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Vlogging Auschwitz: new players in Holocaust commemoration

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ABSTRACT

Content creators on YouTube have started documenting their visits to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in vlog form. This social media format has enabled influencers to assume the role of popular historian, endowing their trips with a sense of moral responsibility. Critical tools should be applied not only to content analysis but also to metadata and various methods of curating visibility on the platform. Additionally, mechanisms of self-promotion and the fate of official narratives of commemoration in an era of user-generated content are of interest. Is this new cohort of popular history practitioners a welcome development in the field of commemoration?

KEYWORDS

Vlogging; curating visibility; popular historian; influencer; Auschwitz-Birkenau; Holocaust commemoration

Introduction

I came across Heidi Somers' vlog episode covering her visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum by chance as my intention had been to check whether a documentary film called *One Day in Auschwitz* (dir. Steve Purcell, 2015) – featuring Kitty Hart-Moxon – was available on YouTube. To the best of my memory, I had typed 'a day in Auschwitz' into the search engine, producing a list of audiovisual materials including the aforementioned documentary following the iconic Holocaust survivor, who took British high school students with her on a memory trip to the concentration camp where she had been incarcerated.[1] However, a video entitled 'Walking Through Auschwitz | WARNING: Actual footage of entire camp' had a much higher number of views (at the time of writing it had gathered three times more viewers than Purcell's documentary).[2] If we take the number of views as the sole measure of success, a person previously unknown as a historian and without any personal connection to the genocidal past has reached a much larger audience than an established biographical expert on the site. However, it would be unfair to compare these two videos by taking into consideration the number of views alone. *One Day in Auschwitz* is a professionally produced feature length documentary whereas 'Walking Through Auschwitz' is a prosumer short, self-recorded by Somers. Nevertheless, the audience numbers for the video uploaded on April 20, 2016 has up-to now surpassed the number of visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau in the respective time frame. [3] In addition to this, Somers' video is the third

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most popular video on YouTube when the keyword 'Auschwitz' is used. The other two films are BBC-produced drone footage of the former camp ('Auschwitz: Drone video of Nazi concentration camp - BBC News') and an interview with Eva Moses Kohr – a survivor of medical experiments on twins performed by the SS doctor Josef Mengele ('I Survived The Holocaust Twin Experiments'). Patrick Ney is not too far behind – as concerns the number of views – with his how-not-to-behave tutorial 'A Warning to Those Visiting Auschwitz'. It would be tempting to frame Somers' and Ney's videos via the concept of dark tourism,[4] but instead this essay delves into mechanisms of curating visibility, self-promotion, and the fate of official narratives of commemoration in an era of user-generated content. The videos chosen for the present article were posted on YouTube between 2010 and 2019. Their selection hinged on the following criteria: a high number of views, the online visibility of the content creator, their motivational angle, and the topic of tourism to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

To shed light on the two most popular vlogs, a selection of other videos has been compiled focusing on audio-visual conventions and genres. There are discernible differences between vloggers in regards their gender, intellectual preparation for the task ahead, production standards, and their level of commitment to curating the uploaded content. The audio-visual materials have been subjected to scrutiny, combining content analysis with an interpretation of the related metadata. Furthermore, profiles have been compiled for Heidi Somers and Patrick Ney on the basis of digital traces left online, be they on YouTube or other social media. Last but not least, their contributions to commemorating the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp are assessed as messages formatted for YouTube as a platform. What does this new cohort of popular history practitioners bring to Holocaust commemoration? What impact do their videos have?

Popular Historians and influencers on social media

There is an inherent problem in categorizing YouTubers or influencers as actors in historical education, a subject steeped in factual knowledge, and often considered morally useful. However, it has been demonstrated that in different national contexts these principles are not uncontested. Anja Mihr makes an important distinction between Holocaust education and human rights education, as the goals of these two pedagogical endeavors do not always align.[5] In the Israeli context, this development comes to the fore in Noga Wolff's argument.[6] Furthermore, the popularization of Holocaust education is connected to its universalization.[7] Some influencers are bona fide history aficionados whereas others may merely be embarking on a trip to a famous historical site motivated by an eagerly expected boost to their online visibility. To understand their position, I would like to propose a spectrum of motivations between the aforementioned extremes. The former role is delineated by Jerome de Groot as a 'popular historian'. De Groot perceives popular historians as history writers addressing wide audiences and using literary skills in order to bring history to life. In addition to creating book-length narratives, they write for magazines, are hosts on television and on the Internet.[8] Peter J. Beck adds that these new 'presenters possess varying, frequently unhistorical, agenda'.[9] YouTubers on the other hand should be looked at through the prism of neoliberal ideology which is the angle taken by Rachel Ashman, Anthony Patterson, and Stephen Brown in their study of 'autopreneurs'.[10] 'This portmanteau of the terms "autobiographical" and

"entrepreneur" succinctly conveys their intensely enterprising and confessional tendencies'.[11] For these individuals, sharing their intimate lives is their source of profit. There is a yawning chasm between a small group of affluent high-achievers at the top and the rest of the field, who are engaged in 'aspirational labor', namely creative work done without remuneration with an eye on future profits.[12] Vloggers compete for attention and, by extension, for monetization of their efforts. Despite a cult of authenticity, their online identities are to a large extent formatted with the tools offered by the platform.[13] As Greg Goldberg demonstrates, these digital workers face 'the transformation of leisure into work' which produces responsible subjects taking up desirable activities online.[14] Given the widespread consensus regarding the moral value of commemorating the Holocaust, such commemorative practices come with a promise of symbolic reward. Recording a trip to the former Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp may also be seen by vloggers as a safe pursuit in a field plagued by economic instability and precarity, where doing what one loves does not always translate into a viable source of income.[15]

Wulf Kansteiner claims that Holocaust memory is yet to put digital culture to proper use as heretofore its immersive tools have been shunned for fear of breaking a cultural taboo connected to virtually transporting contemporary audiences to the sites of mass murder. In his opinion, 'future memory culture' should adopt 'immersive, simulative, and possibly also counterfactual digital memory' in a bid to make the Holocaust politically relevant in the future.[16] In addition to this, traditional institutions do not use social media to its full potential, '"broadcasting" a carefully shaped, widely accepted message via social media' at the cost of omitting current thorny political questions. The reason for the latter is the fact that the museum staff 'have a lot to lose and nothing to gain by politicizing their activities, because negative press coverage would alienate sponsors, endanger their business model and jeopardize the value of their brands'.[17] Last but not least, Kansteiner regrets that in an age of incessant gathering of user data, researchers are cut off from this source of knowledge on user behavior by the respective platforms.[18]

The method adopted herein is inspired by Robert Kozinets' netnography, that is to say, the study of the behavior of Internet users, stressing the human aspect of online activity and agency.[19] In an attempt to fine-tune this method, Kozinets addresses the need to incorporate post-humanist methodologies 'including agentic objects such as bots, algorithms and intelligent agents'.[20] In the face of the ubiquitous curating of content, researchers need to move beyond their filter bubbles, gaining a degree of perspective regarding what is being fed to them.[21] In addition to this, Kozinets' method 'enables researchers to observe and gain an understanding of the voices of individuals and collective interactions online' as Emma Reid and Katherine Duffy argue in their methodological article on 'netnographic sensibility'.[22] These considerations are all the more important as we are dealing with a novel ecosystem of electronic media: 'Social media platforms have, to a remarkable degree, displaced traditional media, and they continue to enlarge their footprint. They have indeed given all comers the opportunity to speak in public and semi-public ways, and at an unprecedented, global scale'.[23] Content creators and platforms share an interest in attaining a quantifiable measure of success, namely popularity.[24] Influencers need to act in accordance with the rules set out by the respective platforms to which they upload their content.[25] They also possess expertise in how to deal with offensive comments either directed at themselves or issues raised in their videos,

photos or posts. However, when met with extreme hostility, they may take up the role of moderator and block comments altogether.

