

Holocaust Intersections in 21st-Century Europe

edited by *Robert S. C. Gordon, Emiliano Perra*

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Holocaust Intersections in 21st-Century Europe: An Introduction

by Robert S. C. Gordon, Emiliano Perra

Two vignettes of contemporary memory politics, from the beginning and the end of the very recent period of cultural history that interests us, help to set out in the first part of this Introduction some coordinates for the field of transversal intersections which permeate 21st-century Holocaust legacies and which this special issue of *Quest* sets out to explore. The first vignette focusses on a strange conjunction at the turn of the millennium between two museum projects, one of them at least obliquely Holocaust-related, both forced to negotiate across fraught trans-communal cultural divides and to relate difficult parallel, convergent and divergent histories. The second picks out an instant, a transient flashpoint from the rolling news media of summer 2016, at which the sites, values and language of Holocaust memory were used to confront, in awkward but powerful ways, immediately contemporary anxieties and atrocities. Following these, the Introduction will move on to address the larger field of intersection between the terms, usages and scholarship of the Holocaust and genocide, including its often problematic aspects. Its aim is to set the stage and provide a framework for the six ‘intersectional’ essays that follow.

Wellington–Berlin

The museum Te Papa Tongarewa or ‘Container of Treasures’ in Māori, better known simply as Te Papa, was inaugurated in February 1998 in Wellington, New Zealand.¹ This remarkable turn-of-the-millennium, post-colonial centre for New Zealand’s (or rather Aeteroa New Zealand’s) national history, culture and art was conceived during the 1990s, following decades of reflection and debate, in order to rehouse and revitalize a series of tired Victorian and post-Victorian museums

¹ Information on Te Papa, on which this paragraph draws, is to be found at: <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz> and in particular <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/what-we-do/our-history> (this and all websites consulted 1 September 2016). See also William J. Tramosch “Te Papa: Reinventing the Museum,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 17/4 (1998): 339-350.

in Wellington (variously known since 1865 as the Colonial Museum, the Dominion Museum and the National Museum). Te Papa has been a remarkable 21st-century success story, both in museological terms and in its ambitious aim to crystallize a new, 'bicultural' vision and diverse national identity for New Zealand, equally attentive to, on the one hand, the Māori or indigenous Polynesian peoples on the islands and, on the other, the Western people, principally the British, who had established a right to settlement there with the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840.² Te Papa was careful not only to give equal space to its bicultural constituents and their shared histories of conflict and incomprehension, violence and oppression; it also shaped each part of the parallel museum narrative in ways that were sensitive to the different conceptions of memory, storytelling, the historical record and the past itself as practised by each of its constituent communities and their cultures. This near-impossible bicultural balancing act seems to have worked: by 2001, the museum had already drawn 5 million visitors and by 2015, 25 million.

Meanwhile, in Berlin between 1997 and 2001, another near-impossible 'bicultural' museum project, also addressing a tense and conflictual multi-ethnic national history and memory, one also conceived during the 1990s following decades of debate, was running into serious civic, political and conceptual-artistic trouble.³ Daniel Libeskind's shattering design for an extension to the Berlin Museum, intended originally to accommodate collections for a new Jewish Museum department, had been selected from competition in June 1989. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall months later and the imminent reunification of Germany and of Berlin, however, caught up in a whirlwind of fierce debate about the new Germany's commemoration of the Holocaust (focussed also on other Berlin sites such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the so-called 'Topography of Terror'), Libeskind's design and the

² On this key notion of 'biculturalism,' see Tramposch, and also Kenneth Gorbey, "The Challenge of Creating a Bicultural Museum," *Museum Anthropology* 15/4 (1991): 7-8 (and for more on Gorbey, see below).

³ On the history of the Jewish Museum Berlin project, there is useful summary information at: http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/Pdfs-en/About-the-Museum/History_Museum/Museumsgeschichte_EN.pdf. There is also a large critical and analytical literature on the museum: see, for example, Ezra Akcan, "Apology and Triumph: Memory Transference, Erasure, and a Rereading of the Berlin Jewish Museum," *New German Critique* 37:/2 (2010) 153-179; Peter Chametzky, 'Not What We Expected: the Jewish Museum Berlin in Practice,' *Museums and Society* 6/3 (2008): 216-245; Amy Sodaro, "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26/1 (2013): 77-91; James Young, 'Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: the Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture,' *Jewish Social Studies* 6/2 (2000): 1-23.

elegant original baroque building of the Berlin Museum alongside it could not contain their own bicultural tensions, its so-called ‘integrative concept’ between a city history museum on the one hand and a Holocaust museum and memorial on the other, was on the brink of collapse, the sheer traumatic force of the latter purpose increasingly coming to crush the former.⁴ Following a series of resignations and the appointment in 1997 of a dynamic German-American, Michael Blumenthal, as the new director, radical steps were taken to resolve the conflict, leading to a general reconceptualization of the project as a German-Jewish history museum. The redesigned museum was to take a purview of over two millennia of German-Jewish relations, from Roman times to Enlightenment flourishing to post-Holocaust community revival, the whole fractured both architectonically and museologically by Libeskind’s shards and disorienting spaces, marking the Holocaust as a traumatic and ever-present wound.⁵ And one of Blumenthal’s most controversial and decisive moves, to signal a break with the introverted anxieties and cultural politics surrounding local and national Holocaust memory practices cemented over the postwar era, and aimed to galvanize the museum’s practical move to completion, was his appointment in October 1999, as exhibition project director, of Kenneth Gorbey, anthropologist and museum designer, and one of the leading figures behind Te Papa.⁶ The museum opened in 2001 and has since become a key stop on the itinerary of Holocaust tourism and memory, and of modern architecture, in contemporary Berlin.

⁴ Comparable tensions, debates and solutions have been aired in the more recent case of the Warsaw museum, Polin, Museum of the History of Polish Jews, opened in 2013. See the account by the director of the museum project there: Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Inside the Museum: Curating Between Hope and Despair: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 45/2-3 (2015): 215-235.

⁵ On the interactions between the architecture and the exhibits, see Susannah Reid “The Jewish Museum Berlin. A Review,” *Virtual Library Museums* (2001), <http://www.historisches-centrum.de/aus-rez/reid01-1.htm>.

⁶ As he had done in Wellington, Gorbey worked together with Nigel Cox on the project.

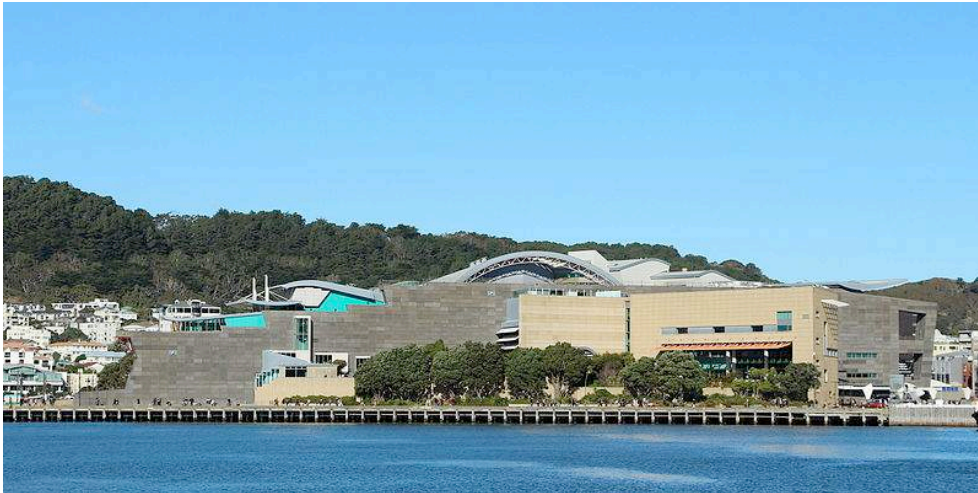


Fig. 1: Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

By Michal Klajban (Own work), via Wikimedia Commons (<https://goo.gl/77qR6d>)



Fig. 2: Jüdisches Museum, Berlin.

By Studio Daniel Libeskind (Architecture New Building); Guenter Schneider (photography), via Wikimedia Commons (<https://goo.gl/ojOOgK>)

The strange conjunction between Te Papa and the Jüdisches Museum Berlin [Fig. 1 and 2], by way of Kenneth Gorbey, is a minor but revealing one. It by no means constitutes a complete nor even a dominant key for understanding and interpreting the Berlin project, with all that building means for contemporary Europe's Holocaust legacy; it nevertheless serves as a powerful symptom of how

complex, how transversal and how layered the conceptual and practical dynamics of that legacy have become, set also against the wider context of contemporary global (and globalized) museology. Blumenthal's turn to Gorbey meant stepping dramatically beyond the close community of first- and second-hand witnesses, of first-, second- or indeed third-generation participant historians and memorializers who inevitably (and rightly) dominated postwar Holocaust discourse in Germany. Gorbey was not Jewish, spoke no German, was not European; and his appointment was roundly criticized at the time as that of a 'Disneyfyer,' a popularizer and simplifier of complex histories.⁷ But the success of his project since its opening, as with Te Papa, and some of his own reflections on his work on it, suggest that this unpredictable turn produced (or was produced by) some powerful lines of convergence and connection within contemporary Holocaust traces in our culture.

We can point briefly to four such lines of intersection: first and most evidently, the Wellington-Berlin link suggests an overlap between post-colonial history and memory, and Holocaust (and other post-genocide) memories. This is a thread that has emerged powerfully in 21st-century critical debate on Holocaust culture, in the work of Rothberg and Cheyette among others,⁸ with analyses concentrating particularly on post-war French colonial politics or civil rights politics and literature, but which, significantly, has become a key focus of debate only recently, a symptom of 21st-century intersectionality as much as of mid-20th-century identity politics. In a comparable fashion, we might note, historiographical and memorial links have come to the fore in Italian memories of and recent scholarship on Fascism's African colonialism and racism as a context for understanding its anti-Semitism. Loose but operative macro-historical analogies link European empire and the Holocaust.⁹ And, we might note in passing, the very looseness of the analogy marks the way in which the Holocaust can be intersectional in contemporary culture, precisely because it has become a pervading superficial presence, a metaphor for any and every form of extreme violence and ideology, if not for evil per se.¹⁰

⁷ See discussion in Reid.

⁸ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁹ For an interesting discussion, see Max Silverman, "Interconnected Histories: Holocaust and Empire in the Cultural Imaginary," *French Studies* 62/4 (2008): 417-428.

¹⁰ On these metaphors in the Italian case, see Robert S. C. Gordon, "Shared Knowledge" in *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 109-138.

Secondly, and closely related to the first, Te Papa's biculturalism and Gorbey's adapted form of an 'integrative concept' for the Jewish museum space – the move from a planned Berlin museum with a Jewish extension, to an integrated 'Berlin + Jewish' museum, to a German-Jewish museum through which to view and understand both German history and Jewish history (and Holocaust history)¹¹ – speaks to a wider politics of diversity and multiculturalism of the contemporary first world (Europe, but also New Zealand), with all the negotiations of similarity and difference that this brings. Researchers such as Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, and Annette Seidel–Arpaci have explored comparable dynamics in the ways in which contemporary immigrant, such as Muslim communities in Germany (before the new influxes of 2015), have been educated into a German Holocaust memory culture.¹²

Thirdly, Gorbey was keenly attentive to the intersection of aesthetics, in this case of Libeskind's architecture, and the historiography and pedagogy of the exhibition project, and also the works of art deployed within the historical displays, a key and distinctive element also of Te Papa. He wrote in a 2007 lecture of the need to overcome the impulse to treat Libeskind's work as an obstacle to visitor experience, to pedagogy and also to the integration of (other) works of art into the information space: "the architecture helps achieve the public good by offering new and unique programmatic opportunities, perhaps not available in other museums, by the alliance of programme and architectural language and space;" and further on, "Libeskind's architecture was a major catalyst in leading the Museum toward exploring art as a vehicle to bring complex emotion to play in the exhibitry."¹³

Fourthly and finally, after the completion of the project, Gorbey reflected on how forms of writing and literature had been a key intersectional influence on his thinking about the visitor experience and the subjective interactions s/he might have with the museum's spaces and exhibits. In particular, he noted the impact of reading Primo Levi's Holocaust testimony, in a 2013 lecture entitled

¹¹ These shifts in concept and design are discussed in detail in Reid, Sodaro and others.

¹² Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, "Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany," *Parallax* 17/4 (2011): 32-48; Annette Seidel–Arpaci, "Swept Under the Rug: Homegrown Antisemitism and Migrants as 'Obstacles' in German Holocaust Remembrance" in *Migration, Memory, and Diversity Germany from 1945 to the Present*, ed. Cornelia Wilhelm, (New York: Berghahn, 2016) [forthcoming].

¹³ Kenneth Gorbey, "Landmark Architecture Serves Museums. The Example of the Jewish Museum Berlin," (Auckland, March 2007), available at: http://www.museumsaotearoa.org.nz/sites/default/files/conferences/MAo6-MA10/ken_gorbey_ma_2007_conference_paper.pdf.

“How Primo Levi Helped Plan a Museum in Berlin.”¹⁴ Gorbey talked there of a series of intuitions and insights he gleaned from his reading of Levi which then informed his work on the museum: these included a sense of a moral humanism in his/our eye onto history, but one that is fluid, uncertain, not set in stone, and accompanied by a strong sense of voice and persona. This was in other words an ethical approach to the encounter in the museum space and gave a fluid narrative frame to Gorbey’s exhibition planning. A guiding aim, as he puts it, was to find a ‘persona of the place.’ In drawing on Levi and imaginatively, conceptually and pragmatically translating his voice and insight into the informational and experiential content of the Jewish Museum Berlin, Gorbey reflects not only as a distant immigrant into the culture of Holocaust remembrance but also as a vehicle of more subtle intersections between text, museum and memory.

The convergences between Te Papa and the Jewish Museum Berlin, then, are multiple if not necessarily all concrete and substantial: they suggest a dynamic field of multiply overlapping intersections in contemporary Holocaust culture, between post-colonial and post-war histories, between bi- and multi-cultural identity practices, between aesthetics and pedagogy as well as historiographical museology, literature and testimony, as though this layered complexity were of the very essence of ‘late’ Holocaust memorialization.

Auschwitz–St Étienne du Rouvray

The Jewish Museum Berlin was inaugurated on 9 September 2001, two days before the Al-Qaeda assaults on New York and Washington, DC. Holocaust memory, among myriad other settled cultural and geopolitical equilibria, were deeply shaken by 9/11 and its spiraling and on-going global consequences, and these continue to act as a primary point of intersection and framing for 21st century Holocaust discourse, up to and including the present day.¹⁵

In late July 2016, Pope Francis undertook his first solemn visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, following his participation in Catholic ‘World Youth Day,’ a mass gathering taking place in nearby Kraków. During his visit to the Lager complex, Pope Francis met some ageing survivors and rescuers, meditated in the cell of the Franciscan victim and Holocaust martyr Maximilian Kolbe, and wrote moving

¹⁴ We draw here on lecture notes kindly provided by the author.

¹⁵ One example of many is found in the opening and closing images of the documentary *La strada di Levi / Primo Levi’s Journey*, (dir. Davide Ferrario, 2006). For an ‘intersectional’ reading of this film, see *Holocaust Intersections. Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millennium*, eds. Axel Bangert, Robert S. C. Gordon and Libby Saxton (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), 10-15.

reflections in the visitors' book; but the most notable aspect for the Vatican press corps and accompanying global media, was the Pope's silence: in the face of this symbolic site of the genocide, his act of witness was to remain wordless, not to be drawn into the tangle of discourse surrounding the Holocaust and its now-long legacy, a complex and contradictory legacy not least for the Catholic Church and for Poland.

It was a characteristically contrarian and also sensitive response by this Pope, one in contrast to visits by his predecessors Benedict XIV in 2006 and, most importantly, John Paul II in 1979, shortly after his epoch-marking election to the papacy in 1978. John Paul's visit to his native Poland, including his visit to Auschwitz, was surrounded by a swirl of passionate acclaim, fierce criticism and vast media attention. The contrast with Francis at first glance might suggest that the Holocaust and its commemoration might be in the process of undergoing an attenuation or a fading in the 21st century from its peak of public presence and discourse in Europe in the later years of the previous century, a withdrawal into a zone of private moral meditation and respectful distance, somewhat sealed off from the hard geo-political, historical and socio-cultural controversies that surrounded it and intersected it in 1979, and continued to do so across Western and Eastern Europe at least up until the turn of the millennium.

And yet, Francis's silence by no means told the whole story. His literal silence in many ways stood less for withdrawal and introspection than for a shift towards new modes of encounter and intersection between the Holocaust, as history and memory, and the many layers and pressure points of contemporary culture and politics. Auschwitz, and the Shoah more broadly, still stands at the heart of Europe's contemporary reality and poses questions, even if answered in meditative silence, to its deepest sense of present identity and values, and its anxieties over both of these.

The director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau site, Piotr Cywiński, was quoted in the press commenting on this very convergence with present-day problems on the day of the papal visit:

[The world] is increasingly internally divided, threatened with terrorism and deterioration of human rights. It is a world where human solidarity is slowly being worn down. If 15 years ago someone had told us that we would so hysterically react to aiding refugees from war-torn territories, I would never have believed it. This is a world which is desperately in need of a wise message, of being reminded of the

fundamental human truths. Auschwitz and the tragedy of the Holocaust sensitize us acutely to these issues.¹⁶

Cywiński was alluding to the series of parallel crises that cast deep shadows over Europe in the summer of 2016: mass migration from the devastated regions of Syria, the wider Middle East and North Africa, and the post-9/11 wars and terrorisms that have both caused it and accompanied it; and the fracturing of intra-European solidarity and identity following the 2008 crash, the Greek crisis, Brexit and the widespread rise of reactionary politics across Europe. More particularly, as Pope Francis had openly acknowledged on his visit to Kraków, the most immediate context that made the message of Auschwitz still so resonant and essential was the shocking sequence of terrorist attacks in France and Germany in July 2016, most but not all inspired by DAESH/ IS: Nice, Würzburg, Reutlingen, Munich, Ansbach, culminating in the gruesome murder of a Catholic priest by two French youths in St Etienne du Rouvray, Normandy, on 26 July. In France, the Catholic Church with all its complex and contradictory relationship to the secular Republic, and the latter in turn in its deeply fractured relation to its French-Muslim communities, was perhaps for the first time directly drawn into the current terrorism crisis, and so too, as response across Europe confirmed, was the Christian-democratic foundations of Europe itself. Meanwhile, the large French Jewish community was still reeling from its position as recurrent target and victim, alongside mainstream symbols of contemporary French culture and democracy, of Islamist terrorist attacks in France in 2012 and 2015. The long-planned visit to Kraków and Auschwitz by Pope Francis inevitably turned into a symbolic declaration of Christian defiance and community in the face of such violence, as well as an act of solidarity and mourning for another Christian martyr in St Etienne and for victims of other beliefs, Muslim, Jewish and secular. There was no ‘war of religion’ in Europe, Pope Francis insisted to the travelling press corps on his plane to Poland within hours of the St Etienne murder;¹⁷ but it hardly needed stating that Maximilian Kolbe was murdered for his religion, like Father Jacques Hamel in St Etienne, as were the 1.1 million Jewish victims who died at Auschwitz, this latter an aspect that has long sat both awkwardly and powerfully alongside the canonization of Kolbe as the saint of Auschwitz.

¹⁶ Quoted in: Harriet Sherwood, “No Words as Pope Francis visits Auschwitz Death Camp in Silence,” *The Guardian*, July 29, 2016 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/29/no-words-as-pope-francis-visits-auschwitz-death-camp-in-silence>).

¹⁷ Tim Hume, “Pope on Priest killing: World is at War, but It’s Not a Religious One,” *CNN*, July 27, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/27/europe/france-church-attack-aftermath/>.

The point here is certainly not to revisit the troubled history of Christian-Jewish relations in the light of the Holocaust, nor to chart the many intractable layers of Europe's contemporary crises. Rather, it is to note that the Holocaust remains, deep into the 21st century, still a persistent presence and touchstone, an echo chamber of contemporary anxiety, a ready symbol, often a symbol that circulates out of any planned control or deployment, embedded in the sites, cycles of events and language of our public discourse. Its power to shock and to signify has perhaps been thinned out by the passage of time and of generations, but nevertheless it remains structurally present, even foundational, cutting in unpredictable ways into the discourse of the present. To revisit Auschwitz, literally or symbolically, or indeed to design a Jewish history and Holocaust museum in 21st-century Europe, is to walk on a ground that is shifting, something more mobile and displaced than its once solemn status in the postwar cultural field implied, something less conventionally stable as a historical referent, something that has variously been labelled global and cosmopolitan, palimpsestic, transnational, multidirectional, or, as here, intersectional, and which therefore requires new tools or perspectives to decode.¹⁸ It is this dynamic of intersection, operating across many different cultural fields and practices, as well as across borders and media, across contrasting constituencies of history, memory and identity, that this issue of *Quest* sets out to develop and probe.

Holocaust-genocide

If these two incidental case studies show surprising or contingent examples of transversal intersection, perhaps the most sustained and substantial axis of intersection in 21st-century Holocaust discourse and representation has been that between the category and label of the Holocaust on the one hand and of genocide on the other. This topic in many respects provides the founding conceptual framework for this issue of *Quest*.

The point of departure is the rise of genocide scholarship since the 1980s-1990s, and more decidedly in the 21st century, as a distinct and burgeoning

¹⁸ See, variously, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *Holocaust Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Rothberg, *Multidirectional*; Bangert et al, *Holocaust Intersections*; Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory. The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction*, (New York: Berghahn, 2013); Larissa Allwork, *Holocaust Remembrance Between the National and the Transnational: A Case Study of the Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the ITF*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

interdisciplinary field of research with its distinct institutions, networks and journals. The earliest periodical publication in the field was *Internet on the Holocaust and Genocide*, a newsletter published since 1985 by the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem, founded in 1981 under the leadership of Israel W. Charny, Elie Wiesel, and Shamaï Davidson.¹⁹ Independently from it, one year later, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* started publication.

Both publications have the intersection between Holocaust and genocide inscribed in their very name. At the same time they also contain the tension between the two terms, seen by many as denoting a hierarchy and predominance of the former (Holocaust) over the latter (genocide). This was the view of Henry H. Huttenbach, who in 1994 launched his own semi-personal newsletter *Genocide Forum* explicitly devoted to the comparative study of genocide. *Genocide Forum* morphed into the *Journal of Genocide Research* (JGR) in 1999, when it transferred to Routledge publisher. In 2005, JGR became the official publication of the European Network of Genocide Scholars (ENoGS, now renamed InoGS – International Network of Genocide Scholars – to mark its extra-European reach) established earlier that same year.²⁰

The other main scholarly organization devoted to the study of genocide was established in 1994 in the USA with the name Association of Genocide Scholars (AGS), and was led by pioneers in the field of genocide studies Helen Fein and Roger Smith. In 2001, AGS assumed its current name International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS). In 2006, the association launched its own journal *Genocide Studies and Prevention*.²¹ As noted by Adam Jones, the early 21st century saw 'something of an explosion' in the field of genocide studies.²²

This rise in genocide consciousness is not exclusively an academic phenomenon, but is corroborated by a rise in the proliferation of the term "genocide" in the public sphere. Some of the contributions in this issue of *Quest* will address this theme with reference to specific case studies. In this introduction, we reconstruct in broad brushstrokes the history of the rising centrality of the term.

¹⁹ The Institute is still active, and between 2010-2012 published its own genocide studies journal *Genocide Prevention Now*. For more information, see <http://www.ihgilm.com/>.

²⁰ See Anton Weiss-Wendt, "Problems in Comparative Genocide Scholarship," in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 61.

²¹ Samuel Totten and Paul R. Bartrop, *Dictionary of Genocide*. 2 vols, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 217.

²² Adam Jones, *The Scourge of Genocide: Essays and Reflections*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 1.

In order to start answering these questions, two graphs from Google Ngram Viewer will be helpful. The first one [Fig.3] looks at the diffusion of the word genocide in books written in English from 1940 to 2008.²³

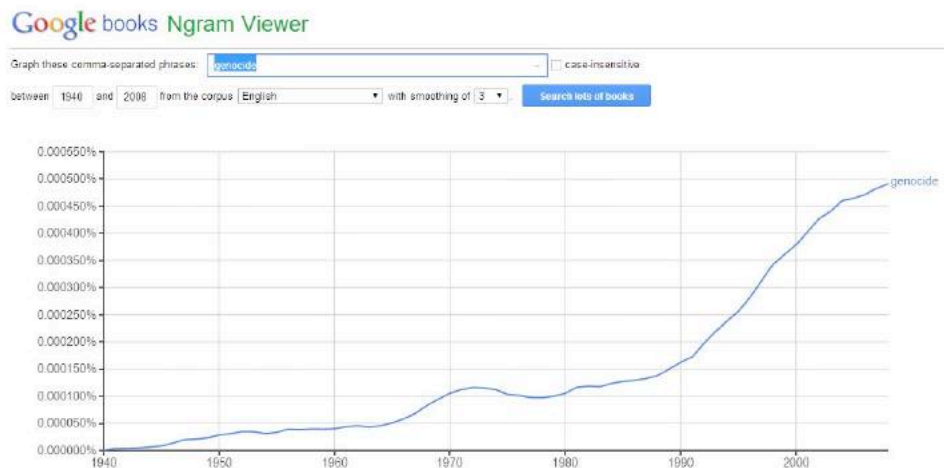


Fig. 3: Google ngram, “genocide” (English, 1940-2008). <https://books.google.com/ngrams> [accessed, November 5 2016]

As we can see, there is no clear and obvious big bang, no clear moment in which the term “explodes.” However, there are two moments in which “genocide” rises more decidedly. These are in the second half of the 1960s and in the 1990s. These increases were due to a combination of factors. For the late 1960s, we can identify three main ones. First, the term was used in works on the Armenian genocide published on the wave of its fiftieth anniversary; secondly, and in larger numbers, in relation to violence in post-independence Rwanda (and later in Burundi); thirdly, and with developing domestic political implications for the USA, in relation to the Vietnam War and the development of the civil rights movement.²⁴

²³ As is well known, the term was introduced by Raphael Lemkin in 1944. See Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944).

²⁴ See as examples James H. Tashjian, *Turkey: Author of Genocide: The Centenary Record of Turkey, 1822-1922*, (Boston: Commemorative Committee on the 50th Anniversary of the Turkish Massacres of the Armenians, 1965); Haigaz K. Kazarian, *Minutes of Secret Meetings Organizing the Turkish Genocide of the Armenians: What Turkish Sources Say on the Subject*, (Boston: Commemorative Committee on the 50th Anniversary of the Turkish Massacres of the Armenians, 1965). On Rwanda and Burundi, see René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, (New York: Praeger, 1970); Michael Bowen, Gary Freeman, and Kay Miller, *Passing By: The United States and Genocide in Burundi, 1972*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International

For the 1990s, the dominant factors are the growth of publications in the fledgling field of genocide studies, the incorporation of the term into works about the Holocaust, and the events in Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the course of the decade and their impact in the use of the term.²⁵ Thus, we see that Armenia, Yugoslavia and Rwanda (twice) played a major role in the rise of the term. Now, if we add to the Google ngram search the noun “Holocaust” (with capital h to optimize references to the destruction of European Jews), we notice two main features [Fig. 4].

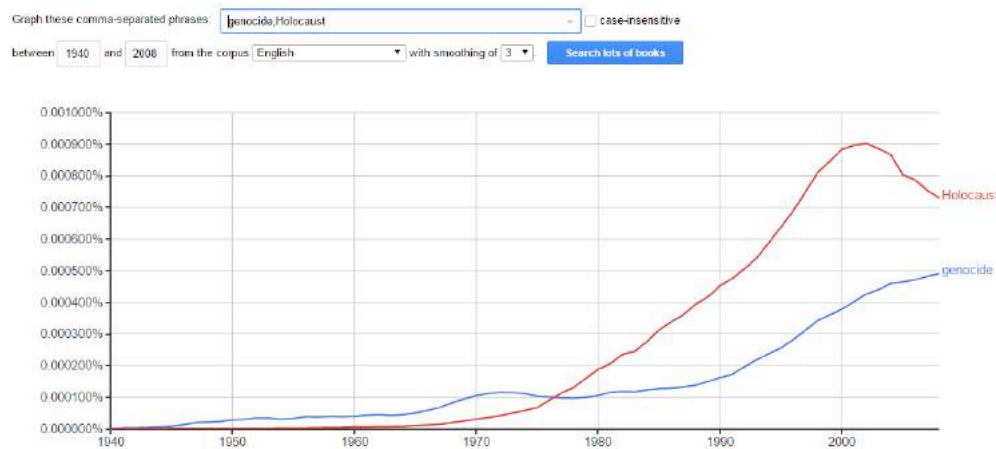


Fig. 4: Google ngram, “genocide,” “Holocaust” (English, 1940-2008).
<https://books.google.com/ngrams><https://books.google.com/ngrams> [accessed, November 5 2016]

Peace, 1973). For examples of the use of “genocide” with reference to the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement, see *U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam*, (Hanoi: Juridical Sciences Institute, Viet Nam State Commission of Social Sciences, 1968); Haig A. Bosmajian, and Hamida Bosmajian, *The Rhetoric of the Civil-Rights Movement*, (New York: Random House, 1969).²⁵ For two landmark works in the field of genocide studies published in the early 1990s, see Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective*, (London: Sage, 1993). The use of the term “genocide” in important works of Holocaust scholarship can be found in, for example, Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide. Essays on Launching the Final Solution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Popular works published on the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s include Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998) and Norman L. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of “Ethnic Cleansing,”* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995).

The first is that the Holocaust had two moments of sharper rise, in the late 1970s and early 1990s. A great deal has been written about this, and we will not dwell on it here.²⁶ The other is that the rise of the terms “Holocaust” and “genocide” follows a similar curve, albeit with clearly different quantities. In other words, the rise of the Holocaust preceded, influenced, but also facilitated that of genocide. The intersection between the two is palpable, and it needs investigating. The argument presented here is, as mentioned above, that the Holocaust has intersected and often acted as a paradigm for the conceptualization of other genocides.²⁷ Whilst the first part of this introduction focused on more transient and at times fruitful areas of cross-fertilization, this second part will engage with some problematic examples of this process, in particular with reference to history-writing and visual culture.

In recent years, a small body of literature has emerged about the use of the Holocaust as a paradigm for the discussion of other phenomena. In her interesting book, Angi Buettner has argued that “the Holocaust has become a benchmark against which other events are judged [...] Using the Holocaust and its images for representing and recording other historical events is a widespread practice in the news media and other cultural fields.”²⁸ Holocaust images are a means to turn our attention towards violence, injustice and suffering. They work by signification or figuration, i.e. as metaphor and symbol. The Holocaust is a set of signifying practices used to gain access to other events.²⁹ In this sense, it serves as the already known through which we can approach the new. Buettner argues that “the more [the image of the Holocaust] has become integrated into the world’s consciousness and memory, the wider and larger it has become, containing more and more different referents, ideas and victims. The story of the destruction of European Jewry gradually has become the story of the destruction of life in general.”³⁰ As Hilene Flanzbaum famously asked, “if the Holocaust as metaphor is part of our common language, who can control who speaks it?”³¹

²⁶ See, e.g., Tom Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 125-192.

²⁷ The bulk of this Introduction was written before and independently from the publication of the important work by Rebecca Jinks, *Representing Genocide: The Holocaust as Paradigm?* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

²⁸ Angi Buettner, *Holocaust Images and Picturing Catastrophe: The Cultural Politics of Seeing*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 2. And cf. note 10 above.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

³¹ Hilene Flanzbaum, “Introduction,” in *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 8.

Buettner sees two decisive moments of this shift: from human to animal victims, and from the Holocaust to other genocides. Here we concentrate on the latter.

Again, this phenomenon has been noted and discussed by others since the 1990s, especially with reference to the theme of ‘uniqueness.’ It is a well-known – and in itself historically significant – debate that need not be rehashed here.³² Suffice to say that, whilst in the past the cause of disagreement was that comparing the Holocaust to other events was seen by some as detrimental to the historical specificity of the Holocaust itself, my argument here is that this process is now harmful to a fuller understanding of the other genocides represented through the lens of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the process continues unabated.

As noted by Leshu Torchin, one problem with the use of Holocaust metaphors is that they tend to simplify and discard complexity in favour of the already known, however atrocious the latter might be. Cueing atrocity through verbal and visual metaphors (the Armenian Holocaust, the American Holocaust, the Spanish Holocaust, as well as images like cattle-cars, shaved heads, camp-like settings) leads to an unavoidable process of selection. We can see this slippage at work in many of the more popular historical works on genocides or crimes against humanity other than the Holocaust, such as the Herero and Nama genocide, Belgian and British colonial crimes in Congo and India, the genocide of Native Americans, and the crimes of Franco during and after the Spanish Civil War.³³ With reference to this latter case, Paul Preston writes in the preface to his otherwise excellent *The Spanish Holocaust* that he “could find no word that more accurately encapsulates the Spanish experience than ‘holocaust.’”³⁴ He also adds that in choosing this term he hopes to suggest “parallels and resonances that will lead to a better understanding of what happened in Spain.”³⁵ Perhaps, but one cannot help but asking why that is the case, and more importantly whether using the term Holocaust really helps understanding what happened in Spain during and after the Civil War.

³² For a good overview see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, “The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13/1 (1999): 28-61.

³³ See David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide*, (London: Faber, 2011); Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, (London: Macmillan, 1998); Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*, (London: Verso, 2001); David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*, (London: HarperPress, 2012).

³⁴ Preston, *Spanish Holocaust*, xi.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xii.

As stated above, this use of the Holocaust as shorthand for the conceptualization of other instances of extreme suffering is far from limited to history-writing, but is integral part of genocide “talk” and representation. This is partly understandable: evoking Holocaust imagery represents valuable moral capital for advocates of group victims of severe abuse. This process was often contentious in the recent past; it is perhaps less so now, but it no less present.³⁶ But the Holocaust is not only called forth by representatives of victim groups. It is also widely used in mass culture and media as a paradigm for the presentation and representation of other past and present humanitarian crises. In fact, some of the most well-known representations of genocides, which for large portions of public opinion might be the first if not only entry point into the specific history represented, make heavy use of Holocaust tropes. Several contributions to this issue of *Quest* will develop specific case studies of this phenomenon. The following section of this introduction will briefly discuss the use of Holocaust imagery in some well-known representations of genocides about Australia, Armenia and Rwanda.

Australia, Armenia, Rwanda

³⁶ Two radically divergent examples from the relatively recent past are Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, ed. Alan S. Rosenbaum, 3rd edn (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009). The first edition of Rosenbaum’s edited volume was published in 1996. On these differing perspectives, see David B. MacDonald, *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide: The Holocaust and Historical Representation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 30-33.



Fig. 5. *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (dir. Philip Noyce, 2002)

Directed by Philip Noyce and released in 2002, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is the cinematic adaptation of Doris Pilkington Garimara’s non-fiction book telling the story of her mother’s escape from the Moore River Native Settlement in Australia and her return to their native community at Jigalong after a 1500-mile long journey in 1931. As such it is an example, one of the many, of what Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg defines as “counter-historical dramatic film” – in other words a film based on a true story but presenting a counter-narrative to an official version of history or to a perceived silence surrounding a historical event.³⁷ Tony Hughes d’Aeth sees this as only one of the many similarities between *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and Holocaust films, in particular *Schindler’s List*. In his view, a series of signs like the barbed wire in the lettering and poster of the film [Fig. 5], the shaving of Olive’s hair, the replacement of everyday clothes with white uniforms and the ‘selection’ scene in which the children are separated at Moore River Native Settlement, are clear Holocaust references. Moreover, in the film the transfer of the two sisters is carried out by the codified means of the train, instead of the ferry, as was actually the case.³⁸ While Hughes d’Aeth himself acknowledges that there are significant differences between the two films (first of all in the fact that the perspective is not that of an ambiguous witness/rescuer but

³⁷ Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, *Beyond Terror: Gender, Narrative, Human Rights*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 29.

³⁸ Tony Hughes DuAeth, “Which Rabbit-Proof Fence? Empathy, Assimilation, Hollywood,” *Australian Humanities Review* (September 2002), <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-September-2002/hughesdaeth.html>.

that of the victims themselves), the relevant point here is the one made by Donna Lee Frieze, that all these links with the Holocaust serve to reinforce the film's view that the chief protector's policy was genocidal.³⁹

The Holocaust template and its shortcomings are more obvious in the case of Rwanda, and of its most widely known representation *Hotel Rwanda*. They are evident in the film itself, and all the more so because they are explicitly stated in one of the companion essays to the official script, journalist Nicola Graydon's "The Rwandan Schindler."⁴⁰ Moreover, they are also picked up by empirical viewers, as noted in an interesting article that analyzed the reception of the film among 41 empirical viewers, 21 of whom were Germans and 20 Americans. This research showed that interviewees made frequent comparisons to the Holocaust to address the ethnic differentiation between Hutu and Tutsi in *Hotel Rwanda*, noting the use of dehumanizing words to address the victims, but also the silence of bystanders, a phenomenon clearly underscored in the film. Respondents often mentioned *Schindler's List*, primarily to draw a parallel between Paul Rusesabagina and Oskar Schindler's courage in helping innocent victims. The context of reception plays an important role in this process: twice as many German interviewees mentioned *Schindler's List* and the Holocaust compared to the Americans.⁴¹

Hotel Rwanda is by far the most widely known film in a mini-canon of cinematic representations of the Rwandan genocide that also include *100 Days* (dir. Nick Hughes 2001), *Shooting Dogs* (dir. Michael Caton-Jones, 2005), *Sometimes in April* (dir. Raoul Peck, 2005), and *Shake Hands with the Devil* (dir. Roger Spottiswoode, 2007), among others. Even a cursory analysis flags up some of the main problems in the adoption of the Holocaust paradigm. The combination of the fact that the topic is a non-Western genocide and a set of assumptions about Rwanda as part of Africa, result in an overreliance on the Holocaust template to make the stories told in these films understandable and palatable to a Western audience. The Holocaust paradigm thus compounds other deep-seated problems of Eurocentrism.

Just as scholars like Philip Gourevitch, Samantha Power, Stephen Haynes and others felt compelled to compare discrimination practices, the death toll and

³⁹ Donna Lee Frieze, "The Other in Genocide: Responsibility and Benevolence in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*," in *Film & Genocide*, eds. Kristi M. Wilson and Tomás F. Crowder-Taraborrelli, (Madison: The University Of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 122-132.

⁴⁰ Nicola Graydon, "The Rwandan Schindler," in *Hotel Rwanda: Bringing the True Story of an African Hero to Film*, ed. Terry George, (New York: New Parket Press, 2005), 33-45.

⁴¹ Christian Gudehus, Stewart Anderson, and David Keller, "Understanding Hotel Rwanda: A Reception Study," *Memory Studies* 3 (2010): 344-63.

other aspects of the Rwandan genocide to the Holocaust, so do films.⁴² The Rwandan genocide “raises the problematics of representing *yet another* genocide, in this case moreover, *an other, non-Western* genocide,” one which the public are expected not to know much about.⁴³ This leads to a series of narrative and representational choices that are not without consequences. One of these is to rely on Holocaust-like tropes. The parallels between *Schindler’s List* and *Hotel Rwanda* have been debated widely and will be only mentioned briefly here. The characters of Rusesabagina and Schindler follow the same development. They are both male protagonists who, finding themselves in a position of power, decide to save lives whereas many others would have killed.⁴⁴ They do so by showing the same cunning resourcefulness, resorting to charm and bribery when needed.⁴⁵ Both start out as motivated by self-interest but in the course of the film morph into selfless and almost saintly figures. Rusesabagina leaves his family to be rescued while he stays behind with people he wishes to protect.

The similarities are also visual. The original poster for the theatrical release of *Schindler’s List* depicts the entwined hands of the iconic ‘girl in the red coat’ with a man: an image of hope and salvation. In *Hotel Rwanda*, this iconic image is replicated near the end of the film when Rusesabagina is being liberated by the UN convoy and taken to a refugee camp. In this scene, the camera focuses on Paul gripping his family’s hand. Moreover, Joya Uraizee identifies two defining scenes including the male protagonists showing pivotal moments of horror and confrontation with the effects of the genocides. In *Schindler’s List* it is the climactic liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto scene; in *Hotel Rwanda*, it is when Rusesabagina steps out of his car to discover the site of a massacre.⁴⁶

Beyond these visual symmetries, there is at least one more important consequence to the use of the Holocaust paradigm. One key feature of

⁴² Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*; Samantha Power, “A Problem from Hell”: *America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Stephen R. Haynes, “‘Death Was Everywhere, Even in Front of the Church’: Christian Faith and the Rwandan Genocide,” in *Confronting Genocide: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*, ed. Steven Leonard Jacobs, (Lanham: Lexington, 2009), 183-94.

⁴³ Madelaine Hron, “‘Genres of ‘Yet Another Genocide’: Cinematic Representations of Rwanda,” in *Film and Genocide*, eds. Kristi M. Wilson and Tomás F. Crowder-Taraborrelli, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 135.

⁴⁴ Joya Uraizee, “Gazing at the Beast: Describing Mass Murder in Deepa Mehta’s *Earth* and Terry George’s *Hotel Rwanda*,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (2010): 10-27.

⁴⁵ Joyce B. Ashuntantang, “Hollywood’s Representations of Human Rights: The Case of Terry George’s *Hotel Rwanda*,” in *Hollywood’s Africa after 1994*, ed. Maryellen Higgins, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 54-67.

⁴⁶ Uraizee, “Gazing at the Beast,” 19.

Holocaust films is the enclosed space of boxcars, ghettos and camps, and the gas chamber. With the exception of *Sometimes in April*, films about Rwanda present confined camp-like spaces, thus failing to account for the open air, broad daylight and intimate nature of this genocide, in which there was no clearly defined separation between the space of life and death.⁴⁷

This aspect highlights a much larger problem in the intersection of Holocaust and genocide: the lack of interest in putting on screen the sets of conditions that led to the genocide. Most films about the genocide confine Rwandan history to the few weeks of the genocide itself. The opening of *Hotel Rwanda* is exemplary from this point of view, but the same applies to *Shooting Dogs*.⁴⁸ The film opens with a dark screen and the sound of an announcer from Radio Milles Collines — a station also known as Hutu Power Radio and infamous for having facilitated the organization of the genocide — while the screen stays dark. The anti-Tutsi propaganda of the radio station situates the conflict as a clash of ethnic identities rooted in the former colonizers' privileged treatment of the Tutsis. This opening is significant. Its rhetoric of darkness and the disembodied voice of ethnic hatred construct Africa through the Conradian trope of the monstrous and spectacular, the “dark continent” where evil lurks. The film's opening focus on Hutu Power Radio gestures toward a primordial understanding of African politics, while, in contrast, the protagonist Paul Rusesabagina, a Hutu manager of the *Hotel des Milles-Collines*, and his wife, Tatiana, a Tutsi, designate Africa's and Rwanda's political modernity and rationalism. The failure to historicise Hutu rage and hatred plays into the hands of established stereotypes of Africa as a continent without history and civilization.⁴⁹ From this weakness follows another important one: the Manichean division between Hutu and Tutsi, perpetrator and victims, evil and good, barbarity and civilization (with the exception of Westernised Hutus like Rusesabagina). As Joyce Ashuntantang points out, the “Dark Continent” is identified with the Hutus and their savagery.⁵⁰ These binaries, while well meaning, preserve the clear-cut “us” versus “them” dynamics that make genocides possible in the first place. Moreover, they are still to some

⁴⁷ On this, see Hron, “Genres of ‘Yet Another Genocide,’” 137.

⁴⁸ Ann-Marie Cook, “Based on the True Story’: Cinema’s Mythologised Vision of the Rwandan Genocide,” in *Promoting and Producing Evil*, ed. Nancy Billias, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 169-86.

⁴⁹ Heike Härting, “Global Humanitarianism, Race, and the Spectacle of the African Corpse in Current Western Representations of the Rwandan Genocide,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28/1 (2008): 61-77; Ashuntantang, “Hollywood’s Representations of Human Rights.”

⁵⁰ Ashuntantang, “Hollywood’s Representations of Human Rights,” 61.

extent evidence of a lingering colonial gaze, for example the stereotype of Africa as a racialized space of danger and exoticism fully deployed in the interracial love story in *Sunday in Kigali*.

This is even more clearly the case in many documentaries made in post-genocide Rwanda, such as for example *Au Rwanda on dit...La famille qui ne parle pas meurt* (dir. Nathan Réra, 2004). Here, a certain ethnographic gaze merges with the imposition of a Christian narrative of redemption and reconciliation that does not take fully into account the trauma of survivors who have to live side by side with their perpetrators. Cinematic representations of the Rwandan genocide are often presented with heavy Christian overtones, for example in the martyrdom of Father Christopher in the BBC-produced *Shooting Dogs*.⁵¹ More in general, they present a strong emphasis on a universal humanist message. This brings us back to the Holocaust paradigm. As director of *100 Days* Nick Hughes drily pointed out, “before you start looking for Schindler’s List you need to establish what happened in Auschwitz. The problem with the Rwandan genocide is that everybody started making human films about the humanity of people and the possibility of hope surviving the genocide. You shouldn’t do that before you establish that there is no hope and nothing good can come out of that particular event.”⁵² By creating a narrative proximity between a certain type of popular Holocaust representations and the Rwandan genocide these films digest (badly) the Rwandan genocide for a Western audience.

Of course, it is worth asking if these claims that the implementation of a certain type of Holocaust paradigm serves as a ready-made surrogate for understanding of the specificities of genocides, while at the same time facilitating public engagement with it are applicable beyond scholarly writings on these films. The last example, about the Armenian genocide, engages with this point (and the Armenian genocide will be discussed further in Peretti’s essay below).

The extermination of up to 1.3 million of Armenians and hundreds of thousands of other Christian minorities in the Anatolian peninsula during the First World War has been compared to the Holocaust countless times. This was particularly the case in past decades, when comparing the Armenian genocide with the Holocaust was a way for the former to gain recognition and find its place within Western memory culture. The list of examples would be too long; suffice to mention the British Channel 4 documentary “The Hidden Holocaust,” aired in

⁵¹ Linda Melvern, “History? This Film Is Fiction,” *The Observer* March 19, 2006.

⁵² Nick Hughes in Piotr A. Cieplak, “The Rwandan Genocide and the Bestiality of Representation in *100 Days* (2001) and *Shooting Dogs* (2005),” *Journal of African Cinemas*, 2/1 (2010): 49-64 (59).

July 1992 as part of the *Secret History* series. Even in the title, the documentary established a parallel between the two events; this theme was repeated frequently during the course of the program, for example when Robert Fisk defined it the “first Holocaust of the 20th Century.”

But the same is also true of much more recent products and debates. One specific case is that of the novel and film *La masseria delle allodole*, translated as *The Skylark Farm* (novel) and *The Lark Farm* (movie) and their impact in Italy, the home country of the author of the novel Antonia Arslan and the directors of its film adaptation, the Taviani Brothers, in the early 2000s.⁵³ These are semi-fictionalized accounts of Arslan’s family experience during the genocide. The novel and the film represented a first encounter with the Armenian genocide not just for large sections of the public but also for a sizable section of opinion formers. The reception of the film merged with domestic and international political issues of the day, including the divide between left and right, debates about Turkey’s inclusion in the EU, Europe’s supposed Christian roots, and the alliance with the Bush administration (issues also touched upon in the contribution by Garofalo in this issue).

The Holocaust paradigm was deployed on both sides of this fray. One way to put forward the genocide narrative was to assimilate it to the Holocaust. Thus, newspaper reviews of the film commented that the Young Turks “scientifically planned the total solution [*soluzione totale*] to the Armenian question,”⁵⁴ or that the prejudices against the Armenians were the same ones harbored by the Nazis against the Jews.⁵⁵ At the same time, the Holocaust comparison was at times used to undermine the “genocide” claim. This was the case of Sergio Romano, who in a column adopted the dubious argument that since the Holocaust was somewhat worse, then that of the Armenians was “just” a tragedy.⁵⁶ The main proponent of the Holocaust analogy was, perhaps surprisingly, the author of the best-selling novel Antonia Arslan herself. In a series of interviews, she drew explicit parallels between, among others, the Special Organization (the Young Turk Central Committee’s paramilitary extension) and the SS, as well as between the deportations of Armenians to the Syrian desert and

⁵³ Antonia Arslan, *La masseria delle allodole*, (Milano: Rizzoli, 2004); Id., *Skylark Farm* trans. Geoffrey Brock, (London: Atlantic, 2008); Paolo Taviani and Vittorio Taviani, *La masseria delle allodole*, (The Lark Farm, 2007).

⁵⁴ Claudia Morgoglione, “Le immagini-shock del genocidio armeno nell’ultimo film dei fratelli Taviani,” *La Repubblica*, March 19, 2007.

⁵⁵ Giuseppina Manin, “Gli armeni dei Taviani,” *Corriere della Sera*, February 14, 2007.

⁵⁶ Sergio Romano, “La Turchia e gli armeni: i massacri e il diniego,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 30, 2007.

the “Final Solution.”⁵⁷ In order to stress the importance of the Armenian genocide, Arslan herself as well as a host of commentators defined it, like Fisk, as the first genocide of the 20th century.⁵⁸ In other words, the novel and especially the film were then set up to be read through the lens of the Holocaust.

Despite being one of the few films produced to this day on the Armenian genocide, *The Lark Farm* achieve only limited international success. The Armenian genocide is still in search of its landmark work, its *Schindler’s List* or *Hotel Rwanda*.⁵⁹ One exception could have been *Ararat* (dir. Atom Egoyan, 2002), which however proved too complex to be appealing to large masses. It is the story of a group of people whose lives revolve around the making of a traditional historical epic film about the Armenian genocide. Egoyan’s film is, among many other things, a sort of anti-epic historical drama (an anti-*Schindler’s List*). Egoyan has explicitly stated in interviews that the film that is being made within the film, the mimetic, emotionally charged realist period drama, is precisely the film he did not want to make. There are also clues in *Ararat* that confirm this view. Instead, *Ararat* is a film about the trappings of memory and denial. In a sense, Egoyan has bypassed the epic drama phase in which the Holocaust paradigm is strongest, and has produced instead a work that is as thought-provoking as it is esoteric for a mass audience.⁶⁰

This leaves us with a series of unanswered questions: is the Holocaust paradigm, despite its shortcomings, a pre-condition for situating a genocide close to the center of society’s memory culture in this first part of the 21st century? Will the more improvised, at times positive, at times strained forms of intersection presented in the first part of this introduction prevail over the more sustained

⁵⁷ Roberto Carnero, “Arslan: ‘Le armene? Pazienti tessitrici contro il genocidio,’” *L’Unità*, September 5, 2004; Serena Zoli, “La mia dolce Armenia prima del diluvio,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 8, 2004.

⁵⁸ Giuseppe Distefano, “Intervista ai Taviani: gli armeni? Un pezzo di memoria cancellata,” *Il Sole 24 Ore*, March 20, 2007; Zoli, “La mia dolce Armenia.”

⁵⁹ Time will tell if *The Promise* (dir. Terry George, 2016) can fulfil that role.

⁶⁰ On *Ararat*, see at least Georgiana Banita, “‘The Power to Imagine’: Genocide, Exile, and Ethical Memory in Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat*,” in *Film and Genocide*, 87-105; Lawrence Baron, “Holocaust and Genocide Cinema: Crossing Disciplinary, Genre, and Geographical Borders,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 28/4 (2010): 1-9; Helke Heckner, “Screening the Armenian Genocide: Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat* between Erasure and Suture,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 28/4 (2010): 133-145; Jonathan Markovitz, “*Ararat* and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20/2 (2006): 235-255; Devin O. Pendas, “Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat* (2002) and the Critique of Diplomatic Reason,” in *Through a Lens Darkly: Films of Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and Atrocities*, eds. John J. Michalczyk and Raymond J. Helmick, (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 38-47.

and problematic aspects of the adoption of what we called here the Holocaust paradigm? What is the discursive relationship between the Holocaust and other tragic past and present events, or indeed looser discourse of contemporary politics, culture and memory? These are some of the themes developed by the articles presented here.

Six Studies

The six articles in this issue of *Quest* are designed to offer a broad and inclusive approach to the question of Holocaust intersections as laid out in this Introduction. As we have here discussed cases ranging from New Zealand, Poland and France to Australia, Rwanda and Armenia, the articles range over a variety of different geographical and national arenas in Europe, from Britain to Lithuania, from Serbia to Italy. Given the origins of *Quest* as a journal and the range of expertise of the editors of this special issue, it was decided to dedicate particular attention to the case of Italy, in a concerted attempt to adapt to the complexities of the Italian case some of the most interesting recent research and methods of an ‘intersectional’ kind, in ways that perhaps have not been fully attempted before. We also deliberately encouraged an open understanding of the kinds of intersections or what Duncan here, following Rey Chow, calls ‘entanglements,’ which might bring Holocaust ‘talk’ into contact with other discourses and representations in early 21st-century Europe. The six articles look variously at literature and its intersections with sites of memory (Vervae); at groups, associations and communities and their identitarian politics as they cross borders from one memory constituency to another (Peretti); at how old and new media grapple with forms of communication and representation of events, memories and their politics (Duncan, Garofalo); at education and its impact on public, civic discourse (Critchell); and at developments in scholarship, theory and academic study as it interacts with and reflects inter-governmental dialogue (Allwork). Taken together, these articles do not aim to offer comprehensive coverage in regional or conceptual terms, but to give a strong sense of the importance of this transversal approach for understanding the shifting ground of the Holocaust’s present-day status and value.

Larissa Allwork’s article takes as its departure point the author’s work done in preparation for her important monograph *Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the Transnational: The Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the International Task Force* (2015). In particular, the article investigates some of the shortcomings of trauma theory as put forward by

scholars like Cathy Caruth, identifying trauma in the unspoken in narratives such as Holocaust testimonies. In so doing Allwork advocates for the adoption of a revised form of trauma theory. Drawing on the work of Richard McNally and Joshua Pedersen, Allwork claims the signs of trauma can be found in the texts themselves, rather than in their lacunae, and that trauma can therefore be spoken by survivors and in part deciphered.

Kara Critchell explores the politics of Holocaust memorialization by examining the intersection of education, commemoration and national identity in 21st Century Britain since the inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001. In her article, Critchell analyses the close relationship between Holocaust commemoration and education specific of the British context. Moreover, she illustrates how Holocaust commemoration in institutionalized spheres have intersected with contemporary cultural discourse surrounding questions of civic morality, immigration and the memory of other genocides. In her contribution, Critchell argues that the way in which the Holocaust has been indelibly associated with these issues has both implicitly and explicitly connected Holocaust discourse to contemporary debates on what constitutes British identity in the 21st century. In turn, these highly domesticated narratives of the period are often used to promote a self-congratulatory notion of British identity and supposed exceptionalism.

Derek Duncan offers a first case-study analysis of Italian intersectional memory, showing how the current crisis of Mediterranean migration and wider waves of migration from Africa and the Middle East, which has shaken European politics, institutions and values of solidarity to the core, have become entangled in the media with the tropes of representation of the Shoah. Whilst aware of the risks inherent in this process, Duncan suggests, through a reading of migrant literature and film, that it can create a viable space for interrogating also other hidden histories and memories, such as the colonial past.

