar approach in the case of Holocaust literature means acknowledging, as the French philosopher Jacques Rancière radically states, that "there is no property of the event which prohibits representation, which prohibits art, even in the sense of artifice. Unrepresentability does not exist as a property of the event. There are only choices" (2001:96). If these choices entail a postmodern challenge of taboos and a self-conscious distantiation of reality by means of literary devices such as kitsch, unreliability and satire, they nonetheless reveal, in their own way, the ability of literature to interrogate evil and human nature and distance us from easy certainties and typified patterns of thought. Discussing the metafictional aspect of Schlink's *The Reader*, Daniel Reynolds makes a similar argument:

> By inviting its readers to ponder such distinctions as that between fictional construct and factual documentation, or between author and narrator, the novel ultimately argues for fiction's ability to contribute meaningfully to inquiries into the Holocaust (2003:238).

Though retaining a reticent undertone, Matthew Boswell concludes at the end of his investigation of Holocaust literature and taboo (which also touches upon Littell's *The Kindly Ones* and Schlink's *The Reader*): "By continuing to raise such questions and probing these more "existential" types of truth in light of the Holocaust, transgressive works of fiction can at least help to ensure that we do not arrive at the kind of dangerous "final resting place" where the objective truths of mass killing no longer matter" (2014: 195).

Finally, we hold with Michael Mack that there is a therapeutic potential in such fictional encounters with the horror of history: "Literature works against a certain conflation of the other with paranoid hallucination of evil and destruction. It does so by crossing the boundaries

between self and the other by making us experience our shared vulnerability while safely residing at a remove from reality" (2014: 212).

It is perhaps through this shared experience of vulnerability and frailty that we best learn to understand what being human means, and what the ideal that we should strive for should be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

The Problem of Kitsch in the Context of Holocaust Fiction: Jonathan Littell and Bernhard Schlink

This paper aims to discuss the problem of kitsch within a broader framework encompassing the issues and limits of representation in the case of fictional works dealing with concentration camp trauma. Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* (*Der Vorleser*, 1995) and Jonathan Littell's *The Kindly Ones* (*Les Bienveillantes*, 2006) have both achieved international acclaim yet also sparked a huge scandal mainly for their narrative choice of embracing the (controversial) point of view of the perpetrator. Some of the harshest critics in Germany have issued condemnations on grounds of kitsch, lack of aesthetic value and moral relativism; even the term 'Holo-kitsch' was coined. Yet the label 'kitsch' was attached by some voices even to *The Hunger Angel* (*Schaukelatem*, 2009), a totally different kind of novel depicting horrendous events in a Soviet concentration camp from the perspective of a Romanian German deported to Ukraine. This is a work of fiction belonging to a Nobel prize laureate famous for her difficult metaphoric style, Herta Müller, and rooted in the poetic prose of German Expressionism. We would like to outline the main points of the debate, drawing both on reception data and on scholarly papers, whilst investigating the various

(and often fuzzy) assumptions which seem to be related to the kitsch-concept within the context of Holocaust/Gulag fiction, for example, the extent to which it implies a negative value judgement from an aesthetic perspective and/or an ethically grounded uneasiness about trespassing moral limits of representation.

KEYWORDS

Kitsch, Holocaust fiction, ethics, aesthetics, literary representation

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

ESSAYS

INTERPRETATION OF SILENCE IN PAUL CELAN'S HOLOCAUST POETICS

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Perhaps I write because I see no better way to be silent.
There are many kinds of silence and many ways to be silent. …
Silence … speaks and is as risky as speech.

(Schlant 1999:1)

Introduction and Background

After Hitler's ascension to the power in 1933 we witness a rather dramatic increase in anti-Semitic acts", (Brustein 2003: 14) and his success in establishing the Nazi "supremacy and anti-Semitic extermination. The magnitude of suffering almost wiped out "The Word" and the word "God" in all the writers except for a few mentions like Etty Hillesum and Corre ten Boom. While some accounts of suffering stand as testimonies to realize the sustenance and endurance beyond Job or the Hemingwayian heroes; more experiences permanently fractured the self confidence, belief in the Biblical "chosenness" and the power of language. If the romantic period contributed the explosion of voice, then the period of the Holocaust contributed vociferous silence. The bleeding literary voices that came out after the

Holocaust had only a muted hum, like that of a startled swallow still numb with shock. Jane Yolen writes:

> Fiction cannot recite the numbing numbers, but it can be that witness, that memory. A storyteller can attempt to tell the human tale, can make a galaxy out of the chaos, can point to the fact that some people survived even as most people died. And can remind us that the swallows still sing around the smokestacks (Stephens et al. 1995).

The subsequent spiritual paralysis shattered the dreams of "the promised land". The culmination of the frustration can be seen in the famous Richard Rubenstein – Elie Weisel debate. This legacy of Semitic faith underwent a textural change with serious deconstructions and sought the alternative possibilities of hope in the philosophies of the 21st century like existentialism. So much language was worn off after the survivors' voices tried to preserve the unprecedented history from 1933 to 1945. Literature, art and music archived the grim stories of this darkest plight. Writers like Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Anne Frank, Halina Birenbaum, Corrie Ten Boom, Etty Hillesum and Paul Celan have put the best of their efforts to anthologize the testimonies of pain in the concentration camps. The words of pathos these writers tried to tune their literature with were too inadequate to portray the Nazi experimental methods in mass executions. Besides one must know why history has muted this "Area of Darkness" to this day.

The Question of Life and Language after the Holocaust

What is the meaning of human existence after Auschwitz? What remained after the Nazis and the Holocaust? Is "writing poetry after Auschwitz (really) barbaric" as said by Theodre Adorno? These questions may be answered from the point of a Holocaust survivor like Paul Celan who was "almost certainly the major European poet of the period after 1945" (Steiner 1998: 191). His poetry is the most experimental in portraying the collective psyche of the Holocaust victims. The uniqueness of his poetry from other poets of the Holocaust lies in his interpretation of the Holocaust with the technique of silence which results from various concepts. The episode of death with a voluminous witness of every Holocaust survivor in the post-Holocaust world can be paradoxically considered as a metaphor of hope but in most cases, it ends only in expanding the scope of Jewish existentialism expressed in the technique of silence in Paul Celan's poetry and questioning the ultimate objective of theodicy. If the manifestation of evil is essential for the

omnipotent to demonstrate his power and ways; and if the Jews are his chosen ones through whom he will do this, then why there are no prophets like Moses and Abraham among the Holocaust survivors today?

Origins of Silence

Paul Celan's concept of silence originates from the Nazi terror, murder of his parents, persecution in death camps and alienation, "which he survived in body but not in spirit" (Celan 1972: 9). Mostly it is the outcome of his experience as a Holocaust victim in concentration camps, best portrayed in his most defining poem *Todsfuege*. "Realists and literalists among Celan's critics objected to this 'aestheticising' of the death camps" (Celan 1972: 6). Yet, can a Holocaust survivor's domain of experience, in faltering fragments of language and which itself is a testimony of a painful experience, beyond the words, be denied as 'aestheticising' of the death camps? The dialectics on the art of Paul Celan, in which a "terrible beauty is born," are worth-considering as one of the important issues in the Holocaust Literature. The ambiguity of the contrary theories of silence and vociferousness in his poetry needs a serious analysis.

From a "Polyglot Milieu" and the Narrow Confines

While Celan flourished in *muttersprache* under his mother's influence, on the other hand his childhood in Bukovina was influenced by the speakers of various languages like Ukranian, Romanian, German, Swabian and Yiddish. So he struggled to give precise expression to his painful experiences in the haze of the language entanglements. Language was like "eye's roundness between the bars" (Celan 1972: 50). Silence in Celan's poetry also originates from his struggle to rise up against the myriad Holocaust experiences in confrontation with two-fold alterity which can be expressed in the view of Martin Heidegger – "the invisible and inaudible mesh of paths or furrows, which bring language into being" (Ziarek 1994: 154). His voice is suppressed between two opposites like French and German, the pre-Holocaust and the post -Holocaust experiences, the self and the other, and between the foreign and the native land, when they encounter with language which is always painfully elusive. In a small poem from *Glottol Stop* he strives to redeem himself from this confinement "between worlds" and move towards an expression instead of withdrawing into silence. He must find his way through "the manifold of meanings" by "trust (ing) the tearstain". Consider the following lines:

Don't sign your name
between worlds,

surmount
the manifold of meanings,

trust the tearstain,
learn to live. (Popov & Mc Hugh 2000: 108)

After reading his poetry with its epilepsy, paradox, haltingness, sparser images, idiosyncrasy, broken syntax, reticence, quickening emphases, retards, pauses, caustic articulation, misspoken phrases and neologisms we certainly empathize with the collective Holocaust voice. A poem develops by breath units rather than meter. Consider the following lines from the poem *Largo* which witnesses this in a style similar to Dickensonian unsayability:

More- than-
death-
sized we lie
together, the time-
less one teems
under our breathing eyelids (Daniel 1991: 23)

Silence as a Representing Voice of Celan

According to Celan, the Holocaust has contributed only to the existentialistic silence as its consequence with every surviving victim as a mere entity without substantial words of life in a metaphoric sense. In a poem "Tübingen, January" Celan – himself subjected to a variety of psychiatric treatments in post-war France – while comparing his concept of silence with the loneliness of Friedrich Hölderlin, writes:

Should
should a man
should a man come into the world, today, with
the shining beard of the

patriarchs: he could,
if he spoke of this
time, he
could
only babble and babble
over, over
againagain. (Englund 2012: 125)

Paul Celan is a post-Holocaust voice par excellence representing estrangement, existentialism and madness engulfed by the language of silence. Since they have nothing, nobody left and nowhere to go except the haunting nightmares of the Holocaust, they are lost beings without a remote hope in God resorting to suicidal tendencies and insanity. Waiting for liberty was only a deception. Every day the Holocaust prisoner looked for a way out but in the words of Primo Levi, it was like "dawn came on us like a betrayer; it seemed as though the new sun rose as an ally of our enemies to assist in our destruction" (Fisher 1991: 31). One does not know what comes next or what happens when. In the words of Amos Oz it was like "Something is rising up in the night, something is mounting, gathering, something is silently happening" (Patterson 1992: 1).

This concept of uncertainty can be interpreted from Celan's experience when "in July 1941 S.S. Einsatzgruppe… began destroying Czernowitz's Jewish community" (Caruth 1995: 32). In a poem Darkness which records this incident, Celan expresses his fear of the creeping uncertainty and fear that were going to wipe out "six-hundred-year Jewish presence" (Felstiner 2001: 12). In a lyrical response to this political upheaval the poem evokes the note of silence and the image of Keats' immortal "Greciun Urn" in the image of "urns" at the outset of the poem but unlike Keats', Celan's poem is about the theme of death. Mark the notes of silence, speechlessness and choking sensation which result from fear, eeriness, and imminence of death:

The urns of stillness are empty.

In the branches
the swelter of speechless songs
chokes black.

Blunt hourposts
grope toward a strange time.

A wingbeat whirls.

For the owls in the heart
death dawns.
Treason falls into your eyes –

My shadow strives with your scream –

The east smokes after this night…
Only dying
Sparkles. (Felstiner 2001: 13)

The first line "The urns of stillness" denote the cremation or funeral urns and the words "stillness" and "empty" attributed mean not only that the life of Celan's fellow-sufferers will end in emptiness that is without any significance but also that the "urns" are ready for the ashes of their approaching fate. Further they also symbolize the outwardly silence of the concentration camps.

In the next three lines we see the choking sensation of the mass persecutions which may be referred to the line "The branches were broken off" in Romans, chapter 11. The branches here are symbolically the Jews about to be cut off and their voice is choked as they are about to be burnt to ash in the "swelter(ing)" heat of the death camps shortly. This fear in the poet's awareness of the death makes him to "grope toward strange time" and unimaginable violence ahead that will be inflicted by the Nazis. As already "A wingbeat whirls", the poet senses this. Here there is a hidden image of eagle which symbolizes the "Coat of Arms" of the "Weimar Republic". So, in the first and the second stanzas those follow the opening line the poet uses surrealistic imagery to portray the concept of silence which is the outcome of uncertainty.

In the next stanza the poet depicts the image of terror that engulfs his land by "the owls in the heart" where "death dawns". When "treason falls into … (the poet's) … eyes – ", it leads to his struggle between his silence and the scream of those dying, in the line "My shadow strives with your scream –" as he is already aware that "The east … (Ukraine) … smokes after this night…" since "Only dying sparkles". The word "sparkles" indicates either the gunfire or the mass cremation in the death camps like Auschwitz. Throughout the poem one remarkable thing is the technique of silence. There are only two references of sound of which one is muffled and the other is loud – "wingbeat" and "scream".

The end note of the poem *Darkness* stands for the concept of silence as an outcome of immovability and struggle for expression due to the serious questions of language, time, self and region among which concepts he is caught up and is often exploded into surrealistic fragments of repetition.

The Images of Shulamith & Margret

Language is the only "addressable thou" for Celan after the Holocaust. The "thou" in the poem *Todsfuege* is a silent woman figure which represents the beloved of the Jewish race or the land of milk and honey. But the Holocaust has broken all the dreams. He represents the endless silent fear of the "collective psyche" of his brethren and their haunting sense of being *unhomed*, disruption of their perception and their feeling of peril and imminent extermination which is already decided in the lines:

> A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
>
> he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden
>
> hair Margrete
>
> Your ashen hair Shulamith…. (Celan 1972: 33)

The concept of silence can also be seen in the comparison of the images of golden-haired Margret and ashen-haired Shulamit. While the golden-haired Margret stands for Germany, the executioner, symbolizing beauty and riches – the ashen-haired Shulamit symbolizes death, suffering and hopelessness unlike the Biblical Shulamit in the *Song of Solomon*:

> Return, Return, O Shulamite; return, return
>
> that we may look upon thee. What will
>
> ye see in the Shulmite? As it were company
>
> of the two armies. (King James Version)

Now the Holocaust saga which is represented in the figures of Shulamit in two different shades indicate physical pain (in reddish brown) and the other indicates both spiritual and psychological pain (grey). Celan paints his pain and deprivation in colors which create a very strong empathetic impact on the reader. Basically Jews believe that the Promised Land is a land of hope where all the Jews will finally settle. It is a utopian world mentioned as a promise in Exodus 33:3:

> Unto a land flowing with milk and honey;
>
> for I will not go up in your midst, because
>
> you are an obstinate people; otherwise,
>
> I might destroy you on the way (King James Version)

But Paul Celan's poetry represents the shattered hope that becomes silent after the Holocaust.

Stylistic Analysis of Silence

According to Celan everything is lost in the Holocaust and nobody belongs to anybody. The victims can neither be dependent nor independent. They have no alternative but to accept their fate and continue with it or to end their life with their own hands which many had done including Celan. So after the Holocaust, according to Celan, the history of a people has been destroyed and the little number of survivors by 1945 had nothing of their own. They were exiles once for all. And for Celan it is only language which had left to record the memories. On the occasion of receiving a literary prize at Bremen he says:

> Reachable, near and not lost, there remained in the midst of the losses this one thing: language…
>
> But it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through frightful muting, pass through the thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech… (Hirch and Spitzer 2010: 246)

Yet, it is utterly silent. Modifying Martin Heidegger's Christian concept of existence as a "status viatoris", Celan hopes that poetry with its dialogue is like a message in a bottle sent in hope of reaching its destination:

> A Poem as a manifestation of language, and thus essentially dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the – not always hopeful – belief that somewhere and sometime it would wash up on land on heartland perhaps (Lyon 2006: 86).

Doesn't this sensitive and brittle voice evoke Sylvia Plath's in the Bell Jar? If the Holocaust is the sound of terror, its aftermath is silence. And if the language of poetry is a witness to this, the language then is void or silent because "No one bears witness for the witness" (Chare 2011: 68). Preoccupied with the Jewish "collective unconscious", there is an inherent juxtaposed argument in Celan's poetry between remote belief in God and Post-Holocaust shattered spirit, culminating in his last poems which are compressed, spaceless, surfeit and suffocating. In by passage of another he writes:

> The trumpet part
> deep in the glowing
> lacuna
> at lamp height
> in the time hole:
>
> listen your way in
> with your mouth. (Fioretos 1994: 91)

Hearing with mouth indicates the air emptying out of the hollowness of the trumpet ending in silence and while ear is an organ for receiving, mouth is for emptying. Trumpet also denotes the background sound when Moses went up the Sinai which is a symbolic music of revealing God's covenant to his people. Thus the poem is "full of sound … (but) signifying" silence and death. The ambience in his poems is always either twilight or night. There is a gradual receding into death – his own suicide in Seine in April 1970. According to Primo Levi his poetry is a "pre-suicide writing", a "last inarticulate babble … (which) … consternates like the rattle of a dying man" (Magavern 2009: 149). It is "tragic and noble", a natural response to The Holocaust

like Elie Wiesel's *Night*. His poems want to speak of the most extreme horror through silence. Celan had transformed the wild discordant note into the poetry of silence with a deep melancholic note.