Content creators on YouTube and other social media platforms sooner or later come to the realization that the quality of the uploaded materials is by no means a guarantee of success. Thus, they need to study mechanisms of promoting content and achieving visibility. As Angela Glotfelter demonstrates, algorithms employed by platforms to promote content are to a large extent unpredictable and opaque as the big players keep their cards close to their chests.[26] As a result, creators need to address 'both their human and algorithmic audiences in the midst of uncertainty'.[27] Therefore, Glotfelter proposes to talk about algorithmic circulation which she understands as 'how creators may plan for their content to be taken up or boosted by algorithms through iterative processes of navigating, adapting, and reconfiguring their content strategies'.[28] Sophie Bishop points out two major purposes of algorithms on YouTube: managing the fast accumulating video content and taking care of audiences 'who hope to be served relevant entertaining, educational or informative videos'.[29] In order to maximize their visibility, content creators engage in algorithmic gossip, sharing knowledge about the ongoing changes in the visibility policies and their own strategies on how to remain relevant on the platform.[30] Bishop stresses that this communication between users makes up for their lack of specific technical knowledge. YouTube is first and foremost a business venture intended to monetize content to the chagrin of creators whose videos cannot be easily sold to advertisers. This policy is dubbed 'algorithmic bias' which effectively diminishes the chances of success of numerous creators by hiding their videos from prospective audiences.[31] Additionally, creators bent on popular success must play by the algorithmic rules and track their constant changes. However, it has been demonstrated that the visibility of content is not governed by algorithms alone but by 'ranking cultures'.[32] Findings show that YouTube native content fares better on the platform in comparison to mainstream media players. Content creators should also concentrate their efforts on channel subscriptions as a method of addressing their audience.[33]

Given recent discussions on what role social media plays in our culture, political revolutions, democratic elections, and in polarizing people's views,[34] research on representations of the Holocaust in social media is still in its infancy. Initially, social media commemoration stemmed from an understanding of social media platforms as a vehicle for personal expression. Impersonating a character from the past became an early commemorative strategy on Facebook in Poland, something which included both fictional fighters in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and the real Henio Żytomirski – a Jewish boy from Lublin murdered in the Majdanek concentration camp.[35] Interestingly, these two campaigns on Facebook were run respectively by an advertising agency and a non-governmental organization from the cultural sphere. However, after initial success these campaigns, launched in 2009, disappeared from the platform due to the labor-intensive nature of the former project, and a violation of site rules forbidding the creation of 'fake' sites for public personas in the case of Henio Żytomirski's page.

In a study on audio-visual representations of the Lvov pogrom of 1941 on YouTube, Mykola Makhortykh takes two parallel approaches to the studied material: an identification of genres employed in the uploaded content (requiems, records, documentaries, and shows) and user interaction with the moving images (nonverbal interaction, verbal interactions).[36] Makhortykh concludes that despite academic optimism about

the democratization of access to commemoration, digital media may still serve as a weapon of hate speech. A similar polarity of attitudes toward the genocidal past is analyzed in a study of Instagram posts sporting the hashtag #Auschwitz, in which a genuine need to commemorate the victims is contrasted with inconsiderate or hateful posts (including jokes mocking famous Holocaust victims).[37] Commane and Potton point out a generational shift in commemoration as they perceive Instagram to be a medium used predominantly by young people, in this particular case individuals with no biographical link to the Holocaust. Imogen Dalziel scrutinizes a more positive example of curating online photography on Facebook and Instagram by employees of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum as well as criticism levelled at selfie-takers at the site.[38]

According to Gibson and Jones, 'The ability of virtual memorials to capture and create a dynamic experience of the same character as memory can be more satisfying because it is closer to the lived experience'.[39] However, pioneering viral commemorative videos of the Korman family[40] – dancing at different historical and present-day locations to celebrate the gift of the artist's father Adolek Kohn surviving – can be categorized as (auto)-biographical memorialization. Thus, the unease of some viewers does not concern the identity of people engaged in commemorating the strength and resilience of their survivor relative but rather a seeming transgression of the rules of conduct at former sites of mass murder, including Auschwitz-Birkenau. Victoria Grace Walden extends the category of virtual Holocaust memory beyond the realm of the digital, stating that other novel forms of memory which consist in 'embodied contemplation' of the past serve to re-actualize history by breaking the boundary 'between the past, present and future'.[41] Researchers in the field prioritize discussion of the inherent features of respective platforms and their use in memory culture (Popescu, Stańczyk, Dalziel), generic conventions in audiovisual material on YouTube (Makhortykh), and the re-emergence of hate speech in the digital realm (Makhortykh, Commane and Potton). There are also comprehensive studies zeroing in on the more general status of digital commemoration (Kansteiner, Walden), comparing it to earlier practices and/or providing an ideological analysis of the desired shape of future practices. The import of my article lies in how it reconstructs the mechanisms at play in achieving popular success, how it explains adopted audio-visual conventions, and finally how it identifies the role vlogs and vloggers play in commemoration. It seems to me that vloggers have unexpectedly joined the ranks of memory professionals but have mostly been flying under the radar within memory studies. I would like to stress that studying mechanisms of content promotion and the positioning of content creators should go hand in hand with content analysis.

Self-discovery at Auschwitz-Birkenau – Heidi Somers

Heidi Somers is a fitness model-cum-athlete from the United States who has achieved both popular and financial success as an influencer and as an entrepreneur. Paradoxically, Somers' most popular video on YouTube does not touch upon gym routines, dietary advice, competitions, buying real estate, investing in her gym outfit company, or her private life but rather covers a trip to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Nevertheless, the vlogger has applied her knowledge of YouTube as a platform (and other platforms of self-expression) and self-promotion skills to further a greater cause.

Somers is also active on other platforms: a commercial website www.buffbunny.com, Instagram (@buffbunny), Twitter and of course Facebook. Still photographs dominate her Instagram feed, routinely showing Somers working out, posing in athletics clothes, or dressed to the nines. Video content is very rare. A clip from the Auschwitz-Birkenau video was posted on the same day that the full-length production went up on YouTube (Figure 1). Somers also cross-posted the link to the video on her other social media profiles. The analysis below concentrates on the YouTube video as, in comparison to the other platforms, the content is easily searchable, does not disappear on the timeline, and its appeal extends beyond Somers' usual fan base. This vlog episode is a standalone production, requiring no prior knowledge of its producer.