Luca Peretti's article touches on a similar pattern of intersection, between Italian memory and other traumatic collective memory discourse on genocide, concerning in particular Armenia, Rwanda and the Romani, but he brings to bear an important focus on community memory, its strengths and its inevitable conflicts. Specifically, he works with the Jewish community of Rome and its internal and external positions regarding museums and other memorial projects, underlining the key importance of associations, groups and communities for the practical processing of memory and for the creation of dialogue and intersection.

Stejn Vervae't's contribution uses two recent Serbian novels and a film to examine the deeply charged intersections between the legacy of the 1990s Balkan wars in the former Yugoslavia and its plural intersections with memories and

legacies of Nazism and the Holocaust. This arena adds a crucial geo-cultural dimension to the issue, since it is at least arguable, as noted above, that the violence and trauma of those recent wars were at the origin of a profound shift in memory frameworks and in the sense of the modern relevance of the Holocaust in Europe. Vervaeet suggests that the works he analyses create a prism (using a metaphor akin to Luca Peretti's idea of 'kaleidoscopic' memory), through which both these looming and complex events can be seen anew.

Finally, Damiano Garofalo investigates the ways in which the Holocaust intersects with other past and present tragedies in coverage of the commemorations of the Day of Memory since its inception in 2001 across RAI, the public television service in Italy.. By focusing in particular on the popular political talk show *Porta a porta*, Garofalo's article illustrates how the inclusion (or lack thereof) of references to events other than the extermination of the European Jews was often influenced by immediate political concerns, such as for example the 2003 USA-led invasion of Iraq. At the same time, the article shows how other historical genocides, including the Armenian genocide and the *Porajmos* are establishing themselves as a feature of television programming for the Day of Memory.

* * *

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**Interrogating Europe’s Voids of Memory:
Trauma Theory and *Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the
Transnational***

by Larissa Allwork

Abstract

Reflecting on the research process for Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the Transnational (HRNT), which explores and analyzes the significance of the European and global politics of the commemoration of the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes in the late 1990s and 2000s, this article will consider the influence of the intellectual context of trauma theory for this book. It will offer a response to the increasing critique of Eurocentric trauma theory which developed during the period spent researching the Stockholm International Forum (SIF 2000) and the first decade of the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF, now the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, IHRA). This article will discuss how a revised trauma theory, along the lines suggested by scholars such as Joshua Pederson, continues to offer important possibilities for European studies of the histories and memories of the Holocaust in singular and comparative terms.

Introduction

Part One: Encountering Trauma Theory

Part Two: Questioning Trauma Theory

Part Three: Rediscovering Trauma Theory

Introduction

This article will reflect on the impact of contemporary trauma theory as a key intellectual horizon line for research on the histories and memories of the Holocaust in twenty-first century Europe. It is based upon research completed for my monograph *Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the Transnational: A Case Study of the Stockholm International Forum and the*

First Decade of the ITF (henceforth *HRNT*). The book analyzed the significance of the politics and symbolism of the commemoration of the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes in the late 1990s and 2000s at the European, international and transnational levels.¹ The work was a historical study that analyzed archival documents, media representations and oral history interviews in an attempt to reach balanced judgements about post-Cold War developments in Holocaust memorialization. At the same time, the research process for *HRNT* was also alert to history's limitations, although these were not extensively commented on in the book owing to space restrictions. These limitations included the dangers of the narrative seductions of progressive rationalism, non self-reflexive 'objectivity' in which the disciplinary norm of empirical analysis became 'theory in denial' as well as the dominance of the Rankeian orthodoxy that has focused on the nation-state as the primary container of historical analysis. Other potential issues included History's tendency to subordinate the 'unreliable' quirks of the individual's perception to the greater perceived reliability of the archive as well as the genre's sometime failure to give due attention to what is absent, opaque, intangible: traumatic.

These limitations do not necessarily apply to all history writing *tout court* as the discipline is incredibly diverse and sophisticated. This is evidenced by the impact of deconstructivist method, narrative analysis and trauma theory particularly on scholars of gender history, the imperial past and the Holocaust.² Nor is it simply

¹ Larissa Allwork, *Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the Transnational: A Case Study of the Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the ITF*, (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). Preliminary discussions of this material occurred as part of Sonya Andermahr's trauma research group at the University of Northampton and at the University of Zaragoza's 'Acts of Remembrance' conference (24-26 April 2013). I would like to thank Maite Escudero and Constanza del Rio Álvaro, alongside the *Quest* editors and reviewers for their advice in relation to this article. An alternative version of this article will also appear as a book chapter in *Traumatic Memory and the Ethical, Political and Transhistorical Functions of Literature*, eds. Susana Onega, Constanza del Rio Álvaro and Maite Escudero, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave, forthcoming). A note on terminology. The word 'Holocaust' refers to the Nazis and their collaborators mass murder of approximately six million Jews during World War II. 'Nazi-era crimes' is used to describe both the Holocaust and the Third Reich's broader atrocity crimes. The use of the term 'genocide' refers to the standard definition offered by the United Nations Genocide Convention. An analysis of the limitations of these terms is offered in *HRNT*, x-xii. A discussion of what is meant by the 'national' and the 'transnational' is also available in *HRNT*, ix-x.

² Anna Green and Katherine Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust*, (London; Portland: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003).

the case that trauma theory has all the answers. Any theoretical paradigm too rigidly and non-self-critically imposed risks becoming a distortive construct. It may reveal a great deal about the intellectual predilections of its author but it might risk hiding more than it illuminates in relation to intellectual understandings of past and present human political, social and cultural relations. Given this skepticism, this article is the story of how a historian of Europe encountered trauma theory, questioned its paradigms and rediscovered its analytical potentials.

Part one will delineate the ‘state of play’ in regards to trauma theory during my research on the Stockholm International Forum on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (SIF 2000) and the first decade of the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF, renamed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance or IHRA in December 2012). Parts two and three will reflect on this pre-existing use of trauma theory and specifically address how it impacted on the writing of *HRNT*. These sections will address the limits of trauma theory for this particular research project. However, they will also offer some initial thoughts on how a revised trauma theory remains useful for understanding aspects of European memory cultures. This continued use of trauma theory will particularly be considered at the intersections of what Richard Ned Lebow has called ‘individual’ memory (personal testimony), ‘collective’ memory (communal grassroots remembrance rituals) and ‘institutional’ memory (formal discourses about the past by political, social and cultural elites).³

Part One: Encountering Trauma Theory

Trauma Studies scholar Cathy Caruth has written that in the German and English languages the origins of the word ‘trauma’ derived from the Greek term meaning a ‘wound’ inflicted on the body, but that since the incursion of Sigmund Freud and subsequent psychoanalysts, the meaning of the term ‘trauma’ has shifted in its dominant although not uncontested signification.⁴

³ For definitions and an in-depth discussion of these terms see Richard Ned Lebow, ‘The Memory of Politics in Post-War Europe,’ in *The Politics of Memory in Post-War Europe*, eds. Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner and Richard Ned-Lebow, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 1-39.

⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

Freud's explorations in trauma began with his studies in hysteria in the 1890s which introduced the key concept of *Nachträglichkeit* ('belatedness'), but it was in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) that he began to explore the idea, now central to interdisciplinary trauma studies, of the individual's experience of compulsive repetition following the incursion on consciousness of sudden, violent overwhelming stimuli.⁵ Since Freud's explorations, Caruth has argued that the use of the term 'trauma' has often denoted the individual's experience of an unexpected shock: a wound inflicted on the mind, which causes the victim of trauma to experience a radical breach in their sense of time, self as well as their relations to others and the world. Moreover, the radical shock experienced during a traumatic episode renders the traumatic event un-knowable to individual consciousness in its immediate impact, and instead makes its presence known after a latency period through the repetitive actions and nightmares of the survivor of trauma.⁶

While as Caruth indicated this understanding of trauma was initially formulated in relation to Freud's foundational reflections, Roger Luckhurst has suggested that since the resurgence of interest in trauma theory following the Vietnam War and particularly since the 1980s, Freud's ideas have become increasingly questioned and disputed within certain discourses of trauma.⁷ For example, the third edition of *The Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders* (1980) rejected "Freudian psychoanalysis as a classificatory template in favor of a model that considers psychic disorders on the model of neuro-biological, organic illnesses."⁸ Equally, building on Freud's legacy but moving far beyond his initial formulation that collective trauma weakens community cohesion, scholars such as David Lloyd and E. Ann Kaplan have stressed the importance of studying group as opposed to individual experiences of trauma. They applied their considerations to the traumatic aftermaths of colonialism, the Second World War and 9/11 for collectives such as the family and the nation-state.⁹ Furthermore, various creative practitioners have attempted what has been

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writing*, (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

⁶ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 3-4.

⁷ Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, (London: Routledge, 2008), 10-11.

⁸ Summary of third edition of the DSM from Irene Visser, "Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47/3 (2011): 270-282, 273.

⁹ David Lloyd, "Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery?," *Interventions* 2/2 (2000): 212; Kaplan, E. Ann, *Trauma Culture*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 19.

interpreted by scholars such as Caruth and Felman as the paradoxical, aporetic task of finding ways of representing in literary and visual forms the at once ‘knowable’ and ‘unknowable’ experience of individual and collective forms of trauma.

Bearing in mind this context, and perhaps unsurprisingly given the excessive and shocking brutality of the events of the Second World War, an understanding of the significance of the experience of trauma became an important component of psychological, intellectual and artistic responses to the atrocity crimes of Nazism in the immediate decades after 1945. This can be seen in Niederland’s 1961 study of the psychological difficulties encountered by Norwegian Holocaust survivors,¹⁰ as well as from the opposite perspective of the perpetrator nation in Alexander and Margaret Mitscherlich’s psychological analysis of West Germany’s collective failures to ‘come to terms’ with its Nazi past.¹¹ The release of Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) was also particularly significant in the context of trauma studies, with Shoshana Felman interpreting it as a radical experiment in the aesthetics of absence, trauma and voice which correlates closely with the questions asked by psychoanalytic theory.¹²

While Lanzmann’s film is now perceived to embody a not unproblematic canonical ideal of representation of trauma that stresses aporia, repetition and disruption,⁴ the 1980s also witnessed the publication of Art Spiegelman’s *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* (1986). Provocative in its comic strip format which on first glance seems the opposite of Lanzmann’s vision,¹³ the themes tackled in the narrative of *Maus* nonetheless raised profound questions in relation to forms of transgenerational trauma between Holocaust survivors and their children. Spiegelman’s text engages with his father Vladek’s experiences of incarceration in Nazi occupied Poland, his mother Anja’s suicide after the war, his brother Richieu’s death during the war, and the author’s own psychological breakdown as a young man. For these reasons, *Maus I* and its 1991 sequel *Maus II* remain two

¹⁰ William G. Niederland, “The Problem of the Survivor: The Psychiatric Evaluation of Emotional Disorders in the Survivors of Nazi Persecution,” *Journal of the Hillside Hospital* 10 (1961): 233-247.

¹¹ Alexander and Margaret Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn*, (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

¹² For example, see Felman’s introduction in Claude Lanzmann, “The Obscurity of Understanding: An Evening with Claude Lanzmann,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 200-220, 201-204.

¹³ For a collection of critical approaches to *Maus*, see Deborah R. Geis, *Considering Maus: Approaches to Art Spiegelman’s “Survivors Tale” of the Holocaust*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2007).

of the most moving and accessible texts on the psychology of ‘survivor guilt’ and the transmission of inter-generational trauma.¹⁴

However, it was not until the 1990s and 2000s that there was a particular flowering of trauma studies critical theory, literature and visual culture in relation to the processes of researching and writing about the histories and memories of the Holocaust. This outpouring of literature on the relationship between trauma studies and the Holocaust included works as diverse as Caruth’s important 1995 edited anthology *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, which explored the theoretical paradigm of trauma and its application to the fractured memory of a number of painful and difficult individual and/or collective experiences which have scarred the twentieth century including the Holocaust, Hiroshima and Aids.

However, the literature on trauma has reached far beyond the boundaries of analyzing the psychological damage experienced by survivors of the Holocaust. In this sense, trauma theory has also concurred in shaping questions of the narrative construction of Holocaust historiography, approaches to collective memory studies, the representational form embraced by memorials to the Holocaust, Nazi-era crimes and human rights abuses more broadly. In terms of Holocaust historiography, Dominick LaCapra wrote a number of essays in the 1990s and 2000s on how in spite of professional historians’ aspirations towards objectivity and balanced archival research, the processes of ‘Acting Out’ and ‘Working Through’ still have the potential to affect their narratives of historical trauma in secondary ways associated with processes of ‘identification:’

In acting out, one relives the past as if one were the other, including oneself as another in the past – one is fully possessed by the other or the other’s ghost; and in working through, one tries to acquire some critical distance that allows one to engage in life in the present, to assume responsibility – but that doesn’t mean that you utterly transcend the past. It means that you come to terms with it in a different way related to what you judge to be desirable possibilities that may now be created, including possibilities that lost out in the past but may still be

¹⁴ Art Spiegelman, *Maus: My Father Bleeds History, Vol. 1 – A Survivor’s Tale*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Art Spiegelman, *Maus: And Here My Troubles Began, Vol. 2 – A Survivor’s Tale*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991).

recaptured and reactivated, with significant differences in the present and future.¹⁵

Demonstrating the application of this approach in his book, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (1994), LaCapra analyzed two German neo-conservative histories of the Third Reich published in the 1980s by two members of the ‘Hitler Youth’ generation, Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber. LaCapra perceived ‘denial,’ ‘acting out’ and the failure to ‘work through’ the trauma of the Holocaust in Hillgruber’s portrayal of Eastern Front Nazi soldiers as ‘victims,’¹⁶ as well as in Nolte’s controversial argument that the Holocaust was an extreme version of Soviet terror and that the Nazis defended western civilization by opposing the Bolshevik threat.¹⁷ LaCapra’s critique demonstrates that the most ethically sound uses of trauma theory in relation to analyzing the legacies of the perpetrators do not abuse trauma theory in order to obfuscate responsibility for atrocity crimes; rather they seek to demonstrate how intergenerational acceptance of the realities of perpetration can be difficult, complex and ongoing processes.

However, it was not only in critical approaches to historiography that psychoanalytic frameworks were impacting on the methodological and narrative approach in established disciplines. For example, in the field of collective memory studies of the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes, the work of Henry Rousso on *The Vichy Syndrome*, which was first published in 1987 but also appeared in a post-1991 revised edition, drew in Richard J. Golsan’s words on “the classic Freudian model of trauma, repression and the return of the repressed.”¹⁸ This was in order to suggest that the French collective memory of Vichy had moved through four distinct chronological phases since 1945: ‘Unfinished Mourning’ (1944-1954), ‘Repressions’ (1954-1971), “Broken Mirror” (1970-1974), and “Obsessions” (1974 to the 1990s).

¹⁵ Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 147-148.

¹⁶ Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 49.

¹⁸ Richard J. Golsan, “The Legacy of World War II in France: Mapping the Discourses of Memory,” in *The Politics of Memory in Post-War Europe*, eds. Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner and Richard Ned-Lebow, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 74.

Moreover, trauma theory impacted also on the architecture of museums and monuments. One of the key figures in relation to these developments in the 1990s and 2000s was the architect Daniel Libeskind, who commented that:

I think about trauma not only as an architect but also as someone who was born in the post-Holocaust world, with two parents who were themselves survivors of the Holocaust. The theme of culture and trauma, the void and the experience of architecture can be talked about in conceptual terms as well as expressed in concrete reality.¹⁹

In this way, Libeskind's architecture investigates how the experience of trauma can be represented and mapped onto the geographies, material spaces and urban landscapes that resonate with collective memories of the Holocaust and Nazi-era crimes. For example, a number of Libeskind's architectural projects have been fundamentally "structured by a void and by trauma,"²⁰ including his competition entry for the re-design of Alexanderplatz, Berlin, his realization of Osnabrück's Felix Nussbaum Haus (1993) as well as his engagement throughout the 1990s with the memories of persecution and slave labor at Germany's former Sachsenhausen concentration camp complex. However, he is best known for his realization of the architecture for the Jewish Museum in Berlin (2001). Bringing questions of trauma to the scarred landscape of Germany's re-united post-Cold War metropolis,²¹ the museum itself is architecturally divided into a number of pathways which are symbolic of the roads travelled by many members of Berlin's Jewish community in the twentieth century. These lead to the 'Garden of Exile and Emigration,' the 'Stair of Continuity' or the chill starkness of the 'Holocaust Void.'²² The museum is also sliced by a jagged 150 meters long, 27 meters high, 4.5 meter wide void which disrupts the building and stands for Libeskind's post-Holocaust assessment that "Berlin was organized around a void and a star that no longer shone. That star was assimilation, the total integration of Jews in Berlin."²³

¹⁹ Daniel Libeskind, "Trauma," in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, eds. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobwitz, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003), 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 43-58.

²² *Ibid.*, 54-56.

²³ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

Although the Jewish Museum was clearly designed in relation to Berlin’s specific history, literature and cultural studies scholar Andreas Huyssen has pointed to how Libeskind’s design may have influenced the fractured structure of the Monument to the Victims of State Terror in Buenos Aires.²⁴ The traces of Libeskind’s style in this memorial to the *desaparecidos* or the estimated 30,000 citizens who endured state terror under the Argentinean military dictatorship (1976-1983), has been used by Huyssen in order to inflect the intersection of trauma studies and the iconographical study of public monuments with an overtly transnational and comparative dimension.²⁵ This is because Huyssen has suggested that ‘memory screens’ of the Holocaust may be at work, or the Freud-inspired idea that direct confrontation with local and national traumas can be either heightened or displaced, depending on how they are mediated by international discourses associated with the commemoration of the Holocaust.²⁶ Indeed, the use of tropes primarily associated with Holocaust representations in other symbolic depictions of collective experiences of trauma has resulted in scholars such as Robert Eaglestone asking the provocative question as to whether trauma theory would not be better known as ‘Holocaust theory’?²⁷

Within this context of the Holocaust acting as a ‘memory screen’ in some Argentine public art-works, a practice that takes on additional symbolic resonance given the fact that Jewish activists were one of the groups targeted by the dictatorship, Huyssen has also pointed to the practice of Argentine photographer and installation artist Marcelo Brodsky. Brodsky is a member of the Buena Memoria Human Rights Organization and the Pro-Monument to the Victims of Terrorism Commission that oversaw the construction of the Memory Park and the Monument to the Victims of State Terror in Buenos Aires. Huyssen has observed how Brodsky’s practice has sometimes used symbolism associated with Holocaust memorials in order to provoke remembrance and discussion about human rights in the Argentine context. For example, Brodsky’s photographs of Tucuman University’s “Bosque de la Memoria” (“Memory Forest”), in which a tree has been planted and dedicated to each ‘disappeared’ individual in the region is interpreted by Huyssen as resonating with the

²⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 105-109.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁷ Robert Eaglestone, “Holocaust Theory,” in *Teaching the Holocaust in Literature and Film*, eds. Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 28-36.

iconography of Yad Vashem's "Avenue of the Righteous among the Nations."²⁸ More directly, Brodsky has re-appropriated the list form of Berlin's Wittenbergplatz memorial "Places of terror we must never forget" (1967), locating and photographing a similar sign in front of ESMA (the Naval School of the Mechanics), a former Buenos Aires clandestine detention centre and now human rights and remembrance site. Whereas the Berlin memorial lists a number of Nazi extermination and concentration camps, Brodsky's 2001 temporary installation names former Argentine detention and torture centers.

While Huyssen uses the case of Brodsky to illustrate how the use of symbolism associated with the Holocaust can act as "an international prism" that encourages discussion of atrocities in other historical and geographical contexts,²⁹ not all commentators have been as positive about the transnational potentials of Holocaust symbolism. This critique has not just come from Holocaust "uniqueness" advocates, but also from those who are concerned that the Holocaust is becoming problematically de-historicized or alternatively may symbolically struggle to publically resonate in some regions of the world. For example, Stef Craps has questioned the linking of contemporary discourses of Holocaust memory with human rights activism in the works of scholars such as Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder. For Craps, rhetorical invocations of Holocaust memory have not always been utilized in the service of human rights, specifically within contexts such as the Israel/Palestine conflict and the Iraq war.³⁰

Moreover, despite Michael Rothberg's call for a 'multidirectional memory,'³¹ a number of postcolonial critics have suggested that the centering of the Holocaust in trauma theory can be problematic if it uncritically reinforces the Eurocentricity of a particular paradigm of Western trauma theory. This Euro-centric cultural paradigm of trauma theory has been criticized by among others Craps and Irene Visser as important yet inadequate in many indigenous postcolonial contexts. This is because of the tendency of Western models of trauma theory to reject the importance of non-Western ritual and belief systems in dealing with

²⁸ Andreas Huyssen, "The Mnemonic Art of Marcelo Brodsky," in *Nexo: A Photographic Essay by Marcelo Brodsky*, (Buenos Aires: la marca editora, 2001), 7-11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-11.

³⁰ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 201; Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 77-79.

³¹ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 21-22.

individual and societal experiences and representations of trauma. It also relates to the tendency of some Western models of trauma theory to fetishize experiences and representational tropes that, stress ongoing aporia and melancholia as opposed to an emphasis on recovery and recuperation through the survivor's strategies of narrativization and collective forms of social activism.³²

Part Two: Questioning Trauma Theory

The intellectual background of trauma theory was one of the key critical contexts in which the study of 'institutional' memory embodied by *HRNT* was realized. However, *HRNT*'s assessment of the causes and public impact of Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson's global millennial conference on promoting Holocaust research, remembrance and education initially seemed to problematize rather than embrace the lessons of trauma theory. For as Wulf Kansteiner has commented, one of the primary weaknesses of trauma theory for understanding twenty-first century social and political interactions with Holocaust representations is that it provides few "insights into the experiences of most of our contemporaries who encounter the history of the Holocaust primarily as a tool of education, entertainment or identity politics."³³ Moreover, as the analysis moved to cover the importance of subsequent Stockholm conferences on 'Combating Intolerance' (2001), 'Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation' (2002) and 'Preventing Genocide' (2004), given Craps and Visser's critique, the potential Euro-centrism associated with many of the dominant melancholic paradigms of trauma theory may have been of questionable value in analyzing certain speeches and interviews. Indeed, interviews with genocide survivors Esther Mujawayo-Keiner (Rwanda) and Youk Chhang (Cambodia) in the Stockholm anthology *Beyond the 'Never Again's'* are characterized by their speaker's activism, desire for redress and resilience.³⁴ However, a useful avenue for further research would be

³² Visser, "Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies": 270-282, 270-280; Stef Craps, "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma theory in the global age," in *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, eds. Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone, (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 45-46.

³³ Wulf Kansteiner, "Testing the limits of trauma: the long-term psychological effects of the Holocaust on individuals and collectives," *History of the Human Sciences* 17/2-3 (2004): 97-123, 99.

³⁴ See interviews with Mujawayo-Keiner and Chhang in Eva Fried, *Beyond the 'Never Again's'* (Stockholm: Swedish Government, 2006), 11-16 and 19-24. For an illuminating analysis of testimony and issues associated with universalizing the PTSD construct, particularly in the case

to consider how international events such as the SIF 2002 on 'Truth, Justice and Reconciliation' may have contributed to the further institutionalization and universalization of Western therapeutic discourses such as PTSD at the global level.

The second way in which *HRNT* implied a critique of trauma theory was through its interest in exploring possible Cold War global precursors for the SIF 2000 and the ITF as part of its historical critique of the heavy emphasis placed on the post-1989 period as the engine of transnational Holocaust memory in Levy and Sznajder's 'New Cosmopolitan' interpretation.³⁵ Scholars such as Hasia R. Diner, David Cesarani, Eric J. Sundquist, Laura Jockusch, Roni Stauber, Michael Rothberg and Kirsten Fermaglich have suggested the neglected importance of the 1940s and 1950s in fostering transnational, international, national and local cultures of the remembrance of the Jewish Catastrophe and Nazi-era crimes. For example, Diner has demonstrated how American Jewish individuals and organizations contributed financially to the founding of the Centre De Documentation Juive Contemporaine and Tomb of the Unknown Jewish Martyr which was opened to the public in Paris (1956).³⁶ This new historiography has not only thrown into question the underlying assumption that the 1950s were a relative period of 'silence' in relation to the commemoration of the Holocaust which was structurally reproduced in works as diverse as Levy and Sznajder's, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (2006); Peter Novick's, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience* (1999); and most controversially, Norman Finkelstein's, *The Holocaust Industry* (2000), but has also eroded the psychoanalytically inflected historical narratives of collective memory associated with scholars such as Henry Rousso.³⁷ These Rousso-style interpretations theoretically allied the constructed historical pattern of 'silence' with 'latency' and 'return of the repressed' style narratives. This pattern of 'latency'/'return of the repressed' has been expressed by LaCapra in the following terms:

of descendents of the Cambodian genocide residing in Cambodia and Canada, see Carol A. Kidron, "The Global Semiotics of Trauma and Testimony: A Comparative Study of Jewish Israeli, Cambodian Canadian, and Cambodian Genocide Descendant Legacies," in *Marking Evil: Holocaust Memory in the Global Age*, eds. Amos Goldberg and Haim Hazan, (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 146-170.

³⁵ See *HRNT*, 140-143; Levy and Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*.

³⁶ Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and with Love*, (New York; London: New York University Press, 2009), 30.

³⁷ Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome*.

As many people have pointed out, right after the events there was a rush of memoirs and diaries, and then it all sort of died down for a long period of time – what is tempting to interpret as a period of latency after a traumatic series of events. One of the reasons is that survivors found - in different countries, for different reasons – that they didn't have an audience that they didn't have people who wanted to listen to them.³⁸

This assessment of a possible 'latency' period after the Holocaust in various nation states sits uneasily with the findings of scholars such as Alan Rosen and Rachel Deblinger who have touched on the continued American funding in the 1950s of David Boder's 1946 series of interviews with survivors in Europe's DP Camps,³⁹ or Michael Rothberg's assessment that from the late 1940s until today there has been a sometimes culturally 'underground' but ever present tradition of decolonized Holocaust memory in Western and non-Western societies.⁴⁰ Moreover, it seems to especially conflict with David G. Roskies' analysis of Yiddish and Hebrew communal forms of memory, which highlights the anthologies, diaries, memoirs, memorial books and novels created by amongst others Ka-Tzetnik (Yehiel Diner), Zvi Kolitz, Leyb Rochman, Mordechai Strigler and Abraham Sutzkever in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴¹ What emerges particularly strongly from Roskies' work is a picture of an often forgotten cultural history of the immediate post-war era, or the fact that, as David Cesarani described it, "Scholarship in Yiddish flourished. However, the precipitous decline of Yiddish and the contraction of language competency closed off much of this source material, finally creating the illusion that it had never even existed."⁴²

Thus, while Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has recently reasserted the 'latency' thesis with reference to post-war Germany,⁴³ significant immediate post-war discussion

³⁸ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 158.

³⁹ Alan Rosen, "We know very little in America: David Boder and un-belated testimony," in *After the Holocaust*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, 102-114; Rachel Deblinger, "David P. Boder: Holocaust memory in Displaced Persons camps," *After the Holocaust*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, 115-126.

⁴⁰ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 22.

⁴¹ David G. Roskies, "Dividing the ruins: communal memory in Yiddish and Hebrew," in *After the Holocaust*, eds. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, 82-101.

⁴² Cesarani, "Introduction," *After the Holocaust*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, 1-14, 11-12.

⁴³ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *After 1945: Latency as the Origin of the Present*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

of the Jewish Catastrophe and Nazi-era crimes was carried out by a considerable number of Jewish survivors, liberal intellectuals and those engaged in the politics of decolonization. The problem was that sometimes this multi-lingual discourse fell on the ‘deaf ears’ of mainstream Western societies. Nonetheless, even when it comes to Germany, it can be inferred from studies such as a Dagmar Herzog’s analysis of sexual politics and the memory of Nazism after 1945 that this perceived lack of mainstream public chatter about the charnel house of the Second World War was nonetheless pregnant with deeper discursive meaning. For Herzog, the German churches’ advocacy of sexual sobriety during the 1950s was intimately intertwined with post-war religious discourses about Nazism which suggested that the movement’s broader criminal immorality could not be disconnected from those Third Reich policies that had permitted promiscuity and illegitimacy.⁴⁴ Rebelling against their upbringing and drawing on alternative post-war intellectual movements such as the Frankfurt School, many members of the German generation of 1968 would argue the opposite: that it was sexual repression that enhanced the Nazi regime’s propensity for violence.⁴⁵ Whilst perpetrator motivations are not the central concern of this article, this example from Herzog is relevant because it suggests that historians should listen hard to the alleged ‘silence’ of the 1950s as the legacies of the Holocaust and Nazi-era atrocities have the potential to reveal themselves in the most unlikely of places.

Part 3: Rediscovering Trauma Theory

Despite these limitations of some aspects of trauma theory for *HRNT*, specific examples of research, interviewing and teaching demonstrated the ongoing relevance of trauma theory for this project. The first example relates to encounters with what Lebow might call the ‘individual’ memories of survivors. Bearing in mind Friedländer’s ideas in relation to the construction of historical narratives, survivor perspectives were integrated into my analysis of the historical significance of the SIF 2000 and the ITF British/Lithuanian ‘Liaison Project.’ This included using pre-existing material by survivors on the significance of the conference (eg. Hédi Fried, Irena Veisaite, Joseph Levinson), speaking to Lithuanian Holocaust survivor Rachel Kostanian, as well as conducting new semi-structured interviews with Holocaust survivors, education activists and

⁴⁴ Dagmar Herzog, “‘Pleasure, Sex and Politics Belong Together’: Post-Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in Germany,” *Critical Inquiry* 24/2 (1998): 393-444, 397.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 397-398.

members of the British SIF 2000 delegation Ben Helfgott and Kitty Hart-Moxon.⁴⁶

Although aware that survivor accounts are fundamentally shaped by their context of recall and while semi-structured interviews were always prepared for in the same way (research about the interviewee; preparation of questions; production of an informed consent form), dialogues with survivors were nonetheless always remarkable and took on a dynamic of their own. For as Laub has noted in relation to the importance of listening and acknowledging camp experiences to the recovery of Holocaust survivors, in the moment of the dialogue “the interviewer has to be... both unobtrusive, nondirective, and yet imminently present, active, in the lead.”⁴⁷ While these interviews were quite different to Laub’s in the sense that the interviewer was neither a Holocaust survivor nor a trained psychoanalyst, a situation which allowed the narrator to speak “as an expert about his or her own experience,”⁴⁸ themes relating to trauma and how survivors coped with it were either addressed by direct interview questions or developed organically as the interview progressed. Drawing potential parallels with Laub’s interview with a female survivor of the Auschwitz-Birkenau ‘Kanada’ commando, which detailed the horrors experienced as well as the extraordinary occurrence of the Auschwitz uprising in the autumn of 1944,⁴⁹ one of the most powerful moments was when Hart-Moxon was asked about how she had coped with the atrocities that she had witnessed during her incarceration in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Like Laub’s interviewee, Hart-Moxon had also worked in ‘Kanada,’ where the confiscated possessions of those who were gassed were sorted for delivery to Germany. As a result, Hart-Moxon had been within short distance of the gas chambers between March 1944 and mid-October 1944. Of her experiences, she recalled:

We just saw people going in, all the time columns going in, more people coming from the trains and going in, that’s all you saw, all day long and all night. That went on 24 hours a day. But it just didn’t go into your head that you had all of these people going into a building and they

⁴⁶ *HRNT*, 65-66, 117, 124.

⁴⁷ Dori Laub, “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening,” *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 1992), 71.

⁴⁸ Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 42.

⁴⁹ Laub, “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening,” 59-63.

never came out. And you heard them scream and you saw the fire, and you saw the smoke, but you couldn't believe...It just isn't something that your brain can accept. And that's why it's so difficult for people to understand it. If I couldn't take it in when I was watching it, how can people today understand it? It's difficult isn't it? I knew it was happening but you made yourself believe that it wasn't happening. You didn't want to know. And when your friends said, "Look what's going on" and you said, "I don't want to look. I don't want to see it." But it was all around you of course. I mean the smoke came all down. At times it was all black, all the smoke and debris coming down from the chimneys. But you just couldn't accept...yet you saw the ash come out, and you saw the corpses being heaped up at the side of the gas chamber and you saw all of the tins of gas and you could smell the gas very often, because sometimes they opened up the gas chambers too soon. You could actually smell it. But you simply couldn't get it into your head that all these people were dying. You just couldn't. I think it is more than your brain can accept. Most people would tell you, they couldn't take it in. That was presumably just to protect yourself, because if you could take it in, you would commit suicide. And quite a lot of the Sonderkommando people did commit suicide.⁵⁰

Overwhelming and horrifying, Hart-Moxon's testimony of Birkenau stresses not the single, shocking wounding event nor the experiences of amnesia and unspeakability central to Caruth-inspired readings of trauma narratives. Rather, what is striking about her testimony is the atrocious daily repetition of violence and its cumulative wounding assault on her senses of comprehension, hearing, vision and smell. Here Joshua Pederson's recent rethinking of trauma narratives, building on the work of psychologist Richard McNally is illuminating. McNally has argued that trauma is describable and may even lead to more heightened memories characterized by "disassociative alterations in consciousness (time slowing down, everything seeming unreal)."⁵¹ Consequently, and contesting the Caruth-inspired trauma theory orthodoxy of the 1990s, Pederson argues that in terms of analyzing trauma narratives, scholars should "turn their focus from gaps in text to the text itself,"⁵² pay close attention to "narrative detail" and analyze

⁵⁰ Kitty Hart-Moxon, "Kitty Hart-Moxon interviewed by Larissa Allwork," Unpublished Transcript, interview date: 19 August 2013.

⁵¹ Richard McNally, *Remembering Trauma*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 182.

⁵² Joshua Pederson, "Speak Trauma: Towards a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory," *Narrative* 22/3 (October 2014): 333-353, 338.

“depictions of experiences that are temporally, physically or ontologically distorted.”⁵³ Thus, the paradox can exist that while Hart-Moxon repeatedly claims that her experience of Auschwitz was more than her mind could process, she nonetheless can still, in Pederson’s terms, “speak trauma” in all its sensorial detail, from the sounds of the death camp to the stench emitted by the chimneys of Birkenau.

Hart-Moxon was also asked about the processes associated with the writing of her memoirs *Return to Auschwitz* (1981), and in particular her first book, *I am Alive* (1961).⁵⁴ Hart-Moxon completed *I am Alive* in breaks and gaps of time that she grasped from working in an X-Ray department in the UK after the war. Unlikely as it may seem, it could be argued that this splintered process of writing ended up being an important part of helping her find a mechanism of dealing with the traumatic events of Birkenau that were so powerfully described during the interview:

I just managed to switch. I just learned to switch. And I think that was actually good for me. Because I learned to switch off. Which I can do now. It actually trained me to do this switching off, this switching over. So, immediately a phone rang and I had to go and x-ray this patient, I just left everything and I went back to my work. Because I had to do it. If I wouldn’t have had to do it, I probably couldn’t have done it, I think. There was nobody else in this x-ray department, I was on duty, my casualty was there and I had to cope with it. So, I think, it goes back to what Auschwitz taught you, which is to cope...with extraordinary situations and you just learn to cope. But that’s what it actually taught you, you need to cope with whatever life’s going to throw at you. And I think that’s what happens, or at least that’s what happened to me.⁵⁵

Writing and learning to ‘switch’ from the pain of the past to reclaim agency in the present, thus seems an important part of Hart-Moxon’s rebuilding of her life after 1945, though her approach should not be perceived as a normative coping strategy for all survivors of genocide. For as Anne Karpf, daughter of Holocaust survivor Natalia Kapf has written in her February 2014 *Guardian* article on the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁵⁴ Kitty Hart-Moxon, *I am Alive*, (London; New York: Abelard Schuman, 1961); Kitty Hart-Moxon, *Return to Auschwitz*, (London; Toronto; Sydney; New York: Granada Books, 1983).

⁵⁵ Hart-Moxon, “Kitty Hart-Moxon interviewed by Larissa Allwork.”

passing away of survivor of Theresienstadt, concert pianist and relentless optimist Alice Herz-Sommer:

Herz-Sommer was remarkable, we'll never know what enabled her to manage her traumas with such optimism, or why she was able to feel such profound gratitude towards life. But we should never hold her up as an ideal towards which all traumatised people should aspire. Nor should we apply the psychobabble concept of closure to genocide – when reams of historical evidence – from the Armenian genocide to the Holocaust – show unequivocally that many traumas cannot be processed in the lifetime of the individuals who underwent them, and indeed are passed on to successive generations.⁵⁶

The second way in which trauma theory connects to work arising from *HRNT* is based on the observations of Felman in relation to the transmission of memory through the 'institutional' context of undergraduate teaching, although in contrast to Felman, here the Holocaust related pedagogy focused on history, memory and testimony rather than literature and testimony. In her essay on 'Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching,' Felman described the exceptional responses provoked by exhibiting two films of survivor testimony in her Yale class for "Literature and Testimony." According to Felman the showing of the video testimonies instigated a kind of crisis in the classroom which was marked by a silence within the seminar alongside a profusion of discussion outside of the class.⁵⁷ Following a consultation with Laub about this situation, Felman decided that this contagiousness of trauma in turn required 'working through' via the means of an address to the class by Felman and an assignment that called for the students to express their understanding of encountering the testimonies. For Felman, this process of "creating in the class the highest state of crisis that it could withstand, without 'driving the students crazy,'" reflected her "job as a teacher."⁵⁸ Given the changing economics of British higher education since 2010's Browne report and current debates on US campuses about the need for 'trigger warnings' in relation to potentially explicit or disturbing material on

⁵⁶ Anne Karpf, "Alice Herz-Sommer is not a one person truth, justice and reconciliation commission," *The Guardian*, February 25, 2014.

⁵⁷ Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, eds. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, (Oxford; New York: Routledge, 1992), 42-56.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

university syllabuses,⁵⁹ the idea of taking Felman’s principles of ‘crisis’ into the university seminar room seems increasingly institutionally problematic. This poses important questions for Holocaust educators as they probe the limits of pedagogy in the neo-liberal classroom.

No experiences encountered on this project have been as dramatic as Felman’s and it is important to bear in mind LaCapra’s criticism that it is dangerous “to obscure the difference between victims of traumatic historical events, and others not directly experiencing them.”⁶⁰ However, teaching the Holocaust does present the tutor with some specific challenges,⁶¹ which have been outlined in detail by Holocaust and genocide educationalists such as Paul Salmons and Matthias Haß.⁶² These are not just in relation to the presence of ‘identity politics’ in the seminar room, but also relate to student responses which might be found on other courses but which are arguably intensified by the emotive, violent and provocative subject matter associated with studying the Holocaust, Nazi-era crimes and genocides. For example, throughout a course taught in 2011 there were instances where, despite class members’ distance from the events being studied (no student said that they had lost a relative in the Holocaust, through the Nazi terror system or as a result of any other genocide), the material on display nonetheless occasionally evoked painful personal memories in students which threatened to surface in class. For example, one mature student excused themselves from a seminar on memorialization and restitution because it reminded them of recent struggles in relation to a very close personal bereavement; while another worried that they might break down during their end of term presentation because of the recent death of a close relative. ‘Acting Out’ or an over-identification with the suffering of the victims is a misleading conflation and too strong a term for these encounters. However, it is arguable that the themes of death, bereavement and loss which are entwined with the study of the Holocaust can be challenging for some students. Here the delimited use of ‘trigger warnings’ could be helpful, but only within the context that it is

⁵⁹ Jennifer Medina, “Warning: The Literary Canon Could Make Students Squirm,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/us/warning-the-literary-canon-could-make-students-squirm.html?_r=0 [accessed August 4, 2016].

⁶⁰ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, ix.

⁶¹ This refers to teaching carried out on the BA History module ‘The Holocaust and its Histories’ in the spring term of 2011 at the University of Northampton.

⁶² Paul Salmons and Matthias Haß, “Comparing genocide in the classroom: challenges and opportunities,” in *Holocaust Education in a Global Context*, eds. Karel Fracapane and Matthias Haß, (Paris: UNESCO, 2014), 105-111.

understood that as suggested by Stef Craps, a degree of productive discomfort is central to the pedagogical and educational experience of studying the Holocaust and genocides at university level.⁶³

Third, despite the limitations discussed, certain elements of trauma theory can still be particularly germane in thinking about aspects of what Lebow might call 'collective' memory, in particular in offering a critical framework for beginning to unpick discourses of communal identity politics. For example, LaCapra's highlighting of the dangers of stereotyping and the need to challenge pre-existing paradigms of identity politics holds particular resonance for the representation of my authorship in a community newsletter following an invited lecture on the British/Lithuanian 'Liaison Project' for the Northampton Hebrew Congregation in February 2012. Although a low-key local event for a small, regional Jewish community organization in the UK, the audience for this event nonetheless shows how in Raphael Samuel's terms history is a "social form of knowledge"⁶⁴ produced not only in academia's 'ivory towers' but also in family and communal circles. What happens when these two worlds intersect is the subject of this short analysis.

This lecture was based on *HRNT*'s research on British/Lithuanian intercultural efforts to promote Holocaust, research, remembrance and education in the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁶⁵ A review of the lecture contained the following quote:

Dr Allwork pointed out that the Lithuanians believed themselves to be the victims of Nazi persecution, as they had been under both the Nazi and Soviet yoke. The Lithuanian nation is ultra-nationalistic, and as Dr Allwork pointed out, the link between Communism and Nazism seems to be embedded in their psyche.⁶⁶

⁶³ Stef Craps, Bryan Cheyette, Alan Gibbs, Sonya Andermahr and Larissa Allwork, "Decolonizing Trauma Studies Round-Table Discussion," *Humanities* 4/4 (2015): 905-923, 916.

⁶⁴ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, (London: Verso, 1994), 8.

⁶⁵ Chapter four of *HRNT*, 111-132. An initial version appeared as Larissa Allwork, "Intercultural Legacies of the International Task Force: Lithuania and the British at the Turn of the Millennium," *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 19/2 (2013): 91-124.

⁶⁶ Northampton Hebrew Congregation, "Northampton Hebrew Congregation News 2012."

The use of stereotypes in this description was perplexing and a letter was addressed to the congregation, clarifying my position.⁶⁷ What provoked my response was the use of stereotypes in the article. The talk had certainly been critical of specific failures by the Lithuanian state to deal with the legacies of the Nazi past as well as continuing expressions of ultra-nationalism by some individuals and groups within Lithuania. The lecture was also strongly critical of comparative approaches towards the Nazi and Soviet regimes that do not increase historical knowledge of the similarities and differences between these two ‘totalitarian’ systems, but rather serves a perturbing agenda of blaming all Lithuanian Jews for the Soviet occupation during the Second World War, with the intent of downplaying the responsibility of Lithuanian collaborators in the Holocaust.

However, using essentializing terms such as ‘psyche’ or stereotyping the Lithuanian state in 2012 as ‘ultra-nationalistic’ was both inaccurate and ultimately unhelpful in encouraging constructive dialogues between Lithuanians, Jews living in Lithuania and Lithuanian Jews living in the wider world and Israel. Admittedly, authorial intentions in the synagogue review are impossible to locate. It cannot be known if the reviewer’s comments were based on a misunderstanding of me, my failure to communicate effectively or a simple slip in the reviewer’s writing style. In any case, LaCapra’s assessment of the pain of traumatic pasts, the challenges of working beyond entrenched subject positions and moving towards new dialogues seems pertinent: “I think that one of the great problems in research is that there is a grid of subject positions, and through processes of identification or excessive objectification, one remains in that grid.”⁶⁸

This article has reflected on trauma theory as a key context and intellectual horizon line for the research underpinning *HRNT*. It has been suggested that the limitations of trauma theory for the scholar of the history of collective remembrance are all too apparent. This is particularly due to the Euro-centricity of trauma theory in global comparative approaches, the dangers of front-loading melancholic trauma theory, as well as the limitations of constructing psychoanalytic narratives of national and communal pasts that simplify the diverse remembrance practices of the Shoah in the 1940s and 1950s. As Robert

⁶⁷ It was requested that this letter be distributed to members of the congregation although it has not appeared on the organization’s web-page. A copy of this letter can be found in the University of Northampton’s online NECTAR research database.

⁶⁸ LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 175.

Moeller has pithily noted, there are key “methodological challenges involved in putting an entire nation on the couch.”⁶⁹ Nonetheless, this article has also suggested that the lessons of a revised and self-reflexive trauma theory remain relevant, holding important analytical possibilities for scholars working at the intersections of the over-lapping public and private spheres of ‘individual,’ ‘collective’ and ‘institutional’ memory.

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url: www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=382

⁶⁹ Robert Moeller in Doris Bergen, Volker Berghahn, Robert Moeller, Dirk Moses and Dorothea Wierling, “The Changing Legacy of 1945: A Round-Table Discussion,” *German History* 23/4 (2005): 519-546, 528.

Remembering and Forgetting: the Holocaust in 21st Century Britain

by Kara Critchell

Abstract

This article explores the politics of Holocaust memorialization by examining the intersection of education, commemoration and national identity in 21st-century Britain since the inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001. The article shows how institutionalized spheres have intersected with contemporary cultural discourse surrounding questions of civic morality, immigration and the memory of other genocides. The main argument put forward is that the way in which the Holocaust has been indelibly associated with these issues has both implicitly and explicitly connected Holocaust discourse to contemporary debates on what constitutes British identity in the 21st century. The article also suggests that highly domesticated narratives of the period are often used to promote a self-congratulatory notion of British identity and supposed British exceptionalism.

Introduction

Holocaust Memorial Day: “Too Much History”?

Education and Holocaust Memorialization

An Absence of Intersections? Britishness and the Kindertransport

European Holocaust Consciousness or Domesticated Holocaust Identity?

Conclusion

Introduction

“The world has lost a great man. We must never forget Sir Nicholas Winton’s humanity in saving so many children from the Holocaust.”¹

“MPs have voted against an attempt to compel the Government to offer sanctuary in the UK to 3,000 unaccompanied child refugees from Europe.”²

¹ David Cameron cited in Adam Withnall and Paul Gallagher, “Sir Nicholas Winton: Britain’s Oskar Schindler,” *The Independent*, July 1, 2015.

² Alexandra Sims, “Immigration Bill: MPs Vote Against Child Refugee Amendment,” *The Independent*, April 25, 2016.

The latter part of the 20th century had borne witness to a heightened engagement with the Holocaust in British political and public debates. With the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) on 27 January 2001, Britain entered a new phase in the development of its Holocaust consciousness. Since then, Britain has sought to position itself at the very forefront of Holocaust remembrance and education on a national, international, and supranational level.³ As such, the Holocaust has emerged as a dominant socio-political symbol in 21st century Britain despite the fact that, as Bob Moore has highlighted, “the Holocaust intersects with British history in very few ways.”⁴ This article will discuss the increasingly central role of Holocaust commemoration and education in 21st century Britain and its impact not only on the conceptualization of this historical event, but also on broader interpretations of British identity.

Given the increasing presence of the Holocaust in British historical consciousness, there are multiple intersections which could be discussed in order to ascertain how the various threads of Holocaust remembrance affect 21st Century Britain. The intersection of education and commemoration is certainly one of the defining features of Holocaust institutionalization within Britain to the extent that Holocaust pedagogy and the politics of commemoration cannot be analyzed separately notwithstanding their supposed differences. Reflecting on their similarities the article will show how these institutionalized spheres have intersected with contemporary cultural discourse surrounding questions of civic morality, immigration and the memory of other genocides. The article argues that the way in which the Holocaust has intersected with these issues has both implicitly and explicitly connected Holocaust discourse to contemporary debates on what constitutes British identity in the 21st century. The main argument is that a domesticated and at times rather mythical narrative of events situated at an “experiential and geographical distance” are often used to promote a self-congratulatory notion of past and present British identity.⁵

The growing inter-dependence between education and commemoration means that they intersect in a myriad of ways both reflecting and reinforcing the

³ FCO, *Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues Submits Report on Holocaust education in the UK*, 15 December, 2010; FCO, “ITF Country Report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,” October, 2012, 1; Holocaust Commission, *Britain’s Promise to Remember: The Prime Minister’s Holocaust Commission Report*, January, 2015, 9.

⁴ Bob Moore, “Should More be Done to Remember the Holocaust in Britain?” *History Extra*, (February 2014), <http://www.historyextra.com/...holocaust-britain>, [accessed April 18 2016].

⁵ Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 25.

meaning of, and supposed messages from, the Holocaust that each project. These meanings and messages domesticate and decontextualize the Holocaust in popular understandings and in so doing they help to develop and re-orientate a conceptualization of an inherent British identity that has existed in various forms since before the Second World War had even begun. Charting the increasing prominence of the Holocaust in British commemorative culture, education and political discourse this article will show how interpretations of the historical event are becoming ever more central in the continuing quest for a positive British identity in the post-imperial age. In a global community in which Britain's influence has been steadily diminished this reconfiguration of identity encourages the British people to retain a sense of moral authority based on allusions to supposed stoicism, unity and heroism. This narrative not only draws heavily on the Second World War but, increasingly, on the Holocaust as an event which is the antithesis of what it means to be British. *Pace* Sharon MacDonald's assertion that "self-definition in contrast to national others - though it still goes on - has become less advisable in an era of increased global communication, trade and supra-national organizations," it is apparent that self-definition based on contrast as opposed to shared experience is still an integral ingredient in contemporary constructions of British identity.⁶ The centrality of the Holocaust in British consciousness and this self-definition through contrast entwines Britain closer into European history while at the same time distancing her from the Holocaust and the continent in which it took place. This ideological distance thus reinforces a post-imperial sense of British exceptionalism built on moral values that are deemed in some way to be exclusively 'British'.

Holocaust Memorial Day: "Too Much History"?

When discussing the commemoration of *Yom HaShoah* in 1997, one British journalist observed that the "desire to commemorate the Holocaust is so acute that Jews have a special day set aside on which to do so."⁷ This short article concluded with the reflections of William D. Rubinstein that the Holocaust "was such a traumatic, central event in modern Jewish history that if anything there is more of a desire to commemorate it, not less. It's more real to modern

⁶ Sharon Macdonald, "Commemorating the Holocaust: Reconfiguring National Identity in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of Race*, eds. Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo, (Abdingdon: Routledge, 2005), 49-68; 55.

⁷ C. Garner, "Rabbi calls for end to Holocaust Memorial Day," *The Independent*, October 20, 1997.

people than events of biblical times.”⁸ Although recognizing the need for members of the Jewish community to commemorate the Holocaust this article offered no suggestion that a day devoted to Holocaust remembrance was necessary for wider British society. The fact that this was not mentioned is indicative of the place of the Holocaust in British culture in the 1990s. It was not that the British people were unaware of the Holocaust or its significance, nor was it the case that they were callously indifferent. It was more that the event itself remained on the margins of mainstream society and culture. This is not the space to explore the changing shape of British engagement with the Holocaust in the post-war years but, in essence, it can be said that “awareness of and interest in the Holocaust was generally confused and contradictory, fluctuant and turbid” in the decades following 1945.⁹ That being said the early years of the 1990s had been marked by an increasing engagement with the Holocaust and the decade bore witness to an evolution in the development of British Holocaust consciousness. The culmination of a variety of factors including the success of *Schindler’s List* and the multitude of public acts of remembrance which had taken place across the country in 1995 to mark the fiftieth anniversaries of the liberation of the camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen all encouraged greater awareness of the genocide. Nonetheless, the Holocaust was commemorated as part of a more holistic memory of the Second World War, often projected through the lens of British moral superiority and accompanied by allusions to the myth of societal cohesion and accolades to British heroism in the face of German tyranny. In short, the Second World War, not the Holocaust, was the central focus of the fiftieth anniversaries.¹⁰ This was, however, soon to change when the inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day took place on 27 January 2001. The establishment of the day marked the biggest shift towards a sustained and deliberate institutional engagement with the Holocaust since the subject became a mandatory part of the National Curriculum for British Secondary Schools in 1991.

The creation of the day itself certainly “followed an international trend” towards more coordinated commemoration of the Holocaust.¹¹ Despite the clear

⁸ Rubinstein as cited in *Ibid*.

⁹ Andy Pearce and Kara Critchell, “Holocaust Consciousness in Britain” (paper presented at the University of Winchester, February 12, 2015).

¹⁰ Mark Donnelly, “We Should do Something for the Fiftieth: Remembering Auschwitz, Belsen and the Holocaust in Britain in 1995,” in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, eds. Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 171-189; 172.

¹¹ Nira Yuval-Davis and Max Silverman, “Memorializing the Holocaust in Britain,” *Ethnicities*,

influence of European and international engagement with the Holocaust on the evolution of British Holocaust consciousness, however, Britain did not simply import transnational trends in Holocaust education and commemoration. Such “reductionist interpretations” are, as Andy Pearce rightly states, “fundamentally flawed” and imply indifference or apathy in Britain towards developing its own institutionalized Holocaust consciousness.¹² Contrary to such interpretations the day emerged as a result of interweaving international and domestic influences including lobbying by interested parties, burgeoning political interest within the Labour Party and Government, and the domestic turn towards civic morality and multicultural ideals. To suggest that the nation state is the sole mediator and container of the past is, as Levy and Sznajder observe, “a breathtakingly unhistorical assertion” and it is certainly not the intention of this article to suggest otherwise.¹³ Whilst transnationalism and the so-called ‘cosmopolitan memory’ have certainly helped in shaping Holocaust discourse in 21st century Britain this trend is still in what Emiliano Perra describes as the “embryonic” stage of development.¹⁴ As Jean Marc Dreyfus suggests, in the end “Holocaust memory is in fact only superficially globalized. Each country actually renationalizes it” and, as such, is still in essence continually being shaped by national considerations and interpretations of identity.¹⁵

2/1, (March 2002): 107-123; 107.

¹² Andy Pearce, “The Development of Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain,” *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 14/2 (2008): 71-94; 72. Due to the limitations of space I am unable to offer a full discussion of the interplay between these international developments and their influence on the domestic landscape of Holocaust remembrance. For further information on this and the role of the Stockholm International Forum see Andy Pearce, “Britain’s Holocaust Memorial Day: Inculcating ‘British’ or ‘European’ Holocaust Consciousness?” in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, eds. Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 190-211; and Larissa Allwork, *Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the Transnational: The Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the International Task Force*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

¹³ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory,” *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5/1, (2002): 87-106; 89.

¹⁴ Emiliano Perra, “Between National and Cosmopolitan: Twenty-First Century Holocaust Television in Britain, France and Italy,” in *Holocaust Intersections: Genocide and Visual Culture in the New Millennium*, eds. Axel Bangert, Robert S. C. Gordon and Libby Saxton, (London: Maney Publishing, 2013), 24-45; 25.

¹⁵ Jean-Marc Dreyfus, “Battle in Print: Deshistoricising the Holocaust: Remembrance and the Abandonment of History,” October 19, 2010, <http://www.battleofideas.org.uk/...5404>, [accessed January 7, 2016].