Interpretation of Fear & Death

The poem *Todesfuge* is the best example of the themes of fear and death. The poem opens with an oxymoron of dark note:

> Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall
>
> we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
>
> drink it and drink it
>
> we are digging grave in the sky… (Celan 1972: 33)

The "exilic voice" of Celan draws a painful image of silence. The color black absorbs other colours implying the de-flamboyant setting. The "black milk" is consumed day and night. This suggests the continuous presence of hunger and death. Only death lives and they have no space even for a grave that they must be buried only in the sky. The spread of this absence is a symbolic theme of silence. A Jew, Celan explored the meaning of existence after the Holocaust, between hope and hopelessness with an "Amichaian confrontation" (Mansour et al 2014: 72) and towards the end it was silence that remained in his poems. Fear of murder is another thing which haunted Celan till the end.

As a Holocaust survivor, he was preoccupied with the fear of being caught by his parents' murderers. Moreover he was writing in his mother-tongue (German) to take his mother's murderers to task. The case of his fear can be compared to Harold Pinter's (also a Jew) Anti -Semitic fear of Fascists coming back to life in London which he expressed through silences in his most acclaimed work The Birthday Party. "Celan's ever-deepening fear, and mistrust of people, even close friends" (Joris 2001: 5) left him aphasic in his writings resulting in chronic stuttering and epileptically broken phrases. "His pathological fear of being hurt" (Joris 2001: 207) pervades in the frequent surrealistic leaps of indecisiveness being displaced in a *Waiting for Godot* -like absurdity of life; in fact paradoxically waiting for death. Mark this pattern in "The Straitening":

Came, came.

Came a word, came,

came through the night

wanted to shine, wanted to shine.

Ash.

Ash, ash.

Night.

Night – and – night. – Go

to the eye, the moist one. (Celan 1972: 59)

These babbles of unsayability do not just denote silence but also a kind of voice broken from language. As Dennis J. Schmidt puts it, "such silence is not to be confused with mere quiet but needs to be heard as the unvocalised voice of the poem… a voice estranged from language, rendering the effort to listen to language in the poem rare, demanding, and painful at once" (Wolfson & Brown 2006: 197). Celan's poetry is a metaphor of a silence in broken syllables of death-signifying moan which is a tragic outcome of a long-haunted apocalyptic fear that muted millions of voices. His language is that of the dead. Theodor Adorno says, "Celan's poems want to speak of the most extreme horror through silence. They imitate a language beneath the helpless language of human beings, indeed beneath all organic language: it is that of the dead speaking of stones and stars" (1997: 422). Celan's poetry is a most important part of the Holocaust Literature particularly as a literature of silence.

Death is an important theme that pervades throughout his poetry. With 'night' and 'autumn' as metaphoric portrayals of death, he tunes silence with a vociferous prosody. There is a frequent withdrawal from life that even the daybreak appears to be nightfall when he says, "the night is the night, it begins with morning" (Celan 1972: 31). Fear of death stills the life everywhere and very moment in the 'death camps' proceeds in a snail-slow pace, the pain of which he mumbles in silent, explosive words:

Autumn eats its leaf out of my hand: we are friends.

From the nuts we shell time and we teach it to walk:

Then time returns to the shell. (Celan 1972: 32)

Conclusion

To conclude in the light of Theodre Adrono's reconsideration of his own dictum – "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" – Paul Celan's Holocaust-born epochal art restates "*only* poetry is possible after Auschwitz" Only the poetry of silence can be the best metaphor to represent the history of ashes because

All the poetry there is in the world

appears to rise out of ashes. (Mahapatra 1992: 9)

Though Mahapatra's words cannot be justified in all the cases, they are true in the sense of what kind of themes is the genre of poetry precise for and its emotional depth with a lyrical intensity? When the greatest poets in history like King David, Charles Baudelaire, John Keats, John Berryman, Emile Dickenson, Edgar Elan Poe, and Sylvia Plath are considered for instance, the essence of their poetry is the remnant of what they suffered either mentally or physically which burnt them to the quintessence of what their place in history is. When Berryman saw his father's suicide, the theme of death became the subject all his poetry culminating in *The Dream Songs*. Leonard Cohen says, "If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash" (Reiner 2012: 11). The consequence of the capacity to suffer or endure the ordeal of a classic magnitude is Cohen's metaphor of poetry – ash because in John Cage's words. "There is poetry as soon as we realize that we possess nothing" (Courtney and Keppler 2013: 1).

So to justify, that only poetry is the precise genre, in the light of the thematic analysis of silence in Paul Celan's Holocaust poetics, one must examine how the experience of tribulations confronts with the scope of language "thinking through pain" in a Heideggerian sense and comes to a staggering halt at the periphery thus breaking down into most valuable nothings from the permanently choked voices of history. We come across the most vociferous adjectival and adverbial manifestations of silence of these voices in the poems like *Speak, you Also*. It may be concluded that if according to the poetry of Celan the thematic essence of the Holocaust

persecution is silence and if ash is its metaphor, then the process of the annihilation portrayed in both the topographical and the individual picture of the poem justifies this.

He insists the silent – "you also" – who have nothing; who are unworthy to speak or rather who permanently lost their voice, to give their last "inarticulate babble" before they "grope your (their) way up" which points to death. The execution of six million Jews creates a metaphoric truth that an episode of history was wiped out from the world map because had there been no Holocaust, that absence of today might have been probably something else remarkable. This diminishing picture and its human voice and the burning sensation of which is about to be ash is obvious in the lines:

> But now shrinks the place where you stand:
>
> Where now, stripped by shade, will you go?
>
> ……..
>
> Thinner you grow less knowable,
>
> ……..sand dunes
>
> of wandering words. (Celan 1972: 43)

The words like "shrinks", "stripped by shade", "thinner you grow", "less knowable", "sand dunes", and "wandering words" contribute to the deteriorating pattern of both voice and picture. Especially the phrase "the sand dunes of wandering words" is evocative of the ashy picture of the cremation of corpses which in Celan's words disappeared into ash before they expressed their pain and wish. Lastly the opening line of the poem *Aspen tree* proves the role poetry in explaining the significance of ash in the thematic richness in the concealed epigrammatic images of "ash", "pen" and "tree" in the words "Aspen tree" connoting the tragic account of the Holocaust; and those died are leaves which also mean pages of history. "They glance white into the dark" speaks of their eyes towards death or God which "white" signifies or hopeless future which Celan expresses clearer in the line "Upward. Grope your way up" in the poem *Speak, You Also*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Interpretation of Silence in Paul Celan's Holocaust Poetics

To discuss in the light of Theodre Adorno's reconsideration of his own dictum – "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" – Paul Celan's Holocaust-born epochal art restates "*only* poetry is possible after Auschwitz". The Shaoh stands as a testimony of the most painful endurance in history thus permanently fracturing the self-confidence especially of many Jews and their belief in the "Biblical Chosenness". The consequent literature of continuing silence with a guilt of survival has redefined the term suffering especially in the poetry of Paul Celan which if turned out to be the "last inarticulate babble" had the merit of silencing words into a condensed metaphoric image of recurring complexity that finally brings out a paradoxical message with a strange "capacity to have the incapacity to speak". Unlike the poetry of the Romantics which was verbally vociferous, Celan's was more so with silence being a displaced being like a blurred horizon between the Pre-Holocaust land and the Post-Holocaust sky. Silence as a form of dense literary genre which is like "a letter in a bottle thrown out to sea" in Celan's poetry starts at the periphery of Auschwitz cries. Ironically enough his suicide culminates in this mission. His metaphoric voice sets out for excavation of memories in Shoah painfully encountering aphasia with a parallel pursuit for a language that replays the action and music of the perpetual death in the still fresh picture of ash-flake rain or charred chunks of human flesh. Celan explored the darkest domains of human history with a polysemeous canon and systematically constructed the art of silence as an emerging literary consequence where the words become cryptic, fractured and attain what Gilles Deleuze and Guttari said: "the becoming minor of the major language".

KEYWORDS

Holocaust, Existential Silence, Language Grille, Persecution, Death, Ash.

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

ESSAYS

THE NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST: SYLVIA PLATH AS A MOTHER POET

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In American poet Sylvia Plath's (1932-1963) poems written in the last quarter of 1962, the viewpoints move from the private to the public and historical. The personal experience enlarges to the larger historical one. We can find it in her invocation of historical tragedies such as the Holocaust and Hiroshima in her poems. Plath uses these tragedies to reveal her anxieties under the pressure of the Cold War.

Sylvia Plath is well-known for writing Nazi's Holocaust poems such as "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus," but in this article, I write about her reference to the Holocaust in light of the specter of nuclear war. I focus on Plath's poems, especially "For a Fatherless Son" (dated 26th September 1962), "Fever 103°" (20th October), "Nick and the Candlestick" (29th October), "Mary's Song" (19th November), and "Brasilia" (1st December).

Sylvia Plath lived in the nuclear age. Because of the nuclear conflict caused by the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, people feared that war using

nuclear bombs might occur and lead to genocide. The world had been virtually bombarded by these two superpowers. In Plath's writings as well, a nuclear-conflict subtext is inscribed.

After 1953, both the United States and the Soviet Union launched a series of hydrogen bomb tests. The age was moving from atomic bombs to hydrogen bombs. The biggest hydrogen bomb test was done by the Soviet Union in 1961. Plath learned about it through articles in *Time* Magazine and others (Peel 2002: 39). In a letter to her mother, Plath uses the words "the insanity of world-annihilation" (Plath 1976: 378) after watching the demonstration against hydrogen bombs held in London. She felt testings' intensification like other people.

The year 1962 is especially important because of the high tension of the Cuban Missile Crisis that October. People's fears of Communism were extraordinary in American capitalism. Mass communication incited fears in people, and information by radio programs, newspapers, and magazines gave them great impact. It was hard for the people to think about the facts in a calm way. Plath as well was greatly affected by the news from those media: Plath had read "Time" magazine, "The New Statesman" magazine, and "The Observer" newspaper as well as listening to the BBC radio. Despite living in England and having seen or experienced any wars in Europe, her fears of disaster had not diminished. In her personal life in 1962, she was forced to live with her children without the help of her husband Ted Hughes, because he had left her for an adulterous affair. Being discarded by him, as well as nuclear uncertainty, compounded her anxieties.

After having read two articles written by Fred J. Cook in the magazine *The Nation*, Plath wrote about the shock she received in a letter to her mother:

> I got so awfully depressed two weeks ago by reading two issues of *The Nation* – "Juggernaut, the Warfare State" – all about the terrifying marriage of big business and the military in America and the forces of the John Birch Society, etc.; and then another article about the repulsive shelter craze for fallout, all very factual, documented, and true, that I simply couldn't sleep for nights with all the warlike talk in the papers, such as Kennedy saying Khrushchev would "have no place to hide," and the armed forces manuals indoctrinating soldiers about the "inevitable" war with our "implacable foe" (Plath 1976: 437-438).

After writing "Burning the Letters," Plath had not written a poem for six weeks. But from September 26, Plath produced a variety of poems in the last quarter of 1962. In October especially, in the month of the Cuban Missile Crisis which occurred at the height of the Cold War, she created 25 poems, which were later called the "October Poems." It seems that her dominated anxieties triggered her to write a host of poems. They were a catalyst for her writing.

In addition, her husband's infidelity and the resulting marriage crisis enforced her anxieties. Her huge productivity may be also the result of trying to compensate for the big hole within herself caused by her husband Ted Hughes's leaving.

In Sylvia Plath's case, however, as far as we know, she did not choose the position of a political activist, nor did she communicate with other activists who were against the war. Her writing did not provide a direct commentary on the Cold War conflict. As Robin Peel writes, the contemporary poets avoided involvement in the political situation (Peel 2002: 32). Many poets pursued their own inner world and constructed their poems during a period of heightened world tension. Plath's poems as well focus on her inner world by referring to the outer world. Thus, despite feeling the pressure of the Cold War, Plath did not become a political activist, or write directly about nuclear conflict, but focused only on her inner world under that pressure.

It is important to notice that Sylvia Plath also has a mother's voice. Before the 1970s, it was rare to find a maternal subjectivity in the poetry world. Her contemporary poets did not take up themes of childbirth, stillbirth, and childrearing like Plath did. Contrasted with her mother-theme poems in which the speakers have ambivalent feelings, her poems towards children are filled with love and tenderness. But after Hughes's abandonment and in the midst of nuclear conflict, her mother-infant poems are also filled with anxieties that are connected to the children's future. The mothers-speakers are vulnerable and helpless. It is not surprising that she as a mother began to "wonder if there was any point in trying to bring up children in such a mad, self-destructive world" (Plath 1976: 438). Plath's anxieties about the effects of nuclear bombs were directly connected to her children.

Sylvia Plath wrote "For a Fatherless Son" on 26th September. Under the nuclear conflict, Plath's anxieties of rearing her children alone are reflected in this poem. The speaker is a husbandless mother. Looking at her fatherless son, the speaker thinks that at this moment the baby does not know that his father was away but will feel his absence soon. The emotional isolation are strengthened because of Plath's memory of growing up without a father.

> You will be aware of an absence, presently,
>
> Growing beside you, like a tree,
>
> A death tree, color gone, an Australian gum tree—
>
> Balding, gelded by lightning—an illusion,
>
> And a sky like a pig's backside, an utter lack of attention. (Plath, 1981: 205)

The reference to "lightning" suggests the explosion of a hydrogen bomb. A tree dies because of the explosion. The sky is like the color of "a pig's backside," and its blue color disappears because of white clouds. Plath also depicts the apocalyptic scene.

In "Fever 103°" the speaker feels disintegration in her bodily temperature rise. A bout of fever is connected with a nuclear blast: the blast in Hiroshima. As Tim Kendall writes, "[t]he body itself becomes a site of potential holocaust, embodying global catastrophe" (Kendall 2001: 163-64).

Two kinds of fire are described here. One is the fire of hell, and the other is those of heaven. The reference to "Hiroshima ash" is connected with the first fires in an apocalyptic wasteland. They show the images of irradiation in a nuclear holocaust, and accompany the peeling skin. On the other hand, the fires of heaven evoke an image of purification. The fires of heaven are followed by those of hell. Does this mean that even after destruction on earth there is the possibility of going up to heaven and being cleansed and purified? There is, however, no resolution of surviving.

Radiation turned it white

And killed it in an hour.

Greasing the bodies of adulterers

Like Hiroshima ash and eating in.

The sin. The sin. (Plath 1981: 231).

In context, the speaker rises to heaven as a "pure acetylene / Virgin" (Plath 1981: 231). Here we can find the speaker's identification with the Virgin Mary. It is significant that the speaker becomes a flammable "acetylene" Virgin. Mary in the Assumption – Mary's bodily rise to heaven – is ironically described. This Assumption is not a celebrated one. Becoming an acetylene -vapor person means losing one's own body. And the smell of acetylene suggests the aftermath of nuclear disaster.

In "Nick and the Candlestick," the Virgin Mary-like mother sits with her sleeping Christ -like child by candlelight in a darkened cold room like a cave, a setting which is similar to those of "Candles" and "By Candlelight." Here, the child is sleeping as if still in the protected womb. It is, however, possible to notice this womb-tomb relation. Usually, the scenes of the Virgin Mary and

the infant Christ remind us of the co-existence of life and death because of the ever-present association with the Crucifixion. For the poem's mother-speaker, Nick is the newborn Christ. She superimposes the life of Christ onto that of her child, predicting his fate.

In the last stanza, the mother-speaker praises the supremacy of her Christ-like child Nick: "You are the one / Solid the spaces lean on, envious. / You are the baby in the barn" (Plath 1981: 240-242). However, the stars are falling into blackness and "the mercuric / Atoms that cripple" are dropping "[i]nto the terrible well." The mother-speaker feels strong fear for her child, who is born into darkness. She must defend her vulnerable child against a threatening world. As Christina Britzolakis writes, "Plath draws on aspects of the symbolic and religious discourse of motherhood as a critique of Cold War militarism" (Britzolakis 1999: 86).

"Mary's Song" refers to the Virgin Mary. The title reminds us of the nursery rhyme "Mary had a little lamb," and there is an implication that Mary's son, Christ, is the sacrificial lamb. It seems that this poem is the song of the wailing mother -- the Mater Dolorosa -- who bears her child into an agonizing world in which he is born to die as a sacrifice. The mother's protective wishes are not rewarded.

This poem begins with an image from everyday life. The "Sunday lamb" cooking for dinner is equated with Christ, the sacrificial lamb. The speaker watches the light of the flames within the gas oven. She associates the fire for cooking this "Sunday lamb" with the fire which was used by the church to burn the flesh of the heretics, "the tallow heretics". Then the image shifts to the Nazi extermination gas ovens. Holocaust is the site of burnt bodies. In this way, the fire of the homely gas oven develops into other kinds of fire. In the fifth stanza onwards, there appears an image of another fire, the dropping of A-bombs in Hiroshima:

Gray birds obsess my heart,

Mouth-ash, ash of eye.

They settle. On the high

Precipice

That emptied one man into space

The ovens glowed like heavens, incandescent.