An analysis of the audio-visual material would be incomplete without delving into two other parallel materials: textual and visual elements accompanying the video as well as tags retrievable from the code. A custom thumbnail promotes Somers' video in the search results. It is a composite of three images: on the left we see a woman – presumably

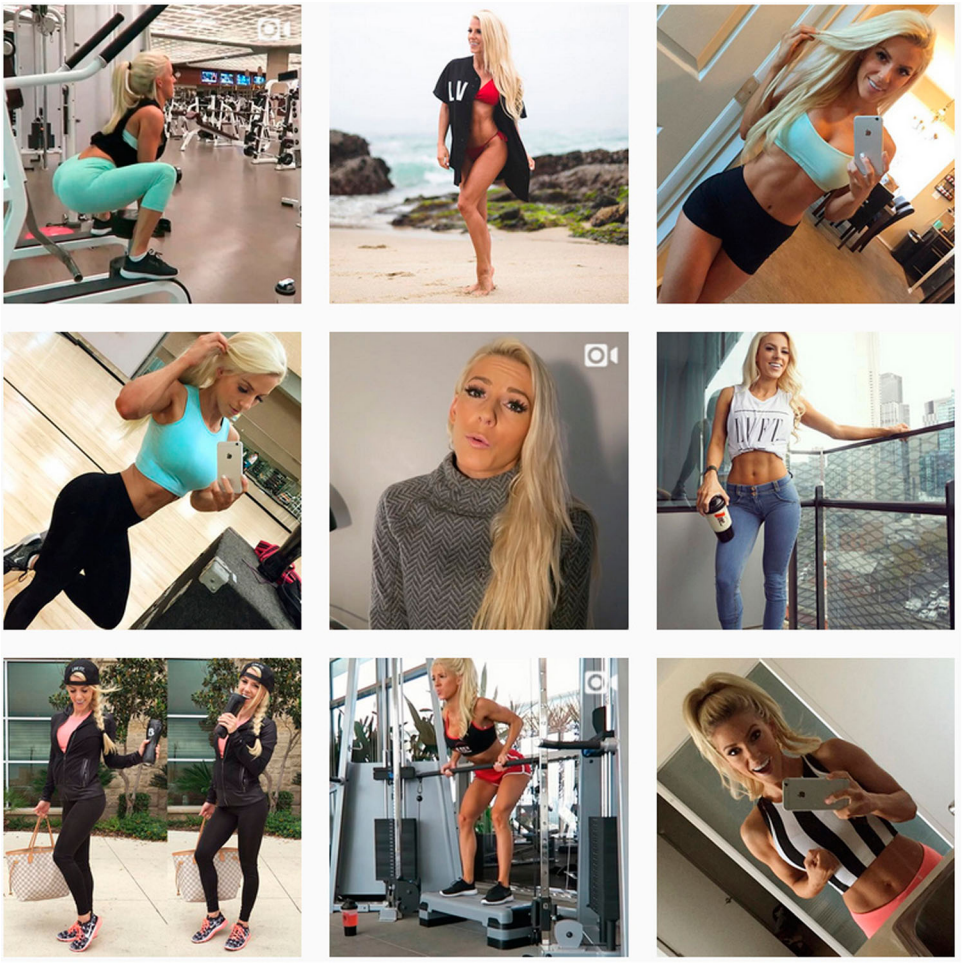

Figure 1. Heidi Somers' Instagram feed with the Auschwitz vlog thumbnail in the center. Note a marked discrepancy in her appearance compared to that seen in her typical content.

in her 20s – in medium close-up, in the top right there is an image of a guard tower and two blocks at Auschwitz I, and finally in bottom right we espy a medium close-up of a stack of prisoners' suitcases with Klara Goldstein's name and address on a piece of luggage in the center of the frame (Figure 2). The layout of the thumbnail follows to an extent a guideline for 'smashing thumbnails' found in an online tutorial.[42] In lieu of an 'expressive headshot', there is an image of Somers talking, with her gaze turned away from the camera. This layout communicates the fact that the video presents an individual take on the former camp and the second and third screenshots signal a shift from an 'establishing shot' to objects singled out by the content creator.

Taken aback by initial responses to the video, Somers posted a disclaimer in the description. First, she admits to having disabled comments 'due to the complete disrespect some people had towards the people who were murdered and suffered at Auschwitz'. There is no way of recovering these comments, the Internet Archive (archive.org) does not store them and once they have disappeared from Somers' profile they are gone. It is my hunch that the vague wording in her sentence – especially the reluctance to call hateful comments hate speech or antisemitism – is a PR strategy to avoid these controversial words on her page. Not to mention that disabling comments frees her from the obligation to monitor and moderate them as well as respond to them. In a much longer argument, Somers defends her right to have filmed at the exhibition, stating that filming is only prohibited in the 'room of hair,' whereas elsewhere only flash photography is not allowed due to preservation of artifacts. To offer further proof she posts a link to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum's website, stating its policy regarding photography. The video's original description remains on the page; Somers sees this vlog as a departure from her typical content. The trip was recorded so that

Figure 2. Heidi Somers' YouTube video thumbnail consists of three images: a clipped screenshot with the vlogger in a hotel room, an establishing shot of the camp, and a detail showing material proof of mass murder.

she could share the place with prospective visitors, who she urges should treat visiting it as a moral obligation. On this occasion, she provides links to her other social media profiles, contact information, and advertises her workout plans.

What is the significance of the number of views? Karin van Es points out that views cannot be treated 'as merely a transactional metric, [but] the view functions as the operational logic of the platform as a whole'.[43] On YouTube 'a view is counted roughly after thirty seconds'[44] and as a metric it drives competition. Creators need to acknowledge two other even more important metrics: 'watch time and subscriber count'.[45] Undoubtedly, some of them are trying to game the system in order to boost the number of views by resorting to 'trickery', that is, 'misleading titles and thumbnails to drive clicks on a particular video'.[46] For van Es there is a fine line between deception and optimization of content for algorithms. Even though tags are invisible to YouTube users, they can be retrieved from the code (right click and select 'view page source'). It turns out that Somers left no stone unturned in trying to boost the visibility of her content. Let us compare her use of tags for a personal video 'My Fitness Journey | How I lost the weight' (the second most popular video on Somers' channel). A total of fifty-five tags are employed, out of which just the last thirteen are on topic whereas the rest promote the channel. Apart from content-specific tags such as 'workout', 'shredded', 'npc', and 'ifbb' (the latter two being athletic federations in which Somers has competed), the list contains general ones such as 'woman', 'blogger', and 'how to' (a much sought-after category of videos on YouTube). The Auschwitz vlog repeats her set of channel tags (thirty-one items) and adds ten content-specific ones: 'auschwitz', 'concentration', 'nazis', 'jews', 'sad', 'footage', 'real', 'death camp', 'evil', and 'holocaust'. There is no limit to the number of tags but YouTube punishes excessive use of them.[47] Most probably, the higher the number of tags, the lower their respective ranking in the algorithm. Six of the tags refer to historical events (relating to the Holocaust) while the rest can be divided into two semantic categories: a generic description of the audiovisual material ('sad',[48] 'real footage') and metaphysics ('evil'). The above list of tags makes it evident that the visibility of Somers' channel has the upper hand, but the content-specific tags identify the Holocaust with mass murder in the death camps run by the Nazi regime.