Scholars' reactions to the announcement of a day of Holocaust remembrance varied. David Cesarani, who later became a founding trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, emphasized the inherent value in having a day in the national calendar that could act as "contested terrain for interpretations of the Holocaust and genocide."¹⁶ Others, most notably Donald Bloxham, Dan Stone and Tony Kushner, were far more wary about the lack of confrontation with some of the more difficult questions associated with the day, including amongst others the failure to address the issue of Britain's own colonial past.¹⁷

Tensions and conflicts surrounding the day were also to enter the public and political spheres before the inaugural ceremony in what Yair Auron describes as "a particularly stormy controversy" over the exclusion of victims of the Armenian genocide from the commemorative program.¹⁸ The omission of any reference to Armenia in the conceptualization of the day was quickly noted by journalist Robert Fisk who referred to the exclusion as an act of "sheer political cowardice" on the part of the British government.¹⁹ Initial efforts by the Anglo-Armenian community to be represented during the first Holocaust Memorial Day came to no avail but interest in, and growing criticism of, the absence of Armenia gained momentum in the national press. Reflecting growing public interest in this decision, representatives from the Home Office were asked during a House of Commons debate in November 2000 whether the Government would include any reference to the massacre of Armenians during the commemoration of the Holocaust Memorial Day. The Minister of State for Immigration, Mike O'Brien reiterated the government's line that:

Holocaust Memorial Day is focused on learning the lessons of the Holocaust and other more recent atrocities that raise similar issues. We took a conscious decision to focus on events around the Holocaust and thereafter, although we

¹⁶ David Cesarani, "Seizing the Day: Why Britain Will Benefit from Holocaust Memorial Day," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 34/4, (2000): 61-66; 66. See also David Cesarani, "Does the Singularity of the Holocaust make it Incomparable and Inoperative for Commemorating, Studying and Preventing Genocide? Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day as Case Study," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 10/2, (Autumn 2001): 40-56.

¹⁷ Donald Bloxham, "Britain's Holocaust Memorial Days: Reshaping the Past in the Service of the Present," *Immigrants & Minorities*, 21/1-2, (2002): 41-62; Tony Kushner, "Too Little, Too Late? Reflections on Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day," *Journal of Israeli History*, 23/1, (2004): 116-129, Dan Stone, "Day of Remembrance or Day of Forgetting? Or, Why Britain Does Not Need a Holocaust Memorial Day," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 34/4, (2000): 53-59.

¹⁸ Yair Auron, *The Pain of Knowledge: Holocaust and Genocide Issues in Education*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 100.

¹⁹ Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest for the Middle East*, (London: Harper Collins, 2005), 423.

did examine requests to consider the atrocities and other events that preceded the Holocaust... It is always difficult to draw a line and wherever it is drawn it runs the risk of being misinterpreted.²⁰

Nonetheless, for many the marginalization of the genocide undermined the entire ethos of a day commemorating the Holocaust. Mark Levene attributed this lack of inclusion and the British government's persistent failure to recognize the Armenian genocide to "the government's current political sensitivities, not only with regard to any direct relationship with Turkey but, much more profoundly, as a result of the complex set of interconnections enmeshing Britain within the Atlantic alliance."²¹ Levene's interpretation that present-day political concerns took precedence over the legitimate acknowledgement and commemoration of the Armenian genocide was shown to be justified after the release of a Foreign Office memorandum stating that whilst the British government would be "open to criticism in terms of the ethical dimension [,] recognizing the genocide would provide no practical benefit to the UK" particularly in light of the importance of the British relationship with Turkey.²² In an attempt to deflect growing anger from interested parties, a small number of representatives from the Armenian community were invited to attend the inaugural ceremony "after the event was seen to be in danger of descending into an unseemly row over recognition between different groups."²³ It was also agreed that the "massacre of Armenians" could be referred to by the BBC and within the ceremony itself.²⁴ Armenia, however, has remained a topic of debate over the years, particularly in 2015 with the centenary of the event. In response to the heightened arguments surrounding Britain's lack of recognition of this genocide, rather euphemistically dubbed as the Armenian "tragedy," the British Government shifted its position preferring to account for this lack of engagement by suggesting that:

...the British Government recognise as genocide only those events found to be so by international courts – for example the Holocaust and the massacres in Srebrenica and Rwanda. We do not exercise a political judgement in ascribing

²⁰ Mike O'Brien, "House of Commons Debates Written Answers: Holocaust Memorial Day, *Hansard*, Col. 917, November 30, 2000.

²¹ Mark Levene, "Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day: A Case of Post-Cold War Wish-Fulfilment, or Brazen Hypocrisy?" *Human Rights Review*, (April-June 2006): 26-59; 28.

²² FCO's Eastern Department, "FCO Memorandum to Minister Joyce Quin," April 12, 1999.

²³ Kamal Ahmed, "Holocaust Day Mired in Protest," *The Guardian*, January 21, 2001.

²⁴ *Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Genocide: Lessons for the Future Commemorative Programme*, (London: HMSO, 2001).

the term “genocide” to a set of events, whether in Armenia, the Holodomor in Ukraine or the massacres of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein in 1998.²⁵

The decision by the British government to frame their interpretation of genocide as those decreed by international courts, as opposed to genocide as it is defined by the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide reflects the tension between officially remembering the Holocaust and remembering other genocides in contemporary society. The response to criticism of the omission provided by Neil Frater, a representative from the Home Office’s Race Equality Unit responsible for overseeing the consultation process for Holocaust Memorial Day, provided a fascinating insight into the confusion endemic to the conceptualization of the day itself. Although referring to the atrocities in Armenia as “an appalling tragedy” and offering the British government’s “sympathies” to the descendants of those who had perished, after consulting with the Holocaust Memorial Day Steering Group the decision was taken not to include Armenia in the day “to avoid the risk of the message becoming too diluted if we try to include too much history.”²⁶ This fear that the message of the day might become too ‘diluted’ raises significant questions about the way in which the Holocaust intersects with other genocides in British consciousness and, in turn, what exactly the ‘message’ of the day is intended to be.

Although the Holocaust was the principal hub around which this day had been created, incorporating other genocides also appeared to be one of the main objectives of the day. In the program created to accompany the 2001 inaugural memorial service at Westminster Abbey, Home Secretary Jack Straw noted that “Holocaust Memorial Day is about learning the lessons of the Holocaust and other more recent atrocities that raise similar issues.”²⁷

The supposed emphasis on ‘more recent’ genocides not only ensured that Armenia did not, and does not, feature prominently within the remembrance day but also led to the somewhat uneven treatment of past genocides in British commemoration. Other genocides that have occurred since the Holocaust, in

²⁵ David Lidington, “House of Commons Business of the House: 1915 Armenian Genocide,” *Hansard*, Cols. 1260-1269; Col. 1265, Mar 23, 2015. Despite this controversy some organisations in Britain did seek to develop initiatives to promote awareness of the genocide to coincide with the centenary. This included the Weiner Library, which established the ‘Fragments of a Lost Homeland Exhibition’ that ran for 6 months.

²⁶ Neil Frater as cited in Fisk, *The Great War for Civilization*, 424.

²⁷ Jack Straw, “Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Genocide Commemorative Programme.” MPs and Peers by and large agreed with this interpretation of the event; see for example Lord Bassam, “House of Lords Debate: Crimes Against Humanity Commemoration,” *Hansard*, Col. 354, January 25, 2001.

particular those committed in Bosnia and Rwanda, have to varying degrees come to be absorbed into the day of remembrance. Yet the position of the Holocaust as the central genocide of the day, and the subsequent hierarchy of suffering this implies, has been evident since the opening ceremony. The official program for Holocaust Memorial Day 2001 asserted that “over 169,000,000 people died during the 20th century as a result of state sponsored mass murder” before going on to clarify the government’s position that “among them all, the Holocaust stands out as an example at the extreme.”²⁸ Sentiments such as these articulated the extent to which the Holocaust was designed to be the main focus of the day. The strapline “Remembering Genocides: Lessons for the Future” was, Cesarani noted, only included due to criticism of the apparent focus on the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.²⁹

What then of the ‘message’ that the Government was trying to convey? The message that, they feared, would be so easily diluted by “too much history”? When announcing the establishment of the day, Tony Blair articulated his hope that, “Holocaust Memorial Day will be a day when we reflect and remember and give our commitment and pledge that the terrible and evil deeds done in our world should never be repeated.”³⁰ The way in which both this and later memorial days were framed reveals the start of an institutional trend with regards to how the Holocaust was thought about in the opening years of the 21st century. This distinctive trend encouraged the abstraction and de-contextualization of the Holocaust within British consciousness in which its ‘lessons’ center on tolerance and anti-racism. This abstraction can ultimately be seen in the “unmooring of the Holocaust from its historical specificity and its circulation instead as an abstract code for Evil and thus as the model for a potential antiracist and human rights politics.”³¹

In its formative years, responsibility for the day lay under the auspices of the Home Office and the Department for Education and Skills. In 2005, however, the independent charitable organization the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) was established to promote, support and deliver Holocaust Memorial Day to the country on behalf of the British government. Although the HMD is now run independently from the government, it continues to be centrally funded and is therefore still reflective of official policy. Despite this continuity,

²⁸ “Holocaust Memorial Day: Remembering Genocide Commemorative Programme.”

²⁹ Cesarani, “Does the Singularity of the Holocaust make it Incomparable and Inoperative,” 41.

³⁰ Tony Blair cited in “UK to Mark Holocaust Memorial Day Each Year,” *Birmingham Post*, January 27, 2000.

³¹ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 229.

the creation of the HMDT had considerable implications for the way in which the Memorial Day was framed over the following years.

Every year the Memorial Day is based on a specific theme, thereby providing “a focus for events and education in local and national commemorations.”³² The inaugural ceremony “Remembering Genocides: Lessons for the Future” was followed by “Britain and the Holocaust” (2002) and “Children and the Holocaust” (2003). Although these themes aroused controversy, they also contained the potential for historical rootedness and even critical self-reflection, as in the case of the 2002 theme “Britain and the Holocaust.” On that occasion, the theme paper referred to the fact that the “ambiguity of Britain’s response to Nazi tyranny and racism is lodged in our heritage,” and that such ambiguity acted as “an inspiration, a warning and a guide.”³³

After the establishment of HMDT, however, there was a shift towards more abstract themes promoting civil morality and democratic values. The emphasis on the “lessons” that contemporary society could draw from the event became increasingly more central to the day than engagement with the historical event itself. This emphasis on moral instruction as opposed to encouraging critical reflection has been termed by Donald Bloxham as being the “pathos approach” to Holocaust commemoration and education, favoring moral judgment and ceremonial processes of remembrance at the expense of tackling more complex historical questions regarding how people came to commit such crimes and why they were able to do so.³⁴ The 2006 theme “One Person *Can* Make a Difference” is a case in point; people were encouraged to learn “to use one’s voice to enhance positive human values.”³⁵ By the same token the 2008 theme “Imagine... Remember, Reflect, React” “challenges us all to imagine the unimaginable” and stands as a “call to action to remember the past, reflect on the present and react to create a better future.”³⁶ The importance of remembrance was also raised by the 2015 “Keep the Memory Alive,” which in its theme paper reiterated the imperative of remembrance to ensure that “we pay respect to [the victims’]

³² Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, “Previous Years Themes,”

<http://hmd.org.uk/resources/previous-years-themes>, [accessed on May 1, 2016].

³³ David Cesarani, *Holocaust Memorial Day Theme Paper: Britain and the Holocaust*, (2002).

³⁴ Bloxham, “Britain’s Holocaust Memorial Days,” 47.

³⁵ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, “*Theme Paper: One Person Can Make a Difference 2006*,” (2005).

³⁶ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, “*Theme Paper: Imagine... Remember, Reflect, React 2008*,” (2007).

unimaginable suffering while retaining the lessons of the past for future generations.”³⁷

As the years went by the themes became ever more focused about the way in which learning from the Holocaust could generate positive active participation in contemporary society. The vision paper for the “Legacy of Hope” event in 2010 explicitly asked those participating in the day to “to look within and without, to be sure of our moral compass, to be certain of our choices and to use our voice, whenever we can, to speak out.”³⁸ Such an inducement to speak out was later encouraged by the theme vision of 2012, which specifically demanded that people “Speak up [and] Speak out” against discrimination and exclusion in their communities. Community was also at the heart of the day the following year, “Communities Together: Build a Bridge” and the traditional ceremony was accompanied by a special public event held on the Millennium Bridge in which “members of the public signed personal statements, pledging to build a bridge in their communities for HMD.” Such shifts away from contextualized historical engagement and towards abstract identification in the service of moral civic instruction makes the government’s concern with having ‘too much history,’ especially uncomfortable history, somewhat less pressing.

Not everyone fully agreed with this approach. In discussing the reasons behind his skepticism towards Holocaust Memorial Day, the son of one survivor observed: “I suspect that it is because remembering the Holocaust has become an official ritual that allows every sanctimonious politician and public figure to put their superior moral virtues on public display.”³⁹ Increasingly, therefore, the Holocaust is not only used to advance messages of tolerance but also as an opportunity for politicians to be seen to demonstrate their own moral standing through promoting their own role in the commemorations themselves. Every year politicians are invited by the Holocaust Educational Trust to sign a Holocaust Memorial Day Book of Commitment designed to illustrate their commitment to the day of remembrance and their pledge to remember those who died. MPs ‘speak out’ against prejudice and intolerance by signing the books of remembrance.

The lucid and carefully sculpted entries of the Prime Minister of the time usually contain messages for contemporary society through platitudes such as “humanity survived our descent into evil and if we recommit today to remembrance and to

³⁷ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, “UK Event,” (2016), <http://hmd.org.uk/page/uk-event>, [accessed on April 14, 2016].

³⁸ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, *Theme Paper: Legacy of Hope 2010*, (2009).

³⁹ Frank Furedi, “The Holocaust should not be for sale,” *Daily Telegraph*, January 26, 2006.

resistance to evil, then that is the legacy of hope.”⁴⁰ At the same time, backbench MPs who sign the memorial books often express sentiments that never explain why “we must always remember what happened” or define exactly why “each new generation needs to know what happened.”⁴¹ The photographs taken of those members of Parliament signing the book, in turn, are then placed on individual MPs constituency website as proof of their actions and of their dedication to remembering what happened.⁴² Regardless of sincere individual commitment the cumulative effect is often that “Holocaust Memorial Day is becoming a Victorian religious rally to which the audience is urged to subscribe and those who don’t are cast as uncivilized.”⁴³

Such abstraction from critical historical understanding alongside the continual reference to Britain’s role in the Second World War ultimately reinforces understandings of a national identity built on supposed, and inherent, British values, thus validating the concern expressed as early as 2000 by Cesarani that the event might “serve to celebrate Britain’s role in defeating Nazism and its supposedly humane immigration record in the 1930s and since.”⁴⁴ Such de-contextualization and abstraction is also discernible in the educational initiatives promoted by organizations committed to ensuring the Holocaust continues to have a significant presence in British culture, as will be considered in greater depth in the following section.

⁴⁰ Gordon Brown, *Holocaust Memorial Day Book of Remembrance 2010: The Legacy of Hope*, (Unpublished).

⁴¹ Annette Brooke, *Holocaust Memorial Day Book of Remembrance*, 2010; Robert Goodwill, *Holocaust Memorial Day Book of Remembrance*, 2007.

⁴² For examples of Members of Parliament detailing their role in Holocaust remembrance please see: Paul Blomfield, “I’ve signed the Holocaust Memorial Day Book of Commitment to ‘speak out’ against prejudice,” January 18, 2012, www.paulblomfield.co.uk/news/news-story/article/ive-signed-the-holocaust-memorial-day-book-ofcommitment-to-speak-out-against-prejudice.html, [accessed January 29, 2013]; Phillip Lee, “Local MP ‘Speaks Out’ Against Prejudice by Signing Holocaust Memorial Day Book of Commitment,” January 20, 2012, www.philliplee.com/social-responsibility/local-mp-speaks-out-against-prejudice-by-signing-holocaust-memorial-day-book-ofcommitment/, [accessed January 28, 2013].

⁴³ Adrian Hamilton, “Keep the Politicians out of Holocaust Day,” *The Independent*, January 26, 2006.

⁴⁴ Cesarani, “Seizing the Day,” 66.

Education and Holocaust Memorialization

The question as to whether pedagogy has a “special and unique task in the education of man in the world after Auschwitz” has been posed repeatedly.⁴⁵ The establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day saw the firm institutionalization of the Holocaust within British society as an educational event.⁴⁶ Education certainly emerged as a significant mediator of Holocaust consciousness in the final decade of the twentieth century having become a mandatory part of the first National Curriculum for all secondary school students in England and Wales in 1991. The development of Holocaust education since this time has frequently been cited as a key turning point in terms of Britain's engagement with the Nazi genocide, signalling a shift from the institutional silences or distortions that had characterized previous decades.⁴⁷

Following the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day, pedagogy played an even greater role in the transmission of the Holocaust in British society. As Cesarani suggested, the commemorative day “will be reinforced by an educational program informed by government departments but devolved on to educational authorities and schools around Britain.”⁴⁸ Education was thus envisaged as being the means by which critical engagement with the day, and the Holocaust, could occur. Reflecting this educational commitment, the HMDT oversaw the publication and distribution of education packs tailored around the specific theme of the year and the creation of individual resources with accompanying guidance notes for educators. Although the HMDT holds overall responsibility for the day, other educational organizations who are active throughout the year have come to assume a role in encouraging participation in

⁴⁵ Arye Carmon, “Problems in Coping with the Holocaust: Experiences with Students in a Multinational Program,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 450, July 1980: 227-236; 227.

⁴⁶ Cesarani, “Does the Singularity of the Holocaust make it Incomparable and Inoperative,” 40.

⁴⁷ For a detailed account of the emergence of the National Curriculum for History, see Lucy Russell, *Teaching the Holocaust in School History: Teachers or Preachers?* (London: Continuum, 2006). On Britain's relationship with the Holocaust see: Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain*; Pearce, “The Development of Holocaust Consciousness”; David Cesarani, “How Post-War Britain Reflected on the Nazi Persecution and Mass Murder of Europe's Jews: A Reassessment of Early Responses,” *Jewish Culture and History*, 12/1-2 (2010): 95-130; Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Sharples & Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust*.

⁴⁸ Cesarani, “Seizing the Day,” 64.

HMD and in promoting Holocaust teaching and remembrance outside of this framework.

Governmental guidance for teachers on how to tackle this complex and emotive subject had been fragmentary at best during the formative years of Holocaust teaching. This perhaps accounts for the influence which non-governmental institutions like the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Imperial War Museum and Holocaust Centre have had on the shape of Holocaust education. These organizations were to play an even more significant role in promoting education and remembrance after the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day for education, much like the community-based aspects of the day was always "intended to be driven by grassroots activists."⁴⁹ The most significant of these is the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET), a lobby turned charitable organization formed in 1988 in the wake of the establishment of the All Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group as a means of "promoting research, supporting Holocaust education, producing resources and advancing the teaching of the Nazi genocide in educational institutions."⁵⁰ In the years since its creation the Trust has grown to be one of the most prominent educational charities in the country.

The material being promoted by the HET was specifically designed to inspire integration, citizenship and community engagement. This mode of Holocaust education, which developed in earnest after the establishment of HMD, prioritizes the transmission and mediation of such contemporary 'lessons' applicable for all, reinforces a more malleable narrative of the Holocaust with recognizable pertinence for contemporary British society. As a result of this emphasis, it is possible to see a gradual shift promoted by HMDT and organizations such as the HET and Anne Frank Trust away from the historical context of the Holocaust in favor of imparting contemporary 'lessons' more effectively.

The question as to whether there is a possibility of 'lessons' for contemporary society being derived from the Holocaust has prompted fierce and prolonged debate between educationists and historians alike.⁵¹ These debates cannot be

⁴⁹ Stephen D. Smith, *Never Again! Yet Again! A Personal Struggle with the Holocaust and Genocide*, (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House, 2009), 116.

⁵⁰ Pearce, "Development of Historical Consciousness," 72; Geoffrey Short and Carol Ann Reed, *Issues in Holocaust Education*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 59.

⁵¹ For further information on these debates see Nicholas Kinloch, "Learning about the Holocaust: Moral or Historical Question?" *Teaching History*, 93, (1998): 44-46; Nicholas Kinloch, "Parallel Catastrophes? Uniqueness, Redemption and the Shoah," *Teaching History*, 104, (2001): 8-14; Steve Illingworth, "Hearts, Minds and Souls: Exploring Values through History," *Teaching History*, 100, (2000): 20-24; Geoffrey Short, "Lessons of the Holocaust: A Response to the Critics," *Educational Review*, 55/3, (2003): 277-287; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust*

reproduced here but what is apparent is that the concept of ‘lessons’ has emerged as a dominant aspect of the way in which the Holocaust is both taught and conceptualized. Whilst this approach is reflected in other countries too, within Britain the approach to Holocaust teaching transmitted through ‘lessons’ for the future has achieved a particular pertinence and provides the moral justification for the continued inclusion of the Holocaust on the National Curriculum. As Andrew Burns observed, it is hoped that the “lessons from that disastrous period of history guide us in the future.”⁵² Such sentiments are continually evoked in both the classroom and in wider culture and used to reflect the righteousness of Britain’s moral commitment to multiculturalism or as a means of emphasizing the benefits of living in a tolerant democracy.

This move towards the Holocaust as holding ‘lessons’ for contemporary society can even be discerned in the shifting emphasis of the aims of the Holocaust Educational Trust. The founding aim of the Trust was originally to “show our citizens and especially our youngsters what happened when racism replaced diversity and when mass murder took over a nation.”⁵³ Such an aim reflected the relative dearth of easily accessible information for students and teachers at the time and the seeming ambivalence of the wider British population towards engaging with the Holocaust. In this vein, the organization’s primary purpose was to inform the British people about the subject itself. In contrast, the aim of the Trust at the present time is to “educate young people from every background about the Holocaust and the important lessons to be learned for today.”⁵⁴ Other educational organizations have also adopted this conviction about moral ‘lessons’ being transmitted to students in a transformative manner. The Holocaust Centre in Nottingham suggests that Holocaust education can help to foster “good citizenship”⁵⁵ values whilst the London Jewish Cultural Centre claims that through learning about the Holocaust we are able to “fight prejudice and

and Collective Memory, (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 261-263; Alice Pettigrew, “Limited Lessons from the Holocaust? Critically Considering the Anti-Racist and Citizenship Potential,” *Teaching History*, 141, (2010): 50-55; Paul Salmons, “Moral Dilemmas: History Teaching and the Holocaust,” *Teaching History*, 104, (2001): 34-40.

⁵² Andrew Burns, “Holocaust Memorial Day: Lessons for the Future,” January 24, 2013, www.het.org.uk/index.php/blog/entry/holocaust-memorial-day-lessons-for-the-future, [accessed on August 24, 2013].

⁵³ Greville Janner, *To Life! The Memoirs of Greville Janner*, (Stroud: Sutton, 2006), 214.

⁵⁴ Holocaust Educational Trust, “About Us,” www.het.org.uk/index.php/about-us-general, [accessed on April 20, 2016].

⁵⁵ The Holocaust Centre, “About Us,” <http://www.nationalholocaustcentre.net/>, [accessed on April 24, 2016].

bigotry.”⁵⁶ Such is the prominence of the notion of the Holocaust holding contemporary meaning applicable to daily life that the idea that the Holocaust contains ‘lessons’ for contemporary society is accepted almost without question in the public sphere.

Reflecting, and shaping, the significance attributed to the existence of such contemporary ‘lessons’ and the shift towards a more contemporary oriented Holocaust education is the Lessons from Auschwitz (LFA) project run by the Holocaust Educational Trust. Established in 1999, the LFA project is a four-part program for sixth-form students aged between 16 and 18 and teachers; it includes a one-day visit to the sites of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II. Originally created by Rabbi Barry Marcus of the Central Synagogue in London as a way to inform the Jewish community in Britain about the Holocaust, since the adoption of the project by the Trust, the visits have now escalated to such an extent that they are a high profile vehicle through which the Holocaust is mediated to British students.⁵⁷ The British government has funded the project since 2005 when the Treasury pledged an annual sum of £1.5million to facilitate and expand the project.

Since the adoption of the initiative by the Holocaust Educational Trust, the project has been re-oriented towards a more multicultural audience through the projection of a universalized British narrative espousing lessons for contemporary society. Following the visit to Auschwitz, as part of the Follow Up session, educators provide students with a selection of ‘historical conclusions and contemporary lessons’ that the Trust feels that students should learn as a result of being taught about the Holocaust.⁵⁸ These contemporary ‘lessons’ which students are provided with range from the fact that “Societies are made up of individuals. If we want to make the world a more humane place, we must start with our own everyday actions,” to “The UK government plays a key role in global events and we, as citizens, can influence governmental policy” to “We

⁵⁶ London Jewish Cultural Centre, “UK Schools Speaker Programme,” (2013), <http://www.ljcc.org.uk/holocaust>, [accessed on December 12, 2014].

⁵⁷ Barry Marcus, *You are witnesses: Collection/Anthology of Personal Reflections from the One Day Visits to Auschwitz*, (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 1999). For a more detailed discussion of the Lessons from Auschwitz programme and the one day visits established by Rabbi Marcus please see Kara Critchell, *Holocaust Education in British Society and Culture*, (Unpublished PhD thesis, 2014).

⁵⁸ Holocaust Educational Trust, “Lessons from Auschwitz: Historical Conclusions and Contemporary Lessons Resource,” (Unpublished).

must promote tolerance of others by recognizing the role played by all regardless of gender, race or creed.”⁵⁹ Students then chose which of these contemporary concerns resonates most with them and that is then defined as being a ‘lesson’ of the Holocaust.

After participation in the project students become Ambassadors for the Trust. In this role, the Trust asserts, these young people become part of the “driving force behind our efforts to ensure that people across Britain understand the importance of remembering the Holocaust.”⁶⁰ This is often achieved by students presenting their trip to their school, writing material for the local newspaper, discussing their visit with local community groups or planting a memorial tree and inviting those in the community to witness the dedication. As Chief Executive of the Trust Karen Pollock observed, “The inspiring work students go on to do in their local areas demonstrates the importance of the visit.”⁶¹

Martin Davies has asserted that “education is a simulacrum of the society it serves.”⁶² This is in part true, but it is clear that by intersecting with commemoration, education does not simply represent the society it serves but also concurs in shaping society’s self-perception. Much like Holocaust Memorial Day the question with education is what exactly it hopes to achieve. Are Holocaust educators seeking to teach the history of the event or are they intending to use the Holocaust to provide moral instruction aimed at forging feelings of citizenship and a sense of identity based on democratic values? Perhaps more significantly, perhaps, what is the intention of the British Government in funding these initiatives? The message that the Government wants to mediate through education appears to be subscribing to the same “pathos” approach to the subject observed in Holocaust Memorial Day. Certainly the de-contextualization of the Holocaust, discernable in the National Curriculum in which it is compulsory to teach about the Holocaust but not mandatory to teach about the Second World War seems to point in that direction.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Holocaust Educational Trust, “About the Ambassador Programme,” <https://www.het.org.uk/...programme>, [accessed on April 28, 2016].

⁶¹ “A Project so Vital to Help Pupils Learning,” *Western Daily Press*, May 1, 2008.

⁶² Martin L. Davies, “Education after Auschwitz: Revisited,” in *How the Holocaust Looks Now: International Perspectives*, eds. Martin Davies and Claus-Christian Szejnmann, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 247-260; 253.

The use of the Holocaust to encourage civic sentiments and democratic values is certainly not unique and is situated alongside a shift in British policy towards education in response to international, and perceived domestic, threats. The introduction of the Preventing Violent Extremism (more commonly referred to as the ‘Prevent’) Programme in the wake of the terror attacks of 2001 and the London bombings of 2005 to promote “mainstream British values: democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind”⁶³ is just one example of how the field of education has been recruited into helping to sculpt a sense of British identity. This was taken even further in the summer of 2015 when the Government made adherence to the program a statutory duty to respond to the “ideological threat of terrorism” and to “prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.”⁶⁴ Situated alongside such discourse, and alongside institutionalized attempts to both sculpt identity and counter extremism in the age of terror, the moves in Holocaust education towards promoting citizenship and democracy reflect a more significant shift in British educational policy over the last 15 years.

An Absence of Intersections? Britishness and the Kindertransport

If education is being overtly harnessed to project supposedly ‘British’ values to counter subversive elements in society in the so called ‘pre-criminal space’ then the use of the Holocaust as a way of asserting British identity is rather more subtly employed.⁶⁵ This is often achieved by drawing on powerful and emotive ‘symbols’ such as Holocaust survivors, who have become integral to education in Britain, to the point that they are referred to as being the “Heart of Holocaust Education.”⁶⁶ As the Holocaust Educational Trust tells students: “survivor testimonies are powerful because they challenge the process of dehumanization... we cannot imagine the numbers of people that suffered during the Holocaust....However, we can gain some understanding by focusing on the

⁶³ HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, June, 2011, 34.

⁶⁴ HM Government, *Protecting Vulnerable People from being Drawn into Terrorism: Statutory guidance for Channel Panel Members and Partners of Local Panels*, April, 2015, 3.

⁶⁵ Homa Khaleeli, “Is the Prevent Strategy Demonising Muslim Schoolchildren?” *The Guardian*, September 23, 2015.

⁶⁶ Holocaust Educational Trust, “Survivor Stories,” www.het.org.uk/index.php/survivor-stories, [accessed April 20, 2016].

individual stories and testimonies of those who suffered and died.”⁶⁷ By using survivor testimonies to encourage a focus on the individual experience, educators are trying to ensure that the victims of the Holocaust are not simply reduced to abstract figures. It is believed that, if students are able to engage with individual testimony, their understanding of human experience within an incomprehensible event can be enhanced.⁶⁸

The form of education promoted by these organizations within their Outreach programs has also helped to propel the survivor witness into the public eye, thereby ensuring that they are increasingly accessible to the public in commemorative events. The way survivors are encountered within British commemorative culture helps to perpetuate narratives of supposedly ‘British’ liberal democratic values. The visible position of naturalized British survivors during memorial days provides indisputable proof of the value of past British actions on the international stage whilst at the same time championing deeply ingrained self-perceptions of Britain that might end up hindering open discussion about less uplifting past and present aspects of British life.

The role of survivors in British Holocaust talk is particularly discernible in the way the theme of rescue epitomized by the Kindertransport features heavily in both education and memorialization. Referred to by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust as a “unique humanitarian programme” the Kindertransport was overlooked in British collective consciousness until the 50th anniversary of the transports.⁶⁹ Since that time, the Kindertransports have evolved so as to become “a source of great national pride within the British historical imagination.”⁷⁰ The British scheme to allow approximately 10,000 children into Britain following

⁶⁷ Holocaust Educational Trust, *Lessons from Auschwitz Orientation Seminar Notes for Educators*, Unpublished, 2011, 8.

⁶⁸ Samuel Totten, “The Use of First-Person Accounts in Teaching about the Holocaust,” *The British Journal of Holocaust Education*, 3/2, (Winter 1994): 160 – 183; 160.

⁶⁹ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, “The Kindertransport,” <http://hmd.org.uk/genocides/kindertransport-refugees> [accessed April 20, 2016]. To mark this anniversary Bertha Leverton, herself a Kindertransportee, planned a reunion for those who had come to Britain as children in 1938. Publication of the event led to over 1000 Kindertransportees attending and began the process of returning the memory of the transports to British consciousness.

⁷⁰ Caroline Sharples, “The Kindertransport in British Historical Memory,” in *The Kindertransport to Britain 1938/39 New Perspectives: The Year Book of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Studies*, eds. Andrea Hammel and Bea Lewkowicz, Vol. 13, (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V, 2012), 15-27; 21.

Kristallnacht on 9 November 1938 has been seen as Britain “securing the future” of those Jewish children who came to Britain.⁷¹

That the Kindertransport has become enshrined within British cultural imagination as an example of the British people rescuing thousands of innocents in a time of adversity is unsurprising. The murder of 1.5 million children, understandably, carries significant emotive power. Just as the murder of children has assumed a prominent position within Holocaust consciousness so too the rescue of children has become an equally dominant theme in British historical understanding. This was enhanced by the decision to make the “Children of the Holocaust” the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2003, thus highlighting the contrast between the position of Jewish children in Nazi occupied territories and the relative safety of those who had been permitted entry into Britain. This has been further reinforced by the creation of an interactive exhibition referred to as “The Journey” at The National Holocaust Centre & Museum in Nottingham. The exhibition, built primarily for the mediation of the Holocaust to primary-aged children, follows the story of 10 year old Leo Stein, a German Jewish boy who came to England as part of the Kindertransport. Given that the Holocaust, with the oft-forgotten exception of the deportation of Jews from the Channel Islands, did not take place on British soil it is perhaps not surprising that one of the most significant roles of survivors in maintaining and reinforcing a notable British connection to the Holocaust is through those who came to Britain. Popular British understanding of the Kindertransport, mediated by politicians, the media and organizations such as the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Imperial War Museum is, to varying degrees, one of prevailing pride in the British rescue of thousands of Jewish children from the clutches of Nazi aggression.⁷²

One widely publicized commemorative event reinforcing this memory of Britain as a place of refuge, and in which survivors appeared to play an integral part, was the 70th anniversary re-enactment of the journey carried out by hundreds of children from Czechoslovakia to Britain in what has become known as the Winton Train, or the Czech Kindertransport. Independent of the Kindertransport operation, but often considered in conjunction with it, the rescue of 669 children by Nicholas Winton has become a significant part of British historical consciousness of the Holocaust. On 1 September 2009, in order

⁷¹ Lembit Öpik, “House of Commons Debate, Holocaust Memorial Day,” *Hansard*, Vol. 477-501, Col. 488, January 29, 2009.

⁷² Ruth Barnett, “The Acculturation of the Kindertransport Children: Intergenerational Dialogue on the Kindertransport Experience,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 23/1, (Fall 2004): 100-108; 101.

to commemorate this act, a train carrying 170 people, including 22 of the child evacuees who were originally involved in this transport and their descendants, left Prague and followed the route taken by the original Winton Trains. They were met in London on 4 September by Nicholas Winton himself with the words, widely reported at the time, “It’s wonderful to see you all after 70 years. Don’t leave it quite so long until we meet here again.”⁷³

How can we interpret survivors’ roles in the remembrance of this event? On the one hand their presence was vital. Without the survivors the journey could not have been relived and the memory would undoubtedly have resonated less widely with the public. Yet, conversely, whilst the survivors were necessary, their experiences were somewhat supplementary to the commemoration, which overwhelmingly centered on Winton himself. The same is also true within popular consciousness of the Kindertransport and, indeed, within wider commemoration of the Holocaust. For whilst the prominence of survivors indicates an increased engagement with them, it can also be seen to promote narratives of British heroism and righteousness.

The press contributed considerably to the perpetuation of the narrative emphasizing the salvation provided to the children admitted into Britain, many of whom are still living in this country. The BBC discussed the enactment under the heading “Czech evacuees thank their saviour.”⁷⁴ In fact so dominant is the memory that the man who organized the transports from Czechoslovakia is often referred to in the British media as the “British Schindler.”⁷⁵ These traditional interpretations of rescue are reinforced by the expressions of gratitude articulated by survivors themselves. One survivor, Bronia Snow, is reported as stating that in Britain she quickly became ‘an Anglophile... I became appreciative of this wonderful country, its toleration, and its good manners.’⁷⁶ Sentiments such as this expressing appreciation towards Britain are frequent and extremely important when considering the role of survivors in British understanding of the Holocaust and of Britain’s role within it. Survivors’ political value does not only

⁷³ “WWII Rescue Train Recreated,” *BBC News*, (September 4, 2009).

⁷⁴ Robert Hall, “Czech Evacuees Thank Their Saviour,” *BBC News*, September 4, 2009.

⁷⁵ Daniel McLaughlin, “Survivors Gather to pay Tribute to British Schindler,” *The Independent*, September 2, 2009.

⁷⁶ Bronia Snow in Stephen Adams, “Schindler Train: I didn’t talk to a soul. I was traumatised,” *Daily Telegraph*, September 4, 2009.

lie in the messages of humanity politicians want to promote but also in the relationship they appear to have with the country in which they found refuge.⁷⁷

Due to the emotiveness of the subject, the expressions of gratitude expressed by survivors and the political pride articulated during commemorative activities, the Kindertransport and the Winton Train have been absorbed within British historical consciousness as acts of rescue representative of tolerance and liberalism at a time when other nations were embracing Fascism. Through replicating the journey of the Winton Train the notion of British rescue, an already powerful story, became firmly entrenched in Britain's Holocaust consciousness. It was not so much the Jewish children but the British man who rescued them who took center stage during the commemorative events. As a result, the survivors are necessary to the story not because of what their experiences reveal about the Holocaust but because of what their presence in Britain reinforces about British identity and past benevolence. This of course should not suggest a belittling of Winton's achievements, nor the achievement of the Kindertransports, but rather that to consider them critically would create a more grounded historical consciousness and place British attitudes both in the past and in the present within a more contextualized and historically nuanced understanding. Instead, the way in which the Kindertransport and British attitudes towards immigration are remembered circumvent difficult questions and risk turning a complex and multifaceted event into a simple redemptive narrative. As Louise London suggests, "a gulf exists" between the memory and history of British engagement with its past when considering this period and, in particular, the notion of providing a safe haven for all those who required it.⁷⁸ Despite the presence of survivors, the historical consciousness promoted is not one primarily about their experiences but, increasingly, about British pride. This positive narrative does not account for the fact that, as Mark Mazower has noted, despite Britain 'priding itself on its tolerance and liberalism, it has in fact only accepted Jews on certain conditions and requires their conformism and assimilation.'⁷⁹ Thus, the position of the survivor in contemporary Holocaust discourse allows for the continuation of a somewhat mythical remembrance both

⁷⁷ Erich Reich, "Letters to the AJR," *Association of Jewish Refugees Journal*, (January 2009); Martin Stern, "Holocaust Memorial Day Trust Podcast," Retrieved on April 21, 2016, www.hmd.org.uk/resources/stories/martin-stern.

⁷⁸ Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.

⁷⁹ Mark Mazower, "England, Liberalism and the Jews," *The Jewish Quarterly*, 167, (1997): 33-38; 33.

of the Holocaust and of British treatment of the “Other.” This constellation is at the core of statements such as, for example, that of Ian Austin MP:

It is true that our country did not do enough, of course, and that it could have done more, and sooner, but no one can deny that when other countries were rounding up their Jews Britain provided a safe haven. It was British troops, as we have heard, who liberated the concentration camps, rescuing tens of thousands of inmates from almost certain death and enabling many of those to go on and prosper under the democratic values of the UK.⁸⁰

The domestication of Holocaust survivors and their experiences in education, together with the relative de-contextualization of the Holocaust in the commemorative sphere, combine to reinforce a narrative that, whilst emphasizing the centrality of the Holocaust, also runs the risk distancing Britain from Europe in British imagination.

European Holocaust Consciousness or Domesticated Holocaust Identity?

The way in which the Holocaust has come to be absorbed into British consciousness since 2001 reflects the inherent tensions between the decontextualized narrative that has evolved in British Holocaust education and commemoration, and the subsequent impact this narrative has had on contemporary conceptualization of British national identity. These conceptualizations based on representations of the Holocaust also intersect with dominant narratives of the Second World War and influence understandings of Britain’s place in Europe. British narratives of the war and the Holocaust present distinctive features. As Mark Donnelly noted, despite being “a global conflict which killed some 60 million and which left the legacy of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and countless acts of barbarism [the war] has evoked nostalgia, pride and even sentimentality in Britain.”⁸¹

It is certainly difficult to separate the memory of the Holocaust from the memory of the British defeat of Nazism and the prevailing of democratic ideals. As a member of the House of Lords declared during a debate to discuss the 50th anniversary of the end of hostilities, “after many years of fighting and after much

⁸⁰ Ian Austin, “House of Commons Debate: Holocaust Memorial Day 2012,” *Hansard*, Vol. 538, Col. 342, January 19, 2012.

⁸¹ Mark Donnelly, *Britain in the Second World War*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.

travail the Allies succeeded in defeating a determined, efficient and dedicated enemy and it is right and fitting that we recall that feat of arms. Secondly, for us and for many of our allies the end of the war represented a triumph for democracy and for democratic ideals.”⁸² Since the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day, however, the Holocaust has become increasingly central to popular understandings of the past and interpretations of British identity. As Andrew Dismore MP noted, “the need to commemorate the Holocaust applies in Britain as much as anywhere. Our country made terrible sacrifices to defeat Hitler. The period of Nazism and the Second World War remain a defining episode in our national psyche.”⁸³ Subsequently, the association between Britain, the Second World War and the Holocaust in cultural imagination contribute to a sense of identity built on pride in British heroism during this time not only in resisting Fascism but also for liberating Holocaust survivors, and the rest of Europe, from the yolk of Nazism. That this pride has not abated and that this narrative has continued to be perpetuated, was illustrated by an Early Day Motion, tabled in 2006, concerning the recognition of the newly established Veterans Day (renamed Armed Forces Day in 2009) which asserted that the House of Commons recognizes that:

the courage and sacrifice of British servicemen made during the Second World War was paramount to saving victims of the Holocaust; notes that on 15th April 1945 British troops liberated the Bergen-Belsen Nazi concentration camp, rescuing tens of thousands of inmates from certain death; further notes the compassion, hope and freedom that liberators gave back to the Holocaust survivors, many of whom have prospered under the democratic values of the UK.⁸⁴

The narrative presented by this EDM is, of course, extremely simplistic, if anything for its failure to reflect the complexities of the immediate post-liberation period during which almost 14,000 people died within the camp.⁸⁵

Of course national ‘myths’, and the subsequent interpretations of identity they inspire, tend not to develop around negative actions of the state and are instead

⁸² Lord Richards, “House of Lords Debate: Fiftieth Anniversary of the End of World War II,” *Hansard*, Vol. 563, Col. 790, April 25, 1995.

⁸³ Andrew Dismore, “House of Commons Debate: Holocaust Remembrance Day,” *Hansard*, Vol. 334, Col. 362, (June 30, 1999).

⁸⁴ Early Day Motion 2414, “Holocaust and Veterans Day: 2005-06 Parliamentary Session,” Tabled June 20, 2006.

⁸⁵ Ben Shephard, *After Daybreak: The Liberation of Belsen, 1945*, (London: Pimlico, 2006), 4.

shaped around the affirmation of a positive self-identity through the assertion of supposed national values such as heroism, liberal democracy or tolerance. Yet this is also achieved by positioning the perceived characteristics of the nation against the actions and characteristics of the ‘Other’. In the immediate aftermath of the war and the liberation of the camps “Britain and its allies had begun to carve out for themselves a new role as the moral teachers of a defeated Germany.”⁸⁶ The British government and the British public embraced the role of moral guide, fueled by the sense of entitlement resulting from being the nation that had not succumbed to Nazism. Rather than considering key figures such as Irma Grese and Josef Kramer as being solely responsible for the crimes that they had committed, they were also “dismissed as typical Germans, the products of a warped and diseased nation.”⁸⁷ The acts of those SS guards within the camps were now being viewed by the British public as representing an entire nation of depraved and bestial “barbarians” who needed to be re-educated before they could be reintegrated into international society.⁸⁸ Situated against prevailing sentiments regarding British heroism and valor such depravity exemplified the superiority of British national character.

The way in which the Holocaust was encountered in these early months has helped to shape a self- perception of Britain as a nation of tolerance situated against the negative characteristics of the ‘Other’. This self-image, drawn from the domesticated narrative of the past and of Britain’s perceived role within history, encourages a particular sense of entitlement to international leadership, particularly with regards to issues with moral or humanitarian implications. When asked about the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day the newly appointed United Kingdom Envoy for post-Holocaust issues stated that Holocaust commemoration was crucial for Britain, observing that, “we, of course historically, we were the country that stood up to Nazism, and in the early days of the war... And I think we have a lot of good things to, not to preach to other people, but there’s good practice in the UK and so if we’re active we can

⁸⁶ Aimée Bunting, “My Question Applies to this Country: British Identities and the Holocaust,” *Holocaust Studies*, 14/1, (2008): 61-92, 66; Jon Bridgman, *The End of the Holocaust: The Liberation of the Camps*, (Singapore, Areopagitica Press, 1990), 10.

⁸⁷ “The Shackled Monster of Belsen,” *Daily Express*, April 21, 1945; “Belsen Beast Taken Back to Death Camp,” *Daily Worker*, September 22, 1945; “Blonde Beastess has Confessed her Guilt,” *Daily Mirror*, October 6, 1945; Tony Kushner, “The Memory of Belsen,” in *Belsen in History and Memory*, eds. Jo Reilly, David Cesarani, Tony Kushner and Colin Richmond, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 181-205; 184.

⁸⁸ H. Kinchett, “Letters: All These Horrors Must be Known,” *Daily Mirror*, April 23, 1945.

spread that good practice around Europe.”⁸⁹ This evocation of British values during the Second World War and British actions in ‘liberating’ survivors of the Holocaust thus allows politicians, and the British public, to maintain a position of moral superiority within the global arena whilst encouraging the view that other countries should be grateful for British heroism and disinterested benevolence. As one MP declared in 2012:

when other countries were rounding up their Jews and herding them on to trains to the gas chamber, Britain provided a safe haven for tens of thousands of refugee children. Think of Britain in the thirties. The rest of Europe was succumbing to fascism... but, here in Britain, Mosley was rejected. Imagine 1941: France invaded, Europe overrun, America not yet in the war and just one country standing for liberty and democracy, a beacon to the rest of the world, fighting not just for our freedom, but for the world’s liberty.⁹⁰

Reflecting the Early Day Motion discussed previously, this rhetoric is also rooted in misconception. The reality is of course that Britain did not go to war for the liberty of the Jewish people, and the government were at pains to prove the opposite at the time; moreover, whilst Mosley was rejected, antisemitism was still a potent if less violent force in British society; furthermore, although the Kindertransport memory is one in which Britain takes solace, resistance towards further Jewish immigration was rife. Nor does this pride in British values take into account issues surrounding immigration either past or present in British society or Britain’s own role in acts of genocide and colonial violence.

The imperial decline of Britain in the wake of the cessation of hostilities in 1945 has ultimately meant that politicians and the wider population have clung to the lingering memories of as the Second World War to sustain pride in British national character. The unfortunate outcome is that introspective analysis of both historical events and British actions (or lack thereof) in the present is lacking. The Holocaust is certainly not alone in being represented in this way. Even the Armenian genocide, which as previously discussed Britain has not officially recognized, is sculpted around a highly selective narrative that seeks to characterize Britain’s historical response as equally positive. When discussing the genocide in 2015 the Minister for Europe reflected on the fact that “the British Government of that time robustly condemned the forced deportations,

⁸⁹ Andrew Burns, “Podcast for the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust,” Retrieved on February 13, 2016, from www.hmd.org.uk/resources/podcast/sir-andrew-burns.

⁹⁰ Ian Austin, “Holocaust Memorial Day 2012,” Col. 342.

massacres and other crimes. We continue to endorse that view. British charities, as we look back, played a major part then in humanitarian relief operations.”⁹¹

The period after the General Elections of 2010 saw a newly invigorated political impetus towards a domestic commitment to ensuring the future of Holocaust remembrance, education and commemoration in British society and culture. This renewed sense of commitment to Holocaust education was not necessarily anticipated. Although the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day had achieved cross-party support, the decisive shift towards the greater institutionalization of Holocaust memorialization and education in the first decade of the 21st century had overwhelmingly been championed by the Labour governments led by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Following the General Election of May 2010, however, the Labour Party’s 13 years in power came to a close after the creation of a coalition government led by the Conservative Party alongside the Liberal Democrats. Like the rest of the country, those invested in Holocaust education and remembrance faced a period of considerable uncertainty about what the future would hold for Britain as they waited to hear how the shift in governmental control of the country would impact the future direction of these spheres of Holocaust memory. Their concern was understandable and was reinforced by the fact that in 2008 *The Guardian* had reported that the then leader of the Conservative party David Cameron referred to day trips to Auschwitz as among some of the many ‘gimmicks’ funded by the sitting Labour government. The inference that this popular program was simply a “short term gimmick” generated a swift popular, and political, backlash that was played out across the pages of the national press.⁹²

Contrary to these concerns, however, the new government not only pledged their support for the Lessons from Auschwitz program but also expressed its determination to augment the place of the Holocaust within British consciousness. Reflecting this shift was the announcement of an Envoy for Post Holocaust Issues in June 2010. The statements accompanying the announcement of this role, and the sentiments they expressed, were revealing about the way in which Britain was choosing to situate itself in regards to the wider European context of Holocaust memorialization. Following his appointment, the new

⁹¹ David Lidington, “HOC Armenian Genocide,” Col. 1265.

⁹² Nicholas Watt, “Cameron under fire for Holocaust ‘gimmick’ remark,” *The Guardian*, February 23, 2008; Helene Mullholland and Deborah Summers, “Cameron Branded ‘Sick and Ignorant’ in Auschwitz Row,” *The Guardian*, February 22, 2008; Andrew Porter, “David Cameron under fire over Auschwitz gaffe,” *The Telegraph*, February 22, 2008.

Envoy Sir Andrew Burns claimed that “the UK already plays a leading and active role in promoting Holocaust education, remembrance and research, in tackling and resolving outstanding issues and claims and in raising public awareness of the continuing relevance of the lessons and legacy of that terrible moment in European history.”⁹³ The explicit reference to the UK as being a leading figure in the sphere of Holocaust education and remembrance was reiterated by Burns’ successor, Sir Eric Pickles, who used his opening statement as an opportunity to praise the fact that “the UK is a leader internationally in ensuring the Holocaust is properly commemorated and the lessons learnt” and to pledge his commitment “to ensuring we retain and build on this position over the years to come.”⁹⁴

Whilst acknowledging that “the UK has taken an increasingly active approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust,” the new Foreign Secretary William Hague went on to suggest that although “this has worked well to date [...] I am concerned that the UK is not taking the leading role it should in these international discussions or best representing the interests of the many Holocaust victims and their families in the UK affected by these issues.”⁹⁵ The expression of such sentiments not only implies the need for Britain to show greater initiative in international discussions about the Holocaust but also articulates idea that the UK can, and *should*, be taking a leading role within the international community. The sense of British exceptionalism encountered within historical conceptualizations of the Second World War appears to be situated alongside an on-going quest and “deep craving” for leadership which, Anne Deighton suggests, is “one facet of what has remained of Britain’s post-imperial political culture.”⁹⁶

The danger of connecting the Holocaust with overt expressions of British identity is that it allows the perpetuation, and indeed evolution of, a post-imperial identity based on positive notions of liberal democracy and tolerance

⁹³ Andrew Burns cited in FCO Press Release, “UK appoints post-Holocaust Issues Envoy,” June 9, 2010.

⁹⁴ Eric Pickles cited in FCO Press Release, “Sir Eric Pickles announced as UK Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues,” September 10, 2015.

⁹⁵ William Hague, “Statement to the House of Commons on appointment of post-Holocaust issues envoy,” June 9, 2010.

⁹⁶ Anne Deighton, “The Past in the Present: British Imperial Memories and the European Question,” in *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 100-120; 100.

that ignores or omits critical evaluation of Britain's own past actions of atrocity and state crimes whilst also helping to defend limited responses to humanitarian crises in the current time. It is certainly the case, as Bloxham and Kushner have observed, that in "Britain racism is often seen as someone else's problem - particularly the Germans since the Second World War - yet it does not take a fascist regime for the proliferation and implementation of racism to take place."⁹⁷ Through the repetition of such sentiments a considered and critical self-reflection is discouraged whilst also distancing Britain from Europe by drawing on past 'achievements' such as not being invaded during World War Two (aside from the Channel Islands) and through acts such as the Kindertransport or the Winton Train. As Mark Levene observed in 2006, "the underlying spuriousness, indeed mendacity of Britain's recent foreign policy record destroys any moral basis upon which it can make claim, let alone offer leadership on the basis of any Holocaust association."⁹⁸ Considering the conflicts which Britain has participated in in the years since this article was published, and the apathetic if not outright callous treatment of refugees fleeing conflict in Syria in 2015 and 2016, one is entitled to question the truthfulness of British claims to moral distinction and the extent to which Holocaust 'lessons' can really be said to be learnt.

The years after 2010 were, however, defined by the establishment of initiatives similar to that of the Envoy designed to expand, develop and reinforce the British government's commitment to, and leadership in, Holocaust education and commemoration. Following a plea from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, the UK pledged 2.1 million pounds of financial assistance to enable restorative work to take place at the site to ensure the preservation of the camps as a place of commemoration, education and remembrance.⁹⁹ Such financial commitment was also to enter the domestic landscape with the Prime Minister committing an additional £300,000 worth of funding for the Lessons from Auschwitz project in 2013. The Holocaust Educational Trust were not only to feature as recipients of financial support but were also to feature significantly in this drive by returning more visibly to their earlier lobbyist roots by encouraging further public commemoration of the Holocaust, the survivors and the liberators. In 2009,

⁹⁷ Donald Bloxham and Tony Kushner, "Exhibiting Racism: Cultural Imperialism, Genocide and Representation," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 2/3, (1998): 349-358; 352.

⁹⁸ Levene, "Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day," 27.

⁹⁹ Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum Report 2008, (Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu, Państwowe Muzeum, 2009).

MPs drafted Early Day Motion 1175 calling for “Recognition for British Heroes of the Holocaust” in honor of those who had performed acts of rescue. Whilst a number of those had been named as Righteous among the Nations in Israel, the campaign highlighted the fact that none of those who had initiated acts of rescue had been honored within Britain itself. Despite this omission, as the *Jewish Chronicle* reported, “such individuals embody all that is best about Britain - and deserve formal recognition, not only to acknowledge their deeds but to serve as an example to future generations about the importance of making a stand against racism, discrimination and other forms of injustice.”¹⁰⁰ The creation of this award was the result of many months of forceful campaigning by the Trust for institutional recognition of their actions.

In a similar vein it was announced in 2015 that Holocaust survivors across the United Kingdom were to receive commemorative medals “to mark 70 years since the end of the Holocaust.”¹⁰¹ The medals, another initiative of the Holocaust Educational Trust, featured the inscription ‘Liberation 1945’ emerging through barbed wire on one side and on the other an inscription to commemorate the British forces who liberated the camp of Bergen-Belsen and “a stylized eternal flame” that, it was claimed, “has come to memorialize the Holocaust victims.”¹⁰² The medals were awarded to Holocaust survivors at a special ceremony presided over by the Chancellor of the Exchequer who stated that, “here we stand in Downing Street in tribute to fight against Nazism. In tribute to the millions who died. In tribute to the brave survivors. In tribute to the liberators.”¹⁰³ Echoing the Heroes of the Holocaust awards the emphasis on Britain as liberators and as defenders of freedom and liberty dominated the official rhetoric of the day as Holocaust survivors were, once again, absorbed into a domesticated narrative of national distinctiveness and superiority.

The Home Secretary’s desire for Britain to take a more “active approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust” during this period was also achieved

¹⁰⁰ Robyn Rosen, “Gordon Brown Honours British Holocaust Heroes,” *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 8, 2010; Retrieved on March 28, 2016, www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/29169/gordon-brown-honours-british-holocaust-heroes.