It is a heart,

This holocaust I walk in,

O golden child the world will kill and eat (Plath 1981: 257).

Writing at the height of the Cold War, the poet shows that the speaker suggests the possibility of future destruction here as well. Mouth and eyes are filled with "ash." This carries connotations of global nuclear holocaust. Etymologically the word "holocaust" comes from Greek, *holokauston, which means "burn all things*." Nuclear war represents burning everything on the earth. All things turn into ashes.

In such a world, the mother cannot protect her child any more. As I have told, Plath enlarges one's private family landscape into the larger disaster of the world. As Jo Gill writes: "The home may be private – closed off from the world – but it is hardly a space of privacy" (Jill 2006: 33). The home is obliged to be involved in world disaster.

As she writes in "Mary's Song," Plath seems to believe that the history in which the weak have been sacrificed by the strong repeats itself. As her subject, Christ is the first sacrifice, and from the modern age onward ordinary people are the subsequent sacrifices. They are obliged to be under the nuclear threat.

In another of Sylvia Plath's late poems, entitled "Brasilia," the mother-speaker identifies herself with the Virgin Mary and talks about her sacrificial Christ-like son. Like "Mary's Song," this poem also seems to reference the song of the wailing mother. The image of the crucifix appears thus:

And my baby a nail

Driven in, driven in.

He shrieks in his grease

Bones nosing for distances.

And I nearly extinct,

His three teeth cutting

Themselves on my thumb — (Plath 1981: 258-259).

The layout of the city Brasilia reminds us of a crucifix. The mother-speaker prays submissively in order for her child not to be the martyr of the world. Although she herself is "nearly extinct", she strongly feels the agony of her child on the cross, surrounded by a new race of robotic "people with torsos of steel . . . super-people". Is this the aftermath of nuclear war? It is where human beings with flesh are denied. What is called "You", does "eat / People like light rays". Does this mean that people are melted by the nightmarish nuclear radiation? People are to be extinguished. In such a world, how can a mother protect her child?

Sylvia Plath describes the past atrocity of the Holocaust under the threat of nuclear destruction. It has been controversial among literary critics that her identification with victimized figures is ambiguous. It is often said that her use of it is somehow emblematic and superficial and that she uses these facts to reveal her own suffering and sad situation. Actually Plath did not experience wars or Nazism's cruelty. In a way, references to Nazi concentration camps and the genocide in Hiroshima may be seen as her attempt to strengthen the effect of her poetry. Against Plath's using the historical occasions, Joyce Carol Oates charges that "Plath exhibits only the most remote (and rhetorical) sympathy with other people" (Oates 1973: 520). Plath said in an interview: "Personal experience in poetry shouldn't be a kind of shut-box and mirror-looking, narcissistic experience. I believe it should be *relevant*, and relevant to the larger things, the bigger things such as Hiroshima and Dachau and so on" (Orr 1966: 169-170).

Looking back on history, we find that history repeats itself, and past disastrous occasions are in a way the present disastrous ones. This fact reminds Plath that her children have a precarious existence. She thinks that it is difficult to raise children in an uncertain world with no guarantee for safety. For her, in these situations, the weak, especially children, are obliged to be the victimized. Children have no way to protect themselves. They are forced to surrender to the power and violence wielded by great powers. For Plath, in the long history of human beings, the weak always have been victimized in disastrous incidents. It is clear that she is worried about the future of children. Thus in Plath's poems in the last quarter of 1962, her fears about the nuclear situation are mainly connected with the speaker's, i.e. Plath's children's future. Her sympathetic internalization of historical matters might be personal, but the anxieties Plath felt are those that we experience now under continuing nuclear pressure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

The Nuclear Holocaust: Sylvia Plath as a Mother Poet

Sylvia Plath is a kind of poet whose personal experience enlarges to the larger historical one. We can find it in her invocation of historical tragedies such as the Holocaust and Hiroshima. Plath uses these tragedies to reveal her anxieties under the pressure of the Cold War. In this paper, I write about her reference to the Holocaust in light of the specter of nuclear war. Plath produced a variety of poems in the last quarter of 1962. In October especially, in the month of the Cuban Missile Crisis which occurred at the height of the Cold War, she created 25 poems, which were later called the "October Poems". It seems that her dominated anxieties triggered her to write a host of poems. This time I focus on Plath's mother-child related poems. Her anxieties about the effects of nuclear bombs were directly connected to her children.

KEYWORDS

Sylvia Plath, Nuclear Holocaust, Cold War

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

ESSAYS

REPRESENTING AND TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A PRACTICAL PROPOSAL

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More than seven decades have elapsed since the horrible Nazi machine was set into motion and, although some thinkers claim that "it is time to leave Auschwitz behind" (Burg 2008: 210), many of the debates concerning its representation and transmission still echo in contemporary societies. Among all the complex questions that the Holocaust brings to the fore, this article will focus on the conflicts over the role of history, testimony and literature in depicting the Holocaust and the traditional clash between the position of the historian, the witness and the artist when coming to terms with it. In the 1980s, Lawrence L. Langer exposed this conflict in the following questions: "To whom shall we entrust the custody of the public memory of the Holocaust? To the historian? To the survivor? To the critic? To the poet, novelist, dramatist?" (1988: 26). It is my contention that these questions are still very present within the field of Holocaust Studies and, thus, I will try to address some of them in the present article.

It is widely agreed that the literary representation of the Holocaust is problematic (Henke 1988: xiii; LaCapra 2001: 11; Lang 1988: 38; Luckhurst 2008: 69; Martínez-Alfaro 2010: 15), as

Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel put it: "by its uniqueness the Holocaust defies literature" (1970: 10). The well-known assumption in Trauma and Memory Studies that the representation of any traumatic episode is an aporetic phenomenon may bring some light into this problematic**.** As most of the well-known trauma critics have argued (Caruth 1995: 7; Granofsky 1995: 17; Hartman 2003: 257; LaCapra 2001: 184; Luckhurst 2008: 80; Vickroy 2002: 8-9; Whitehead 2004: 17), this paradoxical character stems from the contradictory nature of the phenomenon of trauma itself. Roger Luckhurst explains that any traumatic episode implies two main opposing impulses: the need to comprehend and deny the original traumatic event, turning the representation of the traumatic episode into a questionable act (2008: 89). Furthermore, focusing on the literary representation of trauma, Anne Whitehead emphasises that the term "*trauma fiction* represents a paradox or contradiction; if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativised in fiction?" (2004: 3). Taking these aporias into consideration, even more demanding questions arise when dealing with the Holocaust: what happens when the representation of trauma makes reference to historical episodes which have affected a vast number of people; which have implied a turning point in our understanding of history; which have been transmitted generationally, giving place to a feeling of identity based on the trauma itself?

In order to shed some light on these enquiries, I will start by summarising the evolution of the literary representation of the Holocaust, concentrating on the confessional culture that has predominated in the last two decades. An overview of the present-day vast number of Holocaust narratives as well as the memoir boom will lead me to question the dangers of the current overuse of trauma, mainly in relation to Holocaust narratives, and to focus on the key role of education in addressing and negotiating the meaning of the Holocaust when trying to educate "the future generations on the democratic and citizenship values that failed drastically in Europe seven decades ago" (Pellicer-Ortín, Martínez-Alfaro and Fernández-Gil 2015: 161). Thus, one of my main claims will be that the texts and activities teachers prepare for their classrooms may offer an invigorated space of encounter for the students to develop empathic bonds which could help them see the Holocaust through new-fangled prisms. I will illustrate some of these key aspects with a practical exercise that I carried out in some academic workshops, and which could be used in educational contexts to raise students' awareness about the dilemmas posed by the representation of the Holocaust. After presenting these practical activities, I will discuss the possible results of such exercises as well as the potential path that the field of Holocaust Studies may take when it comes to educate the future generations in dealing with one of the darkest

episodes of our era and in making them be aware of the ideological structures that lie behind the predominant literary modes and confessional genres of our given time.

Representing the Holocaust: Debates and Evolution

The depiction of the traumatic events happened during the Nazi regime is always linked to certain ethical and historical limits that try to avoid its trivialisation. Thinkers, historians and artists such as Jean-François Lyotard, Tim Armstrong, Elie Wiesel, Claude Lanzmann, Arthur Cohen, Theodor Adorno or Maurice Blanchot among many others (Rothberg 2000: 5, 19) have argued for the unrepresentability of the Holocaust. For example, the philosopher Berel Lang has claimed that the Holocaust cannot be accessed through any artistic representation but only through historiographic discourse (1988: 38). Ideas supported by Irving Howe when he highlights the difficulties for writers of fiction in making sense of the Holocaust: "what can the literary imagination, traditionally so proud of its self-generating capacities, add to – how can it go beyond – the intolerable matter [the Holocaust] cast up by memory?" (1988: 187).

In contrast, other critics have contended that the society of the future should concentrate on the remembrance of the events themselves and their value for educational purposes, much more so when the number of first-generation survivors decreases every day. This way, Geoffrey Hartman has insisted that "we are deep into the process of creating new instruments to record and express what happened. The instruments themselves, the means of expression, are now, as it were, born of trauma" (2002: 1). Among these instruments, he mentions the power of testimonies as well as fictional narratives (2002: 52); a claim that is also supported by other critics such as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992: xx). Moreover, the voices defending the role of literature as the most appropriate means to depict the Holocaust have increased in the last few years. For instance, Maja Zehfuss sees literary practices as the most suitable sites to negotiate these memories publically and to foster ethical attitudes in citizens when she argues that: "By stressing the fictionality of what might appear as information… literature disturbs our faith in knowing and thereby keeps open the question of memory" (2006: 229-30). Together with this, the tendency to undervalue the narrations that have not been written by first-generation survivors is still a controversial issue. As María Jesús Martínez Alfaro rightly puts it, "fictionalised accounts of the Holocaust… have been thoroughly questioned, or at least questioned in a way that survivors' narratives have not" (2011: 129). Some of the main reasons for this emphasis on

authority are the suspicions about a writer's reasons to write a fictional account on a collective traumatic event of such scale as the Holocaust and the unreliability assigned to these narratives.

The evolution that the literary representation of the Holocaust has undergone in the last decades may be very telling when considering these authorial concerns. More than sixty years ago, Theodor Adorno expressed his famous contention that writing poetry after Auschwitz was barbaric (2003: 160). However, some years later, he explained that what he meant was that literature needed to find new ways to represent the Holocaust, and that the victims had the task to voice their experiences, always respecting certain ethical limits (1973). After this initial advocacy of silence, the testimonial works of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Jorge Semprún, and Jean Améry contributed to promoting the all-pervading idea that the genre of testimony was the most appropriate way to access the Holocaust (Winter 2010: 60). Holocaust witnesses assumed a kind of "liminal, mediating, semi-sacred role" (62), and the duty "to bear witness for the dead and for the living" (Wiesel 1958: xv).

However, in spite of this central role of the witness, artistic consciousness started to develop in the 1980s. The legacy of the Holocaust acquired a more relevant presence in US culture with the popular TV series *Holocaust* (1978) and William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice* (1979), which was made into the well-known film in 1982. From that moment onwards, plenty of written, oral and visual testimonies of Holocaust survivors have been collected. Survivors and their descendants have narrated their experiences in literary forms. In fact, the second – and third – generations of Holocaust survivors have produced a great variety of hybrid accounts that show the descendants' struggles to cope with the inherited burden of the Holocaust. Also, writers who did not live the Holocaust have contributed to the current eclosion of Holocaust narratives. And what is more, false testimonies such as Helen Darville's *The Hand that Signed the Paper* (1995) and Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments* (1996) have seen the light, turning into writings "of pressing generic concern" (Vice 2010: 155). In keeping with this, many recent critical works have even contributed to fostering the label of the so called "Holocaust novels" or "Holocaust genre": the great variety of fictional, semi-fictional or autobiographical works which have represented the Holocaust in recent times (Sicher 2005: xi). Their appearance has even given forth an overrepresentation of the Holocaust, which has made it accessible to a wider public. Accordingly, the latest stage in this evolution has been reached, as the Holocaust has become a metaphor to refer to diverse collective traumatic episodes suffered by different minority groups during the twentieth century.

The Memory Boom and New Testimonial Genres

This recent commodification and metaphorisation of the Holocaust goes hand in hand with the testimonial turn that contemporary culture has experienced since the 1990s. Although the great majority of trauma critics have agreed on the healing potential of trauma narratives (Auerbach 1989: vi; Bloom 2010: 210; Hartman 2003: 259; Henke 1998: xii-xiii; LaCapra 2001: 186; Laub and Podell 1995: 998), inspired, among others, by the pioneering theories of the "talking cure" elaborated by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer at the end of the 19th century (1991: 57-68), we should wonder to what extent the practice of "scriptotherapy" – "the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment" – has been deprived of its original healing meaning (Henke 1998: xii-xiii).

It is evident that a proliferation of life-writing practices and an increasing academic interest in autobiographical genres has recently occurred. In the light of this, Andreas Huyssen claims that memory has emerged as the key organising principle of critical and artistic work at the turn of the millenium (1995: 9). Duncan Bell has even argued that "the turn to memory represents a pathological condition of contemporary political life" (2010: 25). And Roger Luckhurst considers that this obsession has invaded the literary panorama in the form of a "memory boom" of unprecedented proportions (2008: 117). Within this context, an outburst of new autobiographical sub-genres has happened, as the need to narrate traumatic memories has led writers to look for genres that represent what in principle cannot be represented due its traumatic nature.

This boom has also been studied by the sociological and anthropological current of critics that have been aware of the socio-political dangers that the invasion of trauma in general and of Holocaust images in particular may imply in our daily lives. Alan Young (1997: 3-4), Patrick Bracken (2001: 733), and Kirby Farrell (1998: x) are some of the thinkers who have criticised the current universalised notions of trauma and they have claimed for the decentralisation of the Western concept of PTSD. Other critics like Duncan Bell suggest that this "widespread use of trauma discourse in western societies has led to an abdication of individual and political responsibility and the emergence of an undifferentiated "victim culture" (2010: 9). This victim culture has contributed to the creation of what Dominick LaCapra has defined as "foundational traumas" (2001: 26), giving place to myths of origins that tend to justify violence in response to the traumatic experiences undergone by a given group. Further, another negative consequence of this abuse of trauma has been the increasing appearance of False Memory Syndrome cases, which sometimes have been directly or indirectly encouraged by society and therapists, mainly in those

cases related to sexual abuse. Drawing on this, this trauma paradigm, the "trauma culture" according to Roger Luckhurst (2003: 28-47) and "traumatological" in Philip Tew's view (2007: 190), is said to have invaded the media and a wide range of contemporary confessional literature.

Applying these ideas to the case of the Holocaust, I have already pointed a finger at the contemporary tendency to welcome the connections between the Holocaust and other traumatic collective events, emptying the Holocaust of its original meaning and making it part of our collective consciousness. This has had various positive effects, such as the fostering of a universal rights policy and the increasing upsurge of social movements against any form of violence. Nevertheless, its over-presence has also given way to several cases of trivialisation which, according to Manfred Gerstenfeld, contribute to far-fetched comparisons of the Holocaust with very diverse events in order to satisfy different ideological and commercial purposes (2008). Also, this has produced a drastic change in the general understanding of the figure of the survivor. If the term survivor was initially assigned a semi-sacred status, nowadays, "survival has become a paradigm of an identity-making trauma" (Roth 2011: 94-5). Together with this, diverse false testimonies have seen the light, being the object of an interesting controversy about the new -fangled ways of reading testimony and the ethical purposes of these new testimonial narratives. These phenomena, as well as Robert Eaglestone's conviction that "Holocaust testimony needs to be understood as a new genre, in a new context, which involves both texts and altered ways of reading, standing in its own right" (2004: 38), together with Sue Vice's further claims that false testimony may be seen as a new way "to view such constructs as nationality, ethnic origin, the experience of victimhood, gender, and subjectivity itself" (2010: 155), would challenge the traditional clash between Holocaust history, testimony and literature.

In short, tracing the evolution in the theories on the representation of the Holocaust leads us to realise that the fields of Trauma, Memory and Holocaust Studies are broadening their horizons so as to include previous neglected genres, modes and discourses and blurring the traditional rigid boundaries between fiction, autobiography, memoir, testimony and even history. Moreover, a turn to autobiographical and testimonial practices has been noticed and it has been closely related to the current individual and collective need to voice traumatic experiences, even though this ever-present issue of trauma in the Western socio-cultural realm has led to an abuse and over-use of the healing mechanisms initially provided by these narratives. Drawing on this, my next point for discussion would be: to what extent has this changing panorama affected the way the Holocaust, and by extension other traumatic historical episodes, is taught and encountered by readers/students in diverse literary texts?