The clickbait title 'Walking Through Auschwitz | WARNING: Actual footage of entire camp' heralds a juxtaposition of Somers' personal perspective on the camp/museum and comprehensive coverage. The attention-grabbing word 'warning' is capitalized and placed in the geometric center of the line, promising something shocking or extraordinary. A post on Instagram explains that this choice of words stems from the shock she experienced upon visiting the camp. 'Walking-through' videos are a format popular in the electronic media in part due to the *MTV Cribs* program in which celebrities invite their fans into their homes. Since the video is a selective edit of a guided tour the phrase 'entire camp' promises more than the video can deliver. In a similar vein, the phrase 'actual footage' may be mistaken for historical footage. This heading is a staple on YouTube, accompanying videos of car crashes, plane catastrophes, and war journalism. It manifests a belief in the power of citizen journalists recording extraordinary events with their smartphones. The word 'warning' enjoys a similar currency in titles on YouTube, including such mundane topics as the results of a Botox injection. Thus, Somers' title is optimized for YouTube algorithms (a combination of popular

expressions) and audiences (well-versed in the usage of buzz words). By this token, Somers has mastered the art of managing online visibility by playing by the book.

Somers' thirteen minute fifty-seven second video consists of a pre-trip self-filmed interview, a segment with ambient sound at the airport in Cologne, and hand-held footage of Auschwitz I and Birkenau with voice-over. As the video deviates from her typical content about workouts, diet and gym outfits, she offers an explanation of her rationale for embarking on her trip to Poland. Somers admits to having taken an interest in history only in college and attributes her knowledge of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp to undergraduate courses and watching documentaries. The opening part has frequent cuts – a sign that Somers wanted to make a perfect impression. In her other videos, she typically wears athletics clothing revealing her toned body. In this case, she looks appropriately dressed for the occasion and eager to come across as somebody with a serious interest in the topic of genocide. Somers underlines a personal sense of obligation: 'I'm a huge believer in keeping history alive' and identifies a conflict between her personality (pursuit of personal happiness) and the historic site ('lack of love and compassion that they had for people'). Nearly one third of the video covers her preparation, tips for solo international travelers and Somers' decision-making. The video starts in a hotel room which gives the episode an aura of intimacy. Bedrooms are a setting for countless YouTube videos as many influencers started and developed their online careers there.[49] The introduction additionally positions the video on the platform as YouTube algorithms use automatic close captions in order to aid understanding of the content.[50]

Somers follows the itinerary of a tour she bought in Kraków, filming the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum using a hand-held camera without hardware image stabilization. At times, there are odd camera angles, for example, when she films her legs walking in the camp. Typically, she holds the camera in front of her, occasionally pointing it up or down. The footage is edited and there is much redundancy between the visuals and the audio commentary. The walk-through segment of the video lacks ambient sound. In order to account for the discrepancy between the duration of the voiceover and the pace of visuals the footage was sped up in post-production. As the camera is equipped with a wide-angle lens, the field of view depends on the proximity of the vlogger to the objects and people filmed. The voice-over narrative highlights chronological order: 'the first building', 'then' etc. In lieu of a detailed historical explanation, images of museum exhibits are endowed with an affective commentary: we see two photographs from the 'Auschwitz Album',[51] showing the arrival, selection, and the last moments of a transport of Hungarian Jews in the spring of 1944 (with an explanation of the arrival of the transport and the fate of deportees), the belongings of the murdered Jews as well as Zyklon B cans. Neither are the dates when the camp was in operation nor the nationality of the victims conspicuously referred to (in stark contrast to the tag 'jews'). As the number of victims is inflated to 'millions of people', it is not clear whether Somers actually does not know the true figure (estimated at 1.1 million), is speaking about all of the victims of the Holocaust, or is simply resorting to hyperbole. The affective dimension of the commentary comes to the fore in Somers' account of her refusal to grasp the violence meted out at prisoners in Block 11 (the execution block). She took her headphones off because she 'didn't want to hear anymore'. At Crematorium

I (referred to as 'gas chambers') Somers questions the policy of letting people into a place where 'millions of people' perished. The ugliness of the chamber is allegedly related to the murders committed inside. The reporting on Auschwitz I takes up the longest section, in contrast with the two-minute piece on Birkenau. Such a disparity may reflect the itinerary of guided tours, with guides spending more time in Auschwitz I as it fits their narrative agenda better.[52] A montage of two takes of the ramp explains the extermination function of Birkenau: at the Gate of Death, Somers brings up the arrival of the trains, which is followed by a counter-take further down the ramp. Somers' coverage of the death factory consists in showing the ruins of the gas chambers (in sped-up footage) and living conditions in the brick barracks. A panning shot of the camp, including the watchtower at the Gate of Death, becomes a visual coda. For Somers, eye-witnessing is a precondition in order to gain a semblance of understanding: 'to see […] the proof right in front of your eyes'. The final credits warn the viewers that genocides did not end in 1945, but that they can be prevented: 'Education and remembrance are the only cures for hatred and bigotry'.

Somers' video strikes a chord with a broader audience beyond her fan base. She makes her contribution to the culture of remembrance personal, at the same time relying on established tropes of commemorative discourse such as the 'Never again' motto underpinning the final credits. This coverage of the historic camp lacks intellectual depth, and typical markers of historical discourse (causality, facts, dates) are mostly absent. As a result, the audience can identify with Somers' perspective at the cost of losing from sight the cognitive aspect of the tour. Producing the video is an integral part of Somers' path to self-discovery and personal growth. She advocates moral responsibility, but the video fails as an educational tool other than via its arguing for the personal gain attained by seeing historical sites in person. However, Somers' fans defend her against accusations that she is 'fronting', namely pretending to be somebody wiser or more important than she is (as defined at urbandictionary.com). Her followers take her intentions at face value, underlining the importance of historical remembrance – be it for personal, familial, or humanitarian reasons. To the best of my knowledge, this video is Somers' only content in which she addresses larger societal issues beyond her immediate goals of self-improvement through strength training. This speaks volumes about the Holocaust as the key trauma of the twentieth century and the place of Auschwitz-Birkenau on the map of dark tourism (Somers skipped two other must-see tourist attractions, i.e. Kraków and the Wieliczka salt mine). The former camp was not picked at random despite the fact that Somers' confrontation with the site and its history means she was stepping outside her comfort zone (to use a popular self-improvement cliché). As the producer of an autobiographical documentary[53], Somers has played a number of roles: that of video editor, narrator, script writer, and protagonist. Over a series of episodes, she builds up an online persona, communicating her personality to her fans. This character embarks on a journey of self-discovery, motivated by curiosity and social responsibility. In this capacity, Somers serves as a proxy for the audience, who can watch her 'confront' herself with the Holocaust. Furthermore, her trip is shared with the online community via social media by cross-posting to reach various audiences. In the case of YouTube, she was able to reach people with no interest in her typical vlogs or even oblivious of her

other pursuits. In her capacity as a popular historian she propagates 'lessons of the Holocaust,' such as the ongoing threat of genocide and the injunction to memory, at the same time forgoing traditional tools of historical trade.