¹⁰¹ HM Treasury and Department for Communities and Local Government Press Release, “Commemorative medal marks 70 years since the end of the Holocaust,” January 14, 2015.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ George Osborne, “Speech Delivered at Reception for Holocaust Educational Trust,” January 14, 2015.

within the educational system.¹⁰⁴ In February 2013 the Department for Education published its draft proposals for the reform of the National Curriculum. The suggested reforms for Key Stage 3 history (when pupils are between 11 and 14 years of age) proposed that pupils should be taught about the “Nazi atrocities in occupied Europe and the unique evil of the Holocaust.”¹⁰⁵ The deliberate framing of the Holocaust as an event of “unique evil” caused astonishment amongst historians, educationists and teachers, many of whom raised concerns about how the Holocaust was being utilized politically and positioned historically.¹⁰⁶ Tony Kushner interpreted the proposals as a demonstration of the extent to which “crude ethical readings of the Holocaust have now permeated the sphere of pedagogy in Britain.”¹⁰⁷ Others raised concerns that to situate the ‘unique evil of the Holocaust’ alongside a new history curriculum aimed to inspire a positive affirmation of British history and identity would not only ignore other genocides, but also encourage the view that, as one history teacher observed, the Holocaust took place “outside of history as something which was perpetrated by aliens from the planet evil who were defeated by the forces of good.”¹⁰⁸

Although this line was removed after the initial consultation, the original decision to define the Holocaust as being an event of ‘unique evil’ is revealing about the way in which the Holocaust has been absorbed into sections of British society.¹⁰⁹ Reference to genocide had been made in 2008 in a previous revision of the curriculum, explaining teachers that students should explore the “changing nature of conflict and cooperation between countries and peoples” including

¹⁰⁴ William Hague cited in FCO Press Release, “Foreign Secretary urges active approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust,” January 27, 2011.

¹⁰⁵ The Department for Education, *The National Curriculum in England: Framework Document for Consultation*, February, 2013, 171.

¹⁰⁶ Pearce, *Historical Consciousness in Contemporary Britain*, 223-225; “History Curriculum Newsprint & BBC Debates, (2013), <http://historyworks.tv/...updates/> [accessed April 26, 2016].

¹⁰⁷ Tony Kushner, “Loose Connections? Britain and the Final Solution,” Sharples and Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust*, 51-70; 52.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Morgan, “New History Curriculum Draft Proposal - Have your Say!,” *The Historical Association*, <http://www.history.org.uk/forum/...160>, [accessed December 17, 2015]. On the backlash to Gove’s policy, see ‘Michael Gove Redrafts New History Curriculum after Outcry,’ *The Guardian*, June 21, 2013; ‘Gove’s ‘Gentle Tweak’ to History Curriculum,’ *Times Educational Supplement*, July, 10, 2013; ‘A History Teacher’s Appraisal of Michael Gove’s Approach to the Teaching of History,’ *Independent*, January 8, 2014; Richard J Evans, “Michael Gove’s history curriculum is a pub quiz not an education,” *New Statesman*, March 21, 2013.

¹⁰⁹ The Department for Education, *The National Curriculum in England: Framework Document*, July, 2013, 210.

“the Holocaust and other genocides.”¹¹⁰ Although the Holocaust was the only genocide explicitly named, the introduction of ‘other genocides’ into the curriculum offered the opportunity for greater contextualization of the Holocaust within this field. In contrast, the term ‘genocide’ was notable by its absence in the 2013 revisions.

In 2011 the newly appointed Envoy for Post Holocaust Issues had claimed that “Britain is a very cosmopolitan society... and so the events that have taken place in other countries that are of comparable dreadfulness, in Cambodia or in Rwanda or in Bosnia, Sudan are issues which the British public are interested in and care about.”¹¹¹

Whilst these sentiments are not wholly without foundation they do perhaps invest the British population with greater awareness and understanding about these genocides than might be the case in reality. Research conducted by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in 2014 found that “half the UK population cannot name a genocide that has taken place since the Holocaust despite millions being murdered as a result of persecution in Cambodia, Rwanda Bosnia and Darfur.”¹¹² The figures shocked many and the *Daily Telegraph* responded by expressing their barely concealed outrage at the sheer “scale of ignorance of major world events among young people” after reporting that for those aged 16-24, only eight out of ten were able to name an act of genocide to have taken place since World War Two.¹¹³ The exclusive emphasis on the Holocaust and the concurrent removal of genocide from the National Curriculum, however, might not necessarily be the best way to counter this lack of awareness.

As part of the government’s renewed drive towards a more rigorous domestic engagement with the Holocaust, a Parliamentary Inquiry into Holocaust education was launched in 2015. The Education Committee responsible for overseeing the Inquiry requested written submissions from interested parties to investigate a range of issues relating to the scope and quality of Holocaust education in Britain. The Committee asked for submissions specifically

¹¹⁰ Department for Children, Schools and Families and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *The National Curriculum Statutory Requirements for Key Stages 3 and 4*, (2007), 116.

¹¹¹ Andrew Burns, “Podcast for the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.”

¹¹² Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, *HMDT survey: Half of UK population unable to name a post-Holocaust genocide*, January 24, 2014, <http://hmd.org.uk/news/hmdt-survey-half-uk-population-unable-name-post-holocaust-genocide>, [accessed on April 24, 2016].

¹¹³ John Bingham, “Towie Generation have never heard of Rwandan Genocide,” *Daily Telegraph*, January 24, 2014.

addressing ‘the focus on the Holocaust in the national curriculum and the absence of teaching of other genocides’ for, as they were later to report, “the teaching of other genocides and atrocities is an important aspect of young people’s understanding of the modern world.”¹¹⁴ Ironically the launch of an inquiry into the absence of genocide in education was carried out by the very same government that had removed reference to genocide from the curriculum. Yet it is not simply a matter of the Holocaust relegating the memory of other genocides to the periphery of public consciousness. The way in which the Holocaust has been represented in Britain has exerted a significant influence on public engagement with other genocides. For example the popularity of initiatives like the Lessons from Auschwitz program, and the subsequent political and financial value attached to them, has certainly inspired the creation of other organizations, such as Remembering Srebrenica to campaign for the institutionalization of a Srebrenica Memorial Day, which was achieved in 2013. If not fueling public engagement with the genocides themselves the success of the way in which organizations committed to Holocaust memory have structured themselves, and framed the history that they want to remember, has certainly inspired those invested in the promotion of the importance of remembering other acts of atrocity and genocide.

The renewed frenzy towards Holocaust remembrance and education culminated in the establishment of a cross party Holocaust Commission in 2014. The Commission, the Prime Minister declared, had to carry out the “sacred task” of ensuring that the country “has a permanent and fitting memorial to the Holocaust and educational resources for future generations.”¹¹⁵ The memorial will be designed to “serve as a focal point for the national commemoration of the Holocaust and stand as a permanent affirmation of the values of British society” and will be accompanied by the creation of a Learning Centre overseen by the newly established UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation (UKHMF) dedicated to the advance of Holocaust learning.¹¹⁶ As the language employed here shows, despite the reservations expressed following this announcement, the Holocaust is

¹¹⁴ “Government response to the House of Commons Education Committee on Holocaust Education,” 2nd Report of Session, April 21, 2016, 4.

¹¹⁵ David Cameron, “Holocaust Commission Speech,” delivered January 27, 2014; David Cameron as cited in Prime Minister’s Office Press Release, “Prime Minister Launches Holocaust Commission, January 27, 2014, Retrieved April 24, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-launches-holocaust-commission>.

¹¹⁶ United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation, *National Memorial and Learning Centre: Search for a Central London Site*, September, 2015, 5.

still being used as a means by which to reinforce interpretations of British identity through the evocation of ‘British’ values.¹¹⁷ The location of the new memorial, directly alongside the Houses of Parliament also appears as an attempt to physically demonstrate the centrality of the Holocaust in the British imagination and the importance to remembering the event to the British people. Sharon Macdonald has argued that the shift from a focus on ‘the war’ to an emphasis on ‘the Holocaust’ “allows for a less nation- and more European-based form of commemoration. The fact that Holocaust Memorial Day has been achieved as part of a European initiative, to coincide with commemoration in other European countries, is expressive of European cooperation.”¹¹⁸ This claim is partially true; at the same time, however, the way in which the Holocaust has been remembered and taught does not simply imply a growing proximity to Europe in British imagination. The Holocaust then, particularly when viewed through the lens of heroism, liberation and moral tenacity, subscribes to, and reinforces, wider notions of Britain being somehow distinct from Europe in terms of identity whilst paradoxically positioning itself as a European leader in Holocaust memory. Even those committed to the future of Britain in Europe and the consolidation of a broader European identity evoke the imagery of exceptionalism through allusion to an identity based on victory in the war. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was certainly an advocate for greater European integration and identity, described Britain as “the victor in WWII, the main ally of the United States, a proud and independent-minded island race (though with much European blood flowing in our veins)...” during a speech delivered in Warsaw.¹¹⁹ The lack of critical engagement inherent in the narrative encountered within Britain, however, fails to encourage deeper understandings of the politics of British, European and international identity, and resists confrontation with Britain’s imperial past.

Conclusion

Discussion about the Holocaust and its place in British society has grown since the first Holocaust Memorial Day took place. This growth is marked by some defining features: the increasingly symbiotic relationship between Holocaust

¹¹⁷ “Debate: Should More be Done to Remember the Holocaust in Britain?” *History Extra*, January 27, 2016.

¹¹⁸ Macdonald, “Commemorating the Holocaust,” 66.

¹¹⁹ Tony Blair, “Prime Minister’s speech to the Polish Stock Exchange,” October 6, 2000, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/...3384>, [accessed on April 16, 2016].

education and commemoration, the decontextualized narrative projected by these institutionalized representations, and the way in which they have come to intersect with existing interpretations of British identity. As a result, British Holocaust commemoration and education has helped to solidify a sense of exceptionalism and disconnection from Europe whilst, paradoxically, centralizing a European event into British domestic imagination.

The terms of reference for the recently established Holocaust Commission state that “The Holocaust is unique in man’s inhumanity to man and it stands alone as the darkest hour of human history.”¹²⁰ As Tom Lawson rightly observes, “this is an absurd statement, and it immediately ignores or consigns to lesser importance all other incidents of genocide, some of which might be more challenging and more difficult to deal with in Britain.”¹²¹ Yet despite the absurdity of the statement the sentiment that “there is nothing equivalent to the Holocaust” has gained powerful political, cultural and societal value drawing as it does on the inherent connection between the Holocaust and the British public’s perception of their own national identity framed through the lens of World War Two as the heroic liberators of Europe.¹²² Such interpretations of identity allow the British public and the government to assume a position of leadership built on supposed British values whilst avoiding engagement with more sensitive issues like colonial genocides.

Of course this narrative has not gone unchallenged. Academic criticism of the direction of mainstream Holocaust consciousness has accompanied Holocaust Memorial Day consistently since its establishment. Public discussion about the omission of Armenia from the commemorative day accompanied the first event in 2001, and has perhaps grown in intensity since then. Survivors themselves have also become increasingly willing to voice some of the more negative experiences they encountered and endured within Britain, even when these stories run counter to the narrative of the country as welcoming and tolerant. It is clear that inherent tensions continue to haunt the relationship between remembering the Holocaust and navigating identity in 21st century Britain.

These tensions and conflicts can, in part, be attributed to the way in which the Holocaust has been used, framed and shaped by successive governments in order to promote particular domestic and international agendas and to respond to continually changing world affairs. Attending the 25th anniversary of the

¹²⁰ HM Government, *The Prime Ministers Holocaust Commission: Consultation Terms of Reference*, January 27, 2014.

¹²¹ Tom Lawson, “Should More be Done to Remember the Holocaust in Britain?”

¹²² David Cameron, “Prime Minister’s Speech: 25th Anniversary of the Holocaust Educational Trust,” September 16, 2013.

Holocaust Educational Trust, David Cameron stated that “the Holocaust stands apart as a unique moment. It is the darkest hour of human history. And we must ensure that it is always remembered in that way.”¹²³ Herein lies the heart of the contradictions and tensions inherent in the way in which the Holocaust is encountered within British education and commemoration. For as long as the British government, society and culture continue to perpetuate such sentiments that indirectly infer a hierarchy of relevance it unfortunately remains likely that remembering the Holocaust will, ultimately, not result in remembering genocide to any significant degree.

Furthermore, this lack of honest critical engagement affects public discourse about whether or not to accept refugees into the country. By defeating the Nazis in the Second World War Britain assumes the role of moral leader of Europe whilst seemingly being exempt from further interrogation about their present-day actions including the isolationist policy they are following regarding the treatment of refugees. In 2013 Richard Evans observed:

If we want to help young people to develop a sense of citizenship, they have to be able and willing to think for themselves. The study of history does this. It recognises that children are not empty vessels to be filled with patriotic myths. History isn't a myth-making discipline, it's a myth-busting discipline, and it needs to be taught as such in our schools.¹²⁴

Despite the aspirations of Evans it is apparent that Holocaust education, being as it is inextricably linked to commemoration and remembrance, is contributing to a patriotic British narrative whilst also perpetuating a somewhat mythical and redemptive interpretation of the Holocaust, infused with politically charged representations of the past, as opposed to one rooted within historical understanding. In such context the emotive and commemorative emphasis in the approach to Holocaust teaching runs the risk of unwittingly stifling contemporary debate about sensitive political and historical issues.

The Prime Minister's reference to “a bunch of migrants” on 27 January 2016 mere moments after he proclaimed that a statue to commemorate the Holocaust would be established in Parliament square to stand “as a permanent statement of our values as a nation,” and the Government's rejection of providing refuge to 3000 children who had fled the brutal conflict in Syria a few months later, show that decontextualized and self-congratulatory Holocaust memory can co-exist with much less pleasant attitudes in the present, *pace* its supposed ‘lessons.’

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Richard Evans, “Myth-busting,” *The Guardian*, July 13, 2013.

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**‘Il clandestino è l’ebreo di oggi’:
Imprints of the Shoah on Migration to Italy**

by Derek Duncan

Abstract

Drawing on Rey Chow’s notion of entanglement and Michael Rothberg’s work on multidirectional memory, I look at the ways in which certain visual, lexical, and historical representations and tropes operate to create points of connection between the Shoah and contemporary migration to Italy across the Mediterranean. I argue that the deployment of these images is not intended to indicate similarities, or indeed, dissimilarities, between historical events. The network of association which is produced offers a space in which to critically and creatively interrogate past and present, and their possible interconnections. I then analyze in detail the work of novelist, Igiaba Scego, and film-maker, Dagmawi Yimer, to uncover an entanglement bringing together cultural memories of the Shoah, and silenced histories of Italian colonialism to indict political and cultural practices informing responses to death by drowning in the Mediterranean.

Introduction

The entanglements of language

Cultural Memory?

Igiaba Scego: entanglements of place

Dagmawi Yimer: audio-visual entanglements

Ethical entanglements

Introduction

Moni Ovadia, the Italian Jewish musician and actor and a prominent public voice against the resurgence of racism in contemporary Italy, commented that ‘the

clandestine migrant is today's Jew' [*'il clandestino è l'ebreo di oggi'*] in a short postface to Marco Rovelli's *Lager italiani*¹.

Rovelli's book is about the experiences of migrants held in Italy's detention centers, and his provocative choice of title makes an immediate link between these centers and Nazi concentration camps. The testimonies contained in Rovelli's book convince him of the validity of the parallel even as he makes clear, as does Rovelli himself, that life in Italy's detention centers is not on any material level like that in the Lager. There is little gain in making comparisons between these experiences in terms of number, scale, or intentionality. Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben, Ovadia finds a truer parallel in the mechanisms which strip the undocumented migrant of any legal status in ways reminiscent of the logic of the Lager. The migrant becomes "subhuman." Rovelli's achievement is to have taken the reader beyond possible feelings of "indifference" to the human ruination perpetrated by the detention camps, and towards a time when the "shame" of the camps will be properly exposed. The two terms I have highlighted here recall the work of Primo Levi who has provided an indispensable lexis with which to describe and respond to the Shoah. It is difficult for someone familiar with Levi's writing not to register their presence.² So while direct historical equivalence is explicitly denied, this denial is partially disavowed by what I will call the historically textured memory of language. In the course of what follows, I will attempt to track and explicate what I see as a very strong "attraction" between the Shoah and current migration to Europe in terms of how the latter is represented and conceptualized. This attraction is particularly powerful in discourses which aim to contest the dehumanization of the migrant.

I want to avoid interpreting this attraction as a kind of improper equivalence, using instead Rey Chow's notion of "entanglement" as my preferred conceptual tool. For Chow, an "entanglement" does not rely on parallels of similarity, but is more "a figure for meetings that are not necessarily defined by proximity or

¹ Moni Ovadia, "Il nazismo che è in noi," in Marco Rovelli, *Lager italiani* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2006), 281-83. Two years later, another book was published with the same title referring however to Italian camps for Yugoslav prisoners: Alessandra Kersevan, *Lager italiani. Pulizia etnica e campi di concentramento fascisti per civili jugoslavi 1941-1943* (Rome: Nutrimenti, 2008). The imprecision is resonant of what I will discuss here. (All translations from Italian are my own. I have retained the original Italian in a few cases to highlight a particular word or expression the recurrence of which is in itself significant).

² Rovelli's book contains many lexical reiterations of Levi. For a discussion of the presence of Levi in postcolonial studies more broadly, see Derek Duncan, "The Postcolonial Afterlife of Primo Levi," in *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*, eds. Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver and Federico Faloppa (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 287-301.

affinity.” She asks: “What kinds of entanglements might be conceivable through partition and partiality rather than conjunction and intersection, and through disparity rather than equivalence?”³ By remaining attentive to the difference inherent in the attraction of the Shoah to contemporary representations of migration, I will attempt to follow what she calls “a certain contour of the entangled” in both visual and textual modes of representation. In both media, I will suggest, it is possible to discern a memory of the Shoah but, at least in the examples which I explore here, the mnemonic imprint does not imply the equivalence or even repetition of human catastrophe; it is more to do with the aesthetics and politics of dehumanization and resistance.

The entanglements of language

Since the late 1980s, migration to Italy has been of significant concern to successive Italian governments. The ways in which this concern has been expressed have remained remarkably consistent. This consistency defies fluctuations in number, legal status, country of origin, mode of arrival, and many other variables.⁴ The Italian press has been widely criticized for generating a climate of hostility around these issues and for the prejudicial language it has adopted. The term “*clandestino*” is one of the words considered particularly problematic. In both adjectival and nominative forms, it was the term most frequently used in the press from the late 1980s onwards to designate people who had migrated to Italy without the requisite documents to enter or stay in the country. Federico Faloppa has noted how its constant association with undocumented migration in the press forced a shift in meaning from “hidden” to “illegal.”⁵ Use of the term persisted even after 2008 when the “Charter of Rome,” a protocol which seeks to promote the use of accurate language in reporting migration as well as a sense of social responsibility towards migrants themselves, was put in place. In 2011, the “Association of the Charter of Rome” was set up to encourage the diffusion of these aims amongst journalists and anyone else communicating publicly on these issues which that

³ Rey Chow, *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 1-2.

⁴ For excellent introductions to the terms of the debate, see Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy: the Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2005); Alessandro Del Lago, *Non-persone: l'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2004).

⁵ Federico Faloppa, “Media and Migration: Some Linguistic Reflections,” in *Destination Italy*, 105-123; 118.

Charter had expressed only in very broad terms. In 2009, what was referred to as “*clandestinità*” or “*immigrazione clandestina*” was made a criminal offence thus ensuring the term’s continued currency.⁶ Ovadia was in fact one of a number of prominent intellectuals who signed a petition against the legislation condemning it as the re-introduction of the fascist “Race Laws” promulgated in 1938.⁷

Writing in 2006, Ovadia’s adoption of the term “clandestine” is significant. Arguably, it represented an act of resignification in a discourse that presented migrants to Italy as a national threat. Indeed, not all uses of the term are equally prejudicial, yet neither are they ever neutral. In November 2003, the Catholic weekly *Famiglia Cristiana* dedicated its main feature to “illegal migration” [*immigrazione clandestina*], prompted by the official funeral in Rome of thirteen people from Somalia who died trying to cross the Mediterranean.⁸ Walter Veltroni, the then Mayor, orchestrated the event which took place in the Piazza del Campidoglio attracting a great deal of public and media attention.⁹ *Famiglia Cristiana* adopted a very sympathetic tone and very firmly placed the blame for the deaths on Europe’s inability or unwillingness to assume proper responsibility for what was taking place. In many respects, the magazine’s perspective was at odds with the general hostility to migration expressed in the Italian media at that time. The magazine’s front-cover shows a close-up of a dejected young African man, eyes downcast wearing some kind of waterproof jacket [Fig. 1]. We are invited to read the man who remains unnamed as a survivor of the journey across the Mediterranean. The image seems resolutely contemporary, but the accompanying text suggests a historical parallel. The phrase “If this is a man” [*Se questo è un uomo*] appears in large white capital letters underneath the less prominent “illegal migration” [*Immigrazione clandestina*]. The direct reference to Primo Levi’s first book contextualizes the image in a particular, albeit inconclusive, way. A short

⁶ Analysing responses to what took place in Rosarno in 2010, where African workers clashed with police and local farmers, Gabriela Jacomella, a former journalist with *Il corriere della sera*, notes the prevalence of the term “clandestine” in all sections of the Italian press in spite of the Italian government’s clear statement that most of the workers involved in the uprising were legally resident in the country. Gabriela Jacomella, “The Silence of Migrants: The Underrepresentation of Migrant Voices in the Italian Mainstream Media,” in *Destination Italy*, 149-163; 161.

⁷ “Appello contro il ritorno delle leggi razziali in Europa,” <http://temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/camilleri-tabucchi-maraini-fo-rame-ovadia-scaparro-amelio-appello-contro-il-ritorno-delle-leggi-razziali-in-europa/> (this and all websites accessed 11 September 2016).

⁸ *Famiglia Cristiana*, November 2, 2003 .

⁹ For a very well-informed and detailed contextualization of the sinking and the funeral in relation to Italian government policy, see David Forgacs, “Coasts, Blockades and the Free Movement of People,” in *Italian Mobilities*, eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Hom (Routledge: New York, 2016), 175-199; 185-186.

editorial piece asking “If these are men, let us welcome them,” stresses the dehumanizing experience of the crossing and Europe’s failure to provide an adequate response. The reference to Levi invokes a sense of the migrants beleaguered, yet abiding, humanity, and the risks of denying that humanity to both him and the reader. A triangular circuit of empathy is set up through which the (Catholic) reader is invited to understand what to make of the migratory experience. The subtitle of the magazine’s main feature, “the testimonies of the Somali survivors,” reinforces a link with Levi’s own literary and ethical, memorializing project and post-Holocaust paradigm of testimony. What is particularly interesting is how text and image enter into a reinforcing rhetorical knot, a complex metonymic figure of historical transfer.¹⁰



Fig. 1. *Famiglia Cristiana*: the humanitarian gaze
Cover of *Famiglia Cristiana*, n. 44, November 2, 2003.

¹⁰ There are other visual histories connecting representations of beleaguered Africans and Holocaust survivors. T.J. Demos suggests that the origins of this history began in Biafra in 1968 when stark images of starving children evoking a very specific representational memory were used to encourage charitable aid: T.J. Demos, *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 99.

The lapidary reference to *If This Is a Man* indicates the diffusion of Primo Levi's cultural presence and the availability of his work to function as a kind of readily intelligible shorthand. This symbolic capital is even more evident with the title of his final work, *The Drowned and the Saved* [*I sommersi e i salvati*], recurrently used to refer to those who drown in the Mediterranean or indeed survive the crossing.¹¹ The collection of essays *Bibbia e Corano a Lampedusa* illustrates Levi's textually marginal but rhetorically potent presence.¹² The text is a multi-voiced commentary on annotated extracts from the Qur'an and the Bible discovered washed up on Lampedusa. Who actually added the annotations to the texts is not known, but the editors of the volume quite reasonably assume that they offer some insight into the experience of the journey itself; indeed the annotations are seen as a kind of indirect testimony.¹³ The book is dedicated "to the migrants, to the memory of those who *drowned* [*sommersi*] in the Mediterranean, to the people of Lampedusa and Linosa" [my emphasis]. In his wide-ranging introductory essay, Francesco Montenegro, Archbishop of Agrigento, makes specific comparisons to the Jewish exodus from Egypt. He makes an extended reference to the *Book of Lamentations* and the imperative to remember, closing his essay by quoting from "Shemà," the poem/epigraph to *If This Is a Man*. Introducing this quotation, however, he expresses some hesitation in referring to those who drowned as "*sommersi*," wary of creating "inappropriate overlaps."¹⁴ Yet he uses this disavowal to talk about the return of "genocide," which inevitably indexes the systematic racial extermination of the Shoah. The parish priest Stefano Nastasi makes an even more explicit parallel in his intervention suggesting that the situation of the "*sommersi*" "lends itself to analogies and affinities with the twentieth century tragedy of Auschwitz."¹⁵ He also refers to Pope Francis's visit to Lampedusa in July 2013 and the homily where he indicts the "globalization of indifference" and particularly the failure to empathize with the dead demanding

¹¹ As just one example of this, see the comment of Alessandro Triulzi on migrant survivor testimony: the survivors are "in Primo Levi's words, either 'drowned' or 'saved.'" Triulzi's shorthand erases the complexity of Levi's formulation. Alessandro Triulzi, "Hidden Faces, Hidden Histories," in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, eds. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 103-113; 104.

¹² *Bibbia e Corano a Lampedusa*, eds. Arnaldo Mosca Mondadori, Alfonso Cacciatore and Alessandro Triulzi (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 2014).

¹³ The final section of the volume comprises a series of testimonies of a more direct sort ranging from transcriptions of oral accounts and diaries to academic reflections on practices of memorialization.

¹⁴ Francesco Montenegro, "Una riflessione," in *Bibbia e Corano*, 19-36; 36.

¹⁵ Stefano Nastasi, "Testimonianza," in *Bibbia e Corano*, 37-56; 48.

that they be treated “as if they were white.”¹⁶ The Pope’s reference to the racial politics of the Mediterranean is unusually explicit.¹⁷ Yahya Pallavicini, Iman of the Al-Wahid Mosque in Milan brings the history of Italy’s Jewish community and the history of Nazi/Fascist persecution into this entangled constellation more directly: “our Jewish brothers to whom we offered our support on Wednesday October 16 at the Synagogue in Rome on the anniversary of the rounding up [*rastrellamento*] of Jews in Rome.”¹⁸ Commenting on the annotated sections of the Qur’an recovered from the sea, he remarks on the lexical inseparability of the terms witness/martyr in Arabic.¹⁹

What is significant here is not the deployment of each term or reference in isolation, but rather the combined result of their proximity.²⁰ Their articulation is all the more powerful as almost every contributor to the collection makes explicit reference to the events of 3 October 2013 when more than 360 people, mostly Eritrean, drowned off the coast of Lampedusa after a boat they were travelling on from Libya, caught fire and capsized. The scale of the disaster intensified interest across the political and social spectrum, and significantly, led to a greater preoccupation with issues of representation and commemoration. The island of Lampedusa is formally part of the region of Sicily, although it is closer to Africa, only 70 miles off the coast of Tunisia.²¹ While international attention moved

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

¹⁷ See Miguel Mellino, *Cittadinanze postcoloniali: Appartenenza, razza e razzismo in Europa e in Italia* (Rome: Carocci, 2013), 117. For an account of the Pope’s visit and details of the Mass he celebrated, see R. Tina Catania, “Making Immigrants Visible in Lampedusa: Pope Francis, Migration, and the State,” *Italian Studies: Cultural Studies*, 70/4 (2015): 465-486.

¹⁸ Yahya Pallavicini, “Preghiera islamica per i defunti,” in *Bibbia e Corano*, 103-108; 106-107.

¹⁹ Robert Gordon makes the similar point about the origins and proximity of the terms in relation to Christian theology: *Primo Levi’s Ordinary Virtues: From Testimony to Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-4.

²⁰ My work here is heavily indebted to Robert Gordon’s, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), and particularly the chapter “Shared Knowledge,” 109-138, where he charts the ways in which the Holocaust as a point of cultural reference spread in various directions. His comments on how the diffusion of certain images ranging from emaciated bodies to the gate at Auschwitz came to stand as a “shorthand for the entire appalling history, its messages and meanings” (110) have strong parallels with contemporary visual representations of migration. His broader point that so many of the standard ways of representing the Holocaust, both visual and linguistic, became commonplace “as both literal markers of an historical event and flexible and highly recognizable analogies or metaphors” (136) underlies the easy cultural availability of the images and tropes I identify here. Levi’s own name may arguably function as a kind of cultural trope or shorthand. See, for instance, note 34 below.

²¹ There is now a very substantial bibliography on Lampedusa. See, for example, Joseph Pugliese, “Crisis Heterotopias and Border Zones of the Dead,” *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 23/5 (2009): 663-79; Paolo Cuttitta, *Lo spettacolo del confine: Lampedusa tra produzione*

during 2015 to focus primarily on migration from Syria through Turkey and Greece, Lampedusa had previously been seen as the main point of entry into Europe for migrants setting out from the North African coast.²² The history of this migration route is very complex, and numbers have fluctuated according to international circumstance and pressure. The countries of origin of those crossing the Mediterranean have varied in the twenty-five or so years since migration has become a palpably mass experience. While many boats have taken their passengers directly to Lampedusa, more have been directed there by coastal patrols. A migrant holding center based on the island has changed in status and function over the years according to the number of people disembarking on the island. Whoever survives the crossing is usually transported quickly to Sicily or the mainland; typically, there is little contact between the islanders and the migrants. With a permanent population of a little more than 6,000, Lampedusa has had to accommodate a huge array of governmental and non-governmental agencies whose presence on the island has created tensions over scarce resources. Concern for those who survive the crossing has always been mixed with a sense of grief for the dead and missing. The artist, Mimmo Paladino, erected the five meter high “Porta a Lampedusa” in 2008 to remember those who had lost their lives.²³ The association of the island with the catastrophe of migration across the Mediterranean has transnational significance. Groups such as “Lampedusa in Hamburg” use the island’s name to mobilize politically around migration issues.²⁴ The sinking of 3 October had such potency that the date has been adopted as a day on which to commemorate all those who have died crossing the Mediterranean.²⁵

e messa in scena della frontiera (Milan: Mimesis, 2012); “Special Thematic Section: The Mediterranean Migration Frontier,” *ACME: An international e-journal for critical geographies*, 13/2 (2014), <http://ojs.unbc.ca/index.php/acme/issue/view/77>; Nick Dines, Nicola Montagna, and Vincenzo Ruggiero, “Thinking Lampedusa: Border Construction, the Spectacle of Bare Life and the Productivity of Migrants,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38/3 (2014): 430-45; “Special issue: Reimagining Europe’s Borderlands: the social and cultural impact of undocumented migrants on Lampedusa,” *Italian Studies: Cultural Studies*, 70.4 (2015). This body of work reflects a significant diversity of emphasis, in part due to disciplinary difference, but also due to the shifting geopolitical forces which envelop the island.

²² The number of migrants landing in Lampedusa has again increased in the wake of the agreement of March 2016 restricting migration from Turkey to the EU.

²³ For details of the project see <http://www.amaniforafrica.it/cosa-facciamo/la-porta-di-lampedusa>.

²⁴ See <http://lampedusa-hamburg.info>. I am indebted to Jacopo Colombini for my understanding of “Lampedusa” as a transnational signifier.

²⁵ In terms of sheer numbers, the shipwrecks of April 2015 exceeded those of 3 October 2013, but the symbolic capital of that date has made it a recurring and stable point in the discursive constellation I refer to. The Missing Migrants Project maintains on-going statistical information

Cultural Memory?

Before taking my investigation any further, some thought needs to be given to the term “memory” itself, for it is not clear to me that this term conveys an appropriate sense of the traces and echoes of the Shoah I identify. “Memory” as a category of cultural reference, let alone of critical analysis, is notoriously broad. Astrid Erll’s preliminary definition as “an umbrella term for all those processes of a biological, medial, or social nature which relate past and present (and future) in sociocultural contexts” gives an indication of memory’s reach not just with respect to its complex temporality, but also to the diverse locations of its production, communication, and consumption.²⁶ Contemporary understandings of memory extend far beyond the actual capacity of witnesses of a particular event to recall, memorialize, or commemorate it either individually or as a collective.²⁷ Digital modes of communication have intensified debates around questions of memory and historical representation. The availability of these representations does not necessarily ensure their preservation nor guarantee their veracity even beyond the usual vagaries of subjective recall. Liberal distribution of images and texts complicates questions about the possession of memory, and also about who might legitimately claim to be affected by the pressures of the past. The processes of subjective identification may lay claim to, and in turn be moulded by, events which have not been experienced directly.

I referred briefly in my introduction to “the historically textured memory of language” which I see as something akin to what Michael Rothberg has called, in reference to the work of Aimé Césaire, a “multidirectional rhetorical constellation,” a configuration of meaning which invites quite separate historical events to work to illuminate each other without ever falling prey to redundancies of comparison or precedence.²⁸ Rothberg’s influential concept of

on lives lost in the process of migration: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int>.

²⁶ Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 7. Erll’s work is particularly relevant for this article given her emphasis on “the increasingly globalizing pressures and constellations of cultural memory” (27).

²⁷ The bibliography in this area is substantial. See for instance Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); James Young, *At Memory’s Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of*

“multidirectional memory” was developed through a series of close analyses of memories of French colonialism and the Holocaust as he sought to move beyond the competitive logic which often besets memory work and sidestep sterile and antagonistic debates on history versus memory. He aspired instead to “an ethical vision based on commitment to uncovering historical relatedness and working through the partial overlaps and conflicting claims that constitute the archives of memory and the terrain of politics.”²⁹ In discussing the evocation of the Shoah as a point of reference for representations of contemporary migration to Italy, I hope to retain a sense of Rothberg’s ethical ambition. I also want to prioritize three aspects of his analysis which seem particularly helpful:

1. His adoption of Walter Benjamin’s notion of “constellation” which offers “an image of encounter in which different temporalities collide and in which movement and stasis are held in tension.”
2. His insistence that memory operates beyond the borders of the nation to generate what he calls a “transnational encounter.”
3. An abiding interest in the narrative form of multidirectional memory: “what narrative forms correspond to and express the work of intercultural remembrance and what the effects of those narrative forms are.”³⁰

Constellations of multidirectional memory do not produce either synthesis or resolution; they do not stick to conventional spatial and temporal boundaries and their expression may also take on unexpected shapes. Rothberg concludes his book on a note of undecidable complication: “understanding political conflict entails understanding the interlacing of memories in the force field of public space. The only way forward is through their entanglement.”³¹ Like Chow, Rothberg does not aim to “disentangle” the intersections of different cultural memories but rather to work “through” them, investigating their “partial overlaps,” or to pick up on the echo of another expression, their “inappropriate overlaps.”

Before exploring in some depth two extended representational entanglements, I set out some “partial overlaps” or, what Chow has called “scenes of entanglement”

Decolonization, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 77. For an interesting take on the potential conflict and competition of other traumatic pasts in relation to the Holocaust, see Sissy Helff, “Memories of Migration: Tracing the Past Through Movement in Film,” *African and Black Diaspora*, 8/1 (2015): 1-14.

²⁹ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44; 133; 137.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 313.

where the Shoah and migration touch. Their detail maps the contours of its wider cultural discourse.

At the Berlin Film Festival in 2016, the Golden Bear for Best Film was won by Gianfranco Rosi's documentary *Fuocoammare* (*Fire at Sea*). The film was shot on Lampedusa and shows the separate lives of migrants and islanders sharing the same space. In the run-up to the film's screening in Berlin, Rosi's parallel between the current refugee crisis and the Holocaust was very widely quoted in the press. In an interview given to the Italian daily *La Repubblica*, he is more specific in his analogy as he recalls boarding a vessel with a team of coastguards and discovering that those on the boat were dead. Unsure if he should film the scene, the coastguard tells him: "It has to be done. It would be like standing outside a gas chamber during the **Holocaust** and not filming anything because its too disturbing" (emphasis in the original).³² Rosi's work and his commentary on it raise ethical questions about the aesthetics of film and its testimonial function.

The term "Lager" is widely used in Italy to refer to the Shoah.³³ In a piece published in October 2015, the highly-regarded journalist Flore Murard-Yovanvitch deploys the term to talk about conditions in Libyan "concentration camps" where many of those hoping to cross to Italy have been held. In the same article she adopts the near synonyms "extermination" and "genocide" to underline the determining role of racial difference in governmental management of the crossing.³⁴

In December 2013, an inmate in the migrant detention center on Lampedusa managed to film scenes of naked migrants being forcibly showered and disinfected.³⁵ It emerged that those subjected to this treatment included some of

³² Arianna Finos, "Berlino, applausi per "Fuocoammare": 'Raccontiamo l'Olocausto di oggi'," http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/cinema/2016/02/13/news/berlino_applausi_per_fuocoammare_-133340575/.

³³ For a detailed analysis of this and other terms see Robert S.C. Gordon, "From Olocausto to Shoah: Naming Genocide in 21st-century Italy," *Modern Languages Open* (2015), <http://www.modernlanguagesopen.org/index.php/mlo/article/view/75>. Often associated with Levi himself, the term "Lager" had earlier been widely used by activists in ANED. Guri Schwarz very usefully reminded me of this in a private note. The term's ongoing association with Levi underlines the degree to which his name functions as a kind of cultural shorthand for a much more variegated and densely populated field of activity.

³⁴ Flore Murard-Yovanvitch, "I nuovi lager. L'incubo dei migranti nei campi di concentramento libici," <http://www.huffingtonpost.it/flore-murardyovanovitch/...8354772.html>.

³⁵ In much attenuated form, the footage recalls the photographs taken secretly in Auschwitz and discussed in Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Again the point is not to compare two historical instances, but rather to reflect critically on the production, dissemination, and reception

the survivors of the 3 October shipwreck. The footage was broadcast on Raiz, an Italian state television channel. The images were generally seen as reminiscent of concentration camps and the practice loudly condemned by politicians from all sides. Giusi Nicolini, the high profile mayor of Lampedusa was forthright: "It's what they did in the Lager."³⁶

In September 2015, Czech officials used felt-tip pens to inscribe identification numbers on the arms of arriving migrants. Although the aim was to record rather than obliterate their identity,³⁷ the perception that this procedure imitated too closely the tattooing of prisoners by the Nazis led to international outcry and condemnation. Elie Wiesel berated the practice and the growing feeling of intolerance towards migrants but affirmed "This is not the Shoah" reiterating the view that: "The Shoah is not comparable to any other crime in the history of mankind."³⁸ Shaul Bassi, the Jewish Italian postcolonial critic, has commented on a similar incident in Catania where migrants who had been "saved" by a British warship were seen to have identification numbers written on their hands. Like Wiesel, Bassi explicitly expresses his mistrust of facile analogies, but reflects on why certain people "are easily forgettable and reduced to having no identities. Perhaps black bodies are easier to write about than white ones, because we are used to representing them en masse with no identity or name, to seeing them as one suffering body not as individual subjects with a particular identity."³⁹

Two one-day conferences organized by the Italian Senate's Human Rights Committee under the title "A Moral Lesson: The Sin of Indifference. Europe, the Shoah, the disaster in the Mediterranean" in the early summer of 2015 are a further point of reference for Bassi.⁴⁰ The first event was held in Rome in the Palazzo Giustiniani, the seat of the Senate, while the second was held in Milan at Binario

of visual documents and their complex temporalities.

³⁶ "Cie Lampedusa, il video-shock del Tg2 indigna e scuote le coscienze," http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/immigrazione/2013/12/17/news/cie_lampedusa-73848222/; for responses to the footage which is now accessible on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1c48pYG4yU>. The incident is analysed by Dines et al. "Thinking Lampedusa," 435.

³⁷ I would like to thank one of the anonymous readers of this article for reminding me of the different aims of what seems a similar practice. This difference underlines, however, the power of the visual to entangle quite distinct instances.

³⁸ Andrea Tarquini interview with Elie Wiesel, <http://www.repubblica.it/...122109689/>.

³⁹ Valeria Brigida, "Migranti, Catania, gli sbarchi, e i numeri," <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/...1769346/>.

⁴⁰ Gad Lerner, "Il peccato dell'indifferenza. L'Europa, la Shoah, la strage nel Mediterraneo," <http://www.gadlerner.it/2015/09/29/il-peccato-dellindifferenza-leuropa-la-shoah-la-strage-nel-mediterraneo>.

21, the city's memorial to the Shoah, located in the main railway station. In his opening address, the President of the Senate, Pietro Grassi reiterated the idea of the Shoah as a “unique event,” even though the stated aim of the debate was specifically to explore the validity and value of making comparisons between the Shoah and the current situation in the Mediterranean. The conferences were inspired by an article written in 2009 by the journalist Gad Lerner where he gave his conditional approval to a piece in the Catholic daily *L'avvenire* comparing the two historical episodes. Lerner had argued that using the Shoah to provoke the reader to reflect on what was going on today constituted a “good use” of history. Lerner's argument was that the general feeling of “indifference” or willful ignorance which allowed the Shoah to happen might also be detected in attitudes towards people dying in the Mediterranean. This sense of indifference was the focus of Lerner's intervention in 2015. He specifically mentions fascist Race Laws and invokes the term “genocide” to demand a robust response to the deaths occurring off Italy's shores. “Indifferenza” is inscribed in large letters at the entrance to Binario 21.

In January 2015, on Holocaust Memorial Day, the *Istituto centrale per i beni sonori e audiovisivi* (Central Institute for Sound and Audiovisual Collections) hosted a commemorative event in Rome, “Push back and memory: from the Shoah to today.” The event aimed to draw on the historical memory of the Shoah to create and promote an awareness of the inadequacy of responses to the current situation in the Mediterranean. Various groups representing people who had crossed the Mediterranean were involved including the “Truth and Justice Committee for the new Desaparecidos” named after Argentina's “disappeared” politicizing death in the Mediterranean through transnational association.⁴¹ Comparisons between the Shoah and migration are often interwoven with other references. The most frequently invoked parallel is the Middle Passage in which millions of black Africans died in the forced Atlantic crossing. Writing in October 2015, in memory of the sinking two years before, the commentator, Vittorio Vandelli conflates all three: “Migrant's Holocaust, the modern Middle Passage: do we really care?”⁴² He also references the Italian experience of Ellis Island as a means

⁴¹ See: <http://www.icbsa.it/index.php?it/792/respingimenti-e-memoria-dalla-shoah-ad-oggi>.

⁴² Vittorio Vandelli, “Migrants' Holocaust, the modern middle passage: do we really care?,” <http://www.vittorio-vandelli.com/migrants-holocaust/>. As I have noted elsewhere, an entanglement with the Middle Passage has also been made in academic literature. By way of example see Cristina Lombardi Diop, “Ghosts of Memories, Spirits of Ancestors: Slavery, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic,” in *Recharting the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections*, eds. Annalisa Oboe and Anna Scacchi (Routledge: New York, 2008), 162-180.

of rendering the migrants' aspirations and motivations intelligible to the Italian public.

These are only a few examples of the figurative associations drawing the Mediterranean crossing into networks of entanglement for which cultural memories of the Shoah provide an indispensable lexis. In what follows I will read two extended examples of this "rhetorical constellation" examining the work of Igiaba Scego, a contemporary novelist and journalist who writes on the memory of Italian colonialism, and Dagmawi Yimer, a film-maker whose experience of crossing the Mediterranean is strongly imprinted on his work. Their historically informed and politically urgent work is also intimately biographical.

Igiaba Scego: entanglements of place

Igiaba Scego is one of Italy's most prolific and high-profile writers, an active and well-established presence in the press and on social media. Her work interrogates postcolonial Italy and the absence of a robustly conscious and critical memory of the colonial past.⁴³ Her last three books have focussed on Rome, and in different ways are excavations of that colonial past which Scego reveals as always effectively present even when ostensibly invisible.⁴⁴ The first two books combine personal anecdote and historical reflection in different measure while the most recent volume is a work of historical fiction. Yet as I will show, the articulation of this colonial memory has a very particular and convoluted chronology and form across Scego's output; it has in effect its own microhistory of entanglement which alights on a memory of the Shoah after multiple detours which are themselves retrospectively illuminated by it.⁴⁵

The scene of Scego's entanglement is set in *La mia casa è dove sono* (My House Is Where I Am). This extended autobiographical essay is an exploration of Scego's affective attachment to Rome and to Mogadishu, the two cities which form her emotional landscape. She devotes one chapter to the Axum stela which had stood

⁴³ For an excellent introduction to Scego's earlier work see Piera Carroli, "Oltre Babilonia? Postcolonial Female Trajectories towards Nomadic Subjectivity," *Italian Studies*, 65/2 (2010): 204-218.

⁴⁴ Igiaba Scego, *La mia casa è dove sono* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2010); *Roma negata: Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (Rome: Ediesse, 2014); *Adua* (Florence: Giunti, 2015).

⁴⁵ For a complex sense of Rome as the scene of Holocaust entanglement, see Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 86-108.

in Piazza Porta Capena since 1937, booty from Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia two years before. After years of protracted negotiation and logistical difficulties, the stele had been returned to Axum in 2005, and nothing had been placed in the square to fill the gap it left: "There is nothing in that spot today. A void."⁴⁶ Scego goes on to recount her family's own colonial history which she intertwines with the symbolism of that now empty space. Her chapter concludes with the wish that the space might one day be filled: "Every time I pass Porta Capena Square I am afraid of what might be forgotten. In that square there used to be a stele, now there is nothing, It would be great one day to have a monument to the victims of Italian colonialism."⁴⁷ Scego herself begins this work of commemoration as she interweaves the biographies of her grandfather and uncle with that history of colonial violence. She wonders about her grandfather's relationship to colonial Italy and his role as an interpreter close to Rodolfo Graziani, responsible for the forced internment of thousands of nomads in Libya in the early 1920s as well as the use of chemical weapons outlawed by the League of Nations in the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. In her account of the violence of Italy's colonial presence, she adopts a lexis which both anticipates the Shoah, but which invites her reader to infer a pre-history to the Nazi genocide. She uses the term "Lager" to describe the camps where the Italians had incarcerated and slaughtered the Libyan nomads, adding that these same "concentration camps" were set up in Ethiopia in the mid-1930s.⁴⁸ While a historical parallel is not bluntly stated, the "partial overlap" of memories created by a shared lexis invites connections to be made across historical difference.

In *Roma negata: percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (Rome Denied: Postcolonial Paths in the City), Scego more explicitly pursues the traces which Italy's colonial past has left on the urban fabric. The book starts however with another point of entanglement as Scego returns to Piazza Porta Capena. The emptiness left in the square by the removal of the Axum stele had been filled subsequently by a memorial to the events in New York of 11 September 2001. In 2009, two Roman columns were placed in the square to remember those who died. While the words of Gianni Alemanno, the then mayor of Rome, suggested to Scego the wish to commemorate victims of any kind of political violence, for her, the ongoing absence of any kind of monument to those who died in Italy's colonies clearly shows that "not every memory... is treated the same."⁴⁹ As a resonant example of

⁴⁶ Scego, *La mia casa*, 71.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁹ Scego, *Roma negata*, 16.

this, Scego cites the fact that the Italian media remained silent about the historical link between Italy and Eritrea in their reports on the shipwreck of 3 October 2013. There was no acknowledgement that most of these people came from a former Italian colony. The “memorial pact” between Italy and the US, sealed by the columns in the square, has no postcolonial parallel.

3 October 2013 stands at the heart of Scego’s text, yet it is the particular tenor of Italy’s response to this loss of life that motivates her critical reflection on colonial memory which is the book’s true subject.⁵⁰ The scale of lives lost on that day provoked immediate and very public expressions of sympathy and condolence in the media from across the political spectrum. An initial proposal for a state funeral was quickly abandoned and those who died were buried in various cemeteries in Sicily. The survivors, still at that point mainly on Lampedusa, were not invited to take part; neither were they awarded the Italian citizenship conferred on those who perished.⁵¹ Government ministers as well as representatives of Afwerki’s repressive Eritrean government attended the official commemoration ceremony held in Agrigento, boycotted by the city’s mayor as well as by the mayor of Lampedusa. No memorial to the dead has ever been erected which Scego feels “would let Italy reflect and the Eritrean regime come to terms with its cruelty.”⁵² In contrast, Scego recounts an alternative funeral ceremony which took place outside Montecitorio, the Italian parliament. The funeral was part of a public protest against political responses to deaths in the Mediterranean. The crowd comprised of Italian activists and Eritreans from across Europe. Scego describes the two coffins carried in the procession: a large coffin inscribed with the number 369 and a smaller one to remember the children who had died in the crossing. An actress, playing the role of a drowned girl, recites in Tigrinya the suffering of the dead. Scego hears this voice as a call not to be forgotten: “the Eritreans took their funeral back.”⁵³

Taking possession of the management of death reverses the subordinate role afforded to postcolonial subjects in the domain of necro-politics.⁵⁴ Rosi Bradotti

⁵⁰ For a very full and nuanced analysis of the commemorations after October 3 see Gianluca Gatta, “Lampedusa, 3 ottobre 2013. Vita, morte, nazione e politica nella gestione delle migrazioni,” *Studi culturali*, 112 (2014): 323-332.

⁵¹ The affective burden of this exclusion is conveyed in a letter to the Italian people written by one of the survivors denied permission to travel to his brother’s funeral in Agrigento: “Lettera di Zerit, biologo marino: Al popolo italiano,” in *Bibbia e Corano*, 193-196.

⁵² Scego, *Roma negata*, 38.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵⁴ The term “necro-politics” is drawn from the work of Achille Mbembe who extends the idea of the “camp” to produce an analysis of the neocolonial management of demographic movement and

argues that the state's entitlement to manage death as well as life means that the loss of those who do not survive the journey across the Mediterranean is the consequence of a rigorous logic of national defence which depends on the dispensability of certain human lives. Theorizing this "disposable humanity" in terms of Agamben's "*homo sacer*," Braidotti invites her reader to infer the shadow presence of the Shoah in her reminder of the centrality of the camp to modern regimes of state power.⁵⁵ The Holocaust is barely mentioned in her book yet affirmative postcolonial responses to the inhumanity of racial categorizations inform her argument. The proximity of the Shoah and colonialism is evocatively suggested by a photograph given to Scego by the Italian Jewish writer, Giacometta Limentani. The photo, taken in 1937, shows Limentani as a ten-year old standing beside three *ascari*, indigenous soldiers from East Africa serving in the Italian army. The African troops were in Rome on the occasion of the first anniversary of Mussolini's declaration of Empire. Looking at the image, Scego is moved by its unbearable poignancy: "In that picture were four people who very soon would suffer the consequences of those awful race laws."⁵⁶ The text's memory of the past makes necro-politics of contemporary Italy palpable. Recalling the murder of two Senegalese men in Florence by a sympathizer of the racist far-right, Scego relates this to the growth of neofascism across Europe concluding: "the possibility of a holocaust isn't so remote."⁵⁷

The penultimate chapter of her book deals with a recent memorialization of Italy's fascist, colonial, and anti-semitic past. In 2012, the small town of Affile built a memorial to Rodolfo Graziani. Graziani had been nominated Viceroy of Ethiopia after the declaration of empire and the most brutal excesses of the Italian presence in East Africa are attributed to him. The monument, paid for by municipal funding, was controversial, receiving coverage in the international press. Graziani also had his advocates, locally and further afield, clearly demonstrating the unresolved nature of Italian colonial memory.⁵⁸ In a radio interview, Scego

death. His influential essay cited by Braidotti is: "Necropolitics," *Public Culture*, 15/1 (2003): 11-40.

⁵⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 127.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 115. Gordon makes the point that from the late 1980s, there was an increased tendency to see the introduction of the Race Laws in 1938, rather than the Nazi deportations of 1943, as the starting point of the Holocaust in Italy. By anticipating the start date, Italians themselves become more tightly entangled in the narration and network of events: Gordon, *Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 101-102.

⁵⁷ Scego, *Roma negata*, 23.

⁵⁸ An extreme instance of this support is offered by the 'Associazione Culturale Maresciallo d'Italia Rodolfo Graziani,' <http://www.rodolfograziani.it>. The breadth of the organization's ambition and activities need to be studied as an alternative articulation of counter-memory in their own

entangles Graziani in the events of October 1943 in Rome and the rounding up [*rastrellamento*] of the city's Jewish population.⁵⁹ On 7 October, Graziani, at that point Minister of Defence in Mussolini's Republic of Salò, ordered the disbanding of the Carabinieri, Italy's military police, which had become hostile to the regime. Over 2000 were deported to camps in Germany. It is widely believed that his action facilitated the mass deportation.⁶⁰ Acutely attentive to the lexical legacy of the Shoah, Scego had earlier contested the comments of Matteo Salvini, the virulently anti-immigration right-wing politician, who advocated the "*rastrellamento*" of migrants in Milan 2010, in the wake of, what he perceived as, civil disorder.⁶¹ Although Salvini swiftly retracted the term, Scego returns the word inexorably to October 1943 insisting that the memory of the "*rastrellamento*" and of what it then led to, still inhere in the term, and demand to be justly remembered.

In *Adua*, Limentani's photograph is credited in the Acknowledgments as a source of the novel's inspiration, and the unbearably poignant anticipation of what was still an unimagined catastrophe. Scego translates the image into a subplot in the novel. When Zoppe, a Somali translator working in Rome under Fascism, is arrested and is being beaten in prison, he recalls the white Jewish family with whom he had made friends. Davide, Rebecca, and their young daughter Manuela only ever appear in the novel as a kind of memory or fantasy. In particular, he is haunted by Rebecca's growing anxieties about the rising anti-semitism. After he returns to Africa, she appears to him one final time, anxious and unconvinced by her husband's increasingly desperate patriotic claims: "He never stops talking about his father who died at Vittorio Veneto, or his uncle Nathan's gold medal."⁶² There is also a fleeting mention of the proposal to relocate Italy's Jewish population to the Empire.⁶³ At this point, she disappears never to return.

right.

⁵⁹ "Beautiful Minds" in compagnia in Igiaba Scego, 'Broadcast July 5, 2013,

<http://www.radiocafoscari.it/archivio/beautiful/beautiful130705.mp3> .

⁶⁰ For an account of events of that day see Anna Maria Casavola, *7 ottobre 1943: la deportazione dei Carabinieri nei Lager nazisti* (Rome: Studium, 2008).

⁶¹ Igiaba Scego, "Il peso della parola," <http://www.unita.it/commenti/igiabascego/il-peso-delle-parole-1.49013> .

⁶² Scego, *Adua*, 85.

⁶³ For a discussion of the plan to resettle Jews in Ethiopia, see Richard Pankhurst, "Plans for Mass Jewish Settlement in Ethiopia (1936-1943)," *Ethiopia Observer* 15 (2005): 235-245. Also available at <https://tezetaethiopia.wordpress.com/2005/04/20/plans-for-mass-jewish-settlement-in-ethiopia-1936-1943br-smallby-richarch-pankhurst/> .