Education: New Sites of Representation and Confrontation

It is not a coincidence that these voices demanding more flexible approaches to the Holocaust representation run parallel to the moment when education has become an essential aspect to consider in present-day Holocaust discussions. As Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford argue, the Holocaust has not only become a major topic of research but it has also turned into a key issue to negotiate in pedagogical circles (2008: 1). The same complexities and difficulties that emerge when talking about Holocaust representation in the field of Holocaust Studies come to the fore in the field of pedagogy, becoming part of the vocabulary of the teachers of a good range of subjects and modules at various levels and in very different countries and contexts. Most of the disciplines and fields that have been mentioned so far converge when it comes to the issue of educating on the Holocaust. Although this interest in teaching the Holocaust is significant in many areas, the fields of literary studies, modern languages, and film studies have experienced a more significant surge in interest. Just as the research on this field has enormously increased in the last few decades, the texts dealing with these issues have been extensively analysed in the literature and media curriculum. Therefore, most of the controversies explained so far emerge in a similar way in the literature, film or culture classroom that tackles the Holocaust.

Yet, drawing on the teaching experiences collected in Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford's study (2008: 9-14), the generic distinctions that still worry many literary critics are not so relevant in the classroom. The traditional either/or opposition between viewing literary texts in terms of historical fact or experimental poetic narratives does not help students to grasp the complexity of the Holocaust, as what they should grasp is the immeasurability of the Holocaust and the impossibility to fully comprehend it. Although some historical facts have always to be taught, the Holocaust challenges the main tenet of any educative process, i.e. the transmission of knowledge and factual data, since, in spite of the great number of historical and testimonial reports, "the evidence is not sufficient to provide us with a knowledge of the events" (Donalds and Glejzer 2001: 159). Therefore, a good starting point for a literary course dealing with Holocaust narratives would be to make students aware of the blurring line existing between factual, historical and fictional representations of the Holocaust and help them unveil the range of narrative mechanisms that can be used to put into words such unspeakable events as those undergone under Nazism.

A Practical Exercise: Looking for Authorial Traces in Holocaust Narratives

In order to satisfy this educational purpose, I would like to illustrate the exercise I carried out with the audiences participating in the Conferences "The Future of Holocaust Studies" (Southampton, July 2013) and "AEDEAN" (Barcelona, November 2011), and which could be used with undergraduate or postgraduate students attending any course that is related to the literary and/or cultural representation of the Holocaust. According to Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes' postulates exposed in their work *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, where they claimed that when teaching the and through the Holocaust "one can introduce students to philosophical debates about good and evil; to sociological theories of violence, authority, obedience, conformity, resistance, and rescue; and to psychological theories of tolerance and prejudice, of trauma, memory, and survival" (2004: 6-7); these are the main issues that the exercise proposed is aimed at arising in any class or workshop where it could be implemented. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the teacher that introduces the Holocaust in the classroom can have access to the great number of resources offered by institutions like the UNESCO, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Centre for Holocaust Education in London, or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum which offer recommendations about how to teach through the Holocaust. As may be read on the website of the USHMM: "When you as an educator take the time to consider the rationale for your lessons on the Holocaust, you will be more likely to select content that speaks to your students' interests and provides them with a clearer understanding of a complex history". This is the principle that was applied to the selection of the texts needed for this particular activity, together with some of the guidelines they offer when carrying out similar activities to the one presented here: "Do not teach or imply that the Holocaust was inevitable / Avoid simple answers to complex questions / Strive for precision of language / Strive for balance in establishing whose perspective informs your study of the Holocaust / Avoid comparisons of pain / Do not romanticize history. / Contextualize the history / Translate statistics into people / Make responsible methodological choices." Finally, Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes also explain that the literary and testimonial texts chosen should make use of experimentation and indirectedness so as to prevent the readers' over -identification with the experiences depicted and in order to expose readers to a variety of extreme situations which might urge students to rethink their ethical positions (2004: 16).

Taking these premises into account, the exercise entitled "Looking for Authorial Traces in Holocaust Narratives" consists of analysing various narrative fragments concerned with the Holocaust. They may be testimonial works written by Holocaust survivors, false testimonies, or

literary works produced by non-survivors. The teacher does not initially provide any background information of the author and the text, as they are going to focus only on the stylistic traces displayed. The students should identify different aspects in their analysis, such as the narrative voice, the variety of rhetorical figures, the use of verbal tenses and grammar, and the genre of the text – the aspects that Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford describe as the most relevant to discuss in the class at the level of the discourse (2008: 4). After the analysis, the students should guess which texts are real memoirs and which ones are fictional narratives, and provide some textual evidence for their choice. Then, the teacher will reveal the context of each text and the whole class will check if they were right in their assumptions, which will promote appealing questions for the students' reflection. The choice of texts to be analysed can vary depending on the context, the syllabus and the teacher's preferences. Here, I propose those that I used in the workshops where this exercise was carried out.

Example 1

O you who know

Did you know that hunger makes the eyes sparkle that thirst dims

Them

O you who know

Did you know that you can see your mother dead

And not shed a tear

O you who know

Did you know that in the morning you wish for death

And in the evening you fear it

O you who know

Did you know that a day is longer than a year

A minute longer than a lifetime

O you who know

Did you know that legs are more vulnerable than eyes

Never harder than bones

The heart firmer than steel

Did you know that the stones of the road do not weep

That there is one word

Only for dread

One for anguish

Did you know that suffering is limitless

That horror cannot be circumscribed

Did you know this

You who know.

Some of the aspects that were noticed in the workshops were that this is a poem whose lyrical subject is a Holocaust survivor trying to put into words the horror of a concentration camp and addressing the reader to be involved in this tricky task. The contrast between the survivor, who appears to know what the reader is unable to know, and the readers, who wrongly think that they know what happened, creates an intentional distance between the survivor and the rest of the humanity. Although the initial possibility of understanding seems to be established ("you who know", line 1), this possibility is demolished by the sequence of images that point at the incomprehensible nature of the camps. Formally, the poem presents various rhetorical devices that could be commented during the class. For example, the poem consists of anaphoric constructions addressing the readers ("O you who know"), and this is followed by the questioning "did you know that". This repetitive appeal to the readers forces them to enter the dynamics of the poem and question themselves each of the camp images described. Among these images, body images evoking corporeal sensations and feelings are identified ("hunger makes the eyes sparkle", "thirst dims them", "legs more vulnerable than eyes", "nerves harder than bones", "heart firmer than steel"), which show the dehumanisation suffered by the camp prisoners. This dehumanisation achieves a climax when the lyrical subject evokes how one can see his or her mother dead and be unable to cry under those extreme situations. The poem also displays various antithesis and contradictions ("wish for death" – "fear it", "a day longer than a year" – "minute longer than a lifetime"), which represent the incapability of the human psyche to confront this horror. Other linguistic mechanisms are the recurrent comparative structures that show the author's impossible search of some referent with which life in the camps may be compared. As the poem advances, the problem of language is directly addressed ("one word for dread, one for anguish", lines 18-19), concluding that the Holocaust cannot be expressed. Also, the constant mixture of past and present tenses alludes to the mixture of time dimensions in the world of the concentration camps, i.e. the question is in the past but the horror of the camps belongs in an eternal present for the survivors. Finally, the poem lacks any sign of punctuation, which increases the overpowering feelings evoked by the succession of questions. In fact, this is meant to assert that the reader cannot know any of the images described throughout the poem. When talking

about the generic conventions, the students could point at some of the problems emerged when aestheticising the Holocaust, and try to decide if they think that this poetic licence may have been carried out by a survivor.

Example 2

> So – my suspicions were right. I've fallen into a trap. The oven door is smaller than usual, but it's big enough for children. I know, I've seen, they use children for heating too. Wooden bunks for children, oven doors for children, it's all too much. As I thought this, I suddenly raised up the cellar stairs and into my room. My thoughts were falling over each other. I was right. They're trying to trick me. That's why they want me to forget what I know. The camp's still here. Everything's still here.

To begin with, the students could identify this text as prose and distinguish that there is a first-person narrator, suggesting that this is an autobiographical narrative. The narrator is homodiegetic, s/he takes part in the action narrated, and extradiegetic, as an older narrator is remembering the past now that some time has elapsed. In fact, the first part of the fragment ("So… it's all too much") corresponds to his/her traumatic memories of the camps, while in the second part ("As I thought this… Everything's still present") the trauma comes to the surface when the compulsive repetition of the past makes the subject live in a constant state of anxiety. Students could notice that this episode seems to be very typical in those testimonial trauma narratives in which the subject is living a present situation that reminds him or her of the traumatic past, which is re-enacted in the present. In this case, the traumatic images of the people being burnt in the ovens by the Nazis ("they"), more concretely of children in bunks being cremated, reappear in the narrator's consciousness as part of the stage of repetition-compulsion. Further, the final sentences ("The camp's still here. Everything's still here") go in line with what was explained in the previous extract about the survivors' refusal to leave the memories of the Holocaust behind. This could lead the students to think that this is a real testimony, as part of the survivors' duty to keep Holocaust memories alive.

Example 3

> Three days after the liberation of Buchenwald, I became very ill: some form of poisoning. I was transferred to a hospital and spent two weeks between life and death.
>
> One day when I was able to get up, I decided to look at myself in the mirror on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto.
>
> From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me.

The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me.

The next example would be analysed in a similar way to the previous one, since this is prose and there is a first-person narrator recounting his or her life in the retrospective. The narrator is homodiegetic and intradiegetic as the main character implied in the action; and the focalisation is internal too. This episode refers to the liberation of the camp of Buchenwald and to what happened to the narrator afterwards, the way s/he perceived that moment and the consequences it had for him/her. Instead of making use of sentimental language and complex rhetorical figures, the syntax is very simple. The most relevant aspect in terms of language comes at the end of the paragraph: "From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me. The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me". As in other accounts by Holocaust survivors (Agamben 2000: 41-89), the narrator splits his/her self into the self that experienced life in the concentration camp ("the corpse") and the self that survived it ("me"). The narrator objectifies his/her own persona by making reference to the self s/he was in the camps (Agamben 2000: 156-7), and from that moment, s/he dissociates that traumatic self from his/her present consciousness. Also, it is very telling that the verbal tenses change here from the past used throughout to the present perfect ("has never left me"). This implies that this traumatised corpse belongs in the past but it continues to have present consequences. This strategy might be highlighted by the students and they could discuss whether it is negative, as the dissociated self can never reach a stable sense of identity, or positive, as this might be a strategy to cope with the Holocaust.

Example 4

Does it matter if they were from Kielce or Brno or Grodno or Brody or Lvov or Turin or Berlin? Or that the silverware or one linen tablecloth or the chipped enamel pot – the one with the red stripe, handed down by a mother to her daughter – were later used by a neighbour or someone they never knew? Or if one went first or last; or whether they were separated getting on the train or off the train; or whether they were taken from Athens or Amsterdam or Radom, from Paris or Bordeaux, Rome or Trieste, from Parczew or Bialystok or Salonika. … None of that obsessed me; but – were they silent or did they speak? Were their eyes open or closed?

I couldn't turn my anguish from the precise moment of death. I was focused on that historical split second: the tableau of the haunting trinity – perpetrator, victim, witness.

In this case, the prose makes use of a more elaborated style than in the example two and three. Again, the narration is made in the retrospective as the narrator collects the thoughts s/he had when s/he was in the camps. These thoughts show that the narrator was obsessed with the moment of death experienced by the victims, but here s/he does not only focus on the victim but sees the executions that happened in the camps as a three-side event in which perpetrators, victims and witnesses took part. The metaphor of the "trinity" is used to refer to this triangle, made of the three agents implied in the Holocaust. The narrator's thoughts are rendered as rhetorical questions s/he asked her/himself trying to make sense of the Nazi killings and, although an answer is not given, this accumulation of questions implies that none of the killings can make sense to human reason. Another strategy that could be noticed is that the narrator uses particular examples of cities, countries, and household appliances to turn the unknown and nameless victims into real people. The author also uses verbal tenses for his or her own dramatic purposes: all the actions that the narrator renders when thinking about the Holocaust are in the past but there is one action told in the present: the first question posed by the narrator ("Does it matter"). Again, the use of the present is aimed at turning the Holocaust memory into an everlasting presence.

Discussion and Possible Results

Drawing on the guidelines offered by the USHMM, the development of this exercise could continue as follows: the first thing that the students should check is the biographical background of the author and they should see if they were right in their assumptions, thus, we will be providing a specific and historical context where the text was produced (as the guidelines "Contextualize the history" and "Translate statistics into people" clarify). The first text corresponds to the first part of Charlotte Delbo's trilogy *Auschwitz and After* (1995: 11), translated from the original French *Auswitch et Aprés*. This is a trilogy divided into three parts: *None of Us Will Return*, *Useless Knowledge*, and *The Measure of Our Days* in which she narrates her experience in Auschwitz and Ravensbruk – where she was sent because of being a non-Jewish member of the French resistance – and her posterior return to France after her liberation. Delbo finished the first volume in 1946 but she did not feel prepared to publish it until 1965. Also, the second volume was written between 1946 and 1947 but it did not see the light until 1970, and it was soon followed by the third part. Although Charlotte Delbo has written many plays and essays, she is mainly known for this trilogy. Regarding the genre and style of this work, we can expand on the main ideas they will have suggested in the analysis and explain that this is an experimental

work that mixes a variety of genres in order to express the unspeakable. Charlotte Delbo exemplifies the writer's urge to find a discourse that can explain the Holocaust, whereas it unveils its intrinsic inexplicability. As mentioned by Lawrence L. Langer, "her unique blend of poetry and prose, result[ing]s in a lyrical rendering of atrocity that is alarmingly beautiful, an aesthetics of agitation" (1988: xvi); which is a fruitful reflection to discuss if it is ethical to turn the horror of the Holocaust into art and beauty. This is the style that Michael Rothberg defines as the most appropriate to represent the Holocaust, the traumatic realism "in which the unsymbolizable real persists within and disrupts the mimetic narrative of everyday reality" (2000: 144). We could also talk about the reception of this work and consider to what extent the readers can bear the suffering they are faced to when reading Holocaust narratives (always trying to avoid simple answers to the complex questions emerged when discussing the Holocaust, according to the USHMM).

The second text is a fragment from Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood, 1939-1948* (1997: 125). This work has given place to a strong controversy, since it was published as this author's memoir, it was initially praised by the critics and it even won several prizes. In this memoir, he presented himself as one of the Jewish survivors from Riga and the concentration camps in Poland. However, in 1999 it was discovered that his real name was Bruno Grosjean, he had been born in Switzerland and given in adoption to a Swiss family when he was four years old. Thus, if this text had to be ascribed to a generic category it would be that of false testimony. Sue Vice emphasises the impact of this work as *Fragments* inaugurated the debate on the role of false testimonies and, although most of the initial reactions to this work criticised the morality of such practices (2000: 141), it has been explained that current critics have started to look at them as singular literary genres. This exercise would prompt the most challenging questions for the students, as this text could make them conclude that there is a lack of textual differences between real and false Holocaust testimonies.

The third text is the final part of Elie Wiesel's testimonial narrative *Night* published in 1958 (here 2008: 115), a key text to study when approaching the Holocaust and the testimonial narratives written by survivors. Winner of the Peace Nobel Prize, Elie Wiesel survived Auschwitz and Buchenwald and devoted his life to voicing this horrible episode through testimonial narratives, essays, and lectures. This fragment may be very useful to highlight the minimalism that characterises many survivors' testimonies. For Raul Hilberg, this is the rule that should be obeyed by Holocaust narratives. Indeed, he points at *Night* as the perfect instance of this minimalism, "the art of using a minimum of words to say the maximum" (1988: 23). Therefore, this text will probably raise questions about the genres that are more suitable to depict life in the camps.

The final text is an extract from Anne Michaels' novel *Fugitive Pieces* (1997: 139). The Canadian writer was very acclaimed with the publication of this poetical novel on the transgenerational connections with the Holocaust; however, it was also criticised for being excessively poeticised. Indeed, during the storm of publicity surrounding *Fugitive Pieces,* a journalist asked her to confirm whether she was Jewish and she refused to do so because she considered that the key thing in her *oeuvre* was the text and its lyrical power but not her life and roots (in Crown 2001). The reactions to this novel exemplify what Sue Vice described as "scandalous", since "they invariably provoke controversy by inspiring repulsion and acclaim in equal measure" (2000: 1). The students' answers to this text could agree with these views, since the message of *Fugitive Pieces* has gone further than the biography of its author.

Finally, after providing the solutions to the students, it could be highlighted that, despite the authorial differences, all the texts address the impossibility to rationally understand what happened in the camps, the paradoxes of representation and the problem of language, the impossibility to leave these memories behind, and the active role of the readers in getting involved in the dialectics of comprehending the Holocaust – aspects which seem to coincide with Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes' tenets exposed above (2004: 6-7). In addition to this, this discursive analysis of textual Holocaust representations responds to "a responsible methodological choice" on the teacher's part by fulfilling other relevant guidelines offered by the USHMM. For example, this exercise fosters the "precision of language" needed both to write and read a text approaching the Holocaust; it provides different perspectives on the Holocaust (those belonging to political prisoners, Jewish survivors, bystanders, perpetrators and victims); it makes students read various genres (fiction, autobiography, false testimony); and it avoids any kind of competence for victimhood by placing all the narratives at the same textual level, emphasising that all of them are, in the end, narrative constructions whatever the original source may be. Furthermore, an exercise like this goes in line with the spirit fostered by the USHMM, since it can invite thinkers and teachers alike to question our own roles as educators and critics, agreeing that we, as members of diverse educational communities in our different institutions, can make a difference in our students' perceptions of the Holocaust according to the readings we choose and the texts we analyse in class. Drawing on Yehuda Bauer's claim that Holocaust education should be part of the modern societies' "general attempt to create a world that will not be good, but possibly slightly better than the one we live in now" (2014: 181), we could state to a great extent that that education has now a big responsibility in the future development of Holocaust Studies.