Popular historian as a moral educator – Patrick Ney

Patrick Ney – a British national residing in Warsaw, Poland – is a popular historian via his YouTube channel. In contrast to Somers, he does not rely on his online activity to earn his livelihood. Polish history is his main area of interest and he diligently promotes it to his English-speaking audience. He has learned Polish and participated in a video project to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Polish independence, addressing his audience in the language.[54] His most ambitious project to date consists of a series of daily updates on the progress of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 (sixty three episodes in total).[55] However, his hard work and dedication have failed to attract a large audience (the most popular episodes garnered just a few thousand views). In addition to this, he has produced two historical short films on Auschwitz-Birkenau: about a Polish friar – Father Maximilian Kolbe – who saved another prisoner's life by offering himself in the other's stead ('The Extraordinary Story Of One Man's Sacrifice'), and another about a Polish cavalry officer, Witold Pilecki, a volunteer who went to Auschwitz who set up a resistance group in the camp, conveying intelligence about the genocidal activities at the site ('The Incredible Story of the Hero Who Volunteered for Auschwitz Will Amaze You'). Both videos share a similar story line: a synopsis of the hero's life precedes an ethical lesson for the vlogger and by extension his audience. Ney has internalized Polish memory discourse, employing upbeat endings, stressing heroism, and using solemn music. On the other hand, historical heroes are instrumental in boosting the visibility of his videos: 'To honour [Kolbe's] strength and courage, please, share this film'. Ney's portrayal of the friar glosses over controversies concerning Kolbe's pre-war role as a publisher of antisemitic periodicals.[56] Instead, Ney delivers a message of self-improvement based on a reinterpretation of Kolbe's religious heroism and martyrdom. In this vein, history serves as a source of inspiration for contemporary viewers, who are asked to emulate the extraordinary moral courage of historical heroes in times of peace and freedom.

In a video lasting three minutes and twelve seconds, 'A Warning to Those Visiting Auschwitz', Ney admonishes would-be Auschwitz visitors not to break the rules of conduct at this tragic site. The custom thumbnail is a composite image showing Ney in the center of the frame (his silhouette has been cut out from the video) against a background of a few shots of Auschwitz I: a genuine warning sign reading 'Halt!' (plus a death's head and an inscription in German and Polish), the arch of the 'Arbeit macht frei' gate superimposed on an image of the camp fence, and the building of the Old Theater (Figure 3). The composition of the thumbnail draws attention to the warning sign on the left and only then to the speaker. His green sports jacket and a concerned facial expression evoke associations with TV news reporting. The majority of the twenty-four tags for the Auschwitz decorum video are connected to its main topic: there is a balance between more general categories ('the holocaust' and 'Nazi Germany') and video-specific keywords ('auschwitz documentary', 'auschwitz tour').[57] There is a single classification tag, namely 'motivational video'. A tag reference to a

Figure 3. Patrick Ney's YouTube video thumbnail is a composite image of the iconic gate at Auschwitz I, the brick barracks at the same location, and Ney as an expert in the center of the frame.

viral photographic project *Yolocaust* by Shahak Shapira (www.yolocaust.de launched in 2017) may at first glance seem a trick to make the video visible to people searching for other content. On his website Shapira condemns the taking of frivolous selfies at sites of mass murder, or memorials devoted to the victims, using digitally altered images with the offenders pasted into historical images of dead victims. It is my hunch that both projects share the same concern, that is to say, a call to visitors of genocidal sites to reconsider their behavior. In contradistinction to Shapira, Ney does not level his criticism at individuals identifiable online and stops short of the naming-and-shaming strategy adopted by the German-Israeli artist.

Standing in a medium close-up against a background of birch trees at Birkenau (whence its name), Ney reminisces about his first visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in 2012 and his anger at the other visitors, whose behavior either breached the rules stated by the institution (photographing human hair and other belongings of the victims[58]) or decorum (a pair kissing at the entrance to Crematorium I) (Figure 4). Most of all, he was angry at himself for not saying anything to the offenders. Mass tourists '"ticking off their bucket list" by visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp' bear the brunt of his rant. He feels obliged to warn potentially disrespectful prospective visitors against visiting the former camp or other places of mass extermination and stresses how respectful behavior is of paramount importance: 'It's your obligation as a human, to the human race'. To enhance the humanist message of the video, motivational credits roll against tracking drone footage of Auschwitz I in the falling snow: 'When the last survivors of the Holocaust are gone / We will be the only witnesses to their memory. / How should we remember them? / Share this film. Share your opinion'. By this token, the vlogger positions himself as an agent

Figure 4. Patrick Ney delivering his warning in the birch grove at Birkenau.

propagating lived history. Nevertheless, there is a hidden assumption that misbehaving visitors betray the legacy of survivors.

Production-wise Ney's vlogs have a semi-professional, movie-like appearance. The videos are shot with a DSLR camera stabilized with a steadicam (as seen in the video) or put on a tripod, with some drone footage to spice things up. The speaker is framed centrally with leading lines of trees behind. A similar aesthetic is employed in the final architectural shot of the camp. Ney speaks while looking straight into the camera, delivering a well-rehearsed speech, accentuated with emotive phrases and an engaged tone of voice. There are no interruptions and his speech sounds as if it was continuously recorded without cuts. In this vein, Ney gives an impression of being a media-savvy popular historian, consciously applying audio-visual conventions and assisted by a production crew.

Generic conventions vs creator ingenuity – other vlogs about Auschwitz-Birkenau

Are the above-mentioned videos indicative of larger trends? Let us study a sample of other YouTube videos, showing the present-day appearance of the camp and/or visitors' reflections. With the notable exception of a making-of short video about shooting drone footage for a documentary film ('A drone just flew over Auschwitz and captured something incredibly powerful'), remaining videos reflect visitor experiences or show elderly survivors revisiting the camp. For the purpose of this section, only visitor videos are considered. The search was conducted with the aid of two phrases: 'walking through Auschwitz' and 'visiting Auschwitz'. The first query returned a mere twelve results (each user is likely to get different results, based on a number of factors including their location, the logging on platforms such as Google or Facebook, language used and search history) including Somers' vlog and Ney's warning. The second search yielded more than one

hundred results. A practical approach to visiting the Museum can be found in a how-to video posted by a couple of tourists who go by the moniker of Passport Two ('WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AND EXPECT WHEN VISITING AUSCHWITZ // Auschwitz, Poland') and offer advice on organizing trips from Kraków to the former camp. The video intercuts between a self-filmed interview, screenshots of relevant websites, some archival visuals, and footage of the camp, the main purpose being to share practical tips with prospective visitors. Reconstructing the speakers' itinerary is given equal weight as the history of the camp and its preservation (Figure 5).

There are a few examples of narrated walking tours of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. User XxBec3509 offers an audio commentary accompanying a hand-held video recording of a self-guided tour of Auschwitz I and II ('(HD) Narrated Tour of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau'). A dense historical narrative describes the buildings at the camp as well as the exhibitions in the former prisoner blocks. However, it is rather slow-paced, fairly impersonal and delivered with a flat intonation. The wealth of information contained in its twenty-eight minutes fails to translate into any lesson. Instead, the final credits have an elegiac note to them: 'R.I.P. In memory of the victims of Auschwitz and Birkenau 1940-1945'. Vic Stefanu, meanwhile, is a prolific travel vlogger and chooses a feature format for his exploration of the Birkenau death camp ('Auschwitz II, the German NAZI EXTERMINATION CAMP ☹ (Poland), a complete tour'). Despite the fact that he frequently flips the camera round to show himself and his surroundings, this one-hour-long video prioritizes an explanatory historical narrative. And yet, viewers hardly learn about any concrete events; instead Stefanu paints a panorama of the human misery and the agony of the victims. Every now and then, his audience is admonished to imagine the living conditions of the prisoners, or their death throes in the gas chambers, by looking at the preserved barracks and ruins of other buildings, including the crematoria (Figure 6).