Zoppe's memory of the Limentani family occurs at a moment of extreme physical violence and unjust incarceration. His daughter, Adua, is the novel's other main character. Her name and the book's title recall the battle of 1896 when Ethiopian troops defeated the invading Italian army. Part of Mussolini's plan to conquer Ethiopia was to avenge that defeat. In fact, Adua became a fairly popular girl's name in Italy as a result. Scego's Adua occupies an ambiguous space in postcolonial Italy; an aspiring actress she ends up in soft porn films in predictable Black Venus roles. The novel's layered temporality alternating between the colonial voice of Zoppe and the postcolonial perspective of his daughter is made strikingly contemporary through her marriage to Ahmed, or Titanic as she calls him, a much younger Somali man who had survived the crossing to Lampedusa. As a result, the Jewish family which befriends Zoppe in the 1930s is entangled in the same "rhetorical constellation" which captures Ahmed some 80 years later.

Dagmawi Yimer: audio-visual entanglements

In *Adua*, Scego translates the photograph given to her by Limentani into a family of ghosts which haunts Zoppe, the colonial subject in Rome. Her translation of the familiar lexis of the Shoah into the register of the postcolonial is destabilizing, or multidirectional, in that no single historical event or experience is given priority. For Scego, language is a site of memory, and indeed a practice of commemoration or memorialization, but also of hurt and damage. At the end of Scego's novel, Ahmed leaves Adua, offering her a digital camera as a parting gift: "Now you can film what you like, and talk about yourself any way you want."⁶⁴ Adua, who had been cynically exploited as a black actress, is now in possession of the technology of visual representation and self-narration. The novel ends at this point, but a very similar intersection of self-representation and digital technology informs Dagmawi Yimer's work as he like Scego follows through the entanglements of Italian colonial memory and contemporary migration with the Shoah, albeit in a different medium and modality.

Dagmawi Yimer arrived in Italy in July 2006, rescued by Italian coastguards after the boat he was travelling on across the Mediterranean sank. Born in Addis Abeba, Dagmawi left Ethiopia for political reasons and spent months crossing the Sahara desert to reach Libya and get to Europe.⁶⁵ After enrolling on a video filmmaking

⁶⁴ Scego, *Adua*, 174.

⁶⁵ For a full account of the journey, see Dagmawi Yimer, "Da Addis Abeba a Lampedusa: Cronaca

course in Rome, he has gone on to produce a number of short and full-length documentary films. His first long film, *Come un uomo sulla terra* (2008) co-directed with Andrea Segre and Riccardo Biadene, exposed the brutality of Libya's treatment of migrants and the EU's complicity in that brutality. He also appeared in front of the camera recounting his own experience and recalling explicitly Italy's colonial links with Ethiopia. In his later *Soltanto il mare* (2010), Dagmawi returns to Lampedusa to meet the island's residents and, in a particularly charged scene, thanks the coastguards who rescued him.⁶⁶ The film self-consciously includes shots of Dagmawi filming, underlining the authorial source of the camera's gaze. It also includes news footage taken of his arrival on Lampedusa, at that point an unknown and unnamed face amongst so many others, part of an aesthetic of anonymous migrant dejection, reminiscent of that shown on *Famiglia Cristiana's* cover page. The inclusion of the news footage does more than simply recall Dagmawi's arrival in Italy, which in itself would be of little more than curiosity value. Its potency lies in the fact that it registers the measure of Dagmawi's transformation, not merely as a migrant who has successfully assimilated, but as one who now is able to take charge of the medium of visual representation. In a fascinating biographical essay, the Ethiopian American writer, Maaza Mengiste describes Dagmawi as someone "who tells his story freely, but cannot seem to speak it without a subdued voice, as if the terror has left a permanent scar."⁶⁷ Dagmawi's impairment, she suggests, has been offset by his work as a film-maker: "Using his camera as a voice, Dagmawi Yimer is now helping others share what had once been unspeakable."⁶⁸

di un viaggio," in *Colonia e postcolonia come spazi diasporici. Attraversamenti di memorie, identità e confini nel Corno d'Africa*, eds. Uoldilul Chelati Dirar, Silvana Palma, Alessandro Triulzi Alessandro Volterra (Rome: Carocci, 2011), 335-352.

⁶⁶ For more detailed analysis of Dagmawi's career to date especially in relation to *Soltanto il mare*, see Simona Wright, "Lampedusa's Gaze: Messages from the Outpost of Europe," *Italica*, 91/9 (2014): 775-802; Federica Mazzara, "Spaces of Visibility for the Migrants of Lampedusa: The Counter Narrative of the Aesthetic Discourse," *Italian Studies: Cultural Studies*, 70/4 (2015): 449-464; Aine O'Healy, "Imagining Lampedusa," in *Italian Mobilities*, eds. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Hom (Routledge: New York, 2016), 152-173.

⁶⁷ Maaza Meghiste, "The Madonna of the Sea," <http://granta.com/the-madonna-of-the-sea/>.

⁶⁸ Underpinning my discussion of Dagmawi's commitment to testimony and his ethical reluctance to rely on the representation of the human body as evidence are the debates around Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985): see Sue Vice, *Shoah* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). An increasing interest in the transnational and transversal dimensions of visual representation of the Shoah is seen in work such as Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); *Holocaust Intersections: Genocide and Visual Culture in the New Millennium* eds. Axel Bangert, Robert S.C. Gordon, Libby Saxton (Oxford: Legenda, 2013).

The attempt to find a language for experience which exceeds the limits of language has been an ongoing challenge in the representation of the Shoah. Yet equally as compelling has been the ethical imperative to find ways of bearing witness to the experience of it. In a short essay in the volume accompanying *Come un uomo sulla terra* in which he describes how he kept a diary assiduously during his journey from Ethiopia, Dagmawi reflects on his ethical commitment to witnessing:

Apart from my wish to leave a testimony, I thought that there was a great moral obligation to speak about what we had experienced: reveal the truth of what happened to try to save anyone still undergoing all that violence and discrimination.⁶⁹

Dagmawi's sense of duty to the past is matched by a commitment to future memory in ways which invite comparison to Primo Levi's sense of duty and purpose. The determination to bear witness has been a constant in his work along with an attentiveness to the risks inherent in representation. In late 2015, he was invited to direct a short film by "Redani – Network of the Black African Diaspora in Italy" as part of their initiative against the use of morally exploitative images of African children by NGOs in their fund-raising campaigns.⁷⁰ This campaign critiques the effects of images not dissimilar to the one on the cover of *Famiglia Cristiana*. For Dagmawi, the duty of testimony also demands discretion. In an article published in the Italian daily, *La Repubblica*, in early May 2015, shortly after the catastrophic shipwrecks in which more than 1,000 are estimated to have lost their lives Dagmawi expresses an unwillingness to attempt an account of his journey's full horror: "My duty is to remember those who drowned. Out of respect there is only one part of our journey which I won't talk about. The final part. The sea." He recollects in great detail the hardships of the journey by land, undertaken in impossibly cramped conditions. He concludes the story by remembering those who had already lost their lives at sea and also their names whose meanings ironically seemed to have promised a better future. Saying these

⁶⁹ Dagmawi Yimer, 'Il mio diario non è scomparso', in *Come un uomo sulla terra*, eds. Marco Carsetti and Alessandro Triulzi (Rome: Infinito, 2009), 103-105. The essays in the volume contain italicized references throughout to "sommersi" as well as to the Middle Passage and Guantanamo.

⁷⁰ For details of the campaign and to access the video see <http://ancheleimmaginiucciono.org>. Barbie Zelizer has written of the "repeated aesthetic" through which images not of the Shoah recall the Shoah by virtue of their closeness to "the familiar Holocaust aesthetic." The potential loss of specificity in repetition is the corrosive underside of cultural "shorthand": *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 221.

names aloud has an incantatory force: “Although the bodies they belonged to are no longer here, those names still exist on account of the fact that they have been spoken aloud”⁷¹

The attention to naming as a mode of commemorative representation recalls the Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project, one of the core activities of Yad Vashem. It is also central to the work of the Holocaust Memorial Trust which encourages naming as a potent strategy for countering the anonymity of numbers.⁷² In Dagmawi’s work, names are ghosts. Their commemorative power is celebrated in *ASMAT: nomi per tutte le vittime in mare* (*ASMAT: Names in Memory of All the Victims of the Sea*), the seventeen-minute film he directed to remember those who died on 3 October.⁷³ The piece was commissioned by the “Comitato 3 ottobre,” an NGO set up with the specific aim of having that date declared an official day of remembrance and welcome. In a short commentary on the film, Dagmawi writes:

The film’s images create a space for these names without bodies. Names laden with meaning even if their meaning is difficult to grasp completely. We are obliged to count them all, name them one by one so that we might comprehend how many names have been severed from their bodies, in a single day in the Mediterranean.⁷⁴

The film explores precisely this separation of body and name through aesthetic choices which represent the unrecoverable corporeal loss of the not-to-be-forgotten dead. These choices not only represent their absence and mourn their loss, but also present an alternative aesthetic to the spectacularization of the abject African body familiar from standard media representations. The first half of the film is a mixture of animation and footage of the sea and seabed which may disorientate the spectator as the moving handheld camera doesn’t allow for any

⁷¹ Dagmawi Yimer, “Mediterraneo,” *La Repubblica*, May 3, 2015.

⁷² See <http://hmd.org.uk/page/names-people-murdered>. Shaul Bassi’s comments on the iniquity of using numbers to identify migrants are accompanied by the call to collect individual names and stories as a counter.

⁷³ Both Italian and English versions of the film are accessible on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/114343040>; <https://vimeo.com/114849871>. For a reading of the film which places it in the “rhetorical constellation” of Albanian migration to Italy in the 1990s and practices of commemoration around the sinking of the *Käter I Rades* in 1997, see Daniele Salerno, “Stragi del mare e politiche del lutto sul confine mediterraneo,” in *Il colore della nazione*, ed. Gaia Giuliani (Milan: Mondadori: 2015), 123-139.

⁷⁴ The full text is available at <https://vimeo.com/114849871>.

single angle of vision. The opening sequence showing calm water painted in a bright blue hue and the dark outline of an island in the distance is accompanied by a woman's voice humming and singing. There is an abrupt cut to underwater scenes and choppy waves. The camera pans in on a stylized drawing of a boat with a jump cut to a close-up of the blackness of the hold. The camera again pans across watercolour paintings of people, embracing or with arms outstretched attempting to swim to the surface.⁷⁵ A further cut takes the spectator to a drawing of a broken boat on the sea floor. A slow animated sequence of people standing with the upper half of their bodies covered with shrouds is followed by actual footage of the same. The soundtrack to this sequence alternates between the sound of gently lapping waves and the music of a single instrument which accompanies the female voice. She commands the spectator to listen to the collective "cry" of the migrant. Her singing merges into a ferocious spoken indictment of the culpability of African leaders and the indifference of European politicians, proud of the values of Western civilization. The use of the second person plural "voi" form gives way to a more tender invocation of the island of Lampedusa itself, a beacon of hope for those crossing from Africa. The families of the dead are exhorted to call out their names in remembrance. Before the female narrator begins the work of reciting each name, she speaks a few lines over animated images of the shrouds denouncing the longevity of what is often portrayed as an exceptional moment of crisis. Two points in particular are forcefully made. "We are more visible dead than alive" indicts a culture of reception fixated on those who never reach European soil [*Fig. 2*]. As mentioned above, Italian citizenship was conferred on those who drowned on 3 October while the survivors were interned. The reminder – "we existed even before October 3rd" – similarly critiques a cultural and political response unable to acknowledge the life both of the dead and of those who survived. This disavowal is integral to Braidotti's "necro-politics."

⁷⁵ The artwork is by Luca Serasini and is taken from an unfinished graphic novel produced in commemoration of October 3, <http://www.lucaserasini.it/migrantes>. The images recall graphic underwater footage shot on the sunken boat. Now widely available online, the footage clearly shows images of the dead including that of a couple locked in an embrace https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XP6jsW9NNI. Serasini cites also the underwater sculptures of Jason deCaires Taylor as a source of inspiration <http://www.underwatersculpture.com/sculptures/overview/>. The underwater sculpture park he created off the coast of Grenada contains figures which evoke memories of the Middle Passage although the artist is reluctant to pin his work to a single referent.



Fig. 2: *ASMAT: the visibility of the dead* (detail)
Dagmawi Yimer, *ASMAT - Names in Memory of All the Victims of the Sea*
<https://vimeo.com/114343040>



Fig. 3: *ASMAT: names* (detail)
Dagmawi Yimer, *ASMAT - Names in Memory of All the Victims of the Sea*
<https://vimeo.com/114343040>

Dagmawi's decision not to rely on photographic representations of either the living or the dead is an incisive intervention in contemporary practices of

photojournalism and film-making.⁷⁶ The second half of the film is taken up by the recitation of the names of all those who died on that day. Many of the names are accompanied by the literal translation of their meaning. In addition to hearing the names, the spectator sees them hurtle directly towards her; the Tigrinya script adding to the unfamiliarity of the experience [Fig. 3]. The recitation of the names is a deliberate strategy to remember those who died and to displace that memory from mere statistical enumeration. Translating the meaning of each name deepens the existential and cultural roots of each life. Judith Butler ponders the relevance of the name in her discussion of the ethical parameters of the Abu Ghraib images of abused Iraqi prisoners.⁷⁷ The names of the perpetrators of the abuse became familiar in the media, but Butler makes the point that those of the victims were withheld:

Do we lament the lack of names? Yes and no. They are, and are not, ours to know. We might think that the norms of humanization require the name and the face, but perhaps the “face” works on us precisely through or as its shroud, in and through the means by which it is subsequently obscured. In this sense, the face and name are not ours to know, and affirming this cognitive limit is a way of affirming the humanity that has escaped the control of the photograph.⁷⁸

Butler makes the point that in this particular instance the photographer is wholly complicit in the scene. A different complicity entangles the Turkish photographer Nilufer Demir whose images of the Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, who drowned on 2

⁷⁶ Dagmawi’s work may be productively aligned with that of the contemporary artists focussing on postcolonial Africa analysed by Demos in *Return to the Postcolony*. These artists share a similar engagement with, and critique of, the image as document. Demos also works with the notion of “entanglement”; his understanding of the concept is drawn from Achille Mbembe with its emphasis on temporality and subjectivity. Demos’s conclusion is worth quoting at length as it offers a potentially provocative placement of both Dagmawi and Scego in terms of their artistic practice: “the postcolony shows itself as a temporal entanglement comprised of continuities and discontinuities, overlapping histories and unacknowledged presences. One major accomplishment of the art considered [in *Return to the Postcolony*] is that it proposes aesthetic meditations that pursue these historical linkages and interlinked geographies to critical ends,” 158-59. Demos develops the notion of “entanglement” mapped out in Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁷⁷ As Gordon has noted, Agamben’s argument that the camp has been central to modernity is foundational to how both Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib are understood. Questions of visibility are also common to both: Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 138.

⁷⁸ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*, (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 95.

September 2015, resonated across the world. The most widely reproduced picture showed the boy being carried away by a rescue worker, his lifeless body shielded from the camera's gaze.⁷⁹ The campaigning Italian journalist Fabrizio Gatti responded by making available on his blog hosted by the major Italian journal *L'Espresso*, images taken by a Libyan journalist shown with no narrative discretion the bodies of children who had drowned off the coast of Zuwara in late August 2015 when two boats capsized.⁸⁰ Alan Kurdi's name became a cultural shorthand for the war in Syria while the children on the beach in Zuwara remain largely unknown and unnamed. In a roundtable discussion at the United Nations in May 2016, Maaza Mengiste spoke about the "deception" generated by Alan Kurdi's image which moved those who saw it, but did nothing to register the physical damage and emotional horror caused to those dying, named or unnamed, in such conditions. Yet naming matters:

If your body cannot be named then it is just a corpse. It is a corpse that is less than human, it is a thing. While this thing waits to be claimed, you will become something else in this world: you will be called Missing. There is no ritual for mourning the unclaimed. There is no paying of respects for unmarked graves. While your body is thrown into a shallow grave and marked with a number, the you that is attached to a name, the you that now lacks a body, will have simply disappeared from this earth. You will become one of the disappeared, "*gli scomparsi*." You were here and now you are not.⁸¹

Mengiste implicitly returns us to Butler's "ungrievable lives" and to the aftermath of 3 October, yet she asserts her conviction that the dead must be humanized by returning directly to Primo Levi and his determination to communicate beyond the horror he experienced. She refers specifically to *The Drowned and the Saved*, and the chapter, "The Grey Zone" where Levi explores the necessity and the risk

⁷⁹ Igiaba Scego contrasts the wide distribution of images of the horrific massacre at the university campus in Garissa with the discretion shown to victims of comparable events in the West: "Nessuno si è sognato di fotografare quei corpi senza vita oltraggiati dalle pallottole. E anche se qualcuno lo avesse fatto sarebbe stato giustamente linciato sui giornali," <http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2015/04/05/garissa-campus-kenya-massacro-non-volevo-vedere-quella-foto>. The conscious choice of the term 'lynching' used in reference to the US adds to the rhetorical constellation of affect. Just as black bodies are less identifiable than white one, they are also subject to different regimes of representation: "Death is rarely seen in ragged human remains unless they are foreign": John Taylor, *Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 129.

⁸⁰ Available at: <http://gatti.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it>.

⁸¹ The text of Mengiste's talk can be found at <http://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/primolevi-at-the-un/>.

of understanding the world's tangled complexity. For Levi does indeed talk about "entanglement" – what he refers to as a "*groviglio*" – and how it threatens to render the world unintelligible. Menghiste endorses his determination to work through the entanglement, a commitment inherent to the projects of Scego and Dagmawi.

Ethical entanglements

As I noted earlier, both Rothberg and Chow are deeply engaged in tracing the forms of entanglement that memory assumes. Paul Gilroy does similar work in his study of the Black Atlantic, a study which ends on a compellingly entangled reading of Levi and Toni Morrison:

How are we to think critically about artistic products and aesthetic codes which though they may be traceable back to one distant location, have been changed either by the passage of time or by their displacement through networks of communication and cultural exchange?⁸²

The traceable displacement I want to end on underlines the ethical purchase of the entanglements proposed by Igiaba Scego and Dagmawi Yimer and relates to its staging in one particular site. When Levi returned to Auschwitz in 1965, he was taken aback at, and essentially unmoved by, the site which had been turned into a monument, a museum, "something static, tidied up, meddled with."⁸³ On the other hand, a visit to Birkenau, where he had never previously been, produced an "feeling of violent anguish." Totally unreconstructed, the site remained devoid of any trace of aesthetic intervention or improvement. Since its inception, *Binario 21*, the memorial in Milan station, has functioned as a very active space of commemoration, not only to the Shoah but to other instances of mass slaughter. The site has also given space to the testimonial voices of the marginalized and persecuted. Yet a different form of intervention took place there between June and November 2015, when *Binario 21* offered overnight accommodation to

⁸² Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Yale University Press, 1993), 80.

⁸³ Primo Levi, "Appendice," to *Se questo è un uomo*, in *Opere*, ed. Marco Belpoliti, (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), I, 170-201; 184-185. For an extended discussion of Levi's attitudes to, and engagement with, Holocaust museums see Nancy Harrowitz, "Primo Levi and Holocaust Tourism," in *Primo Levi: The Austere Humanist*, ed. Joseph Farrell, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 203-214.

approximately 5,000 refugees, mostly just passing through Milan, as they travelled onwards to a destination in northern Europe. Working with the City of Milan authorities, the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Catholic charitable body, as well as a large number of volunteers, *Binario 21* became a site of action in, and on, the present. It provided migrants with shelter, food, and clothing, and put on a range of cultural activities including the gathering of testimonies from those eager to pass on their stories. One of these activities required everyone to trace the outline of their hand on a large piece of paper and write their name on it [Fig. 4]. This corporeal and graphic act of self-inscription, of presence, defies the presumed anonymity of the migrant. The symbolism of the hand gestures towards the resignification of the forced finger printing introduced by the Italian government to identify and process migrants.⁸⁴

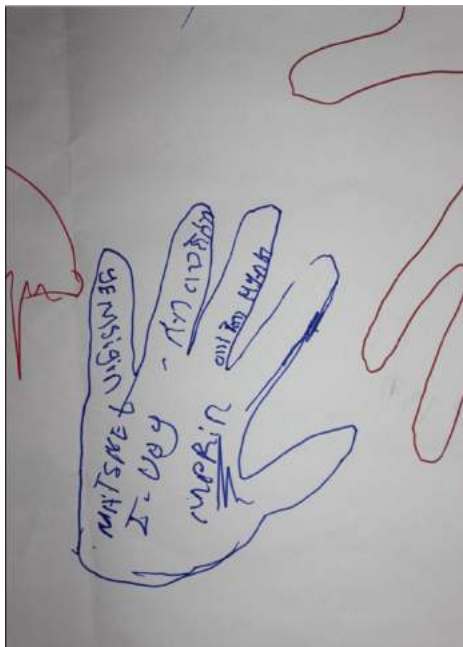


Fig.4: *Binario 21*: self-inscription

Anna Chiara Cimoli and Stefano Pasta have suggested that the activities in the

⁸⁴ Proposals for compulsory finger-printing have been controversial. One of their most vocal opponents has been the Italian Jewish intellectual Amos Luzzatto. In 2008, for example, he explicitly denounced the initiative to finger-print all Roma children as “ethnic profiling,” a return to the racism of his childhood. Italy he claimed is a nation “which has lost its memory”: Amos Luzzatto, “C’è un segno razzista timbrati ed esclusi come noi ebrei,” <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2008/06/26/luzzatto-un-segno-razzista-timbrati-ed.html?ref=search>. The entanglements of visual, bodily, and mnemonic inscription are integral to my argument here.

Memorial represent a “new chapter in civic positioning,” a particular “entanglement” in which the still very new space of *Binario 21* negotiates in relation to the pressures of the present day, but with a clear memory of the past.⁸⁵ Reflecting on the ambiguities of the representational strategies of Christian Boltanski, who has used documents such as photographs to complicate rather than confirm matters of historical record, Brett Ashley Kaplan focuses on the determining potency of affect rather than fact.⁸⁶ The networks of entanglement worked through by Scego and Dagmawi are held in critical counterpoint by the intensity of an intensely felt past. The Shoah haunts Scego’s postcolonial perspective, and ghosts Dagmawi’s strategy of testimony: through their work both contribute to the contemporary modality of civic engagement practiced at *Binario 21* through their production of historically textured memories.

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url: www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=384

⁸⁵ Anna Chiara Cimoli and Stefano Pasta, “Il ciclo di vita della memoria: I profughi al Memoriale della Shoah di Milano: rappresentazione, rotte, cartografie possibili,” *Roots/Routes: Research on Visual Cultures*, 6/21 (2016), <http://www.roots-routes.org/?p=16228>.

⁸⁶ Ashley Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure and the Holocaust*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 108.

La nostra fratellanza nel dolore:
the Jewish Community of Rome and the ‘Other’ Genocides

by Luca Peretti

Abstract

This paper investigates how, if, and to what extent the Jewish Community of Rome interacts with the commemoration of other acts of genocide, mass killing, and ethnic cleansing. I focus mostly on the Armenian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, and the Nazi extermination of Romani people, and I analyze how the Jewish community has been in dialogue with these communities and their memory practices. As an introduction, I discuss the little-known story of the unmade Museo delle Intolleranze e degli Stermini [Museum of Intolerances and Exterminations], which was planned in the late 1990s to be built in the capital city of Italy. In the conclusion, I highlight how we can speak of a ‘kaleidoscopic’ memorial world of the Jewish community of Rome that includes several different acts of commemoration and memory practices.

Introduction

The Unmade (or Virtual) Museum

The CER and the Commemoration of “Other” Genocides

Conclusion

Acknowledgements

Introduction

During the 1990s and more extensively in the 2000s Italy witnessed an ever-increasing presence of Holocaust remembrance and commemoration in politics, arts, and culture at large. The Jewish genocide now firmly occupies a place in the fabric of the memory of the nation – a place that is, however, neither uncontested nor pacified. This process of establishment of the genocide as part of the national memory was accompanied by the reinforcement of the idea of the Shoah as a paradigm, as the lens thorough which other genocides and massacres can, and perhaps should, be considered. The city of Rome plays a major part in these processes; and in a sense, we could say that, for several reasons, it lies at the

center of them: first, because it is the place where the most symbolic and important event of the Italian Shoah took place – the raid and round-up in the former Jewish ghetto of Rome and in the rest of the city which took place on 16 October 1943¹ – and the commemorations of this event have occupied a highly significant place in the landscape of memory; then, because Rome is the largest city of Italy and its capital; and finally, and possibly most importantly, because Rome has the largest and most active Jewish community of Italy. The peculiar relation of Rome with the Holocaust, and particularly with Holocaust remembrance, has brought Robert S. C. Gordon to note how “in ways both historic and symbolic, Rome has returned again and again as a (perhaps the) prime site of Holocaust stories and images in post-war Italy.”²

There is also another process, however, of memorialization of violence taking place in Italy as elsewhere over this period, one perhaps less mediatized and widely known, but nonetheless present: that is, the increased attention to other genocides and mass killings (mostly modern ones), from other exterminations perpetrated by the Nazis during the Second World War (most notably that of the Romani people) to more recent ones (such as the Rwandan genocide) or to older but still modern instances, such as the Armenian genocide.³ These other memorializations have regularly interacted with and intersected the activities of Holocaust remembrance in Rome, including particularly the activities of the organized *Comunità Ebraica di Roma* [Jewish Community of Rome, henceforth,

¹ Millicent Marcus talked of a ‘synecdochal value’ of this event, *Italian film in the shadow of Auschwitz*, (Toronto and London: Toronto University Press, 2007), 161. The director Carlo Lizzani, who made *L'oro di Roma* (The Gold of Rome, 1961) on the 16 October, highlighted how “The story of the Community of Rome [...] reproduced in a small scale, like ‘*in vitro*,’ but with the same torment, the tragedy that at the time was happening all over Europe,” in *L'oro di Roma di Carlo Lizzani*, ed. Giovanni Vento, (Bologna: Cappelli, 1961), 126. The bibliography on the round-up of 16 October includes many contributions in different languages: see, among many, Robert Katz, *Black Sabbath: A Journey Through a Crime Against Humanity*, (New York: Arthur Barker, 1969); Silvia Haia Antonucci, Claudio Procaccia, Gabriele Rigano and Giancarlo Spizzichino, *Roma, 16 ottobre 1943. Anatomia di una deportazione*, (Rome: Guerini e Associati, 2006); Anna Foa, *Portico d'Ottavia 13. Una casa del ghetto nel lungo inverno del '43* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2013); Fausto Coen, *16 ottobre 1943. La grande razzia degli ebrei di Roma*, (Florence: La Giuntina, 1995), and the recent Martin Baumeister, Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, and Claudio Procaccia, *16 ottobre 1943, La deportazione degli ebrei romani tra storia e memoria*, (Rome: Viella, 2016). All translations from Italian are mine, revised by Karen T. Raizen.

² Robert S. C. Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 87.

³ For a comparative introduction to these genocides, see Adam Jones, *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction*, 2nd ed., (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

CER], which is frequently integrated through its institutional representatives and (semi-)official publications with the memory and awareness of other acts of genocide, mass killing, and ethnic cleansing.⁴ The CER is by far the largest Italian Jewish community, and it is also one that, especially in the last few years, has enjoyed extensive media attention and often seems to be considered as representing Italian Jews as a whole, and not just one, albeit large, component of the Italian community.⁵ Its former president, Riccardo Pacifici, enjoyed a particular status and authority: despite being the president of the CER and not of the national body, the *Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane* [Union of Italian Jewish Communities, henceforth UCEI], he enjoyed high and increasing media attention, becoming a sort of unofficial media spokesperson for Italian Jews.⁶ But there are other reasons why it is significant to focus on Rome and on the CER, the most significant of which is the fact that Rome as capital and as a city of multiple, global interactions is a site of plural communities of memory where we find the representatives of a number of other communities and different entities with which Italian Jews are (or could be) in dialogue.

As a starting date, I have chosen 2001, the first year of the official Italian national Memorial Day of the Holocaust, the *Giorno della memoria* [Day of Memory], which takes place on 27 January, subsequently designated at the UN as the *International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust*.⁷ The establishment of this *Giorno* had three consequences that speak

⁴ As all such communities, CER contains within it many different voices and opinions. In this paper I have considered only the positions expressed by the elected officials of the community, by members speaking as spokespersons or in similar functions, and those expressed in official or semi-official publications of the CER.

⁵ This national prominence has been produced for a number of reasons that fall beyond the scope of this paper. One of them is surely the key role of the former chief Rabbi of Rome, Elio Toaff (1915-2015). As Anna Momigliano pointed out, he “was the ‘de-facto leader of Italian Jewry’ until he retired... Unlike many European countries, Italy doesn’t have a national chief rabbi, but Toaff’s status as a spiritual leader approached that level and extended well beyond the capital,” “The End of an Era for Italy’s Jews: Why Young Italian Rabbis Are Bowing to Israeli Orthodoxy,” *Haaretz*, April 27, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/features/.premium-1.653815> [all websites accessed 26 December 2015].

⁶ Or at least this was the way he was considered by Italian media who interviewed him on several occasions regarding not just the CER but Italian Jews as a whole. For a biographical profile of Pacifici see Giorgio Dell’Arti, *Catalogo dei viventi 2016* (forthcoming), <http://cinquantamila.corriere.it/storyTellerThread.php?threadId=PACIFICI+Riccardo>.

⁷ See the websites of The Holocaust and The United Nations Outreach Programme, <http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/>.

to the topic of this paper.⁸ First and most obviously, it inserted an official date of remembrance of the Shoah into the Italian civic calendar, something that created the opportunity and indeed the official obligation to organize events that included, in some cases, also the commemoration of ‘other’ genocides - genocides which, even though they did not take place on Italian soil nor were caused by Italians, are nonetheless occasionally commemorated in Italy and by Italian institutions as well, in a European and global framework of shared memorialization. However, as we will see, this inclusion has also created some tensions, as these other genocides are not included in the official definition of the law that established the Day of Memory, which limits its focus to the Jewish genocide.⁹ Further, the establishment of this *Giorno* triggered the creation of other commemorative dates.¹⁰ There is thus a double aspect to the question: the commemoration of non-Jewish genocides and massacres has been incorporated into this national day of remembrance, and the CER has participated in the memorialization of these other genocides.¹¹ I begin with a brief investigation of the little-known story of the unmade *Museo delle Intolleranze e degli Stermini* [Museum of Intolerances and Exterminations, henceforth MIS] in Rome, a museum that was intended to represent a kaleidoscope of different memories and genocides. I focus subsequently on public and official interventions and statements by the leaders of the CER at commemorations, presentations of books, inaugurations, and similar events, and the direct involvement of the CER in the creation of memorials in so far as they bring into often complex contact the Jewish memory of the Jewish genocide and other communities of memory.

⁸ On the genesis of the *Giorno della memoria*, see Furio Colombo, Athos De Luca and Vittorio Pavoncello, *Il paradosso del Giorno della memoria. Dialoghi*, (Milan: Mimesis, 2014); Francesco Rocchetti, “Il simbolo del voto unanime: l’istituzione del ‘Giorno della memoria’ attraverso il dibattito parlamentare,” in *Antigiudaismo, Antisemitismo, Memoria. Un approccio pluridisciplinare*, ed. Giuseppe Capriotti, (Macerata: Eum-Edizioni Università di Macerata, 2009), 331-346; for the issues that the *Giorno* raised in memory practices, see the provocative book by Elena Lowenthal, *Contro il giorno della memoria*, (Turin: ADD Editore, 2014).

⁹ “Istituzione del “Giorno della Memoria” in ricordo dello sterminio e delle persecuzioni del popolo ebraico e dei deportati militari e politici italiani nei campi nazisti,” *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 177, July 31, 2000, <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/00211.htm>.

¹⁰ The *Giorno del Ricordo*, [Day of Remembrance] established in 2004, commemorates the victims of the *foibe*, and the *Giorno della Libertà* [Day of Freedom] remembers the fall of the Berlin Wall: they both speak to a generic need of remembering the victims of Communism. For the parliamentary debate on the *Giorno della memoria*, see Rocchetti, “Il simbolo del voto unanime.”

¹¹ Similar processes are apparent in the national contexts also: see for example, Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain*, (New York: Routledge, 2014).

The scope and focus of what follows, based as it is on a selection of recent case studies, has shaped its use of local and at times ephemeral sources, including a variety of articles from web-journals and websites, videos, and other content available only online. Despite their limitations, these sources are the most suitable and the most eloquent evidence available for the analysis of the evolution of the CER's attitude toward and actions in regard of other genocides in recent years.

The Unmade (or Virtual) Museum

At the end of the 1990s a group of scholars introduced the idea of a *Museo delle Intolleranze e degli Stermini*, a proposal for a museum that was planned to have been built in Rome for the year 2000.¹² The year was of course symbolic, as it marked the beginning of the new millennium, but was also the year of the most significant Catholic Jubilee of the modern era, which took place in the Vatican and across the Italian capital and was accompanied by urban renovations and constructions of new buildings. On the Advisory Board of the museum we find major scholars in the field of contemporary history, who in a sense legitimated the project with their presence: among others, Claudio Pavone, the historian and former partisan and author of one of the most important books on the Resistance,¹³ the genocide scholar and historian Marcello Flores, and the historian of Italian colonialism Alessandro Triulzi. The coordinator of the project was Annabella Gioia, director of the *Istituto Romano per la Storia d'Italia dal Fascismo alla Resistenza* [Roman Institute for the History of Italy from Fascism to the Resistance].

The name of the planned museum is striking in itself: it makes use of charged plural words, such as 'intolerances' [*intolleranze*] and 'exterminations' [*stermini*], which immediately imply a broader scope than the already dominant central genocide of the 20th century, the Nazi Final Solution, and not a focus on any specific topic or genocide. It implies and includes the Enlightenment idea of tolerance, although in its negative iteration, unlike for example the Museum of

¹² The title of a chapter dedicated to the museum in the *Annale Irsifar* stated: "Perché un museo delle intolleranze e degli stermini a Roma per l'anno 2000?" [Why a museum of intolerances and exterminations for the year 2000?], see *L'Annale Irsifar 1997. L'idea di contemporaneità e la trasmissione storica* (Rome: Carocci, 1998), 125.

¹³ Claudio Pavone, *A Civil War. A History of the Italian Resistance*, (London/New York: Verso, 2014). The first edition in Italian was published in 1991.

Tolerance (MOT) of Los Angeles that opened in 1993.¹⁴ Furthermore, ‘stermini’ is a much broader concept than ‘Holocaust’ (albeit more restrictive than ‘genocide’): as a term, it is inclusive rather than exclusive, chosen for its capacity of potentially fostering dialogue among different communities and constituencies that have experienced mass killings and violence of different types, including colonial and racial violence – a very important inclusion for a country like Italy which had and indeed has yet to fully acknowledged its colonial past.¹⁵ This suggest that MIS would have been a museum like no other in Italy. The goals of the museum in this respect are clearly delineated by Annabella Gioia, one of its creators, who wrote that the museum would:

document racism, fundamentalism, and massacres which marked the path of history... with the intent of identifying the cultural roots, the social mechanisms and the situations which attracted and favored racism and intolerance. Understanding these phenomena should push the visitor to continually interrogate him/herself on his/her past and identity... Our final goal is to contrast a historical path which still today is threatened by new intolerances and new abuses, from which no-one can feel exempt *a priori*.¹⁶

MIS was intended as a museum with a strong pedagogical purpose, one that promoted understanding of history and the study of history as a means to a better understanding of the present. Luca Zevi, one of the creators of MIS and the architect of the monument commemorating the San Lorenzo bombings of 1943,¹⁷ spoke of two approaches that the museum aimed to employ: “1) an analytical approach focused on retracing facts according to a geographical and temporal sequence, 2) a kind of intertextual approach, which would enable the visitor to find common matrices in episodes even if they took place far apart in

¹⁴ See “About us. An Education in MOTivation... at the MOT,” http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/.../About_Us.htm.

¹⁵ See for example *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, eds. Cristina Lombardi-Diop, and Caterina Romeo, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and for the hidden memories of colonialism in Rome, see Igiaba Scego and Rino Bianchi, *Roma negata. Percorsi postcoloniali nella città*, (Rome: Ediesse, 2014).

¹⁶ Annabella Gioia, “La memoria dell’intolleranza,” in *Tolleranza e libertà*, ed. Vittorio Dini (Milan: Elèuthera, 2001), 288-289.

¹⁷ *19 luglio 1943, 4 giugno 1944: Roma verso la libertà* (Rome: Gangemi, 2014), 172. Luca Zevi is member of a prominent Jewish family: his mother Tullia was the president of the UCEI, and his father Bruno was an important architect and historian of architecture. See Nathania Zevi and Tullia Zevi, *Ti racconto la mia storia: dialogo tra nonna e nipote sull’ebraismo*, (Milan: Rizzoli, 2007).

time and space.”¹⁸

Together with Giorgio Tamburini, Zevi went on to become the architect of the *Museo della Shoah* [Museum of the Shoah, henceforth MS], planned since the early 2000s and soon to be opened in Rome. The MS can be seen as a ‘foil’ to this failed project of the end of the 1990s. If the MIS was intended to be “a museum which is not born in place of memory and that consequently does not have an evocative and emotive value; its specificity is the central role of history,”¹⁹ the MS will be built – or rather it is intended to be built – in the former residence of Benito Mussolini in Rome, Villa Torlonia, which is also the location of one of the two Jewish catacombs of Rome: that is, a highly charged place, where the relationship between the fabric of memory of the space and the museum is extremely strong.²⁰ The dynamic between MS and MIS could have resembled the dynamic between the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of Washington, which were built in exactly the same year, 1993.²¹ The Museum of Tolerance, while also maintaining a Jewish focus (it is, after all, associated with the Simon Wiesenthal Center), is much more inclusive in its historical range and has a similar scope to the MIS. The MIS has now a virtual and online existence [Figg. 1 and 2]. By looking at the ‘historical trails’ around which it is organized we can grasp how its scope is much wider than a museum focused only on the Holocaust. These trails are state as: Italian colonialism, East Germany, the genocide of the Rom and the persecution of homosexuals under Nazism, the Armenian genocide, eugenics, and the forced displacement of populations.²² The project is ongoing, at least in its online version; as the curators write on the website, “the seven pieces of

¹⁸ Luca Zevi, “Uno spazio aperto sul labirinto dell’*altra storia*,” in *L’Annale Irsifâr* 1997, 140.

¹⁹ Levi, “Uno spazio,” 127. See also Luca Zevi’s own book on memorialization and architecture, *Conservazione dell’avvenire. Il progetto oltre gli abusi di identità e memoria*, (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011), 157-169.

²⁰ A good synthesis, in English, of the problems which are delaying the construction of the museum is in Anna Momigliano, “Rome May Cancel Plans for Holocaust Museum” *Haaretz*, September 16, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/features/.premium-1.615908>. For more recent developments, “Shoah: inaugurata sede Fondazione Museo Roma,” AGI, October 16, 2015, http://www.agi.it/cronaca/notizie/shoah_inaugurata_sede_fondazione_museo_roma.... The museum has already attracted scholarly attention; see for example Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian culture*, 14-24; and Robert S.C. Gordon, “Il mancato museo della Shoah,” in *Cinema e storia 2013. La Shoah nel cinema italiano*, eds. Andrea Minuz, Guido Vitiello (Soveria Mannelli, Cosenza: Rubettino, 2013), 151-171.

²¹ Andrea Minuz, *La Shoah e la cultura visuale. Cinema, memoria, spazio pubblico*, (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010), 83-111.

²² See http://www.akra.it/amis/english/museo_en.html.

research that constitute the section “Historical trails” have been chosen to give preference to the “places of oblivion,” issues rarely investigated and at times repressed. This selection criterion can explain the absence, in this first phase, of a theme such as the Shoah, the central “event” of the twentieth century, and the inclusion of the persecution of the Rom and homosexuals.”²³

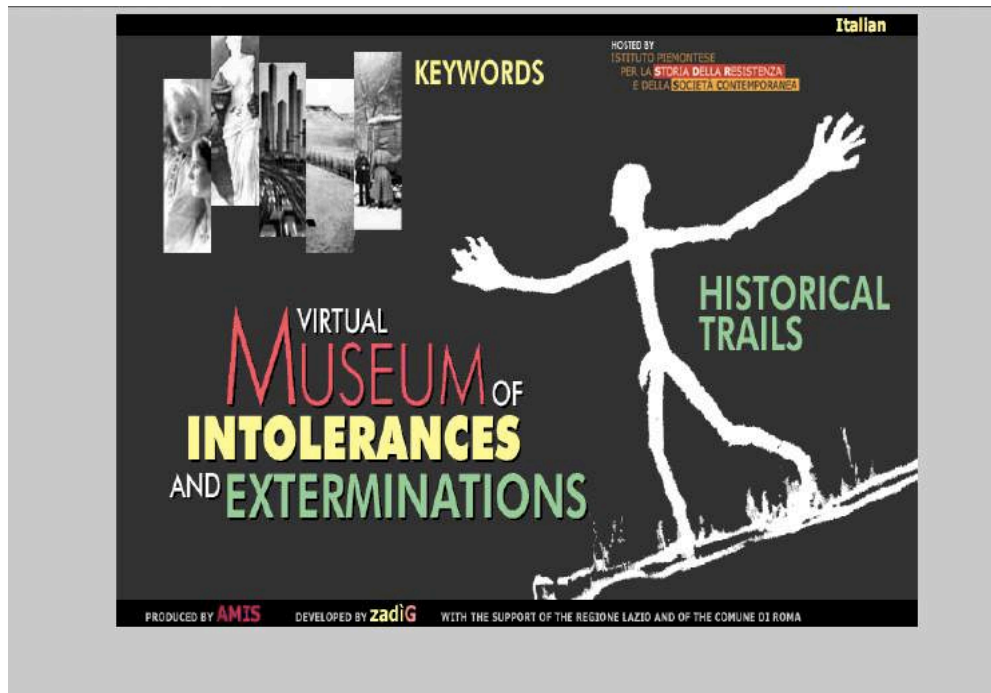


Fig. 1: Homepage of the Virtual Museum of Intolerances and Exterminations <http://www.akra.it/amis/english/index.html>.

²³ *Ibid.*

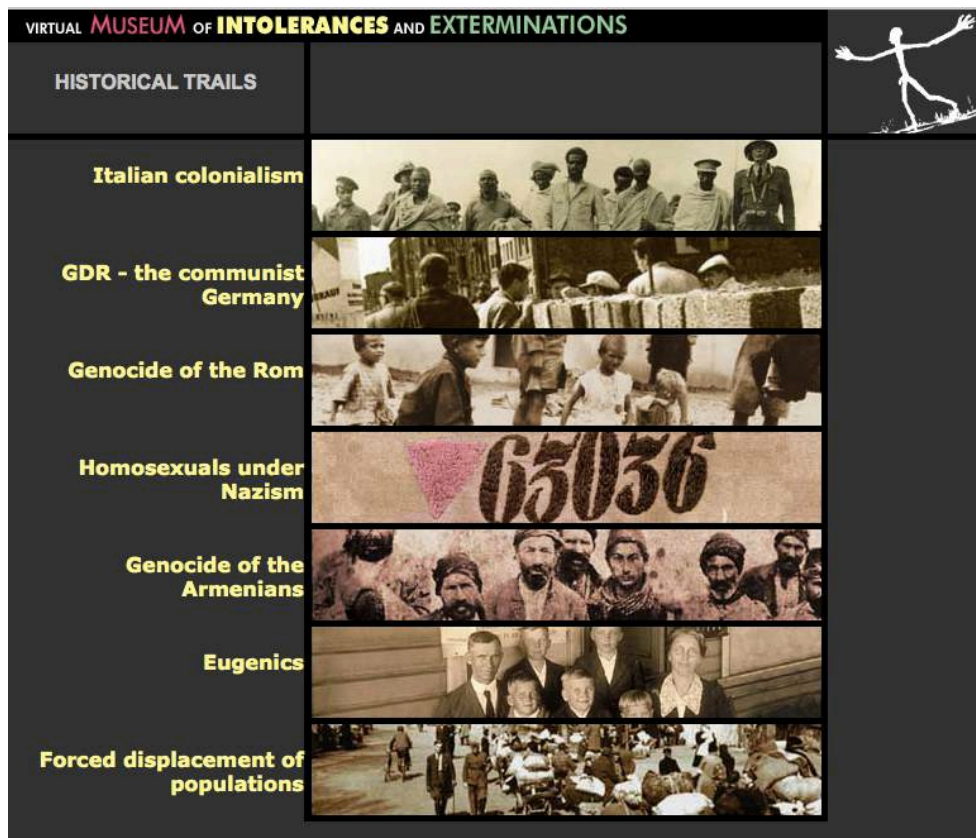


Fig. 2: The 'historical trails' of the Virtual Museum of Intolerances and Exterminations. http://www.akra.it/amis/english/ricerche_en.html

It is essential to note that two other Holocaust museums are being built in Italy, the National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah in Ferrara and the Memorial of the Shoah (Platform 21) in Milan train station, although the latter is more an extended memorial site than a fully-fledged museum.²⁴ In an article for the online magazine *Gli Stati Generali*, Guri Schwarz has highlighted how 'Italy does not have yet a Museum of the Shoah, but as many as three are being planned/built' and how all three have at some point received not just approval from public institutions, including through Acts of Parliament, but also substantial public funding.²⁵ All three were proposed in the early 2000s, in the

²⁴ For more information, see <http://www.memorialeshoah.it/italiano/index.html>.

²⁵ Guri Schwarz, "Memoria e musei della Shoah: delegare tutto alle comunità ebraiche è sbagliato," *Gli Stati Generali*, January 26, 2015, http://www.glistatigenerali.com/beni-culturali_storia-cultura/memoria-e-musei-della-shoah-perche-la-delega-alle-comunita-ebraiche-e-un-errore/.

wake of the establishment of the *Giorno della memoria*.²⁶

What would have been the place and impact of the MIS, planned before any of these three projects, in this picture? While we can only speculate on this question, it is useful to note that the MIS project did indeed leave some traces: this includes not only a series of conferences, scholarly discussions and events which took place between 1997 and 2000,²⁷ but also in the shape of the above-mentioned virtual museum. It seems that the CER was never officially involved in the project as an institution, even though several members and leaders of the community participated. In its current form (i.e. the website/online museum), the MIS is sponsored by the Lazio Region in collaboration with the municipality of Rome and is hosted in the web domain of the *Istituto piemontese per la storia della Resistenza e della società contemporanea* [Piedmont Institute for the History of Resistance and Contemporary Society]. As Gordon noted, “Zevi argued that Rome’s Jewish community, because of its particular history, was ideally placed to co-sponsor such a distinctively broad conception of a memorial museum; but [Zevi’s] project [MIS] was reined in and turned towards a more conventional Holocaust-centered plan [MS].”²⁸ Conversely, the CER played and continues to play an active and ongoing role in the planning of the MS and in the Foundation that has been working toward the its construction and completion.²⁹

The CER and the Commemoration of “Other” Genocides

Among scholars, activists and institutions, there is no general agreement on precisely what a genocide is, and, consequently, which genocides should be included in a hypothetical comprehensive list of genocides.³⁰ It is fair to say that

²⁶ On the complex nexus of political and local reasons behind the planning of these three different museums, see also Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 20-24.

²⁷ See <http://www.akra.it/amis/pres.html> See also Flavio Febbraro, “Museo virtuale delle intolleranze e degli stermini,” *Novecento.org*, 3 (2014), <http://www.novecento.org/...stermini-949/>.

²⁸ Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 19.

²⁹ See the website of the Foundation, in particular the section “Soci Fondatori,” <http://www.museodellashoah.it>.

³⁰ We can take Genocide Studies Program at Yale University as an example. It lists the following as its ‘case studies’: “Amazon, Ancient genocides, Armenian Genocide, Cambodian Genocide, Colonial Genocides, East Timor, Guatemala, Holocaust, Indonesia, Other, Papua, Rwandan Genocide, Sudan, Yugoslavia (former);” <http://gsp.yale.edu>. The scholarly literature on genocide

in recent times the CER has participated in the practice of memorialization of at least the Armenian genocide, of the Nazi extermination of the Romani genocides and of the Rwandan genocide, above and beyond the Holocaust of the Jews, with different levels of involvement and different interests. In the remainder of this paper, I will analyze the involvement of the CER in recent commemorations of these three genocides.

In April 2015, the centenary anniversary of the Armenian genocide was commemorated in Italy as elsewhere, providing the occasion for widespread critical attention and remembrance from different institutions, including those that had previously not paid extensive attention to this historical episode. This anniversary coincided with the centenary of Italy's entry into the First World War, which was also an occasion for renewed attention to those years. Furthermore, the anniversary took place during a time of increased ethnic and political tension within Turkey, successor to the Ottoman Empire where during the First World War approximately 1.5 million Armenians were killed. These tensions developed later in 2015 into a series of politically and religiously motivated massacres in Turkey, leading to the Turkish government's violent repressions of Kurds and leftist political forces.³¹

In April 2015, a number of important initiatives took place worldwide to commemorate the Armenian genocide (a label that to this day Turkey, together with a number of other countries, still refuses to accept). Among many others, two important but very different institutions – the European Parliament and the Pope – spoke openly and strongly about the genocide. As *The New York Times* reported, 'Pope Francis called the massacres "the first genocide of the 20th century" and equated them to mass killings by the Nazis and Soviets. The European Parliament, which first recognized the genocide in 1987, passed a resolution [in April 2015] calling on Turkey to "come to terms with its past".'³²

is vast. See, among many others, Donald Bloxham and Dirk A. Moses, *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Bernard Bruneteau, *Le Siècle des génocides: Violences, massacres et processus génocidaires de l'Arménie au Rwanda*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005); *Storia, verità, giustizia. I crimini del XX secolo*, ed. Marcello Flores, (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2001).

³¹ See, for example, a recent op-ed, Abdullah Demirbas, "Undoing Years of Progress in Turkey," *The New York Times*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/25/...in-turkey.html>.

³² See Peter Baker, "White House Acknowledges Armenian Genocide, But Avoids the Term," *The New York Times*, April 21, 2015. The same article highlighted also how the US President Barack Obama had not yet used the word genocide to refer to these massacres. He instead used the definitions 'the first mass atrocity of the 20th century,' 'the horrors of 1915' and 'a dark

The commemorations in 2015 also included symbolic acts such as turning off the lights of the Coliseum and the Eiffel Tower,³³ or the first ever concert of the Armenian-American band *System of a Down*, in Yerevan.³⁴

The president of the CER at the time, Riccardo Pacifici, joined in the commemoration, also speaking openly about and linking together genocides: ‘Unfortunately the Armenian genocide took place in the face of the indifference of the people [*popoli*, plural, in Italian], allowing for other tyrannical minds to conceive other genocides. The Shoah... found its space in that indifference. Unfortunately, today the free world is still unable to fully express a decisive reaction against similar phenomena.’³⁵ Two key features emerge strongly from this statement. First, the link between the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide is not incidental, for Pacifici, but actually causal: the indifference that met and continued to meet the Armenian genocide fed the indifference in the face of the Holocaust. Secondly, Pacifici highlights the continuing danger of genocide and acknowledges that these are not closed pages in history: implicit in this is the suggestion that we can learn how to prevent new massacres by reflecting on these two genocides.

The strong link between the two events was also present in the commemoration which took place a year before, in April 2014, when for the first time ever the Armenian Ambassador in Italy, Sargis Ghazaryan, talked about the genocide in an Italian school: this happened, not coincidentally, at the Jewish school of Rome. As the magazine *Roma Ebraica* [Jewish Rome] reported, ‘In the building situated at Portico d’Ottavia, where the Roman Jews were gathered to be

chapter in history’. See also Peter Baker, “For Anniversary of Armenian Genocide, Obama Calls It an ‘Atrocity’ Instead,” *The New York Times*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/politics/.../2015/04/23/for-anniversary-of-armenian-genocide...> .

³³ “Colosseo e Tour Eiffel si spengono per ricordare il genocidio armeno,” *Comunità Armena*, April 24, 2015, <http://www.comunitaarmena.it/colosseo-e-tour-eiffel-si-spengono-per-ricordare-il-genocidio-armeno-24-apr-2015/>.

³⁴ Kory Grow, “Genocide and Kim Kardashian: The Bloody History Behind System of a Down’s Tour,” *Rolling Stone*, January 8, 2015, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/features/system-of-a-down-serj-tankian-armenian-genocide-new-album-20150108#ixzz3tOLiwM9v>.

On the relationship between music and the Armenian genocide, see Jack Der-Sarkissian, “Musical Perspectives on the Armenian Genocide: From Aznavour to ‘System of a Down,’” in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard Hovannisian, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007), 213-225.

³⁵ “Genocidio armeno, Pacifici: ‘Si segua l’esempio del popolo ebraico e di quello tedesco,’” *Roma Ebraica*, April 24, 2015, <http://www.romaebraica.it/genocidio-armeno-pacifici-si-segua-lesempio-del-popolo-ebraico-e-tedesco/>.

deported to Nazi concentration and extermination camps, students listened to the history of another massacre, that of the Armenian population, which took place at the beginning of 20th century.”³⁶ This was also the first time that the CER and the Embassy of Armenia in Italy had collaborated. On the occasion Pacifici commented that, “as a Jewish Community we also need to be vessels of the memory of the Armenian genocide and I hope this will set an example for others.” Ghazaryan insisted, “today we are proving our universality – not against someone but against any form of relativism and historical revisionism, as well as any form of negationism. I know I am touching some sensible chords [*nervi*] in this community ... but these are also ours. We, who are heirs of the survivors, have a message to bear.”³⁷ For Pacifici, there is a further link between the two genocides, relating to what the Turkish people can learn from the process of repentance and overcoming of the past by the German people and their renewed relationship with the Jewish people:

We would like to imagine that this 100-year anniversary could open the way to reconciliation between the Armenian and the Turkish people. Today in Germany on January 27, the Day of Repentance [*Giornata del Pentimento*³⁸] is celebrated. We hope that this model of collective and institutional consciousness can be adopted by Turkish society and its leaders, within a spirit of reconciliation that could open way to integration in the European Union, an institution that rejects all xenophobic, racist, and anti-Semitic sentiment.³⁹

The reference to the European Union is a pivotal one, as it highlights how the wider geopolitical context and the transnational nature of memory cultures in contemporary Europe have influenced the decision-making at a local, micro-level in the contact between the CER and representatives of Armenian communities

³⁶ “La scuola ebraica commemora il genocidio armeno,” *Roma Ebraica*, April 24, 2013, <http://www.romaebraica.it/la-scuola-ebraica-commemora-il-genocidio-armeno/>.

³⁷ Similarly Ruth Dureghello, at the time the schools councillor [*assessore*] of the CER and now the president of the community, said: “Memory is a universal value because genocide is never against one people but always against humanity” (*Ibid.*).

³⁸ The official name of the January 27th celebration in Germany is *Tag des Gedenkens an die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* [literally, Day of Remembrance for the Victims of National Socialism], therefore the word forgiveness does not appear. The German Parliament’s website refers to it with a generic “Ceremony of Remembrance,” <http://www.bundestag.de/...remembrance/403466>. Finally, *Buß- und Betttag* [Day of repentance and prayer] is a Lutheran holiday celebrated in Germany – unrelated to Holocaust remembrance.