Representation and Education: A Common Path towards the Future

Considering the main debates concerning Holocaust representation, the evolution from the initial silence regarding these events to the current overrepresentation of trauma as well as the confessional boom witnessed at the present moment, together with the practical exercise presented here; I would like to contend that the future of Holocaust Studies *is* particularly linked to education. As has been shown, the evolution traced in the literary representation of the Holocaust and the theories on its representation have reached the educative world. Moreover, the increasing appearance of Holocaust images in cultural representations and the globalization of this traumatic episode have turned the Holocaust into "a global reference point for education that has both particular historical significance and universal meaning. This perspective corresponds to a change of paradigm in how the Holocaust is studied" (Fracapane and Hab 2014: 12). In other words, the Holocaust has come to be seen as a defining element when studying traumatic collective episodes and other histories of genocide and abuse, and it has acquired a paradigmatic nature, making it part of our collective consciousness. Therefore, this shared presence in our society's consciousness would explain why many of the dilemmas that had been initially confronted by historians, artists and philosophers are now being faced by educators and students alike. In addition to this, it has become quite clear that the present-day imperative need to verbalise traumatic memories has promoted the appearance of new literary and testimonial genres that try to verbalise these experiences. Moreover, the boom of narratives dealing with traumatised lives has also increased the society's interest in studying the phenomenon of trauma itself. In the case of the Holocaust, the emergence of new liminal testimonial genres out of the second and third generations of survivors' need to deal with their traumatic legacy; the appearance of false testimonial narratives; and the proliferation of metaphorical representations of the Holocaust would suggest that current societies are more than ever confronting the Holocaust at the moment when most of the survivors are passing away.

All the enquiries proposed so far would point to some possible future lines of development in the field of Holocaust Studies. Alongside Robert Egalestone and Sue Vice, Antony Rowland has recently argued that "future analyses of testimony must also focus on its literariness, and even on the reconsideration of previous neglected testimonial forms like false testimonies as literary practices, since testimonial genres struggle to find new ways of seeing the Holocaust for the non -survivors" (2010: 114). Conceptions like these could force critics to reconsider works which had been previously neglected on the grounds of their lack of authority and reliability, that is, because of being fictional or not belonging to first-generation Holocaust survivors. Moreover, this

development seems to point out that in the next few years the fields of Trauma, Memory and Holocaust Studies will have to continue uncovering the political implications of this boom of testimonial genres, whereas it will have to be admitted that these new genres appear to offer new productive channels for the representation of some of the main traumatic episodes of our era. As Duncan Bell wisely put it, and going against those critics who could say that the Holocaust is an outdated issue, "the dialectic of memory and forgetting, and the ethical questions raised by the dynamics of this process, look set to disturb us for the foreseeable future" (2010: 25).

Far from being over, the Holocaust is still an important presence in the modern globalised world, and the responsibility of knowledge goes hand in hand with the development of a responsible and rigorous Holocaust education. It is us, as educators, thinkers and critics, who should develop new educational practices which engage the future generations in the debates within the field of Holocaust Studies. Regarding the specific exercise that has been proposed in this article, it seems to be a constructive exercise – according to the criteria established by Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford, Marianne Hirsch and Irene Kacandes and the USHMM, and which have been followed when elaborating the set of activities and selecting the texts – not only to make students observe the evolution in the representation of the Holocaust, examine the current explosion of testimonial narratives (and the ideological conditions that have led to this upsurge of liminal autobiographical practices), and help them be aware of the dilemmas that appear when dealing with the representation of the Holocaust, but also to support the current group of critics who insist on focusing on the added value that a text on the Holocaust can teach us instead of basing our understanding and criticism of a given text on the author's biography and/or background. Thus, drawing on the generally accepted assumption that "the Holocaust changed our intellectual maps of the world" (Eaglestone 2004: 146), it could be concluded that we have the duty to guide the new generations through those maps by "identify[ing] the evil, unmask[ing] it, depriv[ing] it of its poisonous power – which is hatred – and then try[ing] to understand and to make people understand its incomprehensible nature and extent" (Wiesel 2010: 5) through, among other many initiatives, innovative teaching practices such as the one proposed in this small-scale study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research carried out for the writing of this article is part of a project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO) (code FFI2012-32719). The author is grateful for the support of the Government of Aragón and the European Social Fund (ESF) (code H05). Acknowledgements should be given to the Project for Young Researchers at the University of Zaragoza (245216—JIUZ-2014-HUM-02).

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Representing and Teaching the Holocaust in the 21st Century: A Practical Proposal

This article draws on the well-known assumption in Trauma and Holocaust Studies that the representation of traumatic episodes that have affected a huge number of people is usually an aporetic phenomenon. In the case of the Holocaust, the portrayal of these horrible events is always linked to some ethical and historical limits that try to avoid its trivialisation. The first part of this study provides an overview of the evolution of the literary representation of the Holocaust and of the main controversies that have always surrounded the narration of this episode. Then, this evolution will be related to the current „memory boom" and confessional culture that has invaded the cultural panorama, which in the case of the Holocaust has been manifested in the emergence of new hybrid testimonial narratives and the overuse and even commodification of such a traumatic episode. My main contention is that these complex questions have reached the educational context too and thus, the worlds of history, literary criticism and education seem to collide to challenge the future generations' answers to the Holocaust. All these ideas are finally exposed in a practical exercise that could be carried out in the classroom to discuss whether or not there are textual differences between various testimonial genres, and to figure out how the Holocaust can be kept alive ethically. It will contribute to supporting my closing argument that

education has acquired an extremely relevant role within the field of Holocaust Studies, becoming the new site where its meanings and possible representations may be fruitfully negotiated.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust, representation, fiction, testimony, education, memory, trauma, ethics

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

ESSAYS

CONSTRUCTIVE DISTANCE: NICOLE KRAUSS'S *GREAT HOUSE* AS A MODEL FOR THIRD-GENERATION HOLOCAUST FICTION

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…The event of the Holocaust is already a horizon which orients our time, certainly in the west, even now, three or four generations afterwards.

(Eaglestone 2004: 12)

As the final Holocaust survivors pass, the urgent task of representing the atrocity in order to keep its memory alive passes to later generations. However, the ethical imperative for postwar generations to keep memory of the Holocaust alive must compete with vigorous debate about the nature of vicariously claiming connection to this horrific trauma. Accessing the event from a position of generational distance demands new levels of mediation and imagination. Fiction, in particular, has come to be considered a "serious vehicle for thinking about the Holocaust" (Hungerford 2004: 181). Many critics agree that fiction possesses a unique ability to represent the unrepresentable event that is the Holocaust, while also having the power to promote empathy towards traumatic events more broadly: "It is literature that has at least since the Romantics enabled the ethical moment which compels reader response

to pain and suffering, which summons the imaginative empathy of affinity with the Other" (Sicher 2000: 65–66).

Yet despite the liberties that govern standard creative practice, authors of Holocaust fiction are held to, and limited by, a particular set of ethical standards. Berel Lang contends that the Nazi genocide was more morally complex than other large-scale horrific events of history, and so Holocaust fiction must be judged on its ethical rigour as well as on the traditional literary markers of form and style: the Holocaust's "moral enormity could not fail to affect the act of writing and the process of its literary representation" (1988: 1). In this fraught realm, the question of who can speak most legitimately about the Holocaust – an ethical question – must be considered along with the ways in which they speak.

Questions surrounding the legitimacy and authenticity of Holocaust representation have occupied scholars since Theodor Adorno famously and controversially stated that "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric" (1967: 34). Perhaps the most contentious contemporary scholar to engage in discourses of postwar Holocaust ethics is the French critic and second -generation author, Alain Finkielkraut, in his 1994 text *The Imaginary Jew*. Finkielkraut criticises his generation for appropriating the suffering of their Holocaust survivor parents in order to gain a sense of moral advantage: in identifying as victims of the Holocaust without direct exposure to its danger or suffering, Finkielkraut argues, the second generation, intentionally or not, resides in fiction as "imaginary Jews" (1994: 15). Another second-generation French author, Henri Raczymow, has also contributed significantly to discourse surrounding the ethics of transgenerational trauma, while more recently, American literary scholar Gary Weissman has explored why those people with no direct familial link to the atrocity attempt to connect to it vicariously.

The nature of this critical debate revolves around a single key ethical question: whose past is it to tell? If second-generation authors lack the authority to represent a trauma that they experienced only vicariously, as some critics claim, it follows that the fiction of the third generation – I use the term to refer specifically to the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors – is doubly suspect for being twice removed. This question of an author's pedigree lies at the heart of contemporary debates over the ethics of representing the Holocaust. As generational distance from the event increases, the legitimacy of these artistic responses becomes more ethically fraught.

Third-Generation Fiction

In the past ten to fifteen years, we have witnessed the birth of an interesting new field of literary endeavour – writings by the third generation. A growing stable of third-generation authors, including Nicole Krauss (whose novel, *Great House*, this paper will examine), Jonathan Safran Foer, and Natasha Solomons have begun producing inventive and celebrated works of literature that explore the Holocaust from a unique position of generational distance. However, while psychoanalytic theory began in the 1980s to examine the impact of inherited trauma on the third generation (Flanzbaum 2012: 14), there is currently little scholarship on the distinct characteristics of third-generation fiction and the position from which it is written. From its position of generational distance, can the third generation reasonably claim to have inherited the trauma of the Holocaust? Or is their connection to the atrocity differently nuanced and imprecise?

As an author whose Jewish grandfather survived the Holocaust, I would suggest that the ethics of representing the atrocity poses particular challenges and opportunities for the third -generation writer. Authors of this generation face a unique ethical conundrum, in that we are simultaneously connected to and twice-distanced from the event we seek to explore. Hilene Flanzbaum questions whether "by the third generation… it make[s] any sense, psychological or otherwise, to attribute behavior to the Holocaust when so many other narratives have intervened?" Her answer resonates with my own experience:

> …[F]or me, it has been useful (if painful) to consider the history from which I descend. I take such categorization not as a verdict of destiny or doom but as a tool by which I better understand my previously incomprehensible behaviors and forgive my limitations. To think of myself as part of a third generation holds me accountable to my past. (2012: 15)

These issues of legitimacy and authenticity inevitably become more pronounced as generational distance from the Holocaust increases.

This paper explores these complex questions through an in-depth analysis of a key third -generation text, Nicole Krauss's *Great House*. By analysing the distancing techniques Krauss uses in her novel, I aim to demonstrate how by drawing attention to their generational distance from the Holocaust, third-generation authors are responding ethically to the challenge of representing mediated trauma. In this way, *Great House* can be considered ethically valid not despite but because of its author's generational distance from the Holocaust.

Postmemory

Second-generation scholar Marianne Hirsch has contributed significantly to the field of Holocaust memory studies as it relates to the transgenerational transmission of trauma with her research on how inherited traumatic memory (what she terms postmemory) of the Holocaust manifests in the aesthetics of the second generation. Her scholarship on transgenerational trauma has impacted the "era of memory" (Hoffman 2004: 104) so crucially that her term *postmemory* has been adopted almost universally by scholars working in the field of second-generation memory.

While Hirsch initially conceived of postmemory as a familial process of transmitted trauma, passed directly from survivors to their children, her later work encompasses "more explicitly comparative memory work" that includes "extreme dispossession in the context of the familial ruptures caused by war, genocide, and expulsion" (2012: 24). Hirsch comes to distinguish, as Eva Hoffman does (2004: 187), between "the postgeneration as a whole and the literal second generation in particular", thus demarcating "affiliative" and strictly familial postmemory (2008: 114). This paper focuses specifically on Hirsch's concept of familial postmemory.

Her work poses but does not resolve the crucial question: can the third generation legitimately claim to have inherited the trauma of the Holocaust? During an interview at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne, Australia, an audience member asked Jonathan Safran Foer about his views on this subject: whether trauma could be passed down from generation to generation, and the form that this inheritance might take. Rather than label his traumatic connection to the Holocaust explicitly, however, Foer provided the analogy of an old vine growing around a fence that has been removed because it is rotting, until "all that was left was this weird vine that's attached to nothing" (2011). The idea of inherited trauma as something deformed that flourishes and grows around absence or silence resonates with the experience of post-Holocaust generations.

Many second-generation authors describe a sense of absence or void – a lack of knowledge about the past that seeks some resolution or understanding in the present – as a key reason why they are compelled to explore the Holocaust (Hirsch 1996: 661–662; Raczymow 1994: 100). Third-generation authors – twice-distanced from the trauma of the historical event – arguably suffer this absence even more. Whether postmemory can indeed be passed from generation to generation or not, the third generation's familial link to the Holocaust is an important factor informing, and for understanding, their writing.

Third-generation fiction remains a distinct and under-explored phenomenon, with its own specific narrative techniques, theoretical framework, and potential to contribute to contemporary

society's understanding of the Holocaust. However, with a few notable exceptions, scholarship on this subject has tended to focus on specific narrative elements (such as the use of fantasy or dual narrators) without considering how these authors' familial connection to the subject has informed these narrative techniques. This is a significant gap in the field, given that third -generation authors have not only reached adulthood but are contributing critically well-regarded works of fiction to the literary community. This paper traces a crucial link between the third -generation's traumatic inheritance and the specific narrative techniques of their fiction.

Nicole Krauss's *Great House*

Nicole Krauss was born in Manhattan in 1974 to Jewish parents; her maternal and paternal Jewish grandparents had emigrated to London and New York respectively to escape the Holocaust. She studied English at Stanford University, and later pursued graduate study in art history in Britain. Krauss's first novel, *Man Walks into a Room*, published in 2001, explores themes of memory, and was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* First Book Award. *The History of Love*, the author's second novel and an international bestseller, was published in 2005 to wide critical acclaim. Published in 2010, her third novel, *Great House*, was a finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction and was shortlisted for the Orange Prize. In 2004, Krauss married fellow third-generation author Jonathan Safran Foer, from whom she separated in 2014.

Great House explores themes of memory and loss, confession, and Jewish identity, and how these themes relate to and characterise the third-generation experience. The trope of distance emerges in embedded, nuanced ways. Krauss's technique is narratological rather than linguistic; rather than utilise distance in the language of the book, as say Jonathan Safran Foer does in *Everything Is Illuminated*, Krauss structures her narrative as a journey from "distant, foreign points" towards a traumatic heart: an Israeli antiques dealer named Weisz whose father's desk was plundered from his study in Budapest by the Nazis (Spence 2010: 35). The lives of the four Jewish narrators intersect at this colossal writing desk. The desk functions as an extended metaphor whose menacing power comes to represent the burden of emotional inheritance; as the links between characters become clear, so too does their varying access to the trauma of the Holocaust.

The novel is divided into two related sections, each containing four chapters narrated in the first person. In the first chapter, "All Rise", a middle-aged New York writer named Nadia professes her remorse to an unknown listener she addresses as "Your Honour": in writing seven novels at the desk she inherited from the murdered Chilean poet Daniel Varsky, Nadia confesses

she has neglected opportunities to seize both love and life. Varsky's death haunts Nadia to the extent that the trauma permeates each area of her life. Her descent into paranoia and paralysis is told in flashback. The hulking desk that Nadia has "physically grown around" in some ways triggers this emotional descent (Krauss 2010a: 17). When a mysterious young woman comes to claim the desk, the loss severs Nadia's writing life; it is as if she cannot function without the familiar burden of this inherited object:

> I looked across the room at the wooden desk at which I had written seven novels. …One drawer was slightly ajar, one of the nineteen drawers, some small and some large, whose odd number and strange array, I realized now, on the cusp of their being suddenly taken from me, had come to signify a kind of guiding if mysterious order in my life, an order that, when my work was going well, took on an almost mystical quality (2010a: 16).

While her character has no direct connection to the Holocaust (Nadia remains ignorant of the desk's origins in the study in Budapest), her response to first gaining and then losing the desk mirrors symptoms of transgenerational trauma. Nadia clings to this trauma even when its direct object (the desk) has been removed. Here, Krauss's traumatic inheritance as the grandchild of Holocaust survivors manifests in the use of symbolism as a narrative technique. The desk functions as a metaphor to represent the third generation's vague yet powerful emotional connection to the trauma of the Holocaust.

The next chapter, "True Kindness", while it bears perhaps the least relation to the Holocaust (the desk is not present here at all), further explores themes of death and loss through the trope of distance. Set in Israel, the chapter focuses on the elderly Jew Aaron's attempts to reconcile with his estranged son – a judge who is in a coma after being hit by a car (we later learn that Nadia was driving and Aaron's son is the judge to whom she addresses her first-person confession). Aaron laments that his son "tirelessly searched for and collected suffering" from a young age, eventually writing a clandestine novel about a captured shark that bears the accumulated misery of the people dreaming around it (Krauss 2010a: 68).