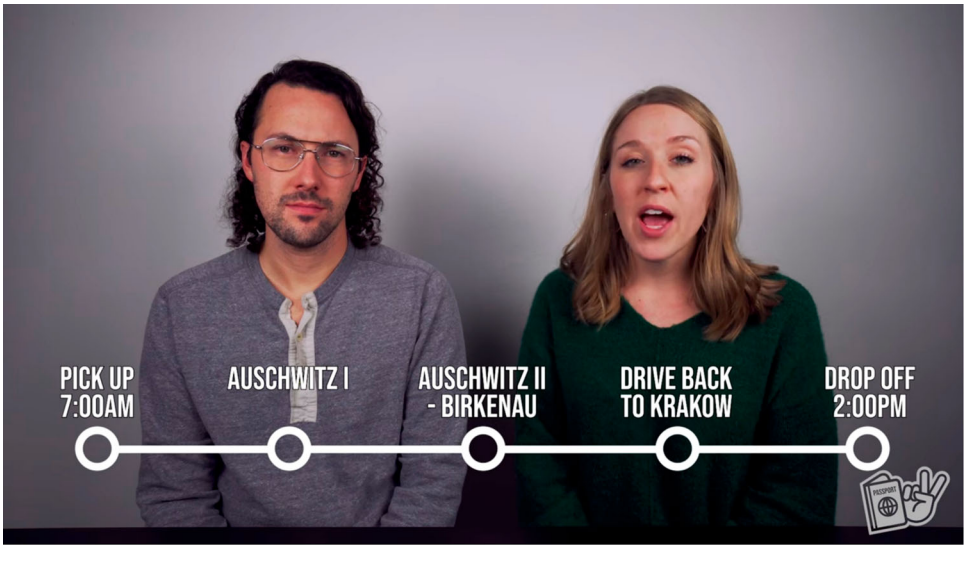

Figure 5. Passport Two is a pair of travelers enhancing their narrative with an infographic. By this token, a visit to the former site of mass murder is no different to planning other tourist attractions.

Figure 6. Vic Stefanu merging historical expertise with an affective investment.

An award-winning pair of travelebrities known as Kara and Nate visited Auschwitz in 2016 at an early stage during their grand tour, which has brought them to almost 100 countries so far and turned traveling into their profession. Their Auschwitz vlog starts in Kraków with the pair facing the camera, explaining how to visit the Museum on one's own ('AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP'). In contrast to other vloggers, they prepared themselves for the visit by taking in the Schindler Factory Museum the day before, rather than by reading about the camp or watching documentaries. The video intercuts between audio-visual 'selfies' (with a camera mounted on an extension arm and facing the speakers) and images of the former camp. On occasion, generic music (upbeat royalty-free background tune popular with content creators on YouTube) strikes a false note given the grim visuals, for example, in the scene showing the ovens in Crematorium I. Time and again, visuals are aestheticized, for example, in a medium close-up of Kara's hand leafing through the list of names of people murdered in the Holocaust and in low-angle shots of the tracks at Birkenau (Figure 7). The film is punctuated with shots of Nate's watch showing the time spent at different places. In the end, before credits roll with George Santayana's aphorism 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it', the pair extol the merits of not taking the organized-tour route as they believe more time spent at the site outweighs the knowledge provided by a tour guide (Figure 8).

The clickbait title 'A Walk Through Auschwitz | Uncensored Footage of the Concentration Camps' advertises a video by a duo called Sutton Grove. The film is made up of a montage of archival images and panning shots of the exhibition set to nostalgic piano music. This elegiac short relies on sequencing visuals, eliciting a feeling of sadness in the absence of any audio commentary. It avoids placing its creators in the limelight, and instead Luke Matthews – co-creator of the channel – makes a brief appearance, with his gaze fixed on the horizon. However, at no point is his identity divulged in the video and it could only be ascertained by an exhaustive comparison with other visuals

Figure 7. Kara and Nate. This shot is an example of the aestheticization of footage with Kara's hand leafing through the Book of Names (of Holocaust victims).

on Sutton Grove's social media. Aesthetically, this video is a crossover between a motivational commercial and a stock video. There is a contradiction between the title (tailored for the algorithm) and its thoughtful though at times generic form of paying homage (Figure 9).

At times, the images of torture on display at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum breach the platform's age restrictions. Wandering Whalley's predilection for filming

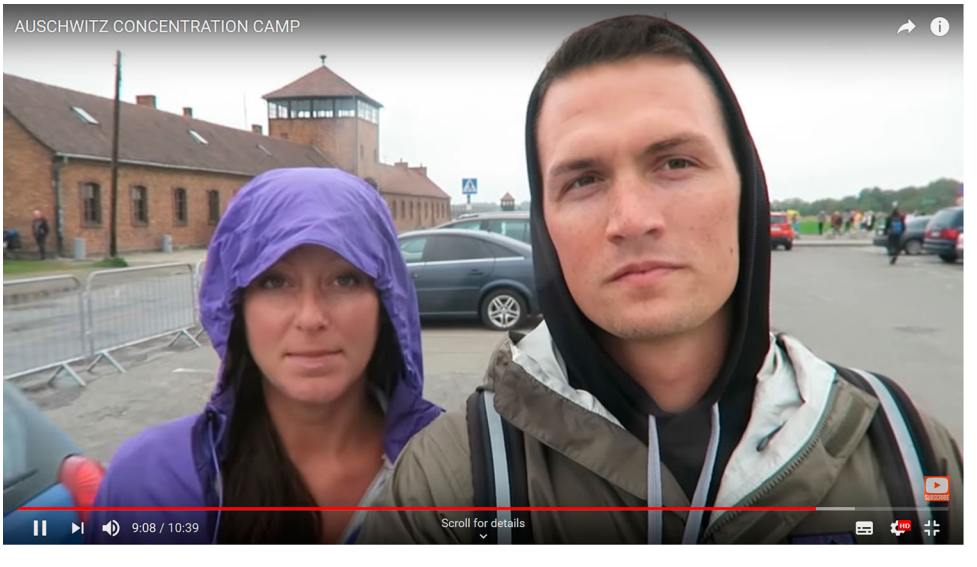

Figure 8. Kara and Nate praising the merits of a self-guided tour of Auschwitz in a final-thoughts segment shot at Birkenau.

Figure 9. Luke Matthews (Sutton Grove) in a pensive mood at Birkenau in a video short blurring the line between a motivational commercial and a stock video.

archival photographs of public executions is probably the reason why one needs to sign into one's YouTube account to be able to watch her video. On the other hand, 'I WENT TO AUSCHWITZ || ACTUAL FOOTAGE FROM THE CAMP || WANDER WITH ME' is a deeply personal travelogue in which the vlogger admits that an emotional overload prevented her from learning the history of the concentration camp. She decided against joining an organized group only to rely on a book-sized printed guide presented to the

Figure 10. Wandering Whalley displays a book-format guide to Auschwitz-Birkenau with the wooden barracks at Birkenau seen in the background.

camera on two occasions (Figure 10). Wandering Whalley balances two – at first glance incompatible – perspectives: self-centered influencer culture (the camera is turned on the vlogger, recording her monologue mixed with ambient sound) and solemn remembrance (Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's *III Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*[59] provides the soundtrack to her tour of Auschwitz I and Birkenau). The underlying assumption is that the visuals in the former camp are self-explanatory. However, one may point to a glaring mistake caused by this approach when the camera studies the gallows on which the camp commandant Rudolf Höss was executed in 1947. Without knowledge of this event, post-war justice is conflated with the concentration camp's regime of terror. By and large, the goal of the trip consists in elucidating affects triggered by traces of history rather than discovering lessons for humanity. Psychological self-scrutiny does not blind her to what she perceives as excesses of self-indulgence, for example, fans' comments on her social media that Auschwitz 'looked amazing' or critiquing other visitors taking selfies.