³⁹ “Genocidio armeno, Pacifici.”

in Rome. This is true of course for Israel as well, a state with which, for obvious reasons, the CER has very strong ties. Since diplomatic relationships between Israel and Turkey have been notably turbulent in recent years, this could have facilitated the strengthened relationship between the CER and Armenian institutions in Rome. Israel is present as well, in different forms, in the practices of memorialization that take place outside of its borders. For example, the CER asked the *Keren Kayemet LeIsrael* [KKL, the Jewish National Fund] to plant trees in Israel in order to commemorate the Armenian victims of genocide.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, it is worth noting that despite some steps in the last year in this direction, Israel still does not recognize officially the events of 1915 as genocide.⁴¹

To conclude, the relationship between the CER and the Armenian representatives in Italy is clearly one of friendship and mutual respect. Not only did the CER participate in the commemoration of the Armenian genocide, but the Armenian ambassador also commemorated the Italian Shoah. On 15 October 2015, the day before the commemoration of the deportation of the Jews of Rome, Ambassador Ghazaryan spoke at a presentation of a book on the German soldier and witness of the Armenian genocide Armin Wegner, highlighting how: “[o]ur responsibility as Armenians and Jews who survived the genocides is to fill the void of indifference. Unfortunately, crimes against humanity are not relegated to the history books, but still belong to current events.” Furthermore, he stressed the importance of commemorating the genocides together, Armenians and Jews.⁴²

This increasing attention paid to the genocide of the Armenians reflects how the two genocides, Armenian and the Shoah, are also seen together in Holocaust studies institutions and educational entities. Ian Hancock discusses this in a provocative article, where he uses the Armenian genocide as a foil and contrast to the Romani exterminations:

...the Facing History and Ourselves organization’s Holocaust *Resource Book*

⁴⁰ “La scuola ebraica commemora.”

⁴¹ See Yair Auron, *The Banality of Denial: Israel and the Armenian Genocide*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003). For recent developments, Raphael Ahren, “Why Israel still refuses to recognize a century-old genocide.” *The Times of Israel*, April 24, 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/why-israel-still-refuses-to-recognize-a-century-old-genocide/>.

⁴² “Ambasciatore armeno, insieme a ebrei per combattere indifferenza (Ansa),” *Comunità Armena*, October 15, 2015, <http://www.comunitaarmena.it/amb-armeno-insieme-a-ebrei-per-combattere-indifferenza-ansa-15-10-15/>.

lists just five pages in the index for ‘Sinti and Roma,’ but eighteen under ‘Armenians’— who weren’t victims of the Holocaust... The 2005 annual Scholars’ Conference on the Holocaust included nothing in its program on Romanies, though it does have a special session commemorating the Armenian Genocide. There is Armenian representation on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council too, but no Romani member.⁴³ There was the Final Solution of the Gypsy Question – but there was no Final Solution of the Armenian Question. Does it take money to face real history?⁴⁴

Nonetheless, in Rome, the extermination of the Romani people has been in these past years a topic of remembrance, with the support also of the CER. It is probably fair to say that, in the case of Rome, Adam Jones’s remarks in his *Genocide. A Comprehensive Introduction* are more appropriate than Hancock’s polemic: “Perhaps more than any other group, the Nazi genocide against Romani peoples parallels the attempted extermination of European Jews.”⁴⁵ The CER has in fact participated in several commemorative events honouring the Porrajmos.⁴⁶

But we must first backtrack and discuss the history of the Porrajmos and how it has been acknowledged (or not) in Italy. If in many cases the idea of an Italian Holocaust is still not completely established and often scholars have to explain

⁴³ Recently the Romani scholar and activist Ethel Brooks, a professor of Sociology and Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers University, was appointed by President Obama to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. See John Chadwick, “Scholar of Romani Descent Ensures Legacy of Her Ancestors Isn’t Lost,” *Rutgers News*, May 23, 2016, <http://news.rutgers.edu/.../scholar-romani-descent-ensures-legacy-her-ancestors-isnt-lost/20160522....> Two other Romani members have served on the Council appointed by the President: William Duna (1987-1997) and Ian Hancock himself (1997-2002). I owe this information to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

⁴⁴ Originally published in Ian Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust: a Reevaluation and an Overview,” in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 383-396; 392-393. The quotation here is taken from a slightly different version of the paper published on the website of *The Romani Archives and Documentation Center* (RADOC), http://www.radoc.net/...holocaust_porrajmos&lang=en now stored at Archive.org, https://web.archive.org/...holocaust_porrajmos&lang=en. Hancock is the director of the center and archive.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Genocide*, 274.

⁴⁶ On the use of this or other terms to name this genocide, see Luca Bravi and Matteo Bassoli, *Il porrajmos in Italia, La persecuzione di rom e sinti durante il fascismo*, (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2013). According to Bravi and Bassoli, the term was originally used by Hancock (13).

how the Italian Jews were also affected by the Nazi exterminations,⁴⁷ conducted with the active cooperation of Italian Fascists, this is even truer for Romani people in Italy. Only recently has the Romani genocide started being a topic for serious academic research in Italy, as well as the subject of a recently established virtual museum⁴⁸ and a series of publications⁴⁹ providing useful context and information. At the conclusion of their book *Il porrajmos in Italia*, Luca Bravi and Matteo Bassoli write: “It is possible to assert that the Porrajmos in Italy existed and had a national character.”⁵⁰ In Rome there is a Romani community (or, rather, communities) of about 10,000 people,⁵¹ largely scattered among camps, both legal and illegal.⁵² These camps, in Rome and elsewhere in Italy, are often treated and described as ghettos,⁵³ drawing a link—whether voluntary or involuntary—between old forms of social exclusion that plagued Jews for centuries, and the current situation of Rom and Sinti peoples in the Italian peninsula in general and, in particular, in the city of Rome.

Although the Porrajmos has a separate dedicated date of commemoration (2

⁴⁷ Iael Nidam-Orvieto refers to the “common perception of Fascist Italy according to which Italy was a safe haven for persecuted Jews during the Holocaust,” which she describes as ‘extremely incorrect’ and ‘false’. See “Fascist Italy and the Jews: Myth Versus Reality,” a video in the series *Insights and Perspectives from Holocaust Researchers and Historians*, produced by Yad Vashem and the Claims Conference, http://www.yadvashem.org/...video/fascist_italy.asp. Nidam-Orvieto was at the time this video was shot (2010) editor-in-chief of Yad Vashem Publications.

⁴⁸ See “Memors. Il primo museo virtuale del Porrajmos in Italia. La persecuzione dei Rom e dei Sinti nel periodo fascista,” <http://porrajmos.it/?lang=it>

⁴⁹ These publications are summarized in Bravi and Bassoli, *Il porrajmos in Italia*, 14-24 and 101-104.

⁵⁰ Bravi and Bassoli, *Il porrajmos in Italia*, 97. On the Romanies and the Holocaust in general, see Hancock, “Romanies and the Holocaust.”

⁵¹ David Forgacs, *Italy's Margins. Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 265.

⁵² For a treatment of the politics surrounding the Romani people in Italy in the last fifty years, see Nando Sigona, “The Governance of Romani People in Italy: Discourse, Policy and Practice,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16/5 (2011): 590-606.

⁵³ “Sociologists, social workers, school teachers, politicians, and those who live near them, they all say that Roma camps are *ghettos*, they trigger uneasiness and illegality,” Alessandra Coppola and Rinaldo Frignani, “In Italia 40 mila persone vivono nei campi rom: il 60% ha meno di 18 anni,” May 29, 2015, http://www.corriere.it/cronache/15_maggio_29/italia-40-mila-persone-vivono-campi-rom...shtml, emphasis added. The word “ghetto” is used also in the title of a book dedicated to the Romani experience in Italy: Nando Sigona, *Figli del ghetto: gli italiani, i campi nomadi e l'invenzione degli zingari*, (Civezzano, Trento: Nonluoghi, 2002).

August),⁵⁴ it is often remembered together with the Jewish genocide, on the occasion of the *Giorno della memoria* and other commemorative events. In Rome, a torchlight procession has taken place every year since 2001, ending at the plaque in Via degli Zingari dedicated to the Rom and Sinti victims who died during the Holocaust (see *Fig. 3*).⁵⁵ This torchlight procession commemorates the ‘*stermini dimenticati*’ [forgotten exterminations].⁵⁶ The march is promoted by a number of different associations, and it has been attended by delegates of the CER, such as Claudio Procaccia in 2015 or Massimo Misano in 2007.⁵⁷ In 2006, the then president of the CER, Leone Paserman, sent his greetings to the people marching and to the organizers: “We Jews cannot forget our brotherhood in pain [*la nostra fratellanza nel dolore*] because we shared the same pain in Auschwitz ... I speak for the entire Jewish Community when I say that I am close to you and hope that many citizens participate in your initiative, so that the memory of all those who have been exterminated be kept alive and, moreover, help us build a more just and more humane world.”⁵⁸

This participation in the commemoration of the Romani genocide is part of a larger effort to build a monument to commemorate other Nazi exterminations in the city of Rome, as reported by *Redattore Sociale*:

In 2013 a deliberation approved by the *Assemblea capitolina* [the Rome municipal council] ... gave some hope for the realization of a monument which would commemorate all the victims of Nazifascism who are orphans of memory – as the organizers of the meeting declared – that is, homosexuals, transsexuals, disabled people, Roma and Sinti.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ The day remembers the massacre of almost 3000 Roma in Auschwitz. In 2015 the European Union voted to recognize this date officially; see “MEPs Urge End to Roma Discrimination and Recognition of Roma Genocide Day,” *European Parliament News*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/...Roma-Genocide-Day> .

⁵⁵ *Zingari* mean gypsies, and like in English the word can carry a derogatory meaning. I am grateful to officials at the *Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali* in Rome for information on this plaque and on the processes of proposal and installation of such memorials, on which I draw in this section.

⁵⁶ “Roma, un monumento per ricordare gli stermini dimenticati,” *Redattore Sociale*, January 25, 2014, <http://www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/...gli-stermini-dimenticati?stampa=s> .

⁵⁷ “Roma: fiaccolata della memoria dei diversi,” *Archivio Romano Lil* (website of Opera Nomadi), January 29, 2007, <http://archivioromanolil.blog.tiscali.it/2007/...> .

⁵⁸ “Il Porrajmos: Roma 27 gennaio,” *Archivio Romano Lil*, January 13, 2006, http://archivioromanolil.blog.tiscali.it/2006/01/13/il_porrajmos... .

⁵⁹ “Roma, un monumento per ricordare gli stermini dimenticati.” On this planned monument see also, Mauro Cioffari, “Giorno Memoria, Cioffari (Sel): ‘Un monumento a rom, omosessuali e

The CER is involved at different levels in this project, one that include not only the planning of a monument but also projects for pedagogical work in schools and with young people. In the words of the organizers, “in 2009 three associations ... presented to the department of educational policies of the municipality of Rome, together with the CER and ANPI [the National Association of Italian Partisans], a project for Roman schools, which would include the production of a film and a book. The project was then revitalized in October 2013.”⁶⁰ The project was subsequently restructured and integrated with a larger European project entitled “MEMOIR - Forgotten Massacres. Memories And Remembrance of the Roma, Homosexual And Disabled People Holocaust,” which was presented in Rome in October 2015. The CER is not one of the partners of the project, but Claudio Procaccia participated in the presentation.⁶¹

Even more important to note in this context is the involvement of the CER in the installation of the only plaque dedicated in Rome to-date to these ‘other genocides’ perpetrated by the Nazis and Fascists present in Rome, the plaque mentioned above to the Romani in Via degli Zingari.

disabili perseguitati dal nazifascismo,” *Roma Today*, January 27, 2015, <http://www.romatoday.it/...monumento-ai-rom-.html>. The grouping of several exterminations, all the while keeping them separate from the Holocaust, raises a number of issues that fall beyond the scope of this paper: for example, it highlights the fact there are always genocides and exterminations that are more forgotten than others, always an implied hierarchy of memory: Jehovah’s Witnesses, for example, are not included in the group.

⁶⁰ “Roma, un monumento per ricordare gli stermini dimenticati.”

⁶¹ “Presentazione Progetto Memoir – Mercoledì 28 Ottobre ore 10.00,” *Mario Mieli. Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale*, October 28, 2015, <http://www.mariomieli.net/presentazione-progetto-memoir...html>. Another large project on the Porrajmos was launched in 2006 by the *Opera Nomadi* in collaboration with UCEI. See “Il Porrajmos dimenticato, presentazione,” *Archivio Romano Lil*, January 3, 2006, http://archivioromanolil.blog.tiscali.it/...porrajmos_dimenticato.



Fig. 3: A plaque dedicated to Rom and Sinti who died during the Holocaust, located in Via degli Zingari, Rome. Author's photograph.

This is a very important, if not very well known monument in Rome: it is the only one of its kind in a sea of memorial plaques;⁶² its creation involved the collaboration of different entities working together: the *Opera Nomadi* (a national Romani group), the CER, the *Comune di Roma* (Rome city council), together with a Roman school, the *Istituto Commerciale 'Lucio Lombardo Radice'*; and it was unveiled on the occasion of the first *Giorno della Memoria*, in January of 2001. The place was chosen because, as the name suggests, the area had been since the 1400s a meeting place for Roma and transient people travelling to Rome.⁶³ The proposal for the plaque was presented to the *Commissione Storia e Arte* [History and Art Commission] of the Rome council on 30 November 1998, that is before the approval of the *Giorno della Memoria*. The Commission approved the placing of the plaque on the walls of a former school⁶⁴ which belongs to the city, in January 2001. The link between the

⁶² An important work of cataloguing is Giuseppe Mogavero, *I muri ricordano. La Resistenza a Roma attraverso le epigrafi (1943-1945)*, (Bolsena: Massari, 2002), now slightly dated as many plaques have been placed since its publication in 2002. See also *19 luglio 1943, 4 giugno 1944: Roma verso la libertà*, 171-189.

⁶³ See Benedetto Blasi, *Stradario romano. Dizionario storico etimologico topografico*, (Rome: Edizioni del Pasquino, 1980), 343.

⁶⁴ The former school is now abandoned. Between 2004 and 2006 it was an occupied center for the arts and a squat. See Manuel Massimo, “‘Angelo Mai,’ la scuola che non c’è: cantiere fantasma

persecutions of the Romani people and the Jews is here extremely clear, as the plaque declares its commemoration of “Rom, Sinti, and Travellers who died in the extermination camps together with Jews.” The plaque also offers a warning, “... so that this history should never happen again,” and evokes a universalistic and humanitarian principle, “for brotherhood among all the peoples.”⁶⁵ The way it interacts with the immediate neighborhood is also interesting: much like the former Jewish Ghetto of Rome (which was once a working-class neighborhood and is now a hip, gentrified location), the Monti neighborhood, where Via degli Zingari is located, is undergoing a similar transformation. Curiously, there is no mention of the plaque in the unofficial monthly magazine of the CER, *Shalom*, which in February 2001 dedicated many pages to the commemoration of the *Giorno della memoria*.⁶⁶

Before moving to a conclusion, I turn finally to highlight the CER’s participation in events regarding the commemoration of another event of mass extermination, the Rwandan genocide. The comparison of the Holocaust to Rwanda is far from unique to Rome or Italy. In November 2014, for example, an important conference was organized by Yair Auron (who has worked on Israel and ‘other’ genocides) at the Open University of Israel. Gabriele Nissim, Italian historian author of several books on the ‘Righteous among the Nations,’ was present at the event and he wrote that the conference aimed “not only to compare the two genocide cases [Rwandan and Shoah], but to launch a true debate about the distortions of memory that happen in Israel. While opening the proceedings, [Auron] immediately expressed his sense of emotion: “It’s the first time in seventy years that we in Israel discuss the other genocide cases and look at the

nel cuore di Roma,” *La Repubblica*, May 3, 2011, <http://roma.repubblica.it/.../2011/05/03/.../>. The building is now intermittently under renovation; see Lili Garrone, “Scuola, il cantiere infinito (e incompiuto) dell’Angelo Mai,” *Il Corriere della Sera - Roma*, January 22, 2016, http://roma.corriere.it/.../16_gennaio_21/...shtml.

⁶⁵ The Italian text reads: “Il Comune di Roma L’Opera Nomadi e la Comunità Ebraica posero a perenne ricordo dei ROM SINTI E CAMMINANTI che insieme agli ebrei perirono nei campi di sterminio ad opera della barbarie genocida del nazifascismo perché questa storia non si ripeta più, per non dimenticare, per la fratellanza fra tutti i popoli” [see *Fig. 3*].

⁶⁶ The same is true for newspapers based in Rome, which dedicated little space to the march that preceded the unveiling of the plaque and to the unveiling itself. See for example: “Fosse Ardeatine, i fiori della discordia,” *Il Messaggero*, January 27, 2001, 32; “Da Roma a Fossoli le celebrazioni in Italia,” *La Repubblica*, January 26, 2001, 45. In both cases, the articles are general accounts of events marking the *Giorno della Memoria*.

Holocaust through different eyes.”⁶⁷ The event was attended, among others, by the survivor of the Rwandan genocide and writer Yolande Mukagasana,⁶⁸ who in 2008 also participated in a roundtable discussion hosted at the Jewish school of Rome.⁶⁹ The CER hosted and organized this event on the occasion of the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda, which takes place on 7 April.⁷⁰ As this demonstrates, the CER has been interested in the commemoration of the Rwandan genocide for several years: we can add that in April 2010 the CER participated in a similar event, organized this time at the Teatro Piccolo Eliseo in Rome,⁷¹ and that in November 2015, the CER president Ruth Dureghello talked at the presentation of the recently formed association *Ibuka Italia – Memoria e Giustizia* – an umbrella organization for the remembrance and commemoration of the victims in Rwanda, which took place at the Italian Parliament.⁷²

In an article of April 2014, Piero Di Nepi remembers the event that took place in 2008 at the Jewish school: Di Nepi puts the Nazi Holocaust in relation to the Rwandan genocide (the subtitle begins significantly, ‘As in the Nazi genocide, the Hutu genocide...’) but also highlights the risk of focusing only on the Shoah: “We should stop being, in reality, Eurocentric: these are names [those of the Rwandan victims] which are worth as much as those we carry with us and list every 27 January.”⁷³ He also discusses the Rwandan genocide as a post-colonial and neo-colonial one, echoing Michael Rothberg’s important work on the

⁶⁷ Gabriele Nissim, “Israel, a revolution in the field of memory,” *Gariwo – La Foresta dei Giusti*, November 11, 2014, <http://en.gariwo.net/editorials/israel-a-revolution-in-the-field-of-memory-11745.html>. However, there is a longer history of comparative genocide debate in Israel: a similar event, the ‘International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide,’ which sparked polemical debate, took place in 1982. See the booklet <http://web.asc.upenn.edu/gerbner/...2545>.

⁶⁸ For the poster of the conference (in Hebrew) see: <http://www.openu.ac.il/...genocidem14.html>. See also Anna Foa, “...genocidi,” in *Moked*, November 17, 2014, <http://moked.it/blog...genocidi-4/>. For a short biography of Mukagasana see: <http://www.romamultiethnica.it/...yolande-mukagasana.html>.

⁶⁹ See “Giornata Internazionale della Memoria per il 16 anniversario del genocidio del Rwanda,” *Bene Rwanda*, April 4, 2008, <http://www.benerwanda.org/?p=282>

⁷⁰ See <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/...shtml>.

⁷¹ See “Giornata Internazionale della Memoria per il 16 anniversario del genocidio del Rwanda,” *Bene Rwanda*, March 23, 2010, <http://www.benerwanda.org/?p=1589>

⁷² See “Presentazione dell’Associazione ‘Ibuka Italia – Memoria e Giustizia’ per il genocidio del Ruanda,” *Camera dei deputati*, November 20, 2015, <http://www.camera.it/leg17/...9617>.

⁷³ Piero di Nepi, “Il massacro dei 100 giorni,” *Shalom* 7, (April 2014). In the same issue see also D.T., “Ruanda, venti anni fa un genocidio dimenticato.”

‘multidirectional’ links between Holocaust memory and the post-colonial era.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The events and acts of commemoration analyzed in this paper undoubtedly represent a partial list, but they nevertheless give an idea of the involvement of the CER in memorial practices which go beyond the remembrance of the Shoah, of the intersection of Jewish memorialization with the acknowledgement and shared memory of other genocides. Whether or not these interactions are qualitatively and quantitatively ‘enough,’ they exist, and they generate a number of different questions, such as the complex question of the internal and analytical understanding of an idea of common grief (the *fratellanza nel dolore*, to use Paserman’s words); the idea of the Jewish Holocaust as a paradigm for reading and responding to other forms of genocidal violence; the ambivalences and strengths of the attempt to join forces with other victims in order to prevent future massacres and to focus attention on present ones. These in turn raise further questions: what is to be included in acts of memorialization? What is considered worthy of being remembered, and according to which principles? The answers to these questions from the specific perspective of Rome and its Jewish Community lie in the political-cultural choices of the CER, but it is also important to consider how these practices in some cases may occur as the result of the strong initiative of particularly motivated individuals, organizations, or institutions (embassies, NGOs etc.), or may be influenced by international politics. The CER case study is particularly fruitful for considering these questions, precisely because of its specific positionality within the frame of Roman, Italian, and international politics and culture – and Jewish Roman, Jewish Italian, and Jewish culture. The CER case could be compared with the practices of memory of other Jewish communities in Europe and elsewhere, particularly in largely multi-ethnic cities and countries with large Jewish communities, such as the United States or Argentina and Brazil – let alone Israel, which presents a completely different set of questions. Comparable studies may be carried out for cities like London and Paris, which have large Jewish communities and which host also an array of different communities and ethnic groups.

I want finally to conclude by noting how these practices are also part of a

⁷⁴ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

complex contemporary Italian politics of memory in which the CER is deeply involved. Such practices are far from being peacefully accepted and normalized – on the contrary, in recent years they have sparked conflict, which has sometimes even been violent in nature. Such is the case, for example, of the participation in marches for the anniversary of the Liberation of Italy on 25 April,⁷⁵ which involved disputes with pro-Palestinian militants, or other occasional confrontations with militants that exploded into fights and brawls.⁷⁶ The CER also celebrates other events that have affected the Italian nation as a whole: for example, in 2014 the Jewish Museum of Rome organized an exhibition on the participation of Jewish soldiers in the First World War.⁷⁷ The CER also regularly expresses its position on contemporary matters, often through the presence of large banners on the Rome Synagogue or in other areas of the former Jewish Ghetto area of the city: in some cases these are hung by non-official or semi-official entities, such as the young people of the Community, while other banners have been positioned by official entities within the Community. As an example, a tall banner dedicated to Ron Arad (an Israeli soldier missing in action since 1986) stood for some time next to another banner that advocated the liberation of two Italian marines arrested in India, thus aligning with a campaign that has been spearheaded largely by right-wing constituents in Italy. All of these commemorative practices highlight the kaleidoscopic memorial and political practices of the Jewish Community of the capital city of Italy, within which its interactions with other genocides alongside the Holocaust need to be understood.

⁷⁵ Three contributions help to contextualize this complicated matter: Riccardo Pacifici, “Il 25 Aprile ritrovato al fianco della Brigata Ebraica,” *romaebraica.it*, April 26, 2015, <http://www.romaebraica.it/il-25-aprile-ritrovato.../>; Giovanni Pietrangeli, “Disintossichiamoci il 25 aprile! Alcune riflessioni sulle commemorazioni oltre le identità,” *Minima et Moralia*, May 4, 2014, <http://www.minimaetmoralia.it/wp/riflessioni-sulle-commemorazioni.../>; Gad Lerner, “Abu Mazen, la memoria della Shoah e la scelta regressiva della Brigata Ebraica,” *GadLerner.it*, April 28, 2014, <http://www.gadlerner.it/2014/04/28/abu-mazen-la-memoria-della-shoah-e-la-scelta-regressiva-della-brigata-ebraica>.

⁷⁶ See, among others, “Luci spente al Colosseo per Shalit e rissa tra ebrei romani e ‘Free Gaza,’” *La Repubblica Roma*, June 25, 2010, <http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2010/06/25/.../>.

⁷⁷ On this exhibition, see: http://lnx.museoebraico.roma.it/w/?page_id=4349. The *foibe*, possibly the site where the most controversial battles over memory have been fought in recent years in Italy, have also been occasionally used to counterbalance the memory of the Shoah in the city of Rome, at times in contrast to the agenda of the memory practices of the CER. An example is found in the position of the former mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, about which see Damiano Garofalo, “La memorializzazione delle Foibe e il paradigma della Shoah,” *Officine della storia*, 13 (2015), <http://www.officinadellastoria.info/magazine/index...>

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**Between Local and Global Politics of Memory:
Transnational Dimensions of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary
Serbian Prose Fiction and Film**

by Stijn Vervaet

Abstract

*Serbia joined the ITF (Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research) in 2011. This resulted in increased institutional efforts to pay more attention to Holocaust education and commemoration. However, critics have observed that many of these state-supported initiatives use the Holocaust to conceal the state's role as perpetrator or accomplice in mass war crimes and genocide committed during the Second World War and during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Against this backdrop, I discuss two recent Serbian Holocaust novels, Ivan Ivanji's *Man of Ashes* (2006) and Zoran Penevski's *Less Important Crimes* (2005), and Goran Paskaljević's film *When Day Breaks* (2012). I argue that Holocaust memory in these works does not function as a 'screen memory' – one memory that covers up or suppresses other, undesired memories – but as a prism through which memories of the recent Yugoslav past as well as stories of present injustice, which the dominant political elites and mainstream society would prefer to forget or not to see, are filtered and brought to light. Ivanji, who is well acquainted with the politics of memory both in Germany and Serbia, also reflects critically upon the current globalization of Holocaust remembrance, thus providing feedback on the possibilities and limits of the memorial culture stimulated by the ITF.*

Introduction

The IHRA in South-Eastern Europe: Towards the Europeanization of Holocaust Memory in the Former Yugoslavia?

Ivan Ivanji's *Man of Ashes*: Remembering the Holocaust in the Shadow of Goethe's Oak

Zoran Penevski's *Less Important Crimes*: Towards a Digital 'Constellation of Self-Critical National Memories'

Goran Paskaljević's Film *When Day Breaks*: Between the Duty to Remember and the Pitfalls of Didacticism

Conclusion

Introduction¹

Since the foundation of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education and Research (ITF, since 2013 known as IHRA – International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) at the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in January 2000, a European transnational politics of memory has emerged that puts the Holocaust high on the agenda.² Signed by more than 40 participating countries at the closing of this conference, the Stockholm Declaration not only put great emphasis on the importance of Holocaust remembrance and education but also framed to a large extent the Holocaust in terms of a universal moral lesson in good and evil.³ Aleida Assmann distinguished two major goals in IHRA's programme, which she aptly summarized as follows: "1) to transform [the memory of the Holocaust] into a long-term memory at the moment when the communicative memory of survivor-witnesses was fading away" and "2) to carry the memory of the Holocaust across European borders by creating a supranational memory community with an extended infrastructure of social institutions, finances and cooperative networks."⁴ Indeed, it is important to keep in mind that international consensus about the importance of Holocaust memory and the need to create institutions and networks to sustain and disseminate it was reached because of the growing awareness that soon there will be no Holocaust survivors alive who could bear witness to what they went

¹ I would like to thank Robert Gordon, Emiliano Perra, Jakob Lothe, and *Quest's* anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. All translations are my own: I am grateful to Vlad Beronja for his help in making my translations from Serbian sound more natural. Finally, I would like to thank Zoran Penevski for providing the cover image of his novel *Less Important Crimes* and for giving his permission to reproduce it in this article.

² The ITF / IHRA was initiated by Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson in May 1998. For the history of the IHRA, see: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/history-ihra> (this and all websites accessed 9 September 2016).

³ It says, among other things, that 'the unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning' (article 1), that "the magnitude of the Holocaust [...] must be forever seared in our collective memory. [...] The depths of that horror, and the heights of the heroism [of those who defied the Nazis] can be touchstones in our understanding of the human capacity for evil and for good" (article 2). The full text of the Stockholm Declaration is available at: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration>.

⁴ Aleida Assmann, "The Holocaust, a Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community," in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 97–117; 102.

through. The awareness of this coming ‘after testimony,’ as Jakob Lothe, Susan Suleiman, and James Phelan suggest, “also implies an obligation to the future,’ a requirement to ‘thin[k] about the future of Holocaust narrative and about the afterlife of Holocaust narratives in different cultures.”⁵ It is against the backdrop of this constellation – of the awareness of the ‘after-testimony’ era, of joint international efforts to remember the Holocaust, and of their local reception and implementation – that I will explore Holocaust literature and film as a medium of transnational memory in post-conflict Serbia.

I will examine how recent Serbian Holocaust fiction ties in with and reflects upon international debates about Holocaust commemoration and education. How do authors from Serbia of different generations tackle the ‘obligation’ towards the future of Holocaust narrative? How does their work relate to and reflect on the shift towards the ‘Europeanization’ and ‘universalization’ of Holocaust memory in the former Yugoslavia? I will examine two recent Holocaust novels from Serbia, Ivan Ivanji’s *Man of Ashes* (2006) and Zoran Penevski’s *Less Important Crimes* (2005), as well as Goran Paskaljević’s film *When Day Breaks* (directed by Paskaljević, the scenario was written by Filip David, 2012).⁶ I will argue that in these works, contrary to ‘official’ memory politics, Holocaust memory does not function as a ‘screen memory’ (*Deckerinnerung*) in Freud’s sense, that is, as one memory covering up or repressing other, undesired memories.⁷ Drawing on Michael Rothberg’s model of multidirectional memory, I will show how in the works discussed, Holocaust memory functions as a prism through which memories of the recent Yugoslav past, as well as stories of present injustice that the dominant political elites and mainstream society would prefer to forget or not to see (or, crucially, to have them substituted by other memories), are filtered and

⁵ Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman and James Phelan, “Introduction: ‘After’ Testimony,” in *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, eds. Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), 1–19; 2–3.

⁶ Due to space limits, I will focus on a selection of works from Serbia only. Relevant works from Croatia would have been Miljenko Jergović’s novel *Ruta Tannenbaum* (2005), Slobodan Šnajder’s play *The Fifth Gospel* (*Peto jevanđelje*, 2004), and numerous novels by Daša Drndić.

⁷ In his rereading of Freud’s concept of screen memory, Michael Rothberg argued that “the displacement that takes place in screen memory (indeed, in all memory) functions as much to open up lines of communication with the past as to close them off.” See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 12.

brought to light in a non-competitive, intrinsically multidirectional way.⁸ My reading of these three works is particularly inspired by Max Silverman's notion of palimpsestic memory.⁹ In the works discussed, the figure of the palimpsest is operative in both the principal ways pointed out by Silverman. First, the works all show that the present is "haunted by a past which is not immediately visible but progressively brought into view" so that the relationship between past and present is evoked as multi-layered, as "a composite structure, like a palimpsest, so that one layer of [temporal] traces can be seen through, and is transformed by, another."¹⁰ Secondly, the figure of the palimpsest can be recognized in the ways in which the works combine "not simply two moments in time (past and present) but a number of different moments, hence producing a chain of signification which draws together disparate spaces and times."¹¹ Very much like Rothberg, Silverman argues that this palimpsestic understanding of memory brings "the prospect of new solidarities across the lines of race and nation."¹² Of course, the interaction between different temporal and geographical layers and how they superimpose on one another is in each work realized with different means and to different ends. Before turning to the novels, I will discuss briefly how the IHRA paved the way towards a European memory culture focusing on the Holocaust and I will give a succinct overview of the first results of this international infrastructure and networking in Serbia.

The IHRA in South-Eastern Europe: Towards the Europeanization of Holocaust Memory in the Former Yugoslavia?

As Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznajder have noted, the Stockholm declaration and the formation of the ITF/IHRA can be seen as part of a broader development of

⁸ In his path-breaking work, Rothberg offers an alternative to competitive understandings of memory, which perceive the interaction of different collective memories as a "zero-sum struggle over scarce resources." Believing in "a direct line between remembrance of the past and the formation of identity in the present," adherents to the "competitive memory model" fear that public attention to one historical trauma necessarily implies the exclusion of other tragedies from the public sphere. Instead, Rothberg suggests that "we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative." *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹ Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*, (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

“the de-territorialization of Holocaust memories,” which “opens up to an abstract and hence universally accessible terrain on which cosmopolitan memories can form.”¹³ While they rightfully consider ‘the Americanization of the Holocaust’ as one of the important triggers of this process of universalization, it is equally important to note that the Holocaust *qua* universal norm “helped Europeans redefine themselves [...]: the need to avoid another Holocaust provided a foundation for (official) European memory.”¹⁴

The first signs of the institutionalization of such an official memory became apparent in 2005, when the European Parliament voted the establishment of Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January (the date on which Auschwitz was liberated by the Red Army), leading Claus Leggewie to claim that the Holocaust had become Europe’s ‘negative foundation myth’ – that is, that the historical trauma of the Holocaust actually paved the way towards European unification.¹⁵ It comes as no surprise, then, that the European Union also expects future members to comply with this ‘memory codex.’ Or as Tony Judt remarked well before Leggewie: “Holocaust recognition is our contemporary European entry ticket.”¹⁶ This also applies to the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Parallel to or as part of their rapprochement with and integration into the European Union, Croatia (in 2005), Slovenia (in 2011), and Serbia (in 2011) became members of the IHRA, while Macedonia currently has the status of observer country.¹⁷ As member states, Croatia and Serbia committed themselves to the goals of the IHRA, which includes “clear public policy commitment to Holocaust education at a senior political level,” the establishment and observation of an annual ‘Holocaust Memorial Day,’ and “the opening of archives related to the Holocaust for researchers,” as well as the guarantee that “there is or will be academic, educational, and public examination of the country’s historical past as related to

¹³ Levy, Daniel and Nathan Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 183.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁵ Claus Leggewie, “Seven Circles of European memory,” *Eurozine*, December 20, 2010, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2010-12-20-leggewie-en.html>.

¹⁶ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 803. Larissa Allwork has recently proposed to see Holocaust remembrance as fostered by the IHRA as a case of ‘civil religion.’ See Allwork: “Holocaust Remembrance as Civil Religion: The Case of the Stockholm Declaration (2000),” in *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era*, eds. Diana I. Popescu and Tanja Schult, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 288–304.

¹⁷ For a list of member and observer countries, see <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/member-countries> and <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/observer-countries> respectively.

the Holocaust period.”¹⁸ Both states are now gradually including the Holocaust into the school curriculum, organizing teacher training (often in collaboration with Yad Vashem), opening exhibitions, and investing in museums, for example. In other words, since their IHRA membership, Croatia and Serbia have been creating the institutions without which, as Assmann reminds us, any politics of memory would be unthinkable and on whose stability the future of Holocaust memory also depends.¹⁹

However, critics have noted that although the institutional efforts by Croatia and Serbia might be theoretically in line with the IHRA’s and European memory politics, in practice this ‘Europeanization of memory’ also has its flip side and has sometimes led to rather ambiguous results that tend to avoid or conceal uncomfortable issues from the national past.²⁰ In Serbia, the first exhibition on the Holocaust, held in spring 2012 in the Museum of Yugoslav History, received criticism for concealing or even omitting the role of domestic collaborators, specifically of the quisling regime of Milan Nedić and the Belgrade police forces led by Dragomir ‘Dragi’ Jovanović, and for not addressing the anti-Semitism of local intellectuals such as bishop Nikolaj Velimirović.²¹ As Milovan Pisarri put it in his review of the exhibition: “The problem lies in the fact that the message it conveys is clear [...]: the Germans are held responsible for the Holocaust, and they are the only ones to blame and hold accountable.”²² Pisarri further criticized the

¹⁸ For the complete list of membership criteria, see <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/membership-criteria>.

¹⁹ Aleida Assmann. *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*, (Munich: Beck, 2006), 238–241.

²⁰ For a critical analysis of the Croatian context, see Ljiljana Radonić, “Standards of Evasion: Croatia and the ‘Europeanization of Memory,’” *Eurozine*, April 6, 2012, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2012-04-06-radonic-en.html>.

²¹ As early as in June 1942, the part of Serbia occupied by Nazi Germany and which was ruled in alliance with the quisling regime of Milan Nedić, was declared to be ‘judenfrei.’ On collaboration with the Axis forces in Serbia, see Ana Antić: “Police Force under Occupation: Serbian State Guard and Volunteers’ Corps in the Holocaust,” in *Lessons and Legacies X. Back to the Sources: Re-Examining Perpetrators*, ed. Sara R. Horowitz, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 13–36; Olivera Milosavljević, *Potisnuta istina. Kolaboracija u Srbiji 1941–1944*, (Belgrade: Helsinski odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2006); Walter Manoschek, *Serbien ist judenfrei*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995), 109–154. On Velimirović, see Jovan Byford, *Denial and Repression of Anti-Semitism: Post-Communist Rehabilitation of the Serbian Bishop Nikolaj Velimirovic*, (New York: Central European University Press, 2007).

²² Milovan Pisarri, “Exhibition on the Holocaust in Serbia: The Problem of Selective Memory,” *Blog Foruma za primenjenu istoriju*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.fpi.rs/blog/exhibition-on-the-holocaust-in-serbia-the-problem-of-selective-memory>.

exhibition for some serious factual errors and for representing the Jewish population in pre-war Yugoslavia as “the ones who were really pulling the strings of Serbian industry and economy on the whole at the time,” a statement that comes close to the stereotypes that lay at the basis of Goebbels’ anti-Jewish propaganda.²³

Lea David has looked more broadly at the ways in which the Serbian state and political elite deal with the memory of the Holocaust in the post-Milošević era. She analyzed the implementation of the IHRA standards as reflected in the school curriculum, Holocaust commemorations and the official speeches held at these occasions, and embodied in the close Israeli-Serbian collaboration between Yad Vashem on the one hand and the Serbian Orthodox Church led by bishop Jovan Ćulibrk on the other. David points out the existence of two different agendas: one that commemorates the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and another that analogously portrays the Serbs themselves as victims of genocide.²⁴ Characterizing the state’s attitude as “simultaneously both neglecting and embracing different segments of Holocaust memory,” David convincingly argues that Serbian policy boils down to a double form of Holocaust instrumentalization. On the one hand, Holocaust memory serves the Serbian state as “a means of dealing with the contradictory demands at the domestic and international levels.” On the other, the state uses the Holocaust as a ‘screen memory’ that not only emphasizes Serbian victimhood during the Second World War and its role as “righteous amongst the nations” but in doing so also redirects attention from “the Serbian role in the wars of the 1990s” towards “a much more suitable discourse on WWII [...] which can be adjusted to both domestic and international demands.”²⁵

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Lea David, “Holocaust as Screen Memory: The Serbian Case,” in *History and Politics in the Balkans*, eds. Srđan Jovanović and Veran Stančetić, (Belgrade: Center for Good Governance Studies, 2013), 64–88.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 65–66; 68; 84. The term ‘righteous amongst the nations’ is used by the state of Israel and Yad Vashem to refer to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazis. As David suggests, the Serbian political and clerical elite embraces the Holocaust to selectively “promot[e] the values of a Human Rights regime” (*Ibid.*, 76). Promoting a master narrative about “Serbian victimization throughout history” (*Ibid.*, 81) the Serbian political and clerical elite avoids discussing Serbian participation in the Yugoslav wars (including the country’s role in or logistic support to the most serious war crimes, such as mass killings, mass rape, or concentration camps in which non-Serbs were interned, tortured and killed) in the same terms of human rights violations as used in debates about the Holocaust or suffering of Serbs during the Second World War. For those reasons, David argues that Holocaust memory is indirectly utilized to “construct and insinuate Serbian righteousness and victimhood in the wars of the 1990s” (*Ibid.*, 81).

As Assmann put it, “national memories cannot be integrated within a European memory as easily as the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research might wish.”²⁶ Indeed, the “two generally recognized and honourable roles for European nations to assume” in the post-war period, the role of victim and that of resister, are characteristic of many Eastern European nations after 1989, as Assmann notes,²⁷ and also seem to be the dominant memory templates in Serbia today. In the state-supported and institutionalized memory of the country, there seems to be no place for what Reinhard Koselleck called ‘negative memory’: the need for a nation to make the effort to remember not only its own victims but also its own, homegrown perpetrators from within the nation.²⁸

To summarize, the IHRA has certainly stimulated Serbia to invest in Holocaust education, leading to efforts that have in effect led to an increase in official commemorations and educational materials ranging from school handbooks, exhibitions, websites, teacher trainings, conferences, and scholarly works. However, the zero-sum logic typical of post-Yugoslav identity building – which puts the victims of the *own* national group in the limelight but has a blind spot for victims of other nationalities killed by members of the own nation – prevails and seems even in uncanny ways to be compatible with the ‘universalizing template’ of the IHRA. In what follows, I will first examine *Man of Ashes*, in which Holocaust survivor Ivan Ivanji, reflecting on the example of the Buchenwald memorial complex, critically examines recent developments in Holocaust memorialization in Germany and thinks through their consequences for the broader European context.

Ivan Ivanji’s *Man of Ashes*: Remembering the Holocaust in the Shadow of Goethe’s Oak

Ever since the publication of his prose debut *They Didn’t Kill Man* in 1954, the

²⁶ Aleida Assmann, “Europe: A Community of Memory?” (Twentieth Annual Lecture of the GHI, November 16, 2006), *GHI Bulletin* 40 (2007): 11–25; 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15; 16–18.

²⁸ Reinhart Koselleck, “Formen und Traditionen des negatives Gedächtnisses,” in *Verbrechen erinnern: Die Auseinandersetzung mit Holocaust und Völkermord*, eds. Volkhard Knigge and Norbert Frei, (München: C. H. Beck), 21–32. Radonić, “Standards of Evasion,” came to similar conclusions regarding Croatia.

writer, translator, and former diplomat Ivan Ivanji has been returning time and again to the concentration camp Buchenwald and its sub-camps (*Außenlager*) in Magdeburg, Niederorschel, and Langenstein-Zwieberge where he had been interned as a Jew during the Holocaust.²⁹ In 1989, he published the novel *Jumping over Your Shadow* (*Preskakanje senke*), followed in the late 1990s and 2000s by many other novels, collections of short stories, and essays.³⁰ His work is unique in that it offers us insight into how a Holocaust survivor keeps writing about the Holocaust over time, not only because he seems to be haunted by the memories of the camps but also perhaps because the changed historical context seems to challenge him to revisit his memories and re-narrate them in light of current debates. While he wrote *They Didn't Kill Man* in an attempt to work through the memories of the horrors he went through – as he put it himself, “I just had to get it down on paper”³¹ – in his more recent fictional and non-fictional work Ivanji approaches the issue of the Holocaust and his own experience and memories of the camps from a different perspective, anchored in and framed by the present.³² In his essays and novels, he reflects upon and problematizes the whole culture and vocabulary of Holocaust remembrance that has emerged over the past decades, particularly in Germany, where he is often invited as a speaker at commemorations or conferences, a reflection that includes his own role as one of the few remaining survivors. At the same time, he does not shy away from connecting the Holocaust

²⁹ The period of Ivanji's 1950s work lies beyond the scope of this paper, not least because Holocaust memory (and countermemory) under socialism in Yugoslavia raises a very different set of questions: in the 1950s Ivanji's contemporaries who addressed the Holocaust included the prominent playwright Đorđe Lebović. On Lebović, see Stijn Vervaeke, “Staging the Holocaust in the Land of Brotherhood and Unity: Holocaust Drama in Socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 92/2 (April 2014): 228-254.

³⁰ These include *Balerina i rat* (*The Ballet Dancer and the War*, 2003), *Poruka u boci* (*Bottle Post*, 2005), *Aveti iz jednog malog grada* (*Ghosts from a Small Town*, 2009), *Slova od kovanog gvožđa* (*Letters of Forged Iron*, 2010), *Moj lepi život u paklu* (2016), and many essays in the Serbian weekly *Vreme* (*Time*) and in journals and edited volumes in German. Many of these recent novels appeared first in German, after which the author himself rewrote them in Serbian (Ivanji prefers the term rewriting over translating). Interview with the author on 5 January 2016; on Ivanji's bi(tri)lingualism, see also his essay “Kinderfräuleinsprache und ‘naški jezik,’ unsere Sprache,” in *Erinnerung an Jugoslawien in der deutschsprachigen Literatur: zur Exophonie*, eds. Kristian Donko and Johann Georg Lughofer, (Ljubljana: Goethe-Institut, 2014), 4-7.

³¹ Interview with the author, January 5, 2016.

³² Thus, writing as ‘working through’ (*Durcharbeiten*) receives here a double meaning: writing as an attempt by the author to free himself of those painful memories, and as Freud's repetition compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*), that is, as the urge to revisit, rework, rewrite the same memories in order to get them somehow under control and give them a place in his life narrative. See Freud, “Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten” (1914) and “Jenseits des Lustprinzips” (1920).

to stories of non-Jewish suffering or dissecting critically new forms of right-wing extremism, xenophobia, and racism or organized state violence in the light of his own experience of Nazism.

Set in 1997–2005 in Buchenwald and Weimar, Ivanji's novel *Man of Ashes* (*Čovek od pepela*, 2006; *Der Aschenmensch von Buchenwald*, 1999) deals directly with the issues of remembering and forgetting, the importance and the contradictions of Holocaust remembrance and education today, and the role of survivors in these processes. The story opens in 1997, when a roof worker, repairing the roof of one of the buildings of the memorial centre at Buchenwald, discovers a large number of urns containing the ashes of victims killed by the Nazis. The director of the centre decides to bury the urns, 701 in total, together in one communal tomb – because the urns were left uncovered, identification of the individual victims was impossible. This is done in a public ceremony in which representatives of the four religions of victims who perished in the camp – a rabbi and a Catholic, a Protestant, and an Orthodox priest – take part, as well as a camp survivor in whom we can recognize Ivanji. However, in an unexpected twist of fate, the 'souls' of the killed merge into one big cloud that hovers over the Ettersberg and the city of Weimar, reminding the living of their duty to remember the victims of the Holocaust. In the course of the novel, it becomes clear that there are different dead inhabiting the Ettersberg, who all claim the right to be remembered.

After a few pages, it emerges that the first person-narrator is a survivor of Buchenwald – apparently Ivanji's alter ego – when, commenting on the impressions a high school student wrote down after his visit to the camp, he notes: "I was the same age as this child when I was interred here as a prisoner wearing the number 58116."³³ The first-person narrator describes his repeated visits to Buchenwald and Weimar on the occasion of the annual commemorations and recalls his memories of the concentration camp. These chapters alternate at random with chapters told by an authorial narrator who describes the birth of the 'Man of Ashes' – an amorphous cloud of 'souls' held together by a force called 'the principle' (in his German version of the novel, Ivanji calls this 'das Es'), who all tell how they died in the camp. As Tihomir Brajović, one of the rare Serbian literary critics who has written about Ivanji's novel, noted, "the narrator was prompted to the act of writing [...], realizing the contradictions of that assiduous and systematic, but at the same time to him deeply problematic and, we could say, in a

³³ Ivan Ivanji, *Čovek od pepela*, (Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 2006), 14. Further references to this novel will be indicated by parenthetical page numbers following the quotes in the main text.

certain way forgetful *Erinnerungsarbeit* or ‘memory work.’”³⁴ Brajović connects Ivanji’s novel to a series of post-Yugoslav novels (by Dubravka Ugrešić, David Albahari, Saša Ilić, and Igor Štiks) that thematize issues of forgetting and remembering in the wake of the Yugoslav wars and whose narrators or protagonists point to “a particular cultural phenomenon that we could call the syndrome of ‘displaced,’ ‘transposed’ or ‘compensatory’ memory characteristic of the self-understanding and representation of neuralgic topics of the recent past in a significant part of the contemporary literature of the Western Balkans.”³⁵ Brajović’s terminology somehow resonates with Freud’s ‘screen memory’ in that it implies “the paradoxical narrative form of ‘evocative oblivion’ that ‘neutralizes,’ distances and ‘objectivizes’ the still painful traumas and frustrations of the own community by remembering the historical experience of others.”³⁶

I certainly agree with Brajović that the authors he mentions lay bare the mechanisms of social oblivion at work in post-Yugoslav societies and to a large extent follow his analysis of *Man of Ashes*. However, he fails to notice the multidirectional dynamics at work in much post-Yugoslav memory fiction – in both the novels he discusses and the works analysed here – and thus neglects the novels’ potential to *contest* the social oblivion their narrators or protagonists problematize. Bringing to the fore the multi-layered quality of the memory site(s) they are dealing with and showing the potential of Holocaust sites to trigger associative links with other temporally or geographically removed memories of suffering, the works of art discussed here not only evoke (by way of certain tropes and/or a specific narrative structures) the palimpsestic nature of cultural memory, but also destabilize received ideas about the subject(s) of memory and the role of culture in processes of remembering.

Already on the first page of the novel, Ivanji introduces the Ettersberg as an ambiguous and polyvalent site of memory. It is both the place where the concentration camp Buchenwald was located and the hill that Goethe, who lived and worked for a large part of his life in nearby Weimar, sometimes visited at night

³⁴ Tihomir Brajović, “Geteov hrast na Zapadnom Balkanu. Fenomen kompenzativne memorije u savremenom srpskom, hrvatskom i bosanskohercegovačkom romanu,” *Sarajevske sveske* 29–30 (2010): 477–489; 478. An abridged English version is published under the title “Goethe’s Oak Tree in the Western Balkans: Wars, Memories and Identities in Contemporary Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian Novels,” in *Balkan Memories: Media Constructions of National and Transnational Memory*, ed. Tanja Zimmermann, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), 163–169.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 482.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 488.

and where he allegedly inscribed his famous poem *Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* onto the wall of a wooden cabin.³⁷ Reminding the reader that the last verse of the poem, “Warte nur, balde / ruhest du auch” (“Just wait, soon / You will rest as well”) is actually a premonition of eternal rest, of death, the narrator ironically points out the discrepancy between Weimar as the seat of German classicism and symbol of German civilization (*Hochkultur*) and the concentration camp the Nazis constructed in its immediate vicinity, at the symbolically loaded place on which, as legend had it, ‘Goethe’s oak’ stood.³⁸ The need to think through this unsettling incongruity is most directly articulated by the director of the centre, whose thoughts are communicated to us in free, indirect speech, resulting in a mix of narrator’s voice and the voice of character:

He would have liked for the fact that Hitler came after Goethe and that there exists a certain connection between the two to be taken seriously. Of course this doesn’t mean that Goethe prepared the ground for Hitler, even though in his role as a chief advisor [to the Grand Duke] he was a rather authoritarian statesman; but, as far as Weimar is concerned, *it simply has to be acknowledged that supreme culture was hardly resistant to infection and moreover that barbarism arose in the very midst of culture.* (16, emphasis added)

The narrator cynically adds that, “in the mind of the Buchenwald prisoners, many of whom were far more educated than their German guards and executioners, Goethe played a specific, and for some, even a great role. For them, Weimar, until the moment they arrived in the camp, was connected with Goethe’s name. And from then on?” (16).³⁹ Even though the narrator put it as a rhetorical question, the answer seems to be clear: the very existence of a concentration camp near Weimar probably shattered the prisoners’ last illusions about the potentially benevolent influence of culture on people and should also force the reader to think. Mentioning that Weimar had been selected as the ‘European capital of culture’ for

³⁷ Literary history has by now accepted that ‘Wanderers Nachtlied’ (‘Wanderer’s Nightsong’) was written on the Ettersberg, whereas ‘Ein Gleiches’ (‘A Similar Song’), both published in the same volume in 1815, was allegedly written on the wall of a wooden lodge on the Kickelhahn mountain near Ilmenau. Goethe, *Gedichte*, ed. Erich Trunz, (Munich: Beck, 1998), 555.

³⁸ The narrator comments extensively on the beliefs surrounding the ‘Goethe-Eiche.’ Pointing out that in Goethe in his talks with Eckermann explicitly mentions a beech tree (Buche), he concludes that the whole story is actually a legend in which the mythic German oak merges with Goethe’s beech. (106–110)

³⁹ Later in the novel, the narrator will give his own answer to the question: “I can’t remember whether as prisoner 58116 in Buchenwald I knew that the camp was located in the neighbourhood of Weimar in which Goethe used to live. Probably I didn’t” (58).

1999, the narrator finely points out the difficulties Weimar's citizens have in integrating the remnants of the concentration camp into the idealized picture of their city as they would like to present it to the world, except perhaps as a form of memory tourism – note the switch to indirect free discourse from the second sentence on, through which the narrator ironically distances himself from the alleged point of view of Weimar's inhabitants:

The inhabitants of Weimar would prefer to cut themselves off sharply from the Ettersberg, the mound that rises above them. If the horror must be remembered at all, let it then remain up there on the hill. It is also perfectly convenient to set up museums and monuments up there, a memorial centre, or whatever they call it, where wreaths can be laid down and where you can stand with certain horror; the feeling of horror increases the adrenalin and adrenalin is necessary for certain forms of tourism, and for that reason there will always be enough visitors to former concentration camps – in other words – just one more attraction! Let the city itself, however, remain the cradle of everything beautiful, noble, and good, in glory of the Germans and to the benefit of the whole world. (54)

At the same time, the narrator suggests the impossibility of separating those two pasts – the bad of the Ettersberg and the noble of Weimar – pointing out that young neo-Nazis gather at the foot of the bronze monument to Goethe and Schiller in the city's Theatre Square and threaten or even beat up foreigners.

Buchenwald itself is no less multi-layered than Weimar. Recalling the fact that after the end of the war the Soviet forces also interned their adversaries in Buchenwald, "sometimes even in the same barracks" (17), the narrator explains that for those people there will be a memorial centre built within the confines of the existing centre but that this causes quite a stir in public opinion in Germany:

In one instance, the director has to defend the decision of his institution to construct a separate building for the historical representation of the Soviet special camp against the charges that it violates the resolution of the European Parliament and equates these two prisons, while in another instance he has to declare that there are revisionist tendencies in Germany

and that he does not adhere to them. (17)⁴⁰

These two or even three different historical layers of the camp and their respective victims are all (re)present(ed) in the novel, which thus echoes the palimpsestic nature of the site.⁴¹ As Sarah Dillon writes, “the presence of texts from the past, present (and possibly future) in the palimpsest does not elide temporality but evidences the spectrality of any ‘present’ moment which always already contains within it ‘past,’ ‘present’ and ‘future’ moments” and, referring to De Quincey, “the fantasy of the palimpsest of the mind, and the disunity of the self it implies, does [...] lead [...] to a post-Romantic notion of the spectralized subject.”⁴² United in the figure of the Man of Ashes, the voices of Jews, communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, Gypsies – the latter three of which, as the narrator puts it, “have no lobby” (26), meaning that after their death, nobody remembered them or erected a monument for them – intermingle and together form a spectral subject that haunts the present. However, the dead of Buchenwald are unexpectedly interrupted in their conversation by two other voices they experience as foreign elements. The first voice they discover in their midst is that of one of Goethe’s servants who had been inhabiting the Ettersberg for centuries – yet another way to indicate how the high culture of the age of German classicism and the barbarism of the Nazis are inseparably connected – a rather ironic choice because the servant is not the best representative of high culture: the only story he keeps repeating is that he served hot chocolate to Goethe. The second one is the hostile voice of a member of the Hitler Youth (*Hitler-Jugend*) who “planned to fight for Germany” but whom the Soviet forces interned in Buchenwald in order to re-educate him, where he died of pneumonia:

⁴⁰ The director of the Memorial Centre, who is sketched by the narrator with much sympathy, can be easily recognized as the fictional double of Volkhard Knigge – “a young historian who has had for a long time a scholarly interest in psychoanalysis” (16) and who doesn’t hesitate to take a clear position in the debate about historical revisionism. Debates about the question whether the co-representation of the GDR and the Nazi eras entails an equation of both regimes continue to the present day; for a recent case in which Volkhard Knigge has also voiced his opinion, see Philippe Oehmke, “Zwickmülle der Vergangenheit,” *Der Spiegel* 21 (2008): 166-168.