According to Berger and Milbauer, Aaron's frequent use of the phrase "pass over it" indicates "the silence which characterizes many in the survivor community, as well as their descendants, when reflecting on the myriad moral, psychological, and theological questions engendered by the Shoah" (2013: 80). His final statement, "I can't pass over it", shows that his own traumatic memory will be passed down to the second generation. While the chapter does not deal directly with the Holocaust, suffering and death are present not just as themes but as

menacing forces the characters are attempting to escape. In this way, Krauss highlights the haunting nature of postmemory and its capacity to reverberate across generations.

"Swimming Holes" explores British scholar Arthur's guilty investigation into his mysterious wife Lotte's traumatic past (Moore 2011). As she succumbs to dementia, he considers whether her deep-seated grief at leaving her parents behind when she escaped from Nazi Germany on a Kindertransport in 1939 invalidates what he thought was their happy life together. In the fourth chapter, "Lies Told by Children", a young writer/academic named Izzy explores the truth of her relationship with the damaged siblings, Yoav and Leah. Their father Weisz's unspoken yet pervasive Holocaust trauma profoundly impacts his children: "They were prisoners of their father's, locked within the walls of their own family, and in the end it wasn't possible for them to belong to anyone else" (Krauss 2010a: 113). Here, Foer's idea of inherited trauma as a "weird vine" that grows around absence or silence resonates with particular poignancy (2011).

In the second section of the novel, this chapter is replaced by one titled "Weisz", in which Yoav and Leah's father reveals the origin of the desk's extraordinary influence: he has spent his life as an antiques dealer tracking down the furniture plundered by the Nazis from his father's study in Budapest, "as if by putting all the pieces back together he might collapse time and erase regret" (Krauss 2010a: 116). The desk is the final piece in the puzzle, and after retrieving it he commits suicide. The desk's passage from one character to another "allows Krauss to probe closely the survivors' and their offspring's 'response to catastrophic loss'" (Berger and Milbauer 2013: 69).

Narrative Structure

Great House's structure, which opposes "any kind of easy connective tissue" (Krauss 2010b) so that characters and narratives stand removed from one another for the majority of the book, reflects the difficulty of accessing the trauma of the Holocaust from the distance of the third generation. According to Krauss:

> novels tend to be, in some way, a structural blueprint of the mechanisms of the author's mind, and I happen to have a very strong spatial sense. … I've developed this habit of starting at very distant, foreign points and moving inwards. I'm trying to understand: what is the connection between these feelings, these people, these places, these ideas? (Spence 2010: 35)

Krauss's narrative progresses from these "distant, foreign points" towards the harrowing core of the novel with only a vague sense of how (or indeed if) these characters and narratives

will connect. Without any obvious sense of chronology, the narratives stand beside each other in time and space. The novel's structure, then, functions as a series of concentric circles that sweep ever closer to the Holocaust as the site of grief. Krauss approaches the trauma of the event indirectly, never tackling it head-on but rather coming at it from the side as the narrative circles finally overlap. This structural approach leaves the reader feeling both distanced from the trauma of the Holocaust, and wary of investing emotionally in the story lest these tentative narrative threads fail to connect. However, just as the reader struggles against the structural and emotional distance inherent in the novel, so too does the author of third-generation fiction struggle to access the trauma of the Holocaust from their position of generational distance. Thus, the readers' difficult journey through the narrative – their battle against the trope of distance inherent in the novel's structure – mirrors the third-generation author's struggle to connect meaningfully with their remote traumatic past.

Linking these disparate narratives is the desk which, Krauss notes, "becomes like a needle and thread that stitches some of the stories together" (Spence 2010: 35). Far from being a simple structural aid, however, the desk comes to represent the burden of inherited trauma. Krauss explains, "it wasn't so much the desk that mattered, but the burden of inheritance – emotional inheritance. This is one of the many things I was writing about: what we inherit from our parents and what we pass down to our children. … And so, somehow, the desk became imbued with all of that" (Spence 2010: 35). Krauss's literary preoccupation with this burden of inheritance, argue Berger and Milbauer, "is central to the explicitly Jewish imperative of passing the tradition from generation to generation (*l'dor ve-dor*) and goes to the heart of Krauss's fiction. …The issues of writing and parenthood are intertwined, as are those of bearing witness and intergenerational transmission of memory and trauma" (2013: 67-68).

As the desk was stolen by the Nazis, its menacing power over the characters stems directly from the trauma of the Holocaust. This trauma is symbolised in the physical structure of the desk itself. The desk's nineteenth drawer is locked, as if here, sealed under lock and key, resides the original site of trauma: the hidden suffering of the Holocaust. This drawer haunts the characters for the reason that they cannot access it; what resides in there is a mystery that is both inherited and inaccessible. Thus, the desk functions as a metaphor for the vague yet powerful emotional connection these characters have to the Holocaust. Moreover, the desk can be seen to represent the haunting strains of absence and silence that characterise Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the ways in which Nicole Krauss's novel, *Great House*, interrogates notions of third-generation postmemory; in particular, how her familial connection to the Holocaust and resultant burden of inheritance manifests in specific narrative techniques. Krauss, however, argues that *Great House* does not explore the Holocaust directly:

> I know this goes against the grain of what most critics might say about my work, but I would not say that I've written about the Holocaust. I am the grandchild of people who survived the historical event. I'm not writing their story—I couldn't write their story. There are characters in my novels who have either survived the Holocaust or been affected by it. But I've written very little about the Holocaust in terms of actual events. What interests me is the response to catastrophic loss (2010b).

According to Berger and Milbauer,

> Krauss is right to insist that she cannot write the story of survivors or their direct offspring for whom the Holocaust as a historical event, a lived experience, held an immediacy she cannot recreate. Nonetheless, Krauss realizes that the impact of the Holocaust continues to resound … and that she must therefore find ways to comprehend and articulate the plights of contemporary Jews who have inherited the traumatic legacy of the Shoah, in all of its many, varied, but sharply felt manifestations (2013: 65).

Krauss acknowledges that the title of her book, *Great House*, which refers to a story from the *Book of Kings* about the Jews being exiled from Jerusalem, speaks directly to the "catastrophic loss" her family endured in the Second World War, and more broadly to "how Jews attempt to cope with the destruction that characterises their history" (Moore 2011).

The troubled Jewish siblings Yoav and Leah, in fact, are the only characters in *Great House* who belong to the third generation (the desk was their Hungarian grandfather's). While their father, Weisz, disguises the burden of his emotional inheritance, his strict and dogged personality (mirrored in his unrelenting search for his father's desk) has the effect of transferring his own inherited trauma onto his children.

Thus, although there are only two third-generation characters, the themes of distance and haunting that permeate the book – the characters' vague yet potent emotional connection to the trauma of the Holocaust – reflect the third generation's dilemma. How do we access the trauma

of the Holocaust from the distance of the third generation? What does it mean to be both connected to and twice-distanced from the event we seek to represent? Is our work, by its very distance from the Holocaust, ethically suspect? Or can this distance itself, when acknowledged and utilised as a narrative trope as in *Great House*, render our work ethically legitimate? Throughout this book, "death and the death imprint stalk the lives of Holocaust survivors and their descendants" (Berger and Milbauer 2013: 77). Yet the novel also contains a measure of hope: "Krauss's appeal to her readers is that writing itself is a form of protest against despair" (Berger and Milbauer 2013: 81).

In "The Future of the Past", Efraim Sicher articulates the second generation's complex need to privately mourn and publicly "speak" the Holocaust – a need that encompasses both their desire to promote lessons of the atrocity in order to oppose the silence that harbours forgetting or denial, while simultaneously "working-through" the Holocaust's traumatic legacy on their own psyches (2000: 70). Is the third generation compelled by this same need to privately mourn and publicly "speak" the Holocaust? Do our fictions arise from the desire to process our traumatic inheritance, or from subtler, more complex yearnings?

In Nicole Krauss's *Great House*, the author's use of specific narrative techniques highlights the third generation's simultaneous connection to and distance from the Holocaust. By drawing attention to her remoteness from the trauma, Krauss enables readers to compare their own perhaps dormant knowledge of the atrocity against the version being presented in the text, and thus to be led away from a passive or complacent reading of history towards a more active one. In this way, *Great House* can be considered ethically valid not despite but because of its author's generational distance from the Holocaust. Krauss's model suggests that an author's very distance from the Holocaust is not only an inevitable but a productive ingredient of contemporary Holocaust fiction. *Great House* has broader implications for how contemporary society accesses past atrocities, suggesting that the mediated spaces of (post) postmemory and imagination are fertile and legitimate sources for engaging with acts of atrocity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Constructive Distance: Nicole Krauss's *Great House* as a Model for Third-Generation Holocaust Fiction

As the final Holocaust survivors pass, the urgent task of representing the atrocity in order to keep its memory alive passes to later generations. In the past ten to fifteen years, the third generation (defined here as the grandchildren of survivors) have begun producing inventive and celebrated works of literature that explore the Holocaust from a unique position of generational distance. While psychoanalytic theory has started examining the impact of inherited trauma on the third generation, there is currently little scholarship on the unique characteristics of third-generation fiction and the position from which it is written. As an author whose Jewish grandfather survived the Holocaust, I would suggest that the ethics of representing the atrocity poses particular challenges and opportunities for the third-generation writer. Authors of this generation face a unique ethical conundrum, I argue, in that they are simultaneously connected to and twice -distanced from the event they seek to explore.

In this paper, I adapt Marianne Hirsch's notion of second-generation postmemory to consider a particular third-generation novel, Nicole Krauss's *Great House*. I suggest that Krauss's text is ethically valid not despite but because of its author's generational distance from the Holocaust. Krauss uses distancing techniques in the structure and content of her novel to highlight her twice-mediated knowledge of the atrocity. By drawing attention to her remoteness from the Holocaust, Krauss enables readers to compare their own dormant knowledge of the atrocity against the version being presented in the text. In this way, she leads readers away from a passive or complacent reading of history towards a more active one. Krauss's model suggests

that the post-generation author's inevitable distance from the Holocaust is in fact a necessary and productive ingredient of contemporary Holocaust fiction.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust fiction, Third generation, Nicole Krauss, *Great House*

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

ESSAYS

THE HOLOCAUST AND THE GROTESQUE: THE CASE OF ARTUR SANDAUER'S FICTION

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The grotesque art is in general characterised by a group of features: a predilection for forms which are unusual and bizarre; absurdity of the rules governing the presented universe; juxtaposing the frightening with the banal or even comical; striking contrasts of thought, subject and style; lampooning of conventional means and ways of thinking and expression; the deliberate mockery of the sublime; and a challenging attitude towards a world vision based on respect for tradition or common-sense (see Kayser 1981; Bakhtin 1984; Jennings 1963; Harpham 2006). This aesthetics is definitely at odds with conventional ideas of how tragic events should be written about, especially one as total and devastating as the Holocaust.

Michał Głowiński, the eminent literary critic and a Holocaust survivor himself, wrote: "No grotesque work was written about the extermination of the Jews, or about the concentration camps. It is even difficult to conceive of such a work" (Głowiński 1980: 184). But such works do exist, although there are not many which make the grotesque their main artistic device. What is more, for some theorists, like Lawrence Langer, they are the core of Holocaust literature, which so often is "… not the transfiguration of empirical reality, but its disfiguration, the conscious and deliberate alienation of the reader's sensibilities from the world of the usual and the familiar, with

an accompanying infiltration into the world of the grotesque, the senseless, and the unimaginable …" (Langer 1975: 2–3).

Elements of the grotesque already occur quite extensively in texts written during the Holocaust: in literary works, such as the ghetto poetry by Władysław Szlengel, or in documentary prose like the diary of Rachela Auerbach or the so called *Diary Written With a Toenail*. The grotesque was also sometimes employed in the post-war literature on concentration camps – consider for example the titles of the 1940s' short stories by Tadeusz Borowski, where linguistic and social convention is confronted with the macabre: "This way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen" and "Here in Our Auschwitz"/ "Auschwitz Our Home", (original Polish titles: "Proszę państwa do gazu" and "U nas w Auschwitzu") or some fragments and aspects of the *House of Dolls* (1955) by Ka-Tsetnik 135633 (Yehiel De-Nur). The grotesque mixture of the morbid and the poetic pervades *Le Sang du ciel* (*Blood from the Sky*) by Piotr Rawicz (1961) or Jerzy Kosiński's *The Painted Bird* (1965), even more steeped in exaggerated, nightmarish horror. In more recent years the grotesque was, and still is, abundantly used in graphic novels or comic books, like Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980–1991) or *Achtung Zelig!* by Krzysztof Gawronkiewicz and Krystian Rosenberg (1993–2004). However, few authors of Holocaust literature have received a thorough critical analysis of their grotesque poetics (Albert Drach being a notable exception; see Cosgrove 2004).

One of the early and more striking examples of employing the grotesque in Holocaust literature is the collection of short stories *Śmierć liberała* (Death of a Liberal, first published 1947) by Artur Sandauer (1913–1989). The author, better known as a literary critic than a fiction writer, survived the Holocaust in Sambor (now in the Ukraine), and the stories, as well as his later autobiographical book *Zapiski z martwego miasta* (Notes from a Dead Town, 1963), are based on his war time experiences (basic bio-bibliographic information on Sandauer can be found in Levine 2003; for the English translation of the title story from *Śmierć liberała* – see Sandauer 2001). Both books contain an account of the lives and then the extermination of the inhabitants of a small-town ghetto. In *Death of a Liberal*, Sandauer's characters are almost exclusively Jewish: pre-war doctors of law who under Nazi German occupation become officials of the puppet "Jewish Council" (*Judenrat*), former students, now junior clerks of the *Judenrat*, and simple, uneducated men and women who just try to save their own lives and those of their families.

Sandauer describes situations and creates portraits of the Holocaust victims (some of them being perpetrators at the same time) in a merciless way in which horror is associated with comical distortion, and is even seemingly masked by it. Paradoxically, this allows the author to expose the dehumanising mechanisms of the Final Solution more clearly than realistic prose is sometimes

able to achieve. It also seems that, as was the case with many other Holocaust survivors, irony and grotesque made it possible for Sandauer to distance himself from his war time experiences, without which he would have been unable to speak about them. Katarzyna Chmielewska, questioning the thesis of Berel Lang, who stated that figurative representations of the Holocaust are by definition inappropriate (Lang 2003), writes that in the diaries written by the Holocaust victims the irony and "[i]ndirect description of facts, the figurative sphere, which supposedly divides the narration from the reality … in fact provides the distance, which makes the narration possible in the first place" (2005: 29). Sandauer's semi-autobiographic fiction provides a similar example (see: Wołk 2010).

Interestingly, reviewers writing in the 1940s about *Death of a Liberal* treated the stories as generally realistic, at most satirically distorting certain aspects of life in the ghettos (see e.g. Wyka 1948). Indeed, the typically grotesque devices often occur in Sandauer's stories in the role of "the equivalent of the unusual reality, marked by inconceivable and unpredictable contrasts" (Głowiński 1980: 184), and not as factors disassembling this reality in order to structure it in a new way. Suchuse of the grotesque certainly de-familiarises the presented world, possibly it also de-automatises the reader's perception of or thinking about the real world (e.g. some historical events or human experiences) but does not necessarily alienate him/her from this world. However, the boundary line between this "modest", reader-friendly grotesque and the "grand", total one is thin.

Consider, for example, the story "Spółka z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością" (Limited Liability Company; in my analysis, I will concentrate on this text and some other related stories). Its protagonist, Dr Henryk Jassym, works in the ghetto administration and his main responsibility is keeping records of food rationing, forced labour directives, and, above all, registration of deaths and "resettlement" (that is to say, deportations to concentration or extermination camps). In his work –

> There happen … disturbing, although at the same time somewhat hilarious occurrences: for example one of the formally deceased who continued to collect his bread rations and go to mandatory work for two full weeks after his death had been registered. How this could have happened nobody knew, for although the bread could have been collected by his family, who would have wanted to go to work in his place? (Sandauer 1974: 16)

An equally bizarre situation occurs when a certain Józef Grad, although twice (!) registered as dead, appears one day in person in Dr Jassym's office and requests him to certify in writing that he is alive, which greatly disturbs the protagonist:

> … here I've got proof, Doctor Henryk ran to the deaths cabinet and pulled out the files, his hands trembling with agitation. "You died for the first time on the fourteenth of December last year, of typhoid fever, and for the second time yesterday, on the sixteenth of February this year, the cause not quoted. As far as I am concerned, you do not exist, do you understand?" (Sandauer 1974: 19)

To which Józef Grad answers and explains:

> When they registered people for bread, I registered twice, once with my father, once with the kids, so that I could get more bread for them. And then the Arbeitsamt [employment office] started calling everyone to work three times a week, and for me it was six times, because they thought there were two of us. So I had to die for the first time, because where was I to get the strength to work for the Germans all week long? [Here Grad tells the story of how he was beaten up – M.W.] … so I think to myself: I'd rather starve than have to bear things like that. So I died for the second time (Sandauer 1974: 19-20).