Finally, the vlog form and a personal narrative video become conventional markers of relatable and relevant historical knowledge. A channel called Top5s, catering to fans of history and paranormal events, adds a personal twist to a retelling of the tragedy of Hungarian Jews murdered in the spring and summer of 1944 at Birkenau ('Exploring Auschwitz II–Birkenau | WARNING Extremely Eerie … '). A factual narrative accompanies artsy shots of the speaker's winter shoes (with the ambient sound of walking on frozen ground) and images of Birkenau. Facts and dates are provided in a voice-over narrative only rarely punctuated with a reference to the speaker's emotions. Despite constant reminders about the presence of the narrator the video never reveals his face. The channel's *raison d'être* is to produce viral videos, however, in this case the result (shy of 900,000) pales in comparison to their record audience of forty million (a video on aliens) (Figure 11).

One could argue that social media posts about visiting commemorative sites run the risk of being criticized for excessive narcissism on the part of the content

Figure 11. Top5s turning to Instagram aesthetics to enhance a factual narrative.

creators. Vlogs uploaded to YouTube take a few approaches to the visibility of their creators: at one extreme, there are monologues from hotel rooms or other places, focusing on the history of the camp, the visitor's reaction to the site or practical advice to other tourists; at the other, there are para-documentaries or poetic films which avoid putting the creator in the limelight, instead zeroing in on the buildings, exhibits, and ruins. The monologue form can be observed in a lengthy historical narrative delivered in a hotel room by Kyle Pounds, lying on his bed ('Insights After Visiting Auschwitz, Poland 1/3').[60] The aestheticized approach forms the crux of a two-part montage of visual impressions of the camp set to John Williams' score for *Schindler's List* ('A Walk Through Auschwitz I Concentration Camp | In 1080p HD'). Nevertheless, there are other tell-tale signs of vloggers' engagement with the site: reflections in glass cases and protective panes, camera movements following a videomaker's gaze (pans switching direction, up-and-down vertical pans), unstabilized footage, picking up objects (for example, roses left by other visitors) to present them to the camera, and pointing at important objects with their hands. Varying levels of production quality betray their mastery of the medium (or lack thereof); paradoxically, most of the technical imperfections enhance the feeling of authenticity. And yet, 'authenticity on YouTube does not refer to a reflection of reality without mediation; instead, it is a specific means and content of representation'.[61] Truth be told, some vloggers successfully employ cinematic conventions, framing according to the rule of thirds or with conspicuous leading lines. There are others who explore a slideshow format, editing still photographs to form a visual narrative ('Auschwitz Birkenau – WARNING disturbing Images and Sound').[62] Interestingly, the above selection of videos concentrates exclusively on self-guided tours. Such a method of getting to know the site is more conducive to media production, allowing for an undisturbed shoot and more thoughtful camera work. There are two complimentary approaches to representing Auschwitz-Birkenau in vlogs: cognitive and affective. Although emotions are more difficult to control, they do not require the lengthy process of learning indispensable for a more intellectual approach. However, this shift is by no means the sole domain of commemoration as 'social media platforms not only empower and validate individual's emotive understanding of the affairs but also encourage a dynamic of communication that rewards such behavior with a form of perceived validation'.[63] In this vein, relying on affects has a number of advantages for the influencer. It enhances their relatability, makes it difficult to contest their message, and it proves that they have learned the social media ropes. The hegemonic logic of digital capitalism works behind the scenes empowering 'affective expressions and doing away with the usual overwhelming rationality'.[64] Thus, influencers participate in a culture in which feelings are more important than facts.[65] Conversely, the distinction between factual knowledge and emotions has been a staple in studies on Holocaust pedagogy with some scholars privileging the former over the latter.[66] Krieg points out that Holocaust-related sites generate 'socially appropriate emotions' such as 'sadness and guilt' which may nevertheless be rejected as imposed on the visitors.[67] Therefore, influencers – perceived as their audience's peers – benefit from their assumed authenticity and facilitate empathy with their affects. At times, it is nigh on impossible to disentangle the cognitive and the emotional in a pedagogical setting.[68]

Conclusion

Having conducted a reverse engineering[69] of the popular success of videos and an analysis of their content, I would now like to return to positioning Somers and Ney in their roles as popular historians and influencers. Somers is an influencer turned popular historian doing a balancing act between enhancing her online visibility without damaging her reputation and giving the impression of being a disinterested agent of historical education and moral responsibility. Ney in his role as a popular historian follows the motto *historia magistra vitae*, searching for lessons from the past to live by today. As an influencer he translates his raging at the excesses of mass tourism into a moral beacon for prospective, responsible visitors to the former camp. Ironically, if the number of views is taken as a measure of success, Somers and Ney excel in their adopted (rather than typical) roles. Their videos should be categorized as tutorials and by this token these content creators exhibit an understanding of what sells on YouTube and how to turn themselves into experts. Such a phenomenon is dubbed in a different context '*I*-Pistemology,' by virtue of which self-proclaimed experts displace former voices of authority.[70]

What is the impact of these videos for influencers, their audiences, and cultural commemoration? Influencers can gain visibility without damaging their reputation if they abide by the institutional rules and show respect to the victims. However, they run the risk of online shaming for impersonating historical experts or being perceived as narcissists. Therefore, they need to weigh up the risks and rewards of visiting the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. As the topic of the Holocaust attracts hate speech, there arises a need to moderate comments or to disable them – so as not to detract the content creator from their main pursuit. High production standards are not a pre-condition for reaching large audiences; on the contrary, unpolished footage may contribute to the vlog being perceived as authentic and produced by a relatable person rather than a media product. These video interventions are not 'lasting' contributions to cultural memory of the past but may fall out of favor in the future. For vloggers, visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau may be their only occasion to consider the traumatic past. They do not produce follow-up videos or try to replicate their success at historical education at other sites. Instead, they cherish the boost they get to the visibility of their channel. Influencers are relatable, media-savvy, drawn to existing memory sites, but free to interpret them in their own way (with the caveat that such acts of interpretation should not endanger their Internet 'brand'). Toning down the political aspect of their human rights message, they differ little from memory professionals at established institutions as proposed by Wulf Kansteiner.[71] In this vein, Somers expressed her human rights message without pointing to any specific humanitarian or genocidal crises, e.g. the refugee crisis in 2015. On the other hand, A. Craig Wight alerts 'managers and stakeholders involved in the supply of Holocaust heritage' to the wealth of visitors' reactions and expectations as expressed in social media posts.[72] According to Wight, their emotional responses may prove of value in 'planning interpretive strategies and the content of guided and non-guided tours'.[73] Thus, commemorative institutions cannot expect the public to pick up the mantle of memory work, but they could endorse influencers on their social media. No less important is the fact that vloggers show that affect may be a tool for reinvigorating historical education.