⁴¹ If we include the camp’s function as memory site of antifascist struggle in the GDR, there are actually three layers; see Sarah Farmer, “Symbols That Face Two Ways: Commemorating the Victims of Nazism and Stalinism at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen,” *Representations* 49 (1995): 97–119; 102, 107. In Ivanji’s novel, this layer is echoed by the roof worker, who recalls that when he visited the camp as a child in the GDR, the teacher told them about the death of Ernst Thälmann, a leader of the German Communist Party who was murdered in Buchenwald by the Nazis (7).

⁴² Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory*, (London: Continuum, 2007), 37.

I wasn't cremated with you. But I did die and was buried immediately next to you. I really don't know how I got here or how I acquired the ability to speak nearly fifty years after my death... [...] They understand. Here is someone who was not interned in the concentration camp for the enemies of Hitler's Germany, who was not liberated on 11 April 1945, but who found himself in the Soviet special camp No. 2, which was set up after the war for defeated Nazis, on the same site, partly using the same barracks. (100–101)

At first, the others are upset by his presence, but one of them, a former Jehovah's Witness, argues in his defence:

We should not generalize. The former Nazis weren't the only ones interned in those Soviet special camps, there were also those who opposed the forced unification of the social democrats with the communists, or communists convicted by the courts set up by the Soviet authorities, because they had butted heads... Some of my brothers were also interned. It's not that I have inside knowledge of these things, but suffering is suffering... (101)

The figure of the dead 'souls' sticking together and acting as a living being allows Ivanji, in a magical realist vein, to tell the stories of those killed by the Nazis in Buchenwald without necessarily appropriating their voices. It seems, however, that recalling their stories is not sufficient for the narrator: the figure he created also needs a face (104). Meditating on the face the amorphous being could take on, the narrator concludes that there actually is one face that he could give the Man of Ashes – it is found on a sculpture made by Buchenwald survivor Bruno Apitz, which in yet another unexpected twist connects the 'Man of Ashes' to Goethe. When on 24 August 1944 the Americans bombed the camp, as a consequence of which more than 320 prisoners died, Goethe's oak was partly turned into ashes. The camp authorities ordered a group of prisoners to cut down the oak and saw it into pieces, but Apitz managed to take a piece with him, out of which he carved a sculpture after the death masks of those who had died in the 'medical ward' (*Pathologie*) in the camp. He called it 'The Last Face' and told his friends that "in this way, out of the many faces of our dead one unique face was created" (105). As Michael Rothberg notes, "within the theory of multidirectional memory, acts of remembrance can thus be understood as processes of articulation in the two senses of that word given to it by Stuart Hall: they are acts of enunciation and they are acts of connection."⁴³ Ivanji's *Man of Ashes* tries not only to voice – to utter,

⁴³ Michael Rothberg, "Afterword: Locating Transnational Memory," *European Review*, 22/4 (2014): 652–656; 654.

articulate or enunciate – the stories of the different victims of Buchenwald, but also to make connections between them as well as with temporally and geographically more remote stories of suffering. He also tries to give them a face in a way that reminds us of Lévinas's understanding of the face: as Judith Butler put it, a face “makes various utterances at once: it bespeaks an agony, an injurability, and a divine prohibition against killing.”⁴⁴

The narrator makes plain that the Man of Ashes as a spectre (or embodiment of the return of the repressed) haunting the surroundings of Weimar could be useful not only in Germany, but also other places: “He is surely needed in the sky above my fatherland. My former fatherland. Above Jasenovac, Banjica, Keraterm, Ovčara, Knin, Srebrenica” (141), listing places of camps and sites of torture and mass killings during the Second World War and during the wars of the 1990s.⁴⁵ He also mentions “the scorched medieval monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija...” (141), where the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians by Serb forces in 1999 took place, in the wake of the NATO bombings, followed by the ethnic cleansing of the remaining Serb communities south of the river Ibar in 2004 by the Albanian majority. Emerging from the site of memory (*Denkmal*) of Buchenwald, the Man of Ashes hovers as a mobile memorial (*Mahnmal*) over places where victims of extreme violence are not (yet) properly remembered and as a spectre from the past that incessantly haunts the present.

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, “Precarious Life,” in *Radicalizing Levinas*, eds. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco, (New York: SUNY Press, 2010), 8.

⁴⁵ Jasenovac was the largest concentration camp in the Independent State of Croatia where Serbs, Jews, Roma, communists, as well as politically non-compliant Croats and Muslims were systematically tortured and murdered between 1941 and 1945. The number of victims of the whole camp complex has been subject to fierce polemics, but is currently estimated at between 122,300 and 130,100. For the debate and most up-to-date estimates see Nataša Mataušić, *Jasenovac 1941-1945: Logor smrti i radni logor*, (Jasenovac-Zagreb: Javna ustanova Spomen-područje Jasenovac, 2003), 116–123; Dragan Cvetković, “Holokaust u Nezavisnoj Državi Hrvatskoj - numeričko određenje,” *Istorija 20. veka 1* (2011): 163-182. The camp Banjica (officially called ‘camp Dedinje’) in Belgrade was established by the decision of the Gestapo and realized by the police of the Serbian quisling government to intern communists and their sympathizers from the whole territory of Serbia and the Balkans; out of the approximately 30,000 interned between 1941 and 1944, between 4,286 and 8,756 were killed. Keraterm was a death camp established and run by the Serb forces in the early 1990s near Prijedor in north-west Bosnia where between 1,000 and 1,500 men of mostly Bosniak and Croatian nationality were tortured and killed. Ovčara was a place near the Croatian town Vukovar where in 1991 Serb paramilitary forces, backed by the Yugoslav army, killed Croatian POWs and civilians, 200 of which were found in a mass grave while 60 are still missing. The Knin camp was a detention camp where Serb militias mistreated, beat, and humiliated Croatian soldiers and civilians. In Srebrenica, Serb forces shot approximately 8,000 men of Bosniak nationality.

However, even the figure of the Man of Ashes as an attempt to articulate the untold stories of Buchenwald's many victims leaves the narrator puzzled by certain ethical dilemmas, leading him to consider some of the blind spots of current Holocaust memorialization. One of the problems is related to the difference that existed among the victims as a consequence of the power hierarchy installed by the Nazis and brings us to the grey zone between victims, accomplices, and executioners. A particular case in Buchenwald were the people employed in the so-called 'Bureau of Labour Statistics' (*Arbeitsstatistik*), who could replace persons on the list for transport to Auschwitz with others, and assign them instead to work units that had higher chances of survival. The narrator mentions that he owes his own survival to an invisible hand in the *Arbeitsstatistik* which, in the Winter of 1944–45 qualified him as a mason's apprentice and sent him to the sub-camp of Niederorschel: "If I were a believer, I would say, blessed be his name. But I never learned his name. I only know that he wore a Buchenwald number, certainly stitched onto a better prison uniform than the one I had, and that he had the power to decide over life and death. Over my life. Over my death" (69). He laconically adds: "what he did for me, historians in the German literature about Buchenwald officially call *Opfertausch* – the exchange of victims. They usually write about it in a negative context" (69). One of the prisoners employed in the *Arbeitsstatistik* was the famous French-Spanish writer Jorge Semprun. The narrator writes in very unambiguous terms about Semprun here: "As a prisoner, Jorge Semprun was lord of life and death. That distinguishes him from me. Not only the fact that he is six years older than me. Not only the fact that he is a much better known writer, and that he was a minister of culture in Spain after the fall of Franco" (69).

The uneven representation of the victims of Nazism today is another issue addressed by Ivanji, although not of the same order because it is inherent to contemporary (geo)politics and not a consequence of the inner logic of the concentration camps. Ivanji mentions how former camp prisoners from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine who are invited to the anniversary of the liberation of the camp are hosted in the refurbished former SS-barracks on the site of the Buchenwald camp instead of in hotels in the city of Weimar: "I am finding out that even today former camp prisoners are not all equal. Just as they also weren't at the time they wore striped prison uniforms" (133). A third issue is related to scale and time, and indicated by the narrator when he wonders "when another ten centuries go by, how will people look at that distant past that is our present?" (79–80).

Whereas Ivanji's narrator generally takes a positive stance towards the critical memory culture that has developed in Germany over the past decades, he nevertheless sighs: "Let the Germans do with the concentrations camps and the monuments on the places where they were erected whatever they want, I don't need them. Neither the Germans nor their museums of horror. But the German language... In no other language can I express myself in the same way" (80). The irreconcilability between the horrors he went through in the Nazi camps and his love for the German language is complete, and seems, albeit on a very personal level, somehow to echo the gap between (German) culture and (Nazi) barbarity that runs as a red thread through the novel. In the following section, I turn to examine whether or not, and how the 'warning' by Ivanji's *Man of Ashes* is taken up by Serbian authors of the second and third generation. Their work takes us from Weimar to Belgrade, from Buchenwald to the Old Fairgrounds, and, not unlike Ivanji's novel, draws our attention to the palimpsestic structure of local Holocaust sites and associatively connects Holocaust memory in Serbia to other traumatic events.

Zoran Penevski's *Less Important Crimes*: Towards a Digital 'Constellation of Self-Critical National Memories'

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, many recent Serbian Holocaust-related novels, artworks, and scholarly and popularizing publications focus on the Old Fairgrounds (*Staro sajmište*) in Belgrade. Located on the left bank of the river Sava, between the two bridges that connect the historic city centre with New Belgrade, the Old Fairgrounds are the most significant Holocaust site in Serbia. Initially built in 1937 to host the International Fair, only four years later the site was transformed by the Gestapo into a concentration camp. At first, the camp functioned as a *Judenlager*, where approximately 7,000 Jewish women, children, and elderly people were detained. In the winter of 1941/1942, approximately 500 Jewish prisoners died of cold, disease or hunger. In spring 1942, approximately 6,300 Jews were killed in a gas van (in Serbian called 'dušegupka,' literally 'soul-killer') that was sent from Berlin for that purpose.⁴⁶ At that point, German-

⁴⁶ Along with Jews, approximately 500 Roma were interned in the concentration camp. Held in horrible conditions, around 60 of them died of disease and exposure. However, most other Roma were released between January and April 1942 after they had provided evidence that they had a permanent address in the city. Jovan Bajford, *Staro sajmište. Mesto sećanja, zaborava i sporenja*,

occupied Serbia was the first country in Europe declared ‘*judenrein*’ and the camp was turned into an *Anhaltelager*, a temporary detention camp for political prisoners, captured partisans, and forced labourers, mostly Serbs from Bosnia and Croatia but also Bosniaks, Albanians, Greeks, and Jews.⁴⁷ Within those two years, between May 1942 and July 1944, approximately 31,972 people passed through the camp, out of which at least 10,636 perished.⁴⁸ Despite the fact that the Old Fairgrounds are “the largest individual Holocaust site in Serbia,” the site up until now has not received a proper Holocaust memorial and plans for a museum have never been realized.⁴⁹ This negligent attitude is all the more significant because the site is one of the rare concentration camps located almost in the centre of the city.

Zoran Penevski’s novel *Less Important Crimes* (*Manje važni zločini*, 2005) connects two timelines: the first one, the frame narrative, is situated in the late 1990s to early 2000s, and starts with the student protests against the Milošević regime and encompasses the 1999 NATO bombing of the country and the protests that on 5 October 2000 brought an end to the Milošević era and the emergence of democratic rule in 2003–2004. The second timeline covers the late 1930s, the Second World War, and the Holocaust in Belgrade. These two stories are both told by a heterodiegetic third-person narrator, but each in a different style and rhythm, the first indicating the hasty, restless urban life of contemporary Belgrade youth, the second evoking the calm, serene voice of an old-fashioned historian, reminiscent of the voice-over of a documentary on a history channel. In the course of the novel, the relevance of the two storylines to each other becomes clear and finally they come together with a detective-story-like twist.

(Belgrade: Beogradski centar za ljudska prava, 2011), 33–44. See also Jovan Byford, “History of the Semlin Camp,” <http://www.semlin.info/>.

⁴⁷ The majority of the prisoners came from the German occupied zone and from the Independent State of Croatia. Perceived as potential supporters of or participants in the partisan movement, they were considered as a factor of instability. However, also ordinary peasants without any connection to the resistance movement were interned. Most prisoners of the transit camp were used as slave labour and transferred to work camps in Germany, Norway and smaller labour camps in central Serbia; a smaller number, mostly political prisoners and partisans, were deported to Mauthausen and Auschwitz. Large groups of prisoners died in the detention camp of hunger, exhaustion and diseases caused by the bad sanitary conditions. Bajford, *Staro sajmište*, 44–53.

⁴⁸ Bajford, *Staro sajmište*, 11; 21–53. Byford takes the figures from Milan Koljanić’s study *Nemački logor na beogradskom sajmištu*, (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1992).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11–12. As the city manager of Belgrade, Goran Vesić announced several times in 2015 and January 2016, this might finally change in the next few years: after the renovation of the central tower in 2016, a memorial centre will be constructed including the Italian and the Czechoslovak pavilions of the Fairgrounds. See <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/317202/Beograd/Staro-sajmiste-od-logora-do-memorijalnog-centra>.

The narrative set in the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s follows the young and hip journalist and lover of electronic music Miloš Milić who works for an online news portal in which we can easily recognise the TV and radio station B92, which at the time played a crucial role as one of the only anti-regime channels in Serbia and was one of the first to go online. At a house music party, Miloš is approached by three guys of his age (in their twenties or thirties): Dušan Pavlović, comic-strip artist Ivan, and the brothers Vlada and Filip. Dušan introduces the group with the words “we’re from the RDB” – not the *State Security Department* (*Resor državne bezbednosti*), as any Serbian citizen would have interpreted the abbreviation at the time, but rather the *Digital Belgrade Department* (*Resor digitalnog Beograda*), “a very serious website about Belgrade, more specifically, about its scars of urbanity.”⁵⁰ They ask him to join their network because he has experience with web editing and because he is from New Belgrade, the part of the city they have not covered yet. More specifically, they want him to gather information about one of the biggest ‘scars’ of Belgrade’s cityscape: the Old Fairgrounds.⁵¹

Miloš agrees to join the RDB, and his search for information on the Old Fairgrounds not only teaches him a lot about the hidden past of Belgrade and the faith of the Belgrade Jews but also helps him put the recent past in perspective, particularly the crimes committed by the Milošević regime about which he learns through his work as a journalist. At the end of the novel, the reader, together with the characters of the frame story, discovers that Miloš’s and Dušan’s grandfathers appear to have been friends. Actually, they turn out to be the main characters of the storyline set in the 1930s and 1940s: the technician Stanimir Pavlović and the photographer Petar Milić, who met at the second international Fair held at the Belgrade Fairgrounds in 1938. During the Nazi Occupation, Petar Milić documented the genocide of the Jews but was denounced to the Gestapo by a Serbian informer, after which he was imprisoned, tortured and killed on the site

⁵⁰ Zoran Penevski, *Manje važni zločini*, (Belgrade: Okean, 2005), 22. Henceforth, references to the novel will be indicated by parenthetical page numbers in the main text. All translations are my own.

⁵¹ Eight years after the publication of *Less Important Crimes*, Milovan Pisarri and Rena Raedle edited a book that seemed to go a long way towards realizing the ambitious plans of Penevski’s trio from the ‘Digital Belgrade Department’ and which brings to the fore Holocaust sites and sites of antifascist resistance in Belgrade during the Second World War: *Places of Suffering and of Anti-Fascist Struggle in Belgrade 1941–44*, with the fitting subtitle *A Guide to Read the City: (Mesta stradanja i antifašističke borbe u Beogradu 1941–44. Priručnik za čitanje grada*, (Belgrade: B92, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung South East Europe, 2013).

of the Old Fairgrounds. Stanomir Pavlović was employed by the Germans as a car mechanic; one of his tasks is to clean the gas van. When he realizes that he is becoming an accomplice in the killings of the Belgrade Jews, he sabotages the van. After the war, the communist authorities accuse him of collaboration with the Nazis and execute him in September 1945.

The way in which Miloš, with Dušan's assistance, discovers the fate of his grandfather – about which his father, who grew up as an orphan, had not told him anything – not only highlights an interruption in the chain of intergenerational memory but also zooms in on the role and responsibility of bystanders of genocide. His search in the archives leads Miloš, and with him the reader, to ponder issues of complicity and collaboration in different times – in the 1940s, during the Second World War and the Holocaust, and in the 1990s, during the Yugoslav wars, the Srebrenica genocide, Kosovo war crimes, and the NATO bombing. This plot structure mirrors that of the novels and films, which Silverman has described as examples of palimpsestic memory, in which “a significant part of the intrigue [...] derives from the fact that the investigation into one buried memory [...] turns out to be an investigation into another [...]. Or rather, the two are shown to be profoundly connected, so that what one might have thought of as distinct moments in time and space are recomposed to create a different spatio-temporal configuration.”⁵²

The novel connects these issues through the trope of the past as a virtual database. The guys from the *Digital Belgrade Service* define their website as ‘an interactive map of Belgrade in which points in space [*prostorne tačke*] also have their temporal wells [*vremenski bunari*] with interesting data [...] the virtual makes it possible for everything to come to the surface’ (34). Not accidentally, both grandfather Petar and grandson Miloš are obsessed by the modern media of their time and use photography and the internet respectively to document and archive (in an attempt to save those memories from oblivion and bring them to light in the future) cases of extreme violence or flagrant social injustice that are forgotten, repressed, or ignored by their fellow citizens. The intertwining of different temporal layers, switching back and forth between the 1990s and the 1940s is echoed not only by the idea of an interactive website that by way of hyperlinks opens up and connects the forgotten stories of sites of suffering in Belgrade, but also by the very structure of the novel. The literary text itself consists of 156 very short numbered chapters, which like narrative ‘flashes’ or ‘hyperlinks’ to different

⁵² Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory*, 3.

webpages, texts, and images tell the stories of the two different generations and provide the reader with historical information on the Belgrade Fairgrounds. Finally, the idea that Belgrade's traumatic history can be read as a palimpsest is also evoked by the cover illustration of the book, which was created by Penevski. The cover shows a photograph in sepia of the Terazije, one of Belgrade's main streets through which the gas van drove on its way from the Old Fairgrounds to Jajinci. In this photograph, a map of the site of the Old Fairgrounds is traced out, suggesting a layering that inverts ordinary spatio-temporal relations: rather than being buried under the present, the past is projected upon it, suggesting the impossibility of erasing the presence and importance of the past in the present [Fig. 1].



Fig. 1. Book cover of Zoran Penevski's novel *Less Important Crimes* (2005).

Reproduced courtesy of Zoran Penevski.

While the novel on the one hand seems to celebrate the possibilities of the Internet to access the past and remember its dark sides, the surprising space-time connections that resurface, the protagonist's reflections upon collective forgetting, and the ways in which this oblivion is carved into the cityscape are rather pessimistic. Furthermore, the parallel between the indifference of many contemporary Serbian citizens towards the memory of the genocide of the Jews during the Second World War, committed in the heart of its capital, and the negation of the genocide in Srebrenica and the war crimes in Kosovo, sheds an entirely new light on the motto that opens the novel, a quote from Milošević who in 1998 claimed: "our whole country will develop as New Belgrade" (7). While New Belgrade is the most modern and urban part of Belgrade, it is also the municipality in which the remnants of the Old Fairgrounds are located. What is more, the use of this quote as a motto for the novel seems to suggest that the backing of institutions and political forces is needed for the memory of a traumatic past to enter the sphere of cultural memory. If this institutional support is lacking, then a possible alternative, as the novel seems to suggest (even though it does so using the form of the novel and not of a blog or website), is the space of the world wide web, which allows us to make *digital* "constellation[s] of self-critical national memories,"⁵³ which, as the title of the book implies, do *not* consider the evil done to others as *less important crimes*. An important role in unearthing the connections and putting them on the (digital) map, seems to be reserved for the young urban generation. However, Penevski's postmodern novel with its dense play between different temporal layers and locations as well as its complex plot might not be the most effective medium to reach out to bigger audiences, in particular the young. In the next section, I turn to a recent Serbian film centred on the topic of Holocaust remembrance.

Goran Paskaljević's Film *When Day Breaks*: Between the Duty to Remember and the Pitfalls of Didacticism

Not unlike Penevski's *Less Important Crimes*, the plot of Goran Paskaljević's film *When Day Breaks* (*Kad svane dan*, 2012) revolves around a quest, the protagonist's

⁵³ Assmann, "The Holocaust, a Global Memory?," 101.

search for a hidden truth.⁵⁴ This quest starts in November 2011, when the protagonist of the film, retired music teacher Miša Brankov, receives a letter from the Jewish Museum in Belgrade. At the Museum, the curator explains to him that workers of the municipality had found a metal box during recent renovations on the water pipes on the site of the Old Fairgrounds. She gives him the metal box, which contains some photographs, a letter, and an unfinished music score entitled ‘When Day Breaks,’ composed, she tells him, by his real father, Isak Weiss. Together with his wife Sara, the composer Isak Weiss was interned at the Old Fairgrounds where both of them were killed because they were Jews. The box contains a note in which Weiss asks the finder – in case they do not manage to get out of the camp – to give the box to the Brankovs, who look after their son Miša. Miša Brankov cannot believe that he was actually adopted by the Brankovs, at whose farm in the vicinity of Pančevo in the Banat he grew up, but he nevertheless takes the box home.⁵⁵ On his way out, the curator shows him the exhibition about the concentration camp the Old Fairgrounds and the gas van the Nazis used to kill the Jews, upon which Brankov utters: “It is terrible... that I hardly knew anything about this” (13:20). A visit to Emil Najfeld, an old acquaintance of the Weisses in Belgrade, confirms the story of the museum curator. Brankov’s brother, who still lives on the farm where they both grew up also admits that he was asked by his parents to accept Miša as his brother and never show or tell him that he was adopted. Brankov visits the Old Fairgrounds, gets increasingly obsessed with the story of his parents and starts to believe that his father actually tried to speak to him through the unfinished music score, a kind of conversation with the dead that will be made possible when he, his son, finishes the score. He wants the piece of music to be performed on the Old Fairgrounds, as a last honour to his parents and the other Jewish victims who perished there. However, this ambition proves extremely difficult because the people whom he approaches are reluctant to help him either because they do not see the importance of the commemorative event or do not believe his story. The current conductor of the amateur choir Brankov formerly conducted is practicing for the choir’s New Year’s programme, and his son, a professional musician, is preparing his orchestra and choir for the premiere

⁵⁴ *When Day Breaks* has received quite some international acclaim and won awards at a number of international film festivals, amongst others the Grand Prix at the film festival in Terni (Italy, 2012), in Merida (Spain), and in Cleveland (USA); in 2013, the film was selected as the Serbian candidate for the Oscar competition but did not receive any awards.

⁵⁵ Not accidentally, the scenario for the film was written by Serbian Jewish author Filip David, who as a child survived the Holocaust because he and his family were hidden from the Nazis by Serbian peasants. In 2015, Filip David was awarded the NIN prize for novel of the year 2014 for *The House of Memory and Oblivion* (*Kuća sećanja i zaborava*).

of one of his own compositions. The son's reaction to his father's description of what happened at the Old Fairgrounds is particularly telling: "Come on, dad! That's over now. Who cares about this today? Let the state bother about that! If that [site] is not marked, there is a reason for it" (66:25). In the end, it is the downtrodden and disadvantaged of contemporary society who perform the composition: a Gypsy orchestra, the lead violinist of which is Brankov's former pupil Rade; Marko Popović, a previously famous classical singer who after the death of his son – who was in the early 1990s recruited by force to serve in Milošević's ugly wars and killed on the front – became an alcoholic living in a wooden cabin on Ada ciganlija.⁵⁶

Brankov's quest clearly links the memory of the Holocaust with stories of injustice suffered by those who today live at the margins of Serbian society. The house on Danube Street in Dorćol, where the Weisses lived, is now inhabited by a poor family who fear that they will be thrown out of their humble abode because real estate investors plan to tear down the building. Some of those people, including refugees from the wars of the 1990s, even live on the site of the Old Fairgrounds, a detail that foregrounds the palimpsestic character of the site today. However, the multi-layered quality of the camp's history during the Second World War is not mentioned. Although the museum curator correctly tells Brankov the history of the 'Judenlager Semlin' as a camp for Jews and Roma and also mentions Serbian collaboration with the Nazis, her story ends in 1942, thus omitting one important historic layer: that of the transit camp of 1942–1944, in which thousands of prisoners died. In *When Day Breaks*, the Old Fairgrounds seem to be represented as a place of Jewish and Roma suffering only. The film explicitly links current right-wing violence against Roma in Serbia to (neo-)Nazism, showing how the wedding party of the Roma family whose boys Brankov is giving violin classes for free is brutally interrupted by hooligans who set the building on fire with Molotov cocktails.

As film critic Kristina Đuković rightly remarked in her review of the film, the big weakness of the film is its didactic tendency, which she sees reflected on a formal level in two ways.⁵⁷ Firstly, the fact that, even though the film, by way of the slow

⁵⁶ Ada ciganlija is a peninsula on the southern bank of the river Sava; it is one of the city's larger public green areas and a popular recreational zone. Its northern edge is characterized by floating barges used as weekend houses – hardly anyone lives here permanently, but those who nevertheless do, are geographically, socially and symbolically situated at the margins of the city.

⁵⁷ Kristina Đuković, "Kad svane dan – Goran Paskaljević: beživotno predavanje," *Popboks*, January 8, 2013, <http://www.popboks.com/article/9322>.

and wide-frame shots, suggests a personal, inner drama, this drama and, as she puts it, the protagonist's "search for social catharsis" is not reflected by the narrative logic of the film, which "evolves according to a list of elaborated points which, like a checklist of daily tasks, map out in a very general and in a completely non-engaged way – and this is particularly contradictory – one of the most tragic stories of this part of the world. For that reason, the film is made to perform a kind of generic civilizational [sic] duty and not, as might be wished, to tell the story in an engaged way." Secondly, she points out that the characters, including the protagonist, are flat, and that presenting a well-educated humanist like Brankov as someone who had no knowledge whatsoever about the Old Fairgrounds makes the story unconvincing: "even though the famous actor Mustafa Nadarević tries hard to breathe some life into the gypsum mask that was given to him instead of a character, this storyline of the film is almost mathematically restrained, as if intending to reach a dry didactic conclusion about the negligence of our time." Duković rightly singles out the fantastic ending of the film - when Miša Brankov, carried away by the tunes of the gypsy orchestra performing the music score composed by his father, in a kind of half-dream, half-hallucination meets his parents and engages in a snow fight with them – as one of the aesthetically more successful moments of the movie. Clearly born of the impetus to save Holocaust memory from oblivion and to educate, the film straddles the line between the aesthetic and the didactic. Whereas the film's main thrust might be said to be in line with the IHRA's emphasis on education, as a work of art it is rather modest. Apart from the message of the importance of Holocaust remembrance, the film's understanding of memory as a palimpsest is much simpler and ultimately far less convincing than that put forward by the novels. Instead of complex relationships between past and present, the film suggests simple one-to-one analogies: for example, the position of Serbian Roma today is suggested to mirror that of the Jews in the Holocaust in a straightforward way. The multi-layered nature of the Fairgrounds' history is acknowledged, but in a very selective way, omitting many non-Jews. The film offers a clear critique of the many failures of state-organized Holocaust remembrance in Serbia, but its own representation of Holocaust memory is rather reductive and its understanding of transgenerational transmission rather naïve.

Conclusion

In one of his recent essays, written on the occasion of a conference held in 2015 in Berlin devoted to the role of commemorative centres in Holocaust education in

Germany, Ivanji recalls a remark made at the conference by Monika Grütters, Germany's minister for culture and media, who said that "we are still in the lucky position of hearing the voices of the living witnesses to an era (*Zeitzeugen*), but soon the authentic sites of persecution and annihilation will be only 'stone witnesses.'"⁵⁸ Ivanji commented on the minister's statement as follows:

I hope that those numerous memorial centres are not built for us and because of us. They are built for the people who visit them, for those generations who did not endure the two decades [sic] of Nazi rule, which I in a simplified way call 'The Time of Evil' so that they would learn something that was not talked about in their family, about which they perhaps learned a little bit at school, so that they could face these fragments of truth about the history of their nation when they visit one of the memorial centres. [...] They are built for the next generations; for our descendants, for the descendants of perpetrators and in the first place for the descendants of that large majority of people who watched the crimes happen but did not dare to take any action against them.⁵⁹

While some are afraid that with the death of the last survivor, the memory work of the centres will also come to an end, Ivanji relativizes this fear, saying that the memory of the Holocaust and its significance for the present is now left to the coming generations. This belief is strengthened by his seeing the interested faces of fourteen-year-olds visiting Buchenwald: "We 'witnesses to an era (*Zeitzeugen*)' said what we had to say, we're leaving the stage, dying out, and now what matters is the survival and function of the German memorial centres in the twenty-first century for the second and third generations after us and our perpetrators."⁶⁰ Commenting on the use of the word *Zeitzeuge* and its currency in German academy, Ivanji notes that he personally has always found the curiosity and interest of the young more important than any court that could have asked him to testify. He makes it clear that he does not perceive himself as "the witness of an era;" rather that he can testify to what he experienced, adding an unusual 'message' for the policy makers and academics gathered in Berlin: "It's nice of you that you don't want to forget us, thank you, but please devote your energy to helping those

⁵⁸ Ivan Ivanji, "Konferencija o radu memorijalnih centara u XXI veku u Berlinu: Kako se sećati zločina" ("A Conference about the Work of Memorial Centres in the 21st Century in Berlin: How to Remember Crimes"), *Vreme* 1291, October 1, 2015, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1331472>.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

who are suffering today. At this very moment, refugees, for example, regardless of where they come from, if they are in need.”⁶¹

Turning to the Serbian context, he reflects on the still unresolved status of the Old Fairgrounds and the debates about the creation of a memorial centre on the site (which is now again under threat by Serbia’s prime minister’s ambitious urbanization project of the Sava banks, ‘Belgrade on the Water,’ financed with Saudi funds). Even though Ivanji is convinced that ‘witnesses of an era’ and their children should not necessarily have a particular right to decide what kind of memorial centres Belgrade will build, he nevertheless states that, if it were up to him, “they should not be graves, but places of life, of intelligent learning about good and evil.”⁶²

From one of his other essays, it becomes clear that this ‘learning about good and evil’ should not be understood as turning Holocaust memory into a universalizing message devoid of any local specifics. As one of the most impressive attempts to transfer Holocaust memory to the next generation, Ivanji singled out the theatre play *Invisible monuments* (*Nevidljivi spomenici*, 2015).⁶³ Co-authored and played by 23 pupils from the Third Gymnasium in Belgrade, the play shows how teenagers in Serbia today question the role of their own family in war crimes in the Second World War as perpetrators, accomplices, and bystanders. The project was realized with the support of the Zagreb Goethe Institute, the famous Belgrade Bitef Theatre, and the Third Gymnasium but without any financial support of state institutions.⁶⁴ In his afterword to a recent thematic issue on transnational

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Ivan Ivanji, “Kultura sećanja – Jedan performans, jedna izložba i jedna predstava o Holokaustu: Moj krik iz dečjih usta,” *Vreme* No. 1274, June 4, 2015, <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1302836>.

⁶⁴ This project is only one of the many examples that shows that an alternative, non-competitive culture of Holocaust remembrance in Serbia is emerging mostly thanks to initiatives by the non-governmental sector. Due to the focus of this article, I cannot discuss these efforts in detail, but important examples include the project *A Visit to Staro Sajmište* (*Poseta Starom sajmištu*, <http://www.starosajmiste.info/en/#>), which not only created a very informative website but also organised guided visits to the Old Fairgrounds and a series of seminars and study tours; the educative project *Days of Remembrance* (*Dani sećanja*, <http://danisećanja.rs/?lang=en>), the project *Against Oblivion: Four WW II Camps in Belgrade* (*Protiv zaborava: četiri logora II svetskog rata u Beogradu*, <http://www.protivzaborava.com/en/about/>) as well as initiatives by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia, such as the fascinating digital archive *Portraits and Memories of the Jewish Community Before the Holocaust* (*Portreti i sećanja Jevrejske zajednice pre Holokausta*, <http://www.jevrejipamte.org/>).

memory, Rothberg noted:

The forms of dialogue, connection, and translation that take place in multidirectional encounters do not take place on an even playing field [...]. It goes without saying that powerful forces – and especially the state – will attempt to create historical memory in its own image and to cast it in stone. But state-sanctioned memory and enforced forgetting can only ever tell half the story. [...] The dynamic of multidirectional memory comes with no guarantees, but it does help constitute a terrain for practising a politics of location that articulates local concerns with national and transnational scales.⁶⁵

As my analysis of Ivanji's *Man of Ashes* has shown, in unearthing the multiple layers of the Buchenwald concentration camp, the novel reveals how a carefully balanced form of Holocaust remembrance such as that organized in Buchenwald can bring to light and help articulate other (hi)stories of extreme violence without necessarily leading to the appropriation of the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. These (hi)stories can be related to the same place, as in the case of the (often innocent) victims of Soviet repression in the immediate postwar years, or to geographically and historically more remote events, as in the case of the war crimes committed during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Not unimportantly, Ivanji's novel suggests that institutionalized forms of Holocaust memorialization should also acknowledge "victims without a lobby" such as Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and Roma and treat all survivors—including those from Eastern Europe—on equal basis. He shows that, while Holocaust memory is thus intrinsically multidirectional (both internally, for example, the "hidden" stories of Jehovah's witnesses, homosexual, and Roma, and externally, that is, related to historically or geographically different events), it indeed depends on the concrete realization of locally embedded politics of memory whether and to what extent certain stories can come to the surface and be brought into circulation. Finally, the novel seems to suggest that, in places where such a memory culture does not exist, works of fiction can at least partly compensate for the gaps and silences in state-sanctioned memory. After all its protagonist, the *Man of Ashes*, unites the souls of *all* victims in inhabiting the Ettersberg.

Moving our focus from Germany to Serbia, from a well established network of Holocaust memorial centres and a rich culture of vivid public debate to a highly politicized public arena, the role of critical cultural practices seems to become even more important. Ivanji's and Penevski's novel, and Paskaljević's film to a more

⁶⁵ Rothberg, "Locating Transnational Memory," 655.

limited extent, unsettle, complement and add a nuance to state-conducted Holocaust remembrance in Serbia. In doing so, they confirm the important role of art in transforming the communicative memory of the Holocaust in Serbia into long-term memory. The novels and film expose the existing tensions between local memory politics characterized by ethno-cultural compartmentalization on the one hand and the international trend of Holocaust universalization and its implicit promise of a cosmopolitan ethics on the other. Raising uncomfortable questions about issues of complicity and collaboration in mass crimes committed during the 1940s and 1990s, they construct “constellation[s] of self-critical national memories.”⁶⁶ and reveal the transnational potential of Holocaust memory in Serbia. However, Paskaljević’s film’s lays bare some of the pitfalls of the Holocaust memorialization boom in contemporary Serbia. Certainly, the impetus to educate broader audiences about the Holocaust in Serbia is important (and definitely in line with the IHRA’s goals), but only if the full complexity of local history is acknowledged. If this is not the case, then interaction between the local and global frames of Holocaust memory might as well be framed as a story of missed opportunities.

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**Temporal Cross-References and Multidirectional Comparisons
Holocaust Remembrance Day on Italian State Television**

by *Damiano Garofalo*

Abstract

This paper will analyze the connections between Holocaust memory and the presence of other genocides – or crimes against humanities – narratives in Italian TV commemorations of the Holocaust Day of Memory (Giorno della memoria) between 2001-2015.¹ The research investigates the question of whether Italian television's approach to the Day of Memory has been exclusively centered on the Holocaust, or whether it has been used also as a starting point to talk about other traumatic historical or current events such as the Iraq War, the War in Afghanistan or Italy's participation in Western policy against Islamic terrorism. With this aim, the paper will examine Italy's State-owned network RAI's programming in the week before and after the Day of Memory (January, 27) from 2001 to 2015, revealing how an increasing civic and didactic awareness of the Holocaust emerged from the TV programs here analyzed. The paper will trace this new television discourse, where the Holocaust began to be perceived as an unconditional warning and a constant term of comparison with other contemporary tragedies.

Holocaust Remembrance Day and the Italian Public Sphere

Laying the Foundations of a Holocaust Televised Memory

Silvio Berlusconi's Holocaust Public Memory

Breaking the Rules: Chile, Balkans and Rwanda

Coming to Terms with the Present: Lampedusa and Other Massacres

Conclusions

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Holocaust Remembrance Day and the Italian Public Sphere

The 21st century has seen a marked acceleration in Europe in the development of multiple forms of Holocaust memory and commemoration. This is particularly noteworthy in the establishment across Europe of official Holocaust Memorial Days, established along the lines traced by the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in 2000.² From the outset, these new public commemorations assumed different and often contradictory national and supranational forms and aims.³ In order to reflect this complexity, we need to rethink the establishment of the various national Holocaust Remembrance Days not only as processes playing a decisive role in the articulation of memory, but also as public vehicles of multiple, even conflicting historiographical paradigms. Among the latter, the problem of national responsibility has certainly been one of the most intensely debated by historians, while at the same time only rarely discussed or acknowledged on these public occasions.⁴ After the end of the war, many European countries engaged in widespread efforts to absolve themselves as much as possible from possible charges of collaboration in the Holocaust. This often led to a public demonization not only of the Nazis, but also of the German people as a whole. This was the case of Italy, too.⁵

Visual culture, including television, provides a privileged vantage point for the analysis of mainstream discussions and paradigms about the Holocaust and its commemoration.⁶ In the Italian case, which will form the primary focus of this

² On these changes see Larissa Allwork, *Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the Transnational. The Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the International Task Force*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), as well as her contribution in this issue of *Quest*.

³ See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), in particular their reflections on the concept of “cosmopolitan memory,” 23-38.

⁴ Levy and Sznaider speak in positive terms of the way in which “television, movies, literature and newspapers have replaced historical experts as a source of information about the Holocaust.” See *Ibid.*, 133-4.

⁵ This is above all true for the Italian case. On this, see Michele Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista: Vicende, identità, persecuzione* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000); Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi, *Caino a Roma: I complici romani della Shoah* (Roma: Cooper, 2005); Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2013); Simon Levis Sullam, *I carnefici italiani: Scene dal genocidio degli ebrei 1943-1945* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2015).

⁶ On the representations of the Holocaust on TV, see Jonathan Pearl and Judith Pearl, *The Chosen Image: Television's Portrayal of Jewish Themes and Characters* (London: McFarland, 1999) and Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For the Italian case, see Emiliano Perra, *Conflicts of Memory: The*

article, television programs have become one of the main vehicles for the diffusion of images and public memory of the past. In this context, we should also observe how public broadcasting service reacted to the Holocaust politics of public memory and commemorations.⁷ Because of RAI's close links with the government of the day, which makes it more immediately responsive to the political aspects of memory, this article will only focus on the State broadcaster and not engage with private networks' coverage of Holocaust commemorations.⁸ To do this, in this article I examine RAI broadcast programming in the week before and after the Day of Memory [*Giorno della memoria*, in Italian] in Italy (27 January), from 2001 to 2015⁹. After a brief discussion of various kinds of Holocaust-related programs during these years – focusing only on RAI's generalist channels and excluding TV-series and fictional products¹⁰ – I will offer an analysis of a corpus of televised Holocaust Remembrance Day

Reception of Holocaust Films and TV Programmes in Italy, 1945 to the Present (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010) and Damiano Garofalo, "La Shoah e l'esperienza dei Lager nei documentari televisivi di Liliana Cavani," *Memoria e Ricerca*, 46 (2014), 173-191. See also Andrea Minuz, *La Shoah e la cultura visuale: Cinema, memoria, spazio pubblico* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2010).

⁷ See. Perra, *Conflicts of Memory*, 217-231 and id., "La rappresentazione della Shoah in televisione," in *Storia della Shoah in Italia: Vicende, memorie, rappresentazioni*, vol. II, eds. Marina Cattaruzza, Marcello Flores, Simon Levis Sullam and Enzo Traverso, (Torino: UTET, 2010), 434-45.

⁸ For the relationship between Italian politics and television see Franco Monteleone, *Storia della radio e della televisione in Italia* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1992); Franco Chiarenza, *Il cavallo morente: Storia della RAI*, (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2002) and Giulia Guazzaloca, *Una e divisibile: La Rai e i partiti negli anni del monopolio pubblico (1954-1975)* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2011). For the recent years, see also Christian Ruggiero, *Il declino della videocrazia: Tv e politica nell'Italia del Medioevo* (Napoli: Scriptaweb, 2011). On the relationship between television and Italian history, see *Fare storia con la televisione: L'immagine come fonte, evento, memoria*, ed. Aldo Grasso (Milano: Vita & Pensiero, 2006); Anna Bisogno, *La storia in TV: Immagine e memoria collettiva* (Roma: Carocci, 2008); *Televisione: Storia, immaginario, memoria*, eds. Damiano Garofalo and Vanessa Roghi (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2015), in particular 97-157, and *Televisionismo: Narrazioni televisive della storia italiana negli anni della seconda Repubblica*, eds. Monica Jansen and Maria Bonaria Urban (Venezia: Ca' Foscari University Press, 2015).

⁹ On the Italian Holocaust Remembrance Day, see C.G. Hassan, "Costruzione della memoria e rappresentazioni sociali: L'immagine della Shoah nella stampa italiana (2012-2013)," in *La Shoah nel cinema italiano*, eds. Andrea Minuz and Guido Vitiello, *Cinema e storia*, 2 (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2013), 143-155 and Fausto Colombo, Athos De Luca, Vittorio Pavoncello, *Il paradosso del Giorno della memoria: Dialoghi*, (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2014).

¹⁰ It is worth mentioning the important role assumed by the historical channel Rai Storia, which is only available on digital terrestrial television. This educational channel has dealt extensively with the Holocaust on every Memory Day since it started broadcasting in 2003. Nevertheless, we think that in this context it is more helpful to reconstruct the role played by RAI generalist channels because of their greater circulation among audiences.

commemorations broadcast by RAI. The specific angle of the analysis is twofold: first, to enquire the extent to which RAI's commemoration of the Day of Memory has been exclusively centered on the Holocaust, including Italian collaboration. Secondly, the article will explore possible intersections between Holocaust commemoration and other historical or current events.

Given the call for a transnational lens of this topic, the analysis would probably benefit from a brief preliminary engagement with transnational theoretical issues. As we shall see, all the comparisons with the Holocaust, made both by conscious and subconscious politics, seem to involve other genocides from a transnational point of view. For this reason, we should strongly consider what is happening elsewhere to determine whether the tendency to incorporate other genocides in the Holocaust public memory is just a narrative one or indeed a political one. Holocaust public memory is devoted to carry messages from the Holocaust to society at large. As Peter Novick has already observed, "these implications have been translated into lessons, and it is the rare Holocaust commemoration, or Holocaust institution, or Holocaust curriculum, that is not dedicated to promulgating *the lessons of the Holocaust*."¹¹ These lessons have a redemptive and political aim even when applied to other genocides. Whilst it is clear that invoking the Holocaust in a comparative way is a clear rhetorical asset, it could also be interesting to analyze the ways in which other genocides are talked about in public spaces primarily dedicated to the Holocaust¹². In this sense, TV programs could be certainly a good lens to analyze this phenomenon from a transcultural and transnational point of view.¹³

Before entering into the analysis of the televisual material, it is necessary to refer to law n. 211, approved by the Italian Parliament in 2000, through which the

¹¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 239.

¹² For a comparable perspective, see Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) and *Local History, Transnational Memory in the Romanian Holocaust*, eds. Valentina Glajar and Jeanine Teodorescu (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹³ For the possibility of re-thinking to media history from this hybrid mixture, and also television as a field where cultural texts travel across countries and influence each other, see Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and *The Transcultural Turn: Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders*, eds. Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

‘Day of Memory’ in memory of the extermination and persecution of the Jewish people and of Italian military and political deportees in the Nazi camps” was instituted.¹⁴ By referring to a broad range of persecutions, the text of the short law served to affirm a comprehensive public memory rather than that of a single community or of private memories/commemorations. Soon afterwards, however, even if the word “Holocaust” was never mentioned in the law, the Jewish community soon took a decisive role in the definition of these new commemorations. By opting for a date such as January, 27 that related to the international memory of the Holocaust, rather than the memory of a day connected to an event that had happened on the Italian soil, the Italian Government seemed to lose another occasion to engage with the country’s historical guilt.¹⁵ On the other hand, we have to note that this law anticipated all the subsequent Remembrance days that were approved in Italy,¹⁶ working as a sort of a national pacification vehicle.¹⁷ In the process of creating the following Remembrance days, the Holocaust has been re-elaborated and de-historicized with the aim of transforming it into a paradigm with a strong iconic and

¹⁴ Law n. 211 of 20 July 2000, <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/002111.htm> [accessed on 1st September 2016].

¹⁵ On the debate about choosing October 16, the date of the roundup of the Jews of Rome, or January 27, a day chosen by most European countries as well as the UN and the EU, see Giovanni De Luna, *La Repubblica del dolore: Le memorie di un’Italia divisa* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010), 67-72. For the symbolic role of October 16 in Italian Holocaust memory, see *16 ottobre 1943: La deportazione degli ebrei romani tra storia e memoria*, eds. Martin Baumeister, Amedeo Osti Guerrazzi and Claudio Procaccia (Roma: Viella, 2016).

¹⁶ On this relationship see Valentina Pisanty, *Abusi di memoria: Negare, banalizzare, sacralizzare la Shoah* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2012) and Susanne C. Knittel, *The Historical Uncanny: Disability, Ethnicity, and the Politics of the Holocaust* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 175-281.

¹⁷ As the final accomplishment of this work of pacification, on 30 March 2004 the Italian Parliament, with only the extreme left abstaining, instituted a “Day of Remembrance of the Italian exodus and the Foibe” in parallel with the Day of Memory, which had been established four years earlier. As John Foot has commented, in the decision to establish the Foibe Day at two weeks’ distance from the Holocaust one, there was the precise political will to divide the Italians between those who will commemorate the Holocaust, and those who will remember the Foibe. The presence of politicians at one or the other institutional event becomes, therefore, a symbol of political, ethnic or religious belonging. Through this division the Italian state seems therefore to acknowledge the divided memory of the country. On this, see John Foot, *Fratture d’Italia: Da Caporetto al G8 di Genova, la memoria divisa del paese* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2009), 142. On the construction of a televised memory of the Foibe, see Damiano Garofalo, “La memorializzazione delle Foibe il paradigma della Shoah: Storia, politica, televisione,” *Media e Storia*, ed. Ilenia Imperi, *Officina della Storia*, 13 (2015), <http://goo.gl/L62x8T> [accessed on 1st September 2016].

symbolic value for the present.¹⁸ In other words, the institution of a variety of other commemorative dates cannot help but resulting in the at least partial de-historicization of the Holocaust itself.

Laying the Foundations of a Holocaust Televised Memory

Italian State Television has played a leading role in these recent Holocaust memory mutations. Indeed, during Holocaust Remembrance Day Italian TV programs and talk-shows dedicate every year several programs of debate and public investigation to the subject. Here it is worth examining several televised instances of particular significance. I refer first to the political talk-show *Porta a porta*, a highly popular program often reverential towards the government of the day that has played an important role in shaping RAI's approach to the Day of Memory since 2005.¹⁹ Hosted by the famous journalist Bruno Vespa, the program dedicated each January, 27 episode to the theme of the Holocaust. All these special episodes tended to be structured along similar lines, and over the years such structure has become a sort of televisual paradigm for a host of other public media commemorations of the Holocaust.

Several structuring features of *Porta a porta*'s broadcasts are worth noting. First of all, in most instances, the discussion is introduced using a series of platitudes common in Holocaust memory talk, such as "so as not to forget" [*per non dimenticare*], "never again" [*mai più*] or "so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past" [*per non ripetere gli errori del passato*]. Secondly, several politicians and a few historians propose their own viewpoints on the event and, finally, the last word is given to survivors and the relatives of the victims, both through pre-recorded interviews or with several of them actually present in the TV studio. The political debate and the lachrymose rhetoric based on the emotional content of the private stories of the victims, which are typical of Italian Holocaust public memory, therefore leaves little space for historical considerations. This pattern is

¹⁸ For a discussion of this global adoption of the Holocaust as a paradigm, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, Martin Jay, Bernhard Giesen, Michael Rothberg, Robert Manne, Nathan Glazer, and Elihu Katz, *Remembering the Holocaust: A Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ On the role of Bruno Vespa's *Porta a porta* as a TV phenomenon, and also for its political connotations, see Giandomenico Crapis, *Televisione e politica negli anni novanta: cronaca e storia, 1990-2000* (Roma: Meltemi, 2006), 181-182; Gianpietro Mazzoleni e Anna Sfaridini, *Politica Pop: Da "Porta a porta" a "L'isola dei famosi"* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009). On the Italian talk show genre, see Aldo Grasso, *Radio e televisione: teorie, analisi, storie, esercizi* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2000), 79-98.

repeated every year. To understand better the role played by *Porta a porta* in shaping a Holocaust public memory paradigm, at least in recent years, we need to analyze the program starting from a wider question: when and how did Italian television decide to engage with the Day of Memory? The first thing that stands out is that there were in fact no episodes of *Porta a porta* on Holocaust-related themes until 2005. Considering the prominence of this theme in the last ten years' of television programming, this absence is quite singular. However, we can note a similar absence in other TV programs until 2004.

On the first Day of Memory in 2001, only two documentaries were broadcast, both on the third RAI channel Rai3 in an unfavorable early morning slot. The first one was entitled *La memoria e la pace* [Memory and peace] and was directed by Massimo Sani.²⁰ Specifically, this was a televised report based on a survey conducted in various schools in Italy on the memory of World War II and the Holocaust. Sani investigated what historical knowledge those students had at the end of their secondary education. The program shows several debates filmed inside classrooms between students and Holocaust survivors. This program was followed by another documentary directed by Sani, entitled *Difesa della razza, memoria di una legge* [Defense of the race, memory of a law],²¹ which was an edited version of a lecture by historian Giuseppe Barone on racism and the Italian racial laws, with several testimonies by Holocaust witnesses.

While both programs aired during the first Day of Memory appear strongly Jewish-centered, commemorations of the second Day of Memory in 2002 were almost hegemonized by the mini-series *Perlasca: un eroe italiano* [Perlasca: an Italian hero], directed by Alberto Negrin and broadcast on Rai1 on January, 28-29. This series presented the story of a "good Italian," Giorgio Perlasca, who saved the lives of thousands of Jews in Budapest. The story revolves entirely around the fate of Hungarian Jews and, though the protagonist is a fascist, during the course of the two episodes the words "fascist," "fascism," or "Mussolini" are never pronounced. The exaltation of the main character, therefore, occurs thanks only to the fact that he is Italian, and "naturally" good, heroic and just.²²

²⁰ *La memoria e la pace*, dir. by Massimo Sani, January 27, 2001, Rai3, 7:00 am.

²¹ *Difesa della razza, memoria di una legge*, dir. by Massimo Sani, January 27, 2001, Rai3, 8:00 am.

²² See, above all, Robert Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2012* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 152-153, and Milly Buonanno, *Italian TV-Drama and Beyond: Stories from the Soil, Stories from the Sea* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 211-222.

With this in mind, we can easily affirm that in the first two years of programming we do not encounter any references to other genocides or historical traumas; moreover, we can also observe how, starting from the hugely successful broadcast of *Perlasca*, the televised landscape on these themes totally changed. On the one hand, in fact, we can perceive the increasing centrality of the Holocaust within public debate; on the other hand, even the Government began to realize the possibility of using Holocaust commemorations for political purposes.

Silvio Berlusconi's Holocaust Public Memory

For the abovementioned reason, the year 2003 represents a very decisive turning point in this analysis. On the evening of the Day of Memory, in fact, a message by the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was simultaneously broadcast on the three public service networks (Rai1, Rai2, Rai3). Here, I would like to quote this message at length, in view of its strong eloquence:

Today in Italy, as much as in many other countries, Holocaust Memory Day is celebrated. A sad and solemn occasion, which calls for everyone to reflect on the atrocities that man is capable of, and on the aberrations whereby any ideologies don't recognize the dignity, but I would also say the sacredness, of every human being. [...] The twentieth century will be sadly remembered for the horrors and suffering inflicted on men by the two totalitarian regimes: the Nazi one, and the Communist one. I appeal especially to the girls and boys of today who live in a country that has been able to recognize their mistakes and, thanks to the great American democracy and to the sacrifice of many of its young lives, was able to reconstruct a democracy respectful of the dignity of the people and the principles of equality and freedom for all citizens. Freedom is the essence of humanity, it is the essence of our intelligence and our heart, is the essence of our capacity to love and create. And God, from the beginning, wanted every man [sic] in this way: he wanted him free. Even in the future you should be aware that this freedom is not given once and for all, but it must be defended day by day from new dangers which threaten it. The defense of freedom is the highest, noblest and most exciting mission.²³

The vagueness of the word "freedom" assumed immediately a political role in Berlusconi's speech. This was intended to be inclusive: because the Nazis tried to

²³ *Messaggio del Presidente del Consiglio in occasione della Giornata della memoria*, January 27, 2003, 8:30 pm, Teche RAI n. M03027/001.

restrict freedom of choice, speech and thought during their regime, the European citizens of today and tomorrow must defend all these freedoms day by day.²⁴ Then, without mentioning the Holocaust, Berlusconi continued:

This year, in celebrating Remembrance Day, we remember that the international community is committed to fighting terrorism, and to rendering harmless those regimes that threaten world peace. Once again, the choice between peace and war is in the hands of those who deny the freedom of their people and attack the peaceful coexistence among peoples. We are for peace, but we cannot become jointly responsible for surrendering to he who threatens our security, our freedom and our democracy. This day must be therefore an opportunity to cultivate the memory, not to forget, to fight against the resurgence of intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism, which still occur in many parts of the world. This day should be, for each of us, the chance to take on the commitment not to forget and to contribute to the building of a fairer world based on peace, democracy and freedom for all women and all men.²⁵

The fact that Berlusconi did not mention the Holocaust and the Jews – except for a vague reference to anti-Semitism – as well as the fact that he mostly made references to terrorism and employed the word “freedom” without qualifying it further, is not without import. For the first time following the establishment of the Day of Memory, Berlusconi himself participated, via a televised message, in the public commemoration of the Day, thus transforming it into a media event.²⁶ Here we can see how, whilst publicly honoring the anniversary, Berlusconi also used the commemoration with the aim of finding approval for

²⁴ With the same purpose, the Italian Parliament, with the Law no. 61 of 15 April 2005, established a Day of Freedom to be commemorated on November 9. This day was intentionally set on the anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, meant as a symbolic event for the liberation of oppressed countries and as a call for democracy for all the people still subject to totalitarianism. On the occasion of the “Day of Freedom,” official commemorative ceremonies are annually organized with the aim to illustrate the value of democracy and freedom against the dangerous effects of past and present totalitarian regimes. See <http://www.parlamento.it/leg/ldl/sldlelencoo42005ordcron.htm>.