The conversation develops further in this tragicomic style, until it reveals why Grad is determined to return to the living again – in order to save himself from being deported (and "deportation" is the euphemism for death) as a result of being unemployed.

It could be argued that in this passage the absurdity does not cross the boundary of the grotesque in its total form, that it's just a reflection of the "cruel, strange, illogical and chaotic world of the Holocaust" (Kowalska 2005: 50), like in the title of Sara Nomberg-Przytyk's autobiographical book: *Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land* (1985). But in the quoted fragments we must also note the word-play exposing the relativity of the notions of "life", "death" and "work", and the unsolved contradictions such as the clash of the rigid formalism of the clerk for whom papers are more significant and trustworthy than a living human being, with the artlessness of the client, for whom regulations are made to be broken. These instruments are those typically belonging to the repertoire of grotesque literature, particularly its "office", (anti)bureaucratic variant represented for example by Nikolai Gogol or Anton Chekhov on the one hand and Franz Kafka on the other.

Indeed, Sandauer's story concentrates on the bureaucratic aspect of the Holocaust – which makes him a predecessor of such authors as Raul Hilberg and Zygmunt Bauman. In "Spółka

z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością" seemingly ordinary registry work, growing to enormous dimensions (Dr Jassym eventually moves into his office, so that he does not waste time on anything apart from work) obscures from the person engaged in it the horrendous simplicity of the Nazi "calculation", which is designed to bring about just one result. And here we encounter another typically grotesque trick: a literal representation of a metaphor. In this case it concerns metaphors suggested by the German word *Lösung* (as in *Endlösung*, the Final Solution) – "solution", in both its meanings: the mathematical and the chemical. In the ghetto, Dr Jassym who used to bean impeccably honest bank accountant before the war, is reduced to recording the figures of the Final Calculation.One morning in his office he fantasises about theultimate "result" of the operations he records:

> He looked into the statistics book, where he kept a daily record of the population. Yesterday it was ten thousand and five, and today – how strange! – a round ten thousand. It's not often that one finds a figure so round, so pleasant to the touch: four zeros and a solitary one. Zero is much nicer in writing than other figures … But for the initial figure of one, one could have written five neat zeros. What a nice thought. Well, enough of this daydreaming! To work, to work! (Sandauer 1974: 15–16)

The grotesque simplification of the situations and characters, depriving them of almost any psychological dimension, limiting them to a few basic gestures and behaviours makes it possible for the author to expose the mechanism of implicating the victims – especially the officials of the *Judenräte* – in genocide. In this vision the circumstances of war, which corrupt all values, turn the old, "universal", virtues of diligence, honesty and work for the community into factors leading to cooperation with murder. Pre-war clerks and lawyers, unable to quit their former social roles, become tools in the hands of the Nazis – like Dr Kirsche, ex-barrister, a character reminiscent in some ways of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the *Judenälteste* (head of the Council of Elders) of Łódź ghetto. The narrator summarises Kirsche's career in typical, for Sandauer and for the grotesque, contradictory style: "When the Germans came, Doctor Kirsche was the first to volunteer for forced labour. Thanks to this, after a day of rinsing pots he advanced to the position of the head of the hastily formed Council" (Sandauer 2001: 136). Several months later, when the SS officer (bearing the Biblical name of Gabriel) tells him to make a list of half the ghetto inhabitants who would then be deported, Kirsche, acting on an impulse of his old self, a defence lawyer, says he may only make a list of those who would *not* be deported.

In the beginning, it is Dr Kirsche's intention to enter on the list persons of high "moral value or social usefulness" (Sandauer 1974: 24) but Dr Jassym, who is helping him with his

registers and also with drawing up the list, has to admit: "… I don't have a note of this in my files" (Sandauer 1974: 24). So they proceed with a more practical criterion: "… let's choose those with whom we are more or less acquainted" (Sandauer 1974: 24). And then, because there is little time to compile the "survivors list", it turns out to be shorter than it might have been, shorter than the unwritten list of those who will be deported and most probably killed. In the end, lack of time forces them to leave out all people with longer names or longer addresses, so when Dr Kirsche proposes to enrolfor example Maurycy Katzenellenbogenof All Saints street, number seventeen, Dr Jassym's answer is: "That sounds long-winded … You must choose shorter names, Sir, like Schmidt or Bąk. We won't manage to reach the quota anyway and such a long one takesup the space, that is time, of two shorter ones" (Sandauer 1974: 25).

But there is no hope even for the "shorter ones", such as Józef Grad's children… The bureaucratic reduction of human beings to their surnames (long or short, Jewish or "Aryan") and to basic statistical attributes is just an element of the process of reducing them to nothingness. In the story "Noc praworządności" (The night of law and order), recounting the "action" executed as a result of "Kirsche's list", a misunderstanding concerning the identity of one of the listed persons arises. At the address stated on the list, instead of the expected Rosenblums lives a family named Rosenblau. On this basis, the protagonist of the story, a young *Judenrat* clerk (possibly an autobiographical figure), tries to save them from deportation. But the Gestapo agent present at the scene dispels any doubt (about the true meaning of the "deportation", too) in an instant: "Ah, it makes no difference at all: Rosenholz or Rosenklotz… We'll take it into consideration at the destination" (Sandauer 1974: 34).

The grotesque story of "Kirsche's list" illustrates several groups of problems at the same time. Firstly, the victims' inability to shed their pre-war habits, together with their desperate need to rationalise their situation, and the inevitable fiasco of their attempts to make sense of the *Endlösung* politics. Secondly, the unintentional entanglement of sections of the Jewish community during World War II, especially the assimilated intelligentsia, in the very process they wish to stop or try to avoid (their involuntarily admitted partial liability for this process, is ironically expressed in the phrase 'Limited liability company').Thirdly, the stories reveal the all-encompassing character of the Holocaust, as epitomised in Dr Kirsche's dying as "the last one from the town" (Sandauer 2001: 142), his fate contradicting and at the same time confirming Józef Grad's bitter observation: "But you knew how to save your own lives" (Sandauer 1974: 27).

The world of bureaucracy with its tendency to produce documents, lists, files and to reducing human individuals to data and statistics has always been a favourite subject matter for grotesque writers. In the Holocaust grotesque by Sandauer it provides the means for symbolical

representation of the very process of mass extermination. Let us return to Dr Jassym's office. The repeatable element of his job is to "transfer [the file of the deceased] from the wasting cabinet of the living to the bulging cabinet of the dead". "… soon there won't be room for any more", reflects the "corpse accountant", "a new cabinet must be ordered at the carpenter's" (Sandauer 1974: 16). After the night during which all inhabitants who had not had the luck to be included on the list prepared by Kirscheand, Jassym left the town for ever, distressed Dr Jassym raves in fever:

> That – that must have been a mistake, misconstrued directions from Berlin, a blunder in some office on the way. And they, those people, will come back one day from the Ukraine, from faraway Ukraine, where they had been sent; they will come back sunburnt from working in the fields and will cry: "Get us registered!"
>
> "Registered? Right this instant! … The files are waiting for you untouched, stacked in the cabinet marked with *Ü* (*übersiedelt* [deported]). I did not burn them. I've kept them in good order, so that you could all register a new on your return. You'll see how smoothly it goes in my office. I take it from here, put it back there – done! – and you're back among the living. You're welcome! Let's begin! Please don't jostle, ladies and gentlemen! (Sandauer 1974: 25)

The grotesque vision of files more durable than people, files which are not burnt in stoves or crematoria, becomes here a symbol of the mass character of the Holocaust, of the objectification of its victims, of their plight (shown not directly, but through its negative), and eventually, of the irreversibility of the Shoah.

*

I have concentrated here only on chosen aspects of the grotesque accounts of the Holocaust in Artur Sandauer's fiction. The grotesque in the works of this and other Holocaust writers is a much wider issue, worthy of thorough study. The authors variously employ images of dehumanisation, ironically reproduce Nazi propaganda, mock highbrow culture (e.g. the Bible), expose the contradictions intrinsic in 19th and 20th century humanitarian discourse or in language itself. Sometimes they show the extermination of people as a horrifying carnival, blur the boundary between the human and the animal or provoke the reader in other ways. That is how the grotesque makes readers uncomfortable, questions readymade interpretations and judgements, demands independence in taking a stance on things which are beyond

understanding. And that is why it becomes an efficient device of artistic expression concerning this subject which does not easily lend itself to more traditional and conventional approaches.

At the beginning of this paper I quoted Michał Głowiński's early opinion on the impossibility of the use of the grotesque in Holocaust literature. In 2005, in the introduction to the volume of essays entitled *Stosowność ći forma: jak opowiadać o Zagładzie?* (Propriety and form: how to tell the story of the Holocaust) Głowiński corrected his view on the relationship between the Shoah theme and the aesthetics of the grotesque: "… undoubtedly, such devices as irony or grotesque do not bring dissonance or discord; moreover, they constitute a rightful and, one might say, efficient way of expression [concerning the Holocaust]… There is no language, no style, no diction which might be in advance considered suitable and proper", or unsuitable and improper, we may add, "in literary works describing the Shoah – both in literature and other arts" (2005: 14). Sandauer's fiction is one of the examples of the truthfulness of this statement. In it, the grotesque poetics serves not only as means of exposing chosen aspects of the Holocaust but it also helps to create metaphors concerning the basic mechanisms and fundamental processes of the catastrophe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

The Holocaust and the Grotesque: the Case of Artur Sandauer's Fiction

The paper brings an analysis of the forms and functions of the grotesque in Artur Sandauer's literary works as well as more general reflections on non-conventional means of artistic

expression applied to the Shoah experience. In Sandauer's fiction, the grotesque poetics serves not only to expose chosen aspects of the Holocaust but it also helps to create metaphors concerning the basic mechanisms and fundamental processes of the catastrophe.The grotesque in the works of this and other Holocaust writers is a much wider issue, worthy of thorough study. The authors variously employ images of dehumanisation, ironically reproduce Nazi propaganda, mock highbrow culture, expose the contradictions intrinsic in 19th and 20th century humanitarian discourse or in language itself. The grotesque makes readers uncomfortable, questions readymade interpretations and judgements, demands independence in taking a stance on things which are beyond understanding. That is why it becomes an efficient device of artistic expression concerning subjects which do not easily lend themselves to more traditional and conventional approaches.

KEYWORDS

The Holocaust, the grotesque, Artur Sandauer, modern Polish literature

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI
GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE
2016 nr 6
The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

ESSAYS

HOLOCAUST SATIRE ON ISRAELI TV: THE BATTLE AGAINST CANONIC MEMORY AGENTS

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The Holocaust is an unhealed trauma that constitutes a pivotal experience in Israel. For many years, Israeli culture recoiled from dealing with the Holocaust from a humorous or satirical perspective. The perception was that a humorous approach to the Holocaust might threaten the sanctity of its memory or evoke feelings of disrespect towards the subject and hurt the survivors' feelings. Official agents of Holocaust memory continue to make use of this approach, but since the 1990s, a new unofficial path of memory has begun taking shape in tandem. It is an alternative and subversive path that seeks to remember – albeit differently. Texts that combine the Holocaust with humor are a major aspect of this new memory (Steir-Livny 2014).

This paper analyzes the changes in the attitude towards Holocaust satire and humor in Israel. The case study includes three skits by *The Chamber Quintet* (*Hahamishia Hakamerit,* "Matar" Productions, Channels 2-Tela'ad, Channel 1, 1993-1997) which were the first that dared to use satire in order to criticize Holocaust memory agents in Israel. This paper focuses on this primeval critique through theories of trauma and secondary trauma. Contrary to perceptions that these satirical skits disrespect the Holocaust and its survivors, this paper maintains that these skits do

not engage at all with the Holocaust itself, but rather with the question of Holocaust memory: the skits criticize the way in which collective memory agents exploit and disrespect its memory.

Holocaust Humor in Western Culture

Between the 1940s and the 1980s, very few films were produced that dared touch on the theme in a humorous manner [for example, *The Great Dictator*, (Charlie Chaplin, 1940), *To Be or Not To Be* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1942), *The Producers* (Mel Brooks, 1968), *Yaakov the Liar* (Jurek Becker, 1969)].

The worldwide debate about combining the Holocaust with humor first began in the 1980s. Disagreements on the subject broke out over Art Spiegelman's graphic novels *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986), and *Maus: Here My Troubles Began* (1991) in which Spiegelman rendered his Polish-born father's biography in the Second World War into a world of cats versus mice. The novel achieved tremendous success, and Spiegelman was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in a Special Citation for Letters (Huyssen 2001). From then on, the combination of the Holocaust with humor was discussed more and more freely in Western research and popular culture (Kaplan 2003; Morreall 2011; Lipman 2008). The film *Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni 1997) spearheaded the way towards a deeper debate on the theme and its silencing. The feature film tells the story of an Italian Jew, Guido Orefice, and his son Joshua, who are deported to an extermination camp in 1943. Guido tells his son that they are playing a complicated game, which they can ultimately win by using their imaginative powers and will. In debates about the film, some argued that Benigni made a joke of the Holocaust, and many of its viewers and critics felt disquieted by a comedy ostensibly unfolding in an extermination camp, but which hardly addressed the atrocities of the Holocaust. Still others held that Benigni managed to instill a touching tragic-comic aspect into the film, which generated a powerful sense of the absurdity of the racial theories (Niv 2000; Zand 2002; Bartov 2008).

In the last decades, artists, comedians and satirists have dismantled the sanctity of the theme, and have introduced Holocaust memory into mundane comic situations, in a way aimed at protesting against the untouchable nature of the theme, by secularizing it in movies, stand-up appearances, TV sitcoms, Youtube videos, and more (Steir-Livny 2014).

Holocaust Humor in Israel: From Taboo to Debate in Popular Culture

Debate on Holocaust humor in Israel was minimal and remained on the margins from statehood in 1948 until the 1990s. The prevalent position was that the combination of humor and the Holocaust disparages the Holocaust's status and decreases the magnitude of the trauma and suffering.

Ways for jointly featuring humor and the Holocaust were first broached in Israel in the 1990s. In 1997, Israelis fumed when it transpired that on Holocaust Day, young people swapped coarse jokes on the internet. The reactions were divided into two groups: those who saw it as a healthy way of coping with the Holocaust in the present, and others who took issue with breaking the unyielding taboo on the subject (Loshitzky 2001).

The screening of *Life is Beautiful* in Israel in 1999, again placed the subject on the public agenda, and reactions in Israel were divided into groups that were for and against. Some viewers walked out demonstratively. Others maintained that representations of the Holocaust do not have to be realistic or possess documentary qualities, and objected to opinions, which supported shaping Holocaust consciousness with its own ceremonial language and reflexive automatic responses towards it. Those who supported the film contended that the angry critics of *Life is Beautiful* in America righteously claimed that it was impossible to create a comedy from the Holocaust. Apparently they were not aware of the tradition of Jewish humor and its ties with pain and persecution, or about the unique role of humor and fantasy in attempts to survive, or at least to preserve a semblance of normality and humanity during the Holocaust, and the tradition of black humor, gallows humor, and concentration camp humor in literary and cinematic representations of the Holocaust (Steir-Livny 2014).

In the 1990s and 2000s, the subject began to be addressed also in research. For example, Ruth Bondi (2002), a Holocaust survivor who documents the Jews of Czechoslovakia under Nazi occupation, described the contribution made by humor and satire for Jews in the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto. She described the songs, sketches, cabaret shows, and the satirical newspaper that were an integral part of life there. The 1990s and 2000s saw the publishing of comprehensive books in Israel, dealing with the importance of humor for Jews under the Nazi regime (Cohen 1994; Levin 2004; Ostrover 2009). Today the debate on the subject in Israel is addressed in films, theatre, TV sitcoms and satire, stand-up appearances, internet clips etc. (Gertz 2004; Steir-Livny 2009; Ofer 2013; Ne'eman Arad 2013).

Television, alongside other forms of mass media, is a major player in the battle over Holocaust memory in Israel. It has an important role in the politics of recognition and in shaping

the identity of individuals and groups. It is a dominant arena in the battle over the Holocaust collective memory (Bourdieu 1984a; Bourdieu 1984b). Since television in Israel is owned and managed by power groups in society (particularly the three main channels – 1, 10, and 22), it attempts to conserve, even in this multicultural era, a sort of tribal campfire that helps shore up the sense of national pride as well as endorsing Jewish and Zionist values (Yuran 2001). But television also provides opportunities for change. Contemporary cultures examine themselves through their art, and television is a spectrum along which controversial, diverse issues and points of view can be openly discussed almost without punishment (Fiske 1980; Newcomb and Hirsch 1994; Shifman 2008).