The audience is initially drawn to a video because of the personal popularity of a given vlogger rather than their historical expertise. Somers accumulated views by exploiting the strength of her fan base but once her video was picked up by YouTube algorithm she was rewarded handsomely by the platform, which favors high-achievers. These vlogs may be seen as a form of alternative pedagogy, a mediated interaction with Auschwitz-Birkenau. The educational value of such audio-visual commemoration varies depending on the content-creator's skill in combining engaging content with valuable information, be it historical or practical (or both). 'Historical lessons' tend to originate from the official, institutional commemoration and vloggers volunteer as a mouthpiece for the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum even when they decide to rely on their own understanding of the past. The propagation of moral lessons may come at the cost of misrepresenting the past, typically due to vloggers' superficial knowledge. By and large, vlogs either encourage the audience to follow in the footsteps of an influencer or they invite viewers to empathize with a vlogger's affective experience. Therefore, this form of commemoration bypasses the labor-intensive cognitive process of imbibing the past in all its complexity, relying instead on affective, visceral responses to the site. And yet, such a harrowing visit should surely be preceded by meticulous preparation: studying the itinerary, getting to know the regulations (guided vs unguided tours, prohibited and undesirable behavior). The size of the audiences reached by content creators on YouTube cannot be downplayed as, with diminished trust in traditional media, this platform has become a go-to destination for those seeking factual knowledge and convincing opinions.

Notes

1. This trip was a repetition of her much earlier journey to Oświęcim, which she had undertaken in the company of her son and a TV crew in 1978. The award-winning documentary *Kitty: Return to Auschwitz* (dir. Peter Morley, 1978) was produced by Yorkshire Television.
2. Video titles are pasted from YouTube and retain their original spelling, punctuation, and layout. For the number of views consult References.
3. The number of visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum exceeded two million in 2016 and was steadily growing since then (2.32 million visitors in 2019). For the annual number of visitors check http://auschwitz.org/en/visiting/attendance/.
4. See Knudsen, "Thanatourism: Witnessing Difficult Pasts"; Reynolds, "Consumers or Witnesses?"; Biran, Poria, Oren, "Sought Experiences at (Dark) Heritage Sites"; Stone, Sharpley, "Consuming Dark Tourism".
5. Mihr, "Why Holocaust Education."
6. Wolff, "Severing a historical bond."
7. Gross, "The Process of the Universalization."
8. De Groot, *Consuming History*.
9. Beck, "For Historians, Even 'Historians of a Postmodernist Kind'," 429.
10. Ashman, Patterson, Brown, "'Don't Forget to Like'".
11. Ibid., 476.
12. Duffy, "The Romance of Work".
13. Ashman, Patterson, Brown, "'Don't Forget to Like'," 478.
14. Goldberg, *Antisocial Media*, 81.
15. Duffy, Wissinger, "Mythologies of Creative Work," 4653.
16. Kansteiner, "Transnational Holocaust Memory," 310.
17. Ibid., 324.
18. Ibid., 330.
19. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*.

20. Kozinets, Scaraboto, Parmentier, "Evolving Netnography," 232.
21. Ibid., 238.
22. Reid, Duffy, "A Netnographic Sensibility," 266.
23. Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet*, 205.
24. Ibid., 201.
25. Ibid.
26. Glotfelter, "Algorithmic Circulation".
27. Ibid., 2.
28. Ibid., 4.
29. Bishop, "Managing Visibility on YouTube," 2589–2590.
30. Ibid.
31. Bishop, "Anxiety, Panic and Self-optimization".
32. Rieder, Matamoros-Fernández, Coromina, "From Ranking Algorithms to 'Ranking Cultures'".
33. Ibid., 63.
34. See Manokha, "Surveillance: The DNA of Platform Capital"; Siwek, "Digital Communication and Agency"; Ward, "Social Networks, the 2016 US Presidential Election"; Kidd, McIntosh, "Social Media and Social Movements".
35. De Bruyn, "World War 2.0: Commemorating War"; Popescu, "Eulogy of a Different Kind"; Stańczyk, "The Absent Jewish Child".
36. Makhortykh, "Nurturing the Pain".
37. Commane, Potton, "Instagram and Auschwitz".
38. Dalziel, "Romantic Auschwitz".
39. Gibson, Jones, "Remediation and Remembrance," 114.
40. Jane Korman uploaded the first video to YouTube in 2010, but it was later taken down due to copyright infringement because of the music track 'I Will Survive' by Gloria Gaynor.
41. Walden, "What is 'Virtual Holocaust Memory?'," 12.
42. Saurav, "How to Make a Smashing YouTube Thumbnail in 5 mins!".
43. Van Es, "YouTube's Operational Logic".
44. Ibid., 226.
45. Ibid., 229.
46. Ibid., 230.
47. Given the widespread quest to attain popularity on YouTube, there are numerous websites offering tips on tagging, see Smarty, "The Ultimate Guide to Proper Youtube Video Tagging".
48. The hashtag 'sadness' has a considerable currency on Instagram as demonstrated by Commane and Potton, "Instagram and Auschwitz," 163.
49. Bishop, "Anxiety, Panic and Self-optimization," 70–71.
50. Ibid., 75.
51. Gutman, Gutterman, *The Auschwitz Album*.
52. Griffiths, "Encountering Auschwitz".
53. Lane, *The Autobiographical Documentary in America*.
54. A lavishly funded '100×100' project was initiated by the Polish National Foundation in 2018 and was meant to promote this momentous anniversary by inviting celebrated foreign nationals to Poland. And yet, videos uploaded to YouTube have attracted very little attention.
55. This series premiered on August 1, 2019 and consecutive episodes were uploaded daily.
56. After the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk was taken over by the conservative Law and Justice's Ministry of Culture, the exhibition stressed the uncontroversial religious interpretation of Kolbe's sacrifice. A reproduction of his portrait was printed on the admission ticket with the slogan: 'return of the heroes'.
57. The video about Father Kolbe takes more liberties with tagging, e.g. by referencing another highly popular American vlogger in Poland (there are two tags with his name and one with

the title of his vlog) and world-famous historian Norman Davies, who specializes in Polish history. However, Ney does not go overboard with self-referencing tags.
58. The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum does not prohibit photographing shoes and other belongings, only the room with hair is officially out of bounds for visiting photographers without a permit.
59. This minimalist symphony consists of three parts and is based on Polish folk music. It studies a mother's grief after the loss of her child (and, in part two, a daughter's writings to her mother on the wall of a Gestapo prison).
60. Due to restrictions in the length of videos uploaded to YouTube, at that time the video had to be cut into ten-minute segments.
61. Hou, "Social Media Celebrity," 536.
62. Robert Caffrey produced a soundtrack based on field recordings and sound effects, the combination of which sends shivers down one's spine.
63. KhosraviNik, "Social Media Techno-Discursive Design," 433.
64. Ibid., 434.
65. Ibid., 439.
66. Krieg, "Who Wants to Be Sad," 115.
67. Ibid.
68. Baum, "'What I Have Learned to Feel'".
69. Reverse engineering is a term adopted by Bishop to refer to studying the YouTube algorithm, an activity which consists in guessing how the platform functions by analyzing the available metrics. Bishop, "Anxiety, Panic and Self-optimization".
70. Van Zoonen, "*I*-Pistemology: Changing Truth Claims".
71. Kansteiner, "Transnational Holocaust Memory," 324.
72. Wight, "Visitor Perceptions of European Holocaust Heritage," 10.
73. Ibid.

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