The Chamber Quintet (*Hahamishia Hakamerit)* was the first TV program that broke the taboo of Holocaust memory and used a satiric approach to criticize the national memory of the Holocaust. The 69 episodes (five seasons) of the program were broadcast, during the 1990s, on Channels 1 and 2 as well as the cable stations. *The Chamber Quintet* became a foundation of Israeli satire, and the content it presented can be seen as signifiers of the changes and new trajectories of collective memory regarding various subjects, including that of the Holocaust.

Acting out the Holocaust in the Israeli Presence

The problematic way in which Israeli society experiences, in the present, the trauma of the Holocaust is clearly discernible in the skit "Ghetto", which focuses on a young man from Tel Aviv trying to get to a party. In the skit, actor Rami Heuberger asks actor Shai Avivi for directions to a party. The directions reveal that all the street names are redolent with death – the names of heroes who sacrificed their lives for the State ("Hanged Men Street", "Eli Cohen Street"), or are in some way tied to the Holocaust: "Take Warsaw Ghetto Street, then a U-turn onto Concentration Camp Avenue, then park in Dachau Square", directs Avivi. "Is it nearby?" Heuberger asks. "Dachau? Dachau is right here, just around the corner", answers Avivi.

The skit can be analyzed through the research regarding trauma and secondary trauma. Trauma in the mental-psychological sense was first cited in the late nineteenth-century; Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, was among the first to develop it. Freud (1978, 2002) considered that one of the central concepts in trauma was "repetition compulsion" – returning to a trauma while blurring the boundaries between past and present, and thus re-experiencing the trauma. This repetition causes suffering and works against the desire of the sufferer. Freud's disciples broadened the debate on trauma and its immediate and later symptoms. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an extremely common mental disturbance among people who have

undergone traumatic incidents. Its sufferers continue to experience the traumatic events for years afterwards (for example: Herman 2004).

But a trauma can affect wider circles. In research, it is called "Secondary Traumatic Stress" – indirect exposure to the trauma by friends and relatives who are emotionally involved with the traumatized persons or indirect exposure to the trauma through intense debate in the media (television, radio, journalism, internet, etc.). Charles Fygley (1995) argues that PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) symptoms, like stress and anxiety, can appear in people who suffer from "Secondary Traumatic Stress", albeit less intensely. Collective memory researchers claim that the danger inherent in the disintegration of distinctions between different times and the merging of the traumatic past with the present is relevant not only for those who experienced the trauma in the flesh but also for those groups that are linked with the people who underwent the trauma. Both groups and societies can become trapped in a situation that co-mingles past and present and reconstructs the trauma, or certain aspects of it, in different ways. Such post -traumatic symptoms can affect the group's behavior in societal and political spheres (LaCapra 2000).

Clinical research addresses Holocaust survivors as people who suffer from PTSD and there are many debates over the question whether Holocaust survivors have transferred traumatic symptoms to their children (second-generation Holocaust survivors) and from them to their grandchildren (third-generation Holocaust survivors). But the trauma lives in much wider circles and affects all Jewish-Israelis through an intensive Holocaust awareness imbued by official memory agents.

The Holocaust was and remains a central trauma in Israel's national consciousness. The memory of the trauma does not fade over the years; on the contrary, Holocaust representations and the public discourse regarding the Holocaust have only grown stronger in recent decades. From the late 1940s onward, Israel's official collective memory of the Holocaust was relentlessly integrated into the Israeli collective memory. Moreover, the traumatic memory of the Holocaust was and is integrated in the representations of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in general, and the Israeli -Palestinian conflict, in particular. Researchers claim that the Israeli media, educational and cultural fields, and public discourse in Israel frame the Holocaust as a current, ongoing local trauma, rather than an event that ended decades ago in another place (Bar-Tal 2007*;* Meyers, Neiger and Zandberg 2014).

Surveys reveal that among the Jewish-Israeli population in general, since the 1940s, the Holocaust has been assimilated as a central event, and young Jewish-Israelis perceive the Holocaust as the historical event that has had the greatest impact on them and their future, even

more than the founding of the State (Porat 2011). Studies in Israel have shown that Holocaust memory has a very powerful presence, does not have just a one-generational impact, and is a cross-generational defining trait of the Jewish population in Israel. Therefore, in Israel, the terms "second-generation Holocaust survivors" and "third-generation Holocaust survivors" refer not only to the offspring of Holocaust survivors, but represent the Jewish Israelis who were born after 1945 in Israel and grew up in an environment that focused on the Holocaust as one of the most important features in Jewish Israeli identity (Milner 2004; Solomon and Chaitin, 2007; Steir -Livny 2014).

Every group builds a collective memory that shapes its unique identity and emphasizes it as opposed to other groups. There is no group, society or state that can exist without a collective memory as this is what unifies people who, in the most part, are not acquainted with one another. ("imagined communities" in the words of Benedict Anderson). Collective memory is based on a selective processing of history and is aimed to serve the group's interests (political, social, national). The shaping of collective memory involves forgetting and marginalizing certain themes while emphasizing others. This is how society builds its narrative as opposed to its "others". Memory agents, such as historians, filmmakers, educators, official ceremonies and urban planners build national collective memory (Halbwachs 1992; Young 1993, Zerubavel 1995). Jeffrey Alexander (2009a; 2009b) claims that any event – as horrendous as it may be – will turn into a trauma for the collective only if members of the elite define and construct it as such. He explains that "memory agents" construct collective trauma – members of the hegemony who feel this event will affect the collective memory and identity in the present and in the future. These "memory agents" construct the trauma as "collective" through a long cultural process of narration and signification.

In the skit "Ghetto", the creators use satire in order to protest against the way memory agents in Israel have increased the secondary trauma of Jewish Israelis. It reflects how collective memory agents relive the trauma of the Holocaust through street names. This part of urban planning reflects the problematic situation of Holocaust remembrance in Israel: the past and the present combined.

The therapeutic importance of black humor (also known as horror humor, sick humor, gallows humor, and grim humor) and self-disparagement for traumatized individuals has been frequently studied, in a wide range of contexts (among victims of abuse, crime, disasters, and more) and in particularly in the context of Jewish humor. Black humor has been presented as an effective defense mechanism for an oppressed minority to withstand attacks by their oppressors; in the Jewish context, it constitutes the defense mechanism of an entire people (for example:

Blacher Cohen 1987; Davies 1991; Ziv 1993; Epstein 2002; Brook 2003; Greenspoon 2011; Wisse 2013; Sover 2015).

Through black humor, the skit reflects the way memory agents in Israel relive the trauma in the present and, sub-textually project the Holocaust on the Israel-Arab conflict. Since Israel's founding, the Holocaust has been connected with the Arab-Jewish-Israeli conflict, creating cultural-media representations that have drawn parallels between Arabs and Nazis, between Israel's wars and the possibility of a "second Holocaust". Researchers contend that Holocaust memory was and remains a crucial factor in the perceptions of the reality of the conflict. It intensifies anxiety levels among Jewish Israelis and their sense of victimhood. The politicization of the Holocaust has created a situation in which the trauma of the Holocaust is integrated within Israeli present-day reality also through the protracted Arab-Jewish-Israeli conflict. This, in turn, has engendered a situation of collective awareness of fear, insecurity, and constant anxiety stemming from the sense of existential danger (Bar-Tal 2007). The skit reflects these notions by showing that the street names commemorate the intertwining of the Holocaust and the Israeli wars, thus creating eternal victimhood.

However, from the earliest days of the State and particularly after the Six Day War (June 1967), left-wingers have suggested a counter-discourse, initially in moderation, but from the 1980s with growing intensity. It is an inverse political memory that criticizes Israelis and the way in which the historically victimized have become the present-day perpetrators (Steir-Livny 2012). Television satire, much of which is written by members of the left wing, reflects those positions and combines the Holocaust with satire to protest the way in which the right-wing memory agents exploits the Holocaust to strengthen its political agenda. Reliving the Holocaust in the present creates a situation of constant fear. This victimization is used in order to justify violent policies against the Arabs in Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories, as well as blocking any opportunity for a peace treaty with the Palestinians (Bar-Tal, 2007).

The Holocaust as a Tool to Leverage Political Achievements

Satire tries to repair a society by using humor. It indicates the absurd in an existing situation and attempts to influence people to change their attitudes. Since satire takes a humorous approach, its use makes it easier to get the message across than some didactic propaganda attempt that might create resistance (Ziv 1984, 1998; Bergson 1999). In recent decades, satirists in Israel have observed how the Holocaust became a way to leverage political achievements. The scriptwriters

of *The Chamber Quintet* aimed to show how the Holocaust became a tool for politicians and public figures who want to create an impression and chalk up achievements.

In the skit "This Terrible Place", the Israeli Prime Minister and his entourage are shown touring Poland with a crew of security guards and photographers and using the site of mass murder as a photo opportunity. The Prime Minister wants to be photographed next to a specific tree "in this terrible place", as he demands. He is not really sad or touched when the camera doesn't work. He is all smiles, cracking jokes, totally detached from the significance of the site. When the photographers start filming, he puts on a serious face. All he can do is repeat the mantra, "In this terrible place, in this horrible place, Jews were slaughtered". In broken English, he mumbles a series of clichés in the style of "Look at this tree. This holy tree was watered by blood". His movements are ludicrous, he pushes his wife aside, tries to find a place in center -frame of the stills photographers crowding around him. As he is swept away by the metaphor of a tree symbolizing the Jewish people, its roots emblematic of the roots of the Jews whose scions were killed next to that tree, a security guard takes a few steps away and discovers that they have the wrong tree. The tree they wanted to film is a few yards away. His embarrassed advisors ask the delegation and photographers to move to the correct tree and start again. The politician's wife smiles her awful smile. When they arrive at the right tree, the politician resumes the exact same speech, cliché-ridden and detached, and with the very same pathos, he repeats his speech about what happened "in this terrible place". The skit shows the cynical and hegemonic manipulation of the Holocaust by politicians who are emotionally detached from the subject; for them, it is just another political tool, nothing else.

By transferring the Prime Minister from one tree to the other, satirists unveil the way the Holocaust has become a "master paradigm", as Tobias Ebbrecht terms it: a series of well-known, repetitive visuals that have appeared so often in Western popular culture that they have almost become clichés. In Western memory, the combination of Poland, forests and Jews is enough to create a Holocaust association. These objects migrate into popular culture as emblematic signs to convey contemporary themes. By revealing the visual "master paradigm" of the Holocaust, the satirists hope to expose Holocaust memory as a political tool and, as such, dismantle its power.

Uzi Weil, a screenwriter for *The Chamber Quintet*, asserts that such manipulations of the Holocaust have intensified and have swelled into unpleasant and disproportional dimensions: "Someone says 'Holocaust' and everyone shuts up". He believes the Holocaust has become a mechanism for forcing people's consciousness to stand at attention whenever the word is spoken; he links this phenomenon to that of the "Holocaust industry", which encompasses the de rigueur school trips to Poland, the selling of right-wing politics in the guise of sensitivity to the

Holocaust, and so on. Weil says that using humor to highlight the Holocaust's commercialization is a way to counter hypocrisy, and to close the gap between people's fine words and their genuine emotions (Shifman 2008). The skit strives to indicate the debasement of words connected to the Holocaust and the total lack of understanding about what happened "there". Beyond that, satirists aim to take issue with the process in which the Holocaust in Israel has become a series of images that gain political-personal-social capital. It is meant to pull back the curtain of hypocrisy from the memory agents of the Holocaust in Israel.

The skit, "Fledermaus at the Olympics," repeats the same idea in a different way. It is set in Stuttgart, Germany during the world athletics championship. Two Zionist wheeler-dealers have managed to enter the area alongside the running-track and in broken English, spiked with Hebrew and Yiddish, they demand that the judge give the Israeli runner an advantage to reduce the "historic injustice" and "to reduce the humiliation". The athlete, Zion Cohen, is the antithesis of the Zionist model of "muscular Judaism": he is short and scrawny, he has "legs like ice-cream sticks". Since he seems incapable of competing with the other athletes through physical strength, he calls on a familiar Jewish trait – lobbying – accompanied here by an Israeli quality – chutzpah. The latter quality is expressed by the fact that the wheeler-dealers burst into the running track area and then demand benefits for the Israeli – not as a favor but because of the rights he deserves due to historic injustice, because of the Holocaust. In the case of the wheeler-dealers, they are continuing the tradition of the Jewish *schnorrer* (beggar), twinning it with Israeli aggressiveness that deteriorates into curses and threats, yet ultimately manages to convince the judge.

The skit shows the cynical and hegemonic manipulation of the Holocaust by politicians who are emotionally detached from the subject. Ami Amir, producer of *The Chamber Quintet*, maintains that skits citing the Holocaust are aimed at showing how it has been enlisted for political and emotionally manipulative needs to justify actions in the present (Blau 2004).

In conclusion, the satirists of *The Chamber Quintet* hold up a mirror to emphasize, through humor, how ridiculous and wrong is the pathos-ridden canonic memory of the Holocaust and its political use in Israel. They strive to explain how extreme and destructive it is for the Holocaust to be injected into everyday life and transformed into an integral facet of Israeli identity.

The satirists do not ridicule the Holocaust or condemn it; on the contrary, they express how Holocaust memory is an integral part of their identity. It is tattooed on their souls and they use satire, not because they have detached themselves from the memory but because they cannot stand the way memory agents use the trauma in a manipulative and cynical way. The skits are their way of protesting against the violation of the trauma. They use satire in order to go against

memory agents who insist on reviving the Holocaust in the present. Against the introduction of the Holocaust into everyday life and its transformation into an integral facet of Israeli identity, they strive to explain how extreme and destructive this actually is.

Representations of the Holocaust within the medium of satirical TV shows allow for different, contradictory readings of these texts. Zandberg (2006) claims that the skits do indeed criticize the banalization of the Holocaust and its instrumentalization, but the fact that such critique appears in a program of television skits, together with skits relating to many other subjects, undermines its own criticism and makes the addressing of the Holocaust in the program banal and mundane. In this way, the medium and the context themselves create a trivialization of the subject. In my opinion, the fact that the satirical critique of Holocaust memory that appeared in *The Chamber Quintet* in conjunction with other skits that confront official Israeli memory agents in other fields and shatter major Israeli myths (such as the Israeli army, Israeli wars, the Israeli macho image, religion, gender relations), only strengthened its criticism. The secularization of Holocaust memory in these skits did not turn Holocaust memory to banal, but on the contrary, turned it into a complex memory with different facets and numerous problems that must be discussed for the sake of Holocaust memory for future generations. Because of this, the medium did not undermine its critique, but rather strengthened it. The satirists exposed, for the first time, the ways memory agents use the Holocaust in order to establish constant victimization. Through these skits, *The Chamber Quintet* positioned itself as a groundbreaking program that set the ground for a future generation of TV satire like *Wonderful Country* (*Eretz Nehederet*; Keshet Productions, Channel 2-Keshet, 2003-2015) and *the Nation's Back* [*Gav Hauma, Channel 10 2014-present*, formerly, *The State of the Nation (Mazav Hauma),* Keshet Productions, Channel 2 2010-2014] who also use Holocaust satire in order to protest against the hegemonic Holocaust remembrance in Israel, and for a new generation of artists who use black humor in different cultural fields towards Holocaust-related issues in order to protest against Israeli political, social and economic wrongs (Steir-Livny 2014).

Contrary to hegemonic perceptions that a satirical approach towards the Holocaust is degrading, the skits do not deride or scorn the Holocaust. In fact, they do not engage at all with the Holocaust itself, but rather with the question of Holocaust memory and its perpetuation in Israel. The satirists aim to take issue with the process in which the Holocaust in Israel has become a series of images that gain political-personal-social capital. The skits demonstrate how Jewish-Israelis, raised in the shadow of Holocaust memories, use satire on television to undermine the hegemonic politicization of the Holocaust, and can thus be perceived as basic, satirical critiques of the memory of the Holocaust in Israel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All articles published in the issue are the revised texts based on lectures delivered at the International Interdisciplinary Conference in Krakow "The Holocaust and the Contemporary World" (23-24 April, 2015).

ABSTRACT

Holocaust Satire on Israeli TV: the Battle against Canonic Memory Agents

For many years, Israeli culture recoiled from dealing with the Holocaust from a humorous or satirical perspective. Since the 1990, a new unofficial path of memory has begun taking shape in Israel. Texts that combine the Holocaust with humor are a major aspect of this new memory. The case study includes three skits by *The Chamber Quintet* (*Hahamishia Hakamerit*, "Matar" Productions, Channels 2-Tela'ad, Channel 1, 1993-1997), the first who dared to use satire to criticize the Holocaust memory agents in Israel. The paper analyzes the changes in the attitude towards Holocaust humor in Israel through theories of trauma and secondary trauma. Contrary to perceptions that these satirical skits disrespect the Holocaust and its survivors, the paper argues that these skits do not constitute cheapening mechanisms, but are nurtured by pain and criticism of a post-traumatic society.

KEYWORDS

Holocaust, Satire, Holocaust satire, Holocaust humor, Israeli culture, Israeli Television, Post -trauma, Cultural representations

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JEDNAK KSIĄŻKI

GDAŃSKIE CZASOPISMO HUMANISTYCZNE

2016 nr 6

The Holocaust and the Contemporary World

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