²⁵ *Messaggio del Presidente del Consiglio in occasione della Giornata della memoria*, cit.

²⁶ As already observed by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, media events are historical facts which have become global rituals of mass communication, in particular of television discourse. Constituting a new television genre, the broadcasts of these rituals show us that these media events have the potential for transforming societies as they shape audiences around the globe. See Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events. The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1994).

his government's foreign policy. In particular, we should recall how in 2002 the Italian Government decided to involve the country in the military intervention in Afghanistan against the Taliban. The strong emphasis placed by Berlusconi on the USA as the "great American democracy," as well as the continuous references to ambiguous threats to freedom and security, can be easily read as a justification for that military intervention, as well as of the impending Iraq invasion, which began in March 2003.²⁷ Finally, the fact that Berlusconi wanted to underline the equal involvement of the "two totalitarian regimes," Nazis and Communists, in the horrors and suffering during the twentieth century, also convert the Day of Memory into an occasion to deliver a jab at domestic leftwing opponents, still disparagingly referred to as communists in the rightwing press.²⁸ The ultimate objective of this politics of memory is undeniable: a political use of Holocaust memory and commemoration strongly connected to present events.²⁹

The same year also saw the first TV program entirely dedicated to the Day of Memory. This was a special episode of the TV program *La storia siamo noi*, edited by Giovanni Minoli and broadcast in the morning of January 27, 2003.³⁰ Here, we can see the germs of several elements which were then consolidated in numerous *Porta a Porta* specials. Before presenting a documentary on Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Minoli introduced the topic with a live recording from the Fosse Ardeatine, alternating pre-recorded interviews with ex-deportees with the views of in-studio guests Tullia Zevi, Alessandra Minerbi or Fiamma Nirenstein. In this case, the discussion revolved entirely around the Holocaust, with no particular reference to other historical or current events.

²⁷ On Silvio Berlusconi's foreign policy on Afghanistan and Iraq, see Giuseppe Cassini, *Gli anni del declino: La politica estera del governo Berlusconi (2001-2006)*, (Roma: Bruno Mondadori, 2007). On the relationship between Italy and the United States during the Berlusconi cabinet, see Mimmo Franzinelli and Alessandro Giaccone, *La Provincia e l'Impero: Il giudizio americano sull'Italia di Berlusconi* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2011).

²⁸ Along similar lines, but without making any references to the involvement of the United States in several Middle East wars, in his speech given in front of the Confederation of Italian ex-Partisans and Combatants the President of Italian Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi said that "memory can create a more civilized and more just world, where the courage to change things prevails over fear," see "Ciampi sull'Olocausto: Ricordare è un dovere," *La Stampa*, January 28, 2002.

²⁹ On this tendency, which is not just related to the Italian case, see Rebecca Clifford, *Commemorating the Holocaust: The Dilemmas of Remembrance in France and Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), and Aline Sierp, *History, Memory and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions* (London: Routledge, 2014).

³⁰ *La storia siamo noi – Olocausto*, January 27, 2003, Rai3, 8:00 am, Teche RAI n. F390082.

Breaking the Rules: Chile, Balkans and Rwanda

The following year, an analogous scheme appears on *La storia siamo noi*, but in addition we also have the first live recording from the Senate of the Memory Day official commemoration.³¹ The event focused entirely on the extermination of the Jews, and many Senators underlined the importance of the commemoration for the development of what they championed as a united European community around Judeo-Christian values and roots. Furthermore, 2004 saw the televised coverage of a sporting event strongly related to the Memory Day: a testimonial football match between singers, actors and journalists organized with the aim of raising funds for a Holocaust Museum in Rome³² – which, after 12 years, still does not yet exist³³. Between 2003 and 2004 we can then see the beginnings of a new public attention for the Memory Day. Since then, the event has become more and more politicized, memorialized and also mediatized.

For all these reasons, and also because of the 60th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz, it is not by chance that 2005 had the first special episode on Memory Day of the above-cited TV talk show *Porta a Porta*.³⁴ In it, anchor Bruno Vespa interviewed Holocaust survivors Alberto Sed, Edith Bruck, Mario Limentani and Alberto Mieli, as well as politicians Walter Veltroni (at that moment Mayor of Rome and one of the most ambitious leaders of the centre-left coalition), Altero Matteoli (right-wing, member of the post-fascist Party *Alleanza Nazionale* who, at that moment, was the Minister of the Environment), and Senator for life Giulio Andreotti (centrist and former leader of Christian-democrats). The guests discussed several themes, though the main topics draw on the stories of the ex-deportees' traumatic past experiences. However, more relevant for this article is that, whenever Vespa interviewed the politicians, they always invoked comparisons with other atrocities or present issues.

A brief excerpt of this debate is useful to illustrate the point. Andreotti commented on the fact that, though “tonight inspires great emotion,” “it would not be possible to create a special episode like this on the survivors from Siberia,

³¹ *Per non dimenticare – Il giorno della memoria dell'Olocausto*, January 27, 2004, Rai1, 10 am, Teche RAI n. Mo4027/001.

³² *Partita della memoria*, January 27, 2004, Rai3, 9:00 pm, Teche RAI n. Mo4027/002.

³³ For the debate around the museum, see Minuz, *La Shoah e la cultura visuale*, and Gordon, *The Holocaust in Italian Culture*, 14-24.

³⁴ *Porta a Porta*, January 27, 2005, Rai1, 11:45 pm, Teche RAI n. F423958.

because there were no survivors.” This is because, in his view, ““when a system abandons the rule of law, we have things like the *Desaparecidos*, we watch what happened in Chile.” For this reason, Andreotti continues, “the real message that all the people who died in the camps give to us, and also the message that survivors give to us today, is precisely that we have to be inflexible preserving this system of values.” Vespa followed suit by recalling that “even if on a smaller scale, something similar has happened in some areas of the world: we have witnessed episodes of ethnic cleansing and, unfortunately, such facts will come to be again.” Then, Walter Veltroni intervened, intending to clarify his position with regards to the possibility of comparing other historical events to the Holocaust:

So, we have to distinguish the matter into two parts. First of all, nothing is comparable to the Holocaust, nothing is comparable to the systematic organization of a death machine that was specifically intended to destroy the Jews, those who do not think like the Nazis, homosexuals, gypsies, etc. But, if we look at this problem from another perspective, that of the ferocity of the human being, we can see in the present similar examples. [...] In recent years, for example, we have seen many of them, and we know well only few of them. I am thinking only of the ethnic wars that take place in parts of the world that are not under the spotlights. Even the brutality of the war in Rwanda was chilling! What happened in the Balkans, the mass graves... there are words that we have started to hear again, like beheadings, tortures... I mean there are times in history... like Beslan! Beslan was one of the most terrible massacres of the recent history!

At this precise moment, Veltroni was interrupted by Vespa, who added, among other examples, “the persecution of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein!” Once again, then, the question was brought back to current international politics, with an indirect reference to the USA invasion of Iraq supported by the right-wing Italian government. Veltroni carried on, ignoring Vespa’s clarification:

So, with the premise that we made, because in the Memory Day nothing is comparable to the Holocaust, we must say that when those elementary principles of respect for pluralism, freedom, and also the value of democracy unfortunately fail, then the risk to be familiar with the depths of insanity could easily return.

This discourse is entirely based on the usual rhetoric of slogans like “never again,” “so as not to forget,” or “so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past”³⁵. But behind these linguistic constructions, we see public uses of the Holocaust founded on well-defined political visions of the past. If in Berlusconi’s message and partially also in Vespa’s statement we have an attempt to use the Holocaust to legitimize the political line of the Government Veltroni’s purpose seems much more oriented towards commemorating the Holocaust by connecting it to the present as a civic duty. This means that we should read the comparisons that Veltroni made – Balkans, Rwanda, Beslan – in the context of a general educational vision that also includes school trips to Auschwitz, the project of a National Holocaust Museum, and other initiatives encouraged by him with the aim of shaping the young generations to develop awareness of the past in order to act in the present. But the obvious risk of this didactic mission is to generate an anxiety of remembering, without specifying exactly what is to be remembered.

Coming to Terms with the Present: Lampedusa and Other Massacres

The final accomplishment of the Veltronian political project is clearly presented in a *Porta a porta* episode, broadcast on January 27, 2009, on the immigration problems in Lampedusa.³⁶ Having debated on the demonstrations of the inhabitants of Lampedusa, who opposed the creation of a Centre for Identification and Expulsion (CIE) of immigrants, Vespa interviewed Veltroni again, commenting negatively on the situation of the island of Lampedusa and presenting, at the same time, the 2009 Memory Day. This passage appears very unnatural, but it is nonetheless full of a clear ideological undertones. After a televised report on an exhibition in Rome on Italy’s Racial Laws, Vespa continued his interview with Veltroni. The politician argued that the tragedy of the Holocaust explains how, in times of crisis, there is a real risk of a new wave of racism and violence, and also stressed the need to educate the new generations on the Holocaust so that they will not commit the same mistakes (in terms of their approach to immigration).

³⁵ As Peter Novick has observed, many of these “invocations of the Holocaust” found particular resonance in the American context. In particular, these are usually exhortations Jews directed at themselves, “to spur them to greater efforts on Israel’s behalf, to see that new generations drew the correct lessons from the catastrophe.” Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 159.

³⁶ *Porta a porta*, January 27, 2009, Rai1, 11:00 pm, Teche RAI n. F536562. On this, see also Derek Duncan’s article in this issue of *Quest*.

But we are not only in front of hazardous comparisons with the present, but also with allusions and cross references with other genocides which happened in the past. For example, once again on *Porta a Porta*, on occasion of the 2012 Memory Day, we have the first televised reference to the Armenian genocide.³⁷ The episode followed the familiar structure (Holocaust testimonies, a few historians, and some delegates from Jewish communities, this time without any politicians). However, at the end of the episode Vespa presented a report with archival images on the deportation and killing of Armenians at the hand of the Young Turks in 1915-1916. The program presented the Armenian genocide as the first genocide in modern history. It claimed that the so-called “death marches” were used for the first time, and that around 1,200,000 people died of starvation, disease or exhaustion. These marches, the program continued, were directly organized under the supervision of the German army officers in connection with the Turkish army, and can be considered as a dress rehearsal for the most well-known marches that deported Jews were forced to endure towards the end of the Second World War.³⁸ It was then the turn of the President of the Roman Jewish community Riccardo Pacifici to compare the historical revisionism of this event made by the Turkish Government with the, in this view, fast-rising phenomenon of Holocaust denial.³⁹ Pacifici was followed by Catholic historian Andrea Riccardi, who at that time was also the Minister for International Cooperation in the Monti Cabinet. Commenting the report on the Armenian genocide, Riccardi stated that “because we have assisted to the massacres in the Balkans, in Rwanda, we should be accustomed to these images; however, every time we listen to these voices or we see these clips, it’s always the first time, because this horror is really too much for us; this is the abyss of horror we can’t get used to.” Here, for the first time, it is worth noting how another genocide takes part in the

³⁷ *Porta a porta*, January 26, 2012, Rai1, 11:00 pm, Teche RAI n. F627167.

³⁸ Actually, there is no historical evidence that the Armenian genocide where organized under the control of the German army. See Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*. trans. Paul Bessemer (London: Constable, 2007).

³⁹ This is a quite strange connection because, at that moment, political and economic relations between Mario Monti and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, then Prime Minister of Turkey, were really favourable. On this, see “Monti: L’Italia vuole che la Turchia entri nell’Ue,” *Lettera 43*, May 8, 2012. The position of Andrea Riccardi also seemed to be clearly philo-Turkish, see Andrea Riccardi, “Perché serve che la Turchia sia europea,” *Famiglia Cristiana*, n. 46, November 12, 2015. Probably, this new interest on the Armenian genocide followed the news of the approval in France of a law that makes it a criminal offence to deny that genocide. On this, see Kim Willsher, “Armenian genocide denial to be banned in France as senators approve new law,” *The Guardian*, January 23, 2012.

commemoration in an otherwise exclusively Holocaust-oriented Memory Day. Moreover, the fact that TV guests who usually deal with the Holocaust are consulted on other themes – in this case the Armenian genocide – means that it is not what to remember that is important (be it the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, or the massacres in Balkans or Rwanda), but rather how to borrow the same public memory paradigm and adopt the same structure for TV commemorations.

It is by no means a coincidence that an identical scheme is staged in the televised coverage of all the institutional commemorations organized by the Chamber of Deputies from 2010 until the present. With reference to the 2010 ceremony, we see how all the speeches by politicians and institutional delegates introducing Elie Wiesel's own speech are full of pompous rhetoric and vague banalities.⁴⁰ Moreover, these occasions provide an opportunity for reiterating publicly the supposed rightness and goodness of all Italians vis-à-vis the Holocaust. In his intervention, Wiesel thanked the Italian country for its commitment to preserving Holocaust memory; he then accused Pope Pius XII for his silence during the Nazis' mass killing of European Jews. Wiesel also renewed his appeal for the arrest of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who had denied the Holocaust and called for the destruction of Israel. "He should be hauled off to the International Court of Justice to face charges of incitement of crimes against humanity," Wiesel said, taking also the opportunity to plea for the liberation of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, while also invoking peace between Israel and Palestine. Finally, he ended his speech with the hope to assist to the approval of an international bill declaring suicide terrorist attacks as "crimes against all of humanity."

This speech is particularly interesting for its strong multidirectional aim. Wiesel, in fact, did not mention any possible comparison of the Holocaust with other historical genocides, but his intention is to use a historical trauma in the discussion of present issues. All references to the Ahmadinejad denial, the Shalit kidnapping, and also to the Road map for peace between Israel and Palestine stem from a Holocaust testimony and, as a consequence, are publicly legitimized by it.

⁴⁰ *Discorso di Elie Wiesel alla Camera dei deputati*, January 27, 2010, Rai3, 12:10 am, Teche Rai n. F574549.

From then on, Italian TV began to cover all yearly institutional Memory Day commemorations with a special episode of Rai3 news. In these programs, we can also note the slow emergence of references to the *Porajmos*, the genocide of Roma and Sinti people during the Second World War, which has started to be publicly considered as part of the Holocaust⁴¹. Nevertheless, the space given to the *Porajmos* remains minimal, and the prominence of the Jewish component still orients all public commemorations, with the above-cited political instances, up to the present.

Conclusions

The discontinuity of the last years, in regards to the narratives that dominated the public sphere until the middle of the 1990s, coincides with a general crisis of the idea of militancy, which, as is widely known, has involved the crisis of ideologies.⁴² In terms of the politics of memory, this represented a shift of attention from the centrality of the political deportation, and, as a consequence, of the figure of the partisan fighter, to the much more innocent positions of the witness and the victim. Following on from this cultural and political shift, the first archetype seems to have almost completely disappeared from television's public discourse on history. Therefore, an increasing top-heavy civic and didactic awareness of the Holocaust emerged from the general decline of the anti-Fascist narrative. This strong shift, thanks also to a new television discourse in political terms, has certainly favored initiatives frequently based on a vague duty to remember.⁴³ Ultimately, this clear change of position allowed the Holocaust to occupy an empty space, not only in terms of the past – and consequently in public memory – but also in the present. It becomes an unconditional warning, a

⁴¹ Here I refer, above all, to *Celebrazione del giorno della memoria alla presenza del Presidente della Repubblica Giorgio Napolitano*, TG3 Special Episode, Rai3, January 27, 2011, 11:00 am, Teche RAI n. F618225; *Celebrazione del giorno della memoria alla presenza del Presidente della Repubblica Giorgio Napolitano*, TG3 Special Episode, Rai3, January 27, 2012, 11:00 am, Teche RAI n. F618225; *Celebrazione del giorno della memoria alla presenza del Presidente della Repubblica Giorgio Napolitano*, TG3 Special Episode, Rai3, January 27, 2014, 11:00 am, Teche RAI n. F615859.

⁴² On this crisis, see above all Sergio Luzzatto, *La crisi dell'antifascismo*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2004) and Guri Schwarz, "Crisi del discorso antifascista e memoria della persecuzione razziale nell'Italia degli anni Ottanta," in *Dopo i testimoni: memorie, storiografie e narrazioni della deportazione razziale*, ed. Marta Baiardi and Alberto Cavaglion (Roma: Viella, 2014), 171-184.

⁴³ A propos of this, Emiliano Perra talks about a "Post-Antifascist Holocaust Memory," see Perra, *Conflicts of Memory*, 224-231.

constant term of comparison with other contemporary tragedies – Palestine, Balkans, Rwanda, Beslan, or the immigrants’ issue, as we have seen.

Television forces the public memory to question itself with the absoluteness of the paradigm of the Holocaust, which is increasingly mentioned and used as a metaphysical and decontextualized entity. On the one hand, it is enshrined as the “absolute evil” in history. At the same time, however, behind the litanies and linguistic rhetoric of the “never again” and “so as not to forget” mottos lies some precise political visions of the present (as in the case of Silvio Berlusconi’s and Walter Veltroni’s ideas). With this in mind, fifteen years later it seems therefore necessary for us to rethink the Holocaust Remembrance Day in virtue of the televised representations, even if in this context uniquely related to RAI generalist channels and to non-fiction programs. We ought to adopt a new approach on the multidirectional implications of Holocaust public memory, as analyzed from a transnational point of view. It is quite obvious, in fact, how all these processes have involved, in various problematic ways, the building and the evolution of a post-war Italian identity increasingly linked to Holocaust public memory segueing into an era of multidirectional memory where the Holocaust enables the articulation of other local and national histories of victimization precisely in virtue of its uniqueness⁴⁴. In the shape of these new public memories proliferating under the contemporary media regime in modern societies, the Holocaust seems no longer to be the only historical trauma to be remembered, even if its uniqueness probably means that it continues to assume a leading role in all the above-mentioned comparisons.

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⁴⁴ The theorization of the so-called multi-directional memories could help us define a sort of “memory archive,” which could set the new rules for the media representations of traumatic pasts. For this methodology, see Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 229.

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Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France. History of a conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 272

by Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun

This is a book whose publication was preceded by unanimous praise, both in the United States and in France. Although in France the book has not yet been translated, the author has been invited by prestigious institutions (for example the CNRS and the Collège de France), where each time there was a large and attentive audience, already swayed by the author's work. The book is about a very topical issue: in the past decade, relations between Jews and Muslims in France and not only, have become increasingly tense. This was further showed by recent acts of terrorism by Islamic extremists, also committed specifically against Jews. Both observers of current events and researchers point to the development of a new and mainly Muslim anti-Semitism in France and the rest of Europe.

Can Mandel, in a book of only 156 pages, sufficiently explain the situation through a historical analysis of the relations between these two groups in France? As the author rightly argues, the essence of the conflict between Jews and Muslims cannot be attributed solely to the effects of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the *Héxagone*, as French journalists hastily do. The thesis that the author develops is based on the idea that as early as the colonial period in Algeria, but even more so since decolonisation, France has highlighted and exacerbated the *inequalities* between Muslims and Jews. In Algeria, the Crémieux decree allowed the mass naturalisation of Jews, who as early as 1870 became French citizens with all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; from 1962 onwards the granting of citizenship took place on French soil. Oddly, the author notes that “the French government [decided] to allow Jews to keep the French citizenship” but did not grant it to Muslims. According to Mandel, the series of inequalities that followed the settlement of the Jews of Algeria in France and after that the arrival of Muslim immigrants, were manifested in education, employment, in diversified highly-skilled jobs. In short, what took place was the successful integration, if not assimilation, of the Jews and the transformation of Muslims into “immigrants” who benefited from a “much weaker social and government support.” Here, Mandel seems to forget that the Jews who arrived in France during this period were first and foremost French citizens – since at least four

generations. So, as French citizens and *not as Jews*, they benefited from the rights of citizenship, including access to schools, social care and jobs.

Has the author examined the legal procedures through which the then government could “decide [or not] to allow Jews to keep French nationality?” In addition to historical errors behind these assertions (for example, the debates within the Gaullist governments concerning the future of the Jews of Algeria never emerged in the public sphere and could not have done so without appearing as a repetition of the repeal of the Pétain decree), is it possible that Mandel deplores the fact that De Gaulle in 1960-1962 did not have another go on what Pétain had done in 1940, when he abolished the Crémieux decree and granted the Jews of Algeria once again the status of indigenous people, so that there would be “fewer inequalities” and injustices between Jews and Muslims?¹ Does the author really think, as she said during an interview with Jean-Philippe Dedieu,² that the benefit of citizenship to individuals who were French citizens for nearly 100 years, and which was subsequently not extended to the Muslims, is the source of the current problems? Does Mandel think that the contract of citizenship between an individual and a nation is something that can be taken and thrown away at some point or another? In 1962, the Jews of Algeria who arrived in France were not an organised group but individual French nationals, who, like the other French citizens of the colony, came to the “motherland.”

We were surprised to see that under the pen of a distinguished American historian (the author is Professor of History and Jewish Studies, and Head of the Department of Jewish Studies at Brown University), the conflict between these two populations seems to have begun during the period of colonisation and been initiated in some way by the colonial power that divided them (through the Crémieux decree) in order to better exercise its authority. Even though this motivation cannot not be completely ruled out, to reduce the conflict between Jews and Muslims to the ulterior motives of the colonial power reveals a total lack of understanding of the broad historical context. Without sinking to the

¹ This is a persistent argument that has been used by all anti-Jewish groups in Algeria since 1871. See the articles published in *Les Juifs d'Algérie. Une histoire de ruptures*, eds. Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Genèvieve Dermenjian, (Paris: PUP, 2015). This view was supported by General Giraud, who did not repeal the withdrawal of the decree under the pretext that we should not perpetuate inequalities between Jews and Muslims, and that we should “let the Jew in his shop and the Muslim in his field.”

² Jean-Philippe Dedieu, “Juifs et musulmans de France, histoire d’une relation. Entretien avec Maud Mandel,” *La Vie des idées*, September 18, 2014, <http://www.laviedesidees.fr/Juifs-et-musulmans-de-France.html>.

level of the current historical discourses that focus only on the violent episodes that have marked the life of Jews in Muslim countries, let us not forget that both the observers and travellers who, between the 16th and the 18th centuries, were not accepting of the Jews in the country and those that were quietly anti-Jewish, were outraged by the deplorable condition of the Jews in this Ottoman province (at the time not yet known as Algeria) who were subject to the *dhimma*, as were all Jews in Muslim lands. For example, the American consul William Shaler in 1816 wrote: “The Jews of Algiers are perhaps the remnants of Israel’s most destitute.” Let us not forget, to mention only the 19th century, the *pogrom* in Algiers in 1805, which claimed the lives of many Jews, the decapitation of the Chief Rabbi of Algiers Isaac Aboulker during a riot in 1815, and finally the case of the Jews of Mascara – including men, women, the elderly, and children – who were massacred indiscriminately by Arabs in 1835 while they were fleeing the city as they were about to be taken by the French.³

As Philippe Portier writes in his foreword to a recent book: “In 1956, the National Liberation Front (FLN), in the Declaration of the Soummam, brings to mind the atmosphere of a ‘millennium entente’ between these two religious components of Algerian society [Jews and Muslims]. But is this the reality? We note that Jews and Muslims are, on more than one level, part of the same civilizational fabric: they speak (almost) the same language, they share similar culinary traditions, they move together to the rhythm of Arab-Andalusian music, and under the cover of a denominational differentiation of activities, they exchange goods and services in the economic sphere. It would be wrong, however, to dwell on these similarities. There are abundant testimonies clearly showing that Jews have been collectively viewed with general contempt which can sometimes feed acts of extreme violence.”⁴ Moreover, when the author raves about the cordial relations between the Jewish traders of Marseille and their Muslim clients in the period 1960-1980⁵, we can only be surprised that from this she draws the conclusion that all is well in all eternity between the two groups, that their proximity from being neighbours and that their good relations on a daily basis are proof that French policy has spoiled the relations between the two.

³ Valérie Assan “L’exode des Juifs de Mascara, un épisode de la guerre entre Abd el-Kader et la France,” *Archives Juives*, 2/38 (2005): 7-27.

⁴ Philippe Portier, “Avant-propos,” in *Les Juifs d’Algérie*, eds. Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun and Genèvieve Dermenjian, 6.

⁵ See, Mandel, *Muslims and Jews*, 155 – according to which ninety percent of Jewish trading merchants were located in areas with a Muslim majority: a sign of cultural proximity that, however, says nothing about the previous history of Jews in Muslim lands.

But what actually happened? The status of *dhimma*, backed by Koranic rules but also by customary practices, can explain the situation of exclusion that the Jewish minority – less than 15,000 people in 1830 – experienced before the French arrived in Algeria. “Ottoman Algeria worked well for the Jews with a dual modality of subjugation which made them subject to both rabbinical law in their internal affairs and Islamic law in their external relations. This was the general pattern that the French presence came to break. The French administration had barely settled when the government repudiated Muslim legislation. None of the great and small humiliations of the past were to be continued: the Muslims and the Jews were each ‘indigenous’ but they were granted a new form of equal status before the occupying power.”⁶ Between July 1830, when the French landed near Algiers, and July 1962, when more than 90% of the French Jews of Algeria permanently left Algeria for France, the Jews of Algeria progressively let go of their *Arab-Berber identity*, a humiliated identity made even more inferior, in order to adopt a *French identity* (which for them symbolised the free and liberated man) that coexisted, until their departure for France, with their *religious identity* which became increasingly confined to the private sphere. The memory of the Jews of Algeria, or that of their descendants that is expressed today in France, brings back to life these plural identities: as *French citizens*, they cultivate their *Jewishness*, which is *Sephardic* and steeped in the *Arab-Berber culture*; they also share with other repatriates of Algeria their feelings for the Algeria of the past which is today largely idealised.

The increasingly desired and claimed transformation of indigenous Jews into French citizens was the culmination of a process originated in the beginning of the French colonial rule. It was the result of the intersection of multiple political, legal, ideological and cultural issues raised by both the successive French governments and the Jewish elites of France and Algeria. This is something that the author seems to forget or strongly minimise. The internalisation of French identity among the Jews of Algeria took place thanks to two institutions that they were all subject to and that became the foundations of the Republic: the school, which assimilated young people in a cultural sense, and the army, which fulfilled the school’s mission for the men. But these institutions did not fully achieve their objectives because they were effectively replaced by three entities: Jewish notables and rabbis (a few exceptional individuals from the local rabbinate and others who had come to France as early as the first decade of the

⁶ Portier, “Avant-propos,” 8.

Conquest); the Consistories that were created based on the French model after the rulings of November 1845 and put in place as early as 1847; and, finally, the women, mothers and sisters from popular milieus, who were most often in daily contact with the French settlers' families and who adopted in their family environment the language, the cuisine and the ways of dressing of the colonial power.

The Jews of Algeria, most of whom were spectators of their own future, had been repeatedly studied by successive French governments (first the monarchy, then the Empire and the Republic) and identified and officially registered until 1870, essentially as regards birth and death certificates. They also became gradually more secular and they have been in (more or less difficult) close contact (depending on the period) with French society – of which they will quickly become key partakers, mindful of their own cultural integration.

It is to be noted that in 1870 the Jews amounted to a small population of less than 40,000 people who thanks to its elites were attached very early on to the French values of Emancipation, the Revolution and the Rights of Man. We must also remember that the project of Jewish mass naturalisation was in the pipeline as early as 1836 thanks not only to the support of the Jews of Algeria and of the Jewish community in France, but also to the then Leftist parties. Emile Ollivier, head of the last government during the Empire, was preparing to have this draft law voted in Parliament just before the defeat of the Empire in Sedan. The Government of National Defence, whose Minister of Justice was Adolphe Crémieux, picked up and acted on the draft law that had been under discussion for 40 years. As for the Muslims, they were two million and almost unanimously *hostile* to the French conquerors whom they viewed as Christians and occupiers, thus rejecting any idea of Francisation. Whereas Jews were predominantly urban dwellers, Muslims were for more than 80% rural dwellers. The granting of citizenship to Jews, more than as an anti-Muslim measure (in fact, Muslims did not want it at that time) should be viewed as something that meant to counteract the influence of foreigners (Italians, Spaniards, and Maltese) – who lived in the cities in equally great numbers as French nationals – and thus broaden the French electoral body during elections, but also to increase the number of military personnel in place, since France had been defeated in Sedan and was too drained to be able to afford to repatriate them.

Mandel seems surprised by the emergence of the category of “North African Jews,” which comprised the Jews of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, during the period of decolonisation: she wonders why no one “during this period [i.e. the

colonial period] identified as a Jew from North Africa.” However, one could argue that people begin to examine their identity when they feel it is under threat. So, the Jews of North Africa discovered themselves as such, but also as *pieds-noirs* and as *Sephardim*, only when they settled in France. Not before. Finally, we must note that in France, French citizens with a Jewish identity are not all of Sephardic origin. For this reason, the author’s pattern of analysis cannot be easily applied to French citizens with a Jewish identity from Alsace-Lorraine, Poland, Russia or Romania.

It is regrettable that the book does not include a final bibliography on a subject matter that covers 200 years of history of states, ideologies, religions and individuals. Secondly, the fact that notes – 81 pages, that is almost a third of the volume – are located at the very end of the book, makes the reading rather difficult.

Overall, the book is full of historical approximations and simple, not to say simplistic, ideas: that the situation between Jews and Muslims in France today is so bad because of the period of colonisation, followed by decolonisation; that France has been consistently unfair to Muslims and has favoured Jews.⁷ At the end of the book, readers will continue to wonder how Mandel cannot be aware of the strong bursts of Muslim anti-Judaism that characterised the Maghreb already before the period of colonisation and the outbreaks of the same anti-Judaism during the colonial period.⁸ Does the author view the violent anti-Semitic acts committed all over Europe by Muslims – not only from the Maghreb but also from Pakistan, Turkey and elsewhere – as merely a result of the Crémieux decree?⁹ Are the “Jews of Algeria” a compact and homogeneous block that can be tossed around one way or another, and that after granting them French citizenship and stripping them of it at some point or another and then giving it back to them, the people who make up this block would not react, letting themselves be carried away by the events in complete passiveness?

⁷ This idea, dominant and commonplace among young North American historians, also is at the core of another much-praised American new book, Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁸ Consider the Constantine pogrom of 5 August 1934. See, Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun, “Antijudaïsme dans l’Algérie coloniale: le pogrom du 5 août 1934 à Constantine comme révélateur de ‘deux hostilités,’” in *L’Antisémitisme en France XIX^e-XXI^e siècle*, eds. Dominique Schnapper, Perrine Simon-Nahum and Paul Salmona, forthcoming.

⁹ *Perceptions of the Holocaust in Europe and in Muslim Communities. Sources, Comparisons and Educational Challenges* eds. Günther Jikeli and Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun, (Dordrecht/Heidelberg/New York/London: Springer Science, 2013).

In short, the book is more ideological than scientific, pointing *in petto* and *in fine* the responsibility of the current violence to France and to the Jews, who since 1830 have not rebuffed what they believed was a blessing for them, for their future and that of their offsprings.

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Maud S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France. History of a Conflict*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014) pp. 253.

by Bryan S. Turner

Before World War II Muslims were generally well integrated into European societies. In Weimar Germany they were a well off and socially accepted community, but this middle-class cohort of Muslims largely disappeared in the aftermath of the War.¹ It was not until 1977 that the concept of ‘Islamophobia’ was first defined in Britain by the Runnymede Trust to describe the nature and scope of prejudice against Muslims and to recommend that the 1976 Race Relation Act be amended to make discrimination on religious grounds unlawful. This amendment was rejected by the government that argued that the Human Rights Act of 1998 would provide sufficient protection of minorities.² Perhaps unsurprisingly after 9/11 there has been a growing literature on Islamophobia indicating widespread hostility to and fear of Muslim communities in western societies. There is even a view that the anti-Muslim discourse is rampant, in fact constituting an ‘industry’ and that Islamophobia is simply an illustration of old Orientalist myths.³ While Europe appears to be struggling with diversity as such, Islam is thought to be a special challenge. In *Can Islam be French?* John Bowen claims that Islam touches raw nerves in French culture.⁴ The entry of Islam into public culture has changed the topography of France and raised old anxieties about colonial repression, modern anti-Semitism, and the struggles between Catholics and Republicans.⁵ It is claimed that European hostility to Jews has been replaced by the growing fear of Muslims.⁶

The mood of European scholarship with respect to the recognition and integration of Islam is typically pessimistic. The rise of anti-immigrant and anti-Islam political parties – Golden Dawn in Greece, the Northern League in Italy,

¹ E. Ozyurek, *Being German Becoming. Race, Religion and Conversion in the New Europe*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

² J. S. Fetzer, J. C. Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France and Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 32.

³ D. Kumer, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*, (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2012).

⁴ J. R. Bowen, *Can Islam be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

⁶ P. Weller, Paul, P. Kingsley, N. Ghanea-Hercock, S. Cheruvallil-Contractor, *Religion or Belief, Discrimination and Equality*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 197.

Marine Le Penn and the National Front in France, and the English defense league in Britain – have exposed a hitherto hidden or ignored under-current of resentment against foreigners. In the context of these developments, Maud Mandel's study of Muslims and Jews in France is a welcome corrective to the dominant focus on anti-Islam in the academic literature and in the popular media. The historical picture is far more complex and contradictory, because, despite religious conflicts around the world, Jews and Muslims often have shared interests as a consequence of having a common experience as outsiders and minorities. Her study is also somewhat unusual in that the dominant comparison in the academic literature is between Christians as the majority and Muslims as a minority.

There have been dramatic but mainly isolated attacks on Jews in France in the 1980s and in the 1990s, but anti-Jewish violence increased dramatically after 2000, primarily fuelled by the resentment of Muslim youth from the most disadvantaged sectors of French society. Tragic attacks on Jewish citizens in 2006 and 2012 caused further alarm for the authorities. Explanations of increasing anti-Semitism or Judeophobia are diverse and often contradictory, but they have in common the belief that Muslim and Jewish communities are on a collision course that is inevitable and unavoidable. The purpose behind Mandel's historical study is to challenge such assumptions. She opens her discussion by recording that she was originally drawn to the topic by observing the deep cultural and historical connections that link these two communities rather than dividing them. As a matter of fact, France has the largest Jewish and Muslim communities – around four to six million Muslims and over half a million Jews – outside Israel. The pressures on these two communities, which share certain linguistic and cultural traditions and a common experience of displacement, to assimilate combined with feelings of rejection, are the same. Mandel consequently wants to reject the dominant narrative that describes the mutual hostility between Jew and Muslim, while also asking how far these narratives engender the very violence they claim to describe. While there is no deep and intractable enmity between actual Jews and Muslims, 'Jew' and 'Muslim' have become political symbols of conflict.

Thus her main thesis is that 'binary constructions of Muslim-Jewish interaction have worked to erase the more complex social terrain in which Muslims and Jews have interacted in late twentieth century France' (p.155). Writing about 'Jews' and 'Muslims' from an historical or sociological perspective raises considerable difficulties, because these labels hide significant cultural, social and religious

differences within the two categories. A further difficulty in defining and contrasting religious identities is that, especially among youth, believing, belonging and behaving are no longer systematically connected.⁷ Perhaps one criticism of the book is that, while she recognizes significant differences within these communities, she does not describe these in any detail. So for example she offers no analysis of the Shia –Sunni divide that intensified after the Iranian Revolution into a global struggle for dominance. In the last decade the Shia-Sunni conflict has largely defined not just the Islamic world but global politics in general.⁸ Nevertheless, Mandel shows considerable sophistication in recognizing that, while the labels obscure historical differences, what Jews and Muslims have in common is their lived experience of both exclusion and successful efforts to integrate. One further parallel between Jews and Muslims perhaps requires more attention from Mandel, namely that Islam and Judaism, in contrast to Roman Catholicism, have no transnational institutions of authority that are recognized globally. In both communities, authority is very much devolved and at least in the case of Islam local *fatwas* give expression to religious ‘de-territorialization’ and promote greater heterodoxy of belief.⁹

The historical unfolding of this narrative of a ‘clash of civilizations’ – a phrase which she does not use – is closely connected with domestic political events such as the 1968 student revolts, the 1980s experiments with multiculturalism and the general economic decline of France by the end of the last century. However, these domestic or national issues cannot be separated from the international and global context, and above all by the complicated history of French Algeria. This attention to the postcolonial is clearly not incidental or trivial and ‘From the standpoint of demography alone, decolonization was monumental in the historical trajectories of France’s Muslim and Jewish populations’ (p. 3). At least one million French citizens were ‘repatriated’ as a consequence of the violence, the number of Algerian Muslims grew from 130,000 in 1930 to over 600,000 by 1963. Between 1944 and 1979 there were 240,000 new Jewish arrivals. While the increase in numbers was important, immigration also brought greater community diversity between the new arrivals and those Jews that had roots in

⁷ G. Davie, Grace, *Religion in Britain since 1945. Believing without Belonging*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

⁸ V. Nasr, *The Shia Revival. How conflicts within Islam will shape the future*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

⁹ O. Roy, Olivier, *Holy Ignorance. When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

France stretching back before the French Revolution and those Jews who had migrated from war-ravaged Eastern Europe.

These developments also began to differentiate Jews from Muslims on the grounds that Jews were regarded as better educated, intelligent and more 'assimilable' than Muslims. The social differentiation was also juridical and the sense that the 1870 Cremieux Decree had granted French citizenship to all Algerian Jews thereby cutting them off decisively from most Algerian Muslims. The Decree had been reinforced by various informal administrative practices and schools of the *Alliance Israelite universelle* by which Jews came to enjoy better life-chances than the Muslim population. Although after World War II citizenship was granted to Muslims in the belief that it would dilute support for the independence struggle, Muslims in France continued to experience discrimination especially after 1954 when the struggle with the *Front de liberation nationale* transformed Muslims into 'the enemy within.' Jews fleeing from the Algerian conflict enjoyed the benefit of subsidies and aid that were made available to repatriating citizens. These historical conditions of structural discrimination had long term consequences in distinguishing between Muslims who were socially and economically marginalized and immigrant Jews who joined a French Jewish community with historical ties. Although Jews had been profoundly traumatized by Vichy legislation during Nazi occupation of France, by the 1950s, as a consequence of a determined rebuilding process, Jews had access to a highly developed infrastructure. In addition to this institutional support, there was a communal leadership committed to their integration and to the defense of Jewish interests. As a result, the Jewish community had many more opportunities to shape public opinion and to access the locus of political power. Jews are unsurprisingly better educated, more economically successful, and socially mobile than French Muslims. However, in one important respect they have been unsuccessful in shaping French foreign policy with respect to Israel and in discrediting public opinion about the plight of Palestinians.

These general observations about the modern history of Jewish-Muslims relations set the scene for the six main chapters each of which considers a moment in which Muslim-Jewish conflicts became a matter of official concern for the French police, the media and the wide array of communal spokespersons. Beginning in 1948 with minor unrest in Marseille, chapter 1 examines the ways in which disagreements over Israel provided a channel for debates about inequalities in French minority policies at home and in North Africa. Jews, who were traditionally reluctant to express a visible ethnic politics in France, kept

quiet about any Zionist sympathies they may have embraced. Chapter 2 explores the link between French colonial policies and Muslim-Jewish relations in the metropole and how decolonization changed the ways in which different actors understood the character of Jewish belonging throughout the region. In particular she considers how the invention of ‘the North African Jew’ united Tunisian, Moroccan and Algerian Jews into a collective that was in conflict with ‘North Africans,’ ‘Arabs’ and ‘Muslims.’ In chapter 3 she examines how these new ways of conceptualizing Muslim-Jewish interactions conditioned integration into the metropole in the late 1950s and 1960s, and how these possibilities for integration were compromised by the structural inequalities between Muslim and Jew. In the context of considerable civil disturbance and international instability around the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, chapter 4 shows that, while conflict between Muslims and Jews was rare, the narrative of two communities in conflict gained momentum and credibility. In chapter 5 the notion of two polarized communities was underlined by a growing student movement that connected radical left politics at home with the plight of the Palestinians abroad. However, it was not until the 1980s that the idea of polarization developed as the central motif for understanding relations between Jews and Muslims. In chapter 6 (‘Particularism *versus* Pluriculturalism’) she describes how the head-scarf controversy in October 1989, the desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Carpentras in May 1990 and the outbreak of the first Gulf War in January 1991 put an end to joint activism and intensified identity politics. France has as a result been deeply divided by the head-scarf controversy and the presence of religious symbols in public schools. With the growth of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s anti-immigration and nationalist agenda and increasing fear of terrorist attacks, the policy of ‘the right to be different’ was replaced by a firmer emphasis on ‘integration’. Public concern was directed towards the ‘second generation’ of Muslim migrants who were identified with general delinquency and occasionally with civil disturbance such as the burning of 250 cars and the wounding of seven police men in Lyon in July and August 1981. These fears were intensified by the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the fear of a global *jihad* movement. It is worth noting in passing that *Muslims and Jews in France* was published before the Charlie Hebdo affair in 2015 and the growing threat of ISIS as an inspiration for domestic terrorism.

Perhaps the principal intellectual lesson of this research is that understanding domestic or national conflicts cannot be undertaken without a detailed and close understanding of international politics. The national relationships between Jews and Muslims since 1945 have been deeply influenced, but not wholly determined,

by France's relationship to Israel during the various wars that have erupted in the region especially in 1948 and 1967. The depressing lesson of this excellent history of social and religious pluralism in modern France is that these external conflicts in the Middle East have contributed to the erosion of the official commitment to 'pluriculturalism' and, while French politics is deeply divided between left and right, both agree that 'immigration' is a 'problem' that needs an urgent solution. The growing crisis of African refugees in the Mediterranean and millions of displaced people from Syria has only served to strengthen opposition to immigration across European societies. Given the economic and political crisis in Greece, some Greek islands, most notably Lesbos, could be quickly overwhelmed. The prospect of an international deal over Iran's nuclear program in 2015 further complicates the international environment and may in fact provoke further conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia on the one hand and divide opinion in the West with respect to the security of Israel in the next decade. While Jews and Muslims may not be on a collision course, it will require considerable statecraft on the part of French leaders to create an environment in which both communities feel safe and secure at home and abroad.

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Anna Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 205.

by *Dario Miccoli*

Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration and Israel/Palestine by Anna Bernard is an original study on the representation and transmission of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as they emerge from literary texts that circulate in metropolitan arenas – by which the author primarily means the Anglo-American world, given its global relevance and the usage of English as a modern *lingua franca*. Bernard bases herself on studies on Israeli and Palestinian literary history and, most of all, on postcolonial and world literature. In doing so, she proposes a comparative and relational reading of texts by Israeli and Palestinian writers: from the memoirs of Edward Said and Mourid Barghouti to the postmodernist novels of Orly Castel-Bloom and those of the world-acclaimed author Amos Oz. The first chapter, “Reading for the nation”, discusses how the idea of national narration has been increasingly marginalized in the field of postcolonial literary studies, also because of scarce attention to a context such as Israel and Palestine. Focusing on this context would allow reappraising the centrality of the national narration and the circulation of its literary representations in metropolitan spaces. Bernard calls for a rethinking of the notion of national allegory – derived from Fredric Jameson’s influential scholarship – and elaborates upon the *demographic imaginary* as a crucial component of Israeli and Palestinian national narrations. This category helps her to “present a framework for thinking the ways in which narrative literature might serve as a laboratory for testing different ways of organizing and defining a polity” (p. 40).

“Exile and liberation: Edward Said’s *Out of Place*” is a thorough discussion of Said’s 1999 memoir. In the chapter, the author argues that this widely circulated text offers an interesting contextualization of the Palestinian demographic imaginary. Following a structure similar to that of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, Said problematizes the exile and liberation of himself as a member of the Palestinian collective and as an individual. Thanks to a close textual reading of *Out of Place*, Bernard demonstrates that Said develops “a model of Palestinian identity and belonging that is based on political belief rather than geographical or biological origin” (p. 66). Reading the memoir against the background of seminal studies by Franco Moretti and Frantz Fanon, the author explains that Said conceives *Out of Place* as an exilic exercise in both personal and national liberation and political awakening.

The third chapter, “‘Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction:’ Mourid Barghouti’s *I Saw Ramallah*” is instead dedicated to the Palestinian poet and writer Mourid Barghouti. At its core is his memoir *I Saw Ramallah* (1997), that recounts not the childhood and youth of the author – as Said’s *Out of Place* did – but the first return trip to Palestine since 1967, after thirty years of absence. In contrast to Said’s exilic reading of Palestinian identity, Barghouti juxtaposes the experience of the Palestinians who live in the West Bank and those who are in exile. This permits him to build an innovative vision of the Palestinian collective as a set of fragments that highlights how – Bernard notes – the writer’s goal is “to acknowledge and explore the historical events and contemporary material realities that divide Palestinians from one another” (p. 87). By narrating the spatial and physical changes occurred to his village and family after the Six-Day War, Barghouti points to the need of establishing a viable solidarity among Palestinians living in different, yet interrelated, contexts.

“‘Israel is not South Africa’: Amos Oz’s Living Utopias” takes quite a critical stance vis-à-vis Oz and his literary and essayist production. In the chapter, Bernard reads Oz as the quintessential representative of the Israeli liberal and progressive left in metropolitan circles and particularly in the Anglo-American world. She analyses many of his works, from *My Michael* (1968) to *A Perfect Peace* (1982) and *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2002), arguing that they all map conflicts between individuals and the political rifts of Israeli society. Bernard also contends that Oz’s fiction explicitly excludes Palestinians in order to defend “the Zionist ‘living utopia’” (p. 114).

Two women writers, one Israeli and the other Palestinian, are at the centre of Chapter Five. “Intersectional Allegories: Orly Castel-Bloom and Sahar Khalifeh” reads texts by Castel-Bloom and Khalifeh as “trenchant critiques of the gender-nationalist nexus in Israeli and Palestinian society” (p. 16). While acknowledging the different poetics of the two – postmodernist and satirical in the case of Castel-Bloom, realist and historical in that of Khalifeh – Bernard interestingly explains that in both cases the nation, and intersectionality as a literary strategy, are a central form of narrative thanks to which discussing issues related to the marginalized position of women. Considering the world literary approach that Bernard follows in *Rhetorics of Belonging*, it is however not entirely clear how can someone like Castel-Bloom – and, to a lesser degree, Khalifeh – be viewed as a *world writer*, considering the limited circulation of her texts and the fact that only three of them, *Dolly City* (1992), *Human Parts* (2002) and *Textile* (2006), are translated into English.

The sixth chapter, “‘An Act of Defiance Against Them All’: Anton Shammas’ *Arabesques*” is probably the most convincing one. The author introduces the

Palestinian Israeli writer and scholar Shamma, who in 1988 published his only yet much-celebrated and discussed novel *Arabesques*. Written in Hebrew and preceded by harsh discussions on the meanings of Israeli identity between Shamma and Abraham B. Yehoshua, *Arabesques* portrays an imaginary Palestinian – constructed by Shamma in a semi-autobiographical manner – that recalls the history of his village and his present life as a writer. According to Bernard, that of Shamma is the only text among those analyzed to suggest a truly post-Zionist idea of the nation that includes all the inhabitants of the region and which resembles what in political circles is known as *one-state solution*. Only *Arabesques* “seeks to imagine a different kind of Israeli/Palestinian polity” and paradoxically becomes “a nationalist novel though the nation it champions does not yet exist” (p. 159).

As mentioned at the beginning, *Rhetorics of Belonging* inscribes itself within a field of research that, in the last two decades, utilised postcolonial approaches in order to analyse in novel ways Israeli and Palestinian literature: think especially of works by Hannan Hever, Ammiel Alcalay, Gil Z. Hochberg and Lital Levy. Bernard combines this line of inquiry with, on the one hand, a world literary interpretation that is indebted to the scholarship of David Damrosch and particularly of Fredric Jameson and, on the other, with the idea of Zionism as a form of settler colonialism. With reference to this last point, I must admit that this reading of Zionism – and, even more so, of Israeli and Palestinian literature as the by-product of a settler-colonial reality – does not seem entirely convincing. Furthermore, whereas it is true that the relational reading of Israeli and Palestinian literature is a welcome and salutary approach, I am less inclined to believe that this necessarily implies telling “the region’s history [...] as a story of ‘settler-native relation’” (p. 12).

Surely, Zionism borrowed practices and strategies that are (also) related to those of modern European colonialism. But it should be contextualized in a longer and more nuanced past, in which both real and imaginative ties between the Land of Israel and the Jewish People always existed. The problematization of following a settler-colonial interpretation comes out very evidently if one thinks of the Sephardic and *mizrahi* writers. Bernard justifies their absence in the book by the fact that none of them sufficiently circulates in metropolitan literary arenas or does so by virtually erasing their ethnicity, as in the case of Castel-Bloom. But then, does someone like Castel-Bloom have that “high degree of visibility in English” (p. 6), which Bernard attributes her, as opposed to authors that more explicitly deal with *mizrahi* issues like Shimon Ballas or Ronit Matalon – whose number of translated novels is more or less the same of Castel-Bloom? My

impression is that the inclusion of *mizrahi* authors – among other issues – would have revealed how the literary relations between Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians are often more complex than the settler-colonial framework presupposes.

With this, I do not intend to minimize the relevance of Bernard's volume, which is indeed an important contribution to the field of postcolonial literature and Israel/Palestine Studies. Mine is however an invitation to handle more cautiously theoretical frameworks and categories – such as *settler-colonialism* or the notion of *demographic imaginary* – that risk imposing very specific interpretations on literary texts that should perhaps be allowed to speak more for themselves.

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Marco Clementi, Eirini Toliou, *Gli ultimi ebrei di Rodi. Leggi razziali e deportazioni nel Dodecaneso italiano (1938-1948)*, (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2015), pp. 307.

by Michele Sarfatti

Authored by an Italian historian and by the director of the Rhodes State Archives, this book deals with the Jews of Rhodes and with those who passed through this area during the Shoah. Rhodes and the other Dodecanese islands had been annexed by Italy in 1912, at the end of the Italo-Turkish War; their inhabitants were granted the so-called “small Italian citizenship.” The two authors have carried out accurate research in numerous archives in various countries, most particularly in Italian military archives and in the Rhodes State Archives. In the latter they have availed themselves (and it is the first time anyone has done so) of the documents of the Italian Governorate and of those of the Italian *Carabinieri*, who then acted as a police force. Bibliographical sources, on the other hand, have not been sufficiently taken into account.

One section of the book is dedicated to the ships that crossed the Dodecanese sea (and sometimes were shipwrecked there), while carrying Jewish migrants who were trying to reach Palestine illegally. It is the first time that scholars have made use of local documentary sources, containing information on the supply and support activities. One of those ships was the “Pentcho,” carrying approximately five hundred passengers. The vessel had previously been used only for river navigation. The “Pentcho” left Bratislava on 18 May 1940, sailed down the Danube, entered the Aegean Sea and eventually, after a voyage of almost five months, was shipwrecked near the small island of Kamilonisi, under Italian control. The refugees were aided by authorities in Rhodes. In February-March 1942, because of problems with food supplies on the island, they were transferred to the internment camp for foreign Jews at Ferramonti, in Southern Italy. On the basis of documentary evidence, the book disproves the testimony rendered in 1944 by one of the shipwrecked Jews (Heinz Wisla, a German) who claimed that the former passengers of the Pentcho had been helped by Pope Pius XII (pp. 72-77).

The authors tell the history of the Jewish community in Rhodes basing their description almost exclusively on archival sources, without incorporating other researches and memoirs. For the first time, they shed light on many specific events, such as the discord that arose in the 1930s between the Jews who adhered to Revisionist Zionism and Fascism and the other Jews, a conflict unwelcome to Italian authorities, who wished the community to remain united. In recounting

the Fascist anti-Jewish persecution, enacted by Rome in 1938 and extended also to the Dodecanese, the authors have used almost exclusively archival documents found in Rhodes. As a result, the book lacks a systematic general depiction, but on the other hand contains a description of important specific aspects, such as the revocation of Italian citizenship and the question of military service (which was a complex issue, as the “small citizenship” – as opposed to the Italian full citizenship – did not include military service).

The two chapters dealing with the consequences of the September 1943 armistice between the Kingdom of Italy and the Allies (which led to the Third Reich assuming military power on the island and to the deportation, on July 23 1944, of the Jews from Rhodes and Kos) are written by Clementi. The author describes the reorganization of the Italian police, now made up of *Carabinieri* who swore alliance to the new government of Mussolini's *Repubblica Sociale Italiana*. On April 17 1944 the Italian police asked the municipal authorities of Rhodes for a list of resident Jews, in duplicate copy. They received it on May 13. Four days later German authorities requested Italian police to verify the identity of all residents. According to an Italian note of July 21, one of the two copies of the list had been handed over “at the time” (a phrase that may, although not necessarily, refer to a period of two months) to the “German secret police” (pp. 182-183). By mid-July the police and the other Italian authorities sent out the German order that Jews must all report at a specified gathering point, and outlawed the transfer of real and personal property between Jews and non-Jews. Basically, they provided administrative assistance that was of the essence in identifying the people that were to be arrested, and that supported the entire deportation procedure. For the first time, this book documents events that were unknown until now and attempts a first reconstruction. It is to be hoped that there will be further research on this subject.

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David Malkiel, *Stones Speak – Hebrew Tombstones from Padua, 1529- 1862*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 404.

by Andrea Morpurgo

Before Emancipation the history of Jewish burials is a history of discrimination: the municipal authorities authorized the Jewish communities to bury their dead only in *extra muros* cemeteries, outside the city walls. After the Unification of Italy the situation changes: the emergence of the public cemetery in the nineteenth century gradually erased the discrepancy between the sepulchral practices of European Jews and Christians that existed during the medieval and early modern periods. In fact, the end of the Jewish interdictions allowed the Jews to be buried in large and modern cemeteries constructed outside the walls – as a new monumental “City of the Dead”. In several cases, Jewish communities were allowed to open a “Riparto Israelitico” annexed to the Catholic cemetery (Turin, Milan, Genoa, Bologna, Rome), whereas in others, they were allowed to renovate old autonomous cemeteries (Venice, Ferrara) or to build new ones (Livorno, Florence). Then, as a result of the Emancipation, the graveyard became a site for the expression of modern values. Epitaphs expressed new aesthetic tastes, cultural values, and social conditions, while tombstones adhered to the Neoclassical trends of the day. Yet these epitaphs and tombstones, for all their radical change, were carefully designed to express a Jewish voice and to depict the Jewish identity of the deceased.

David Malkiel’s latest book *Stones Speak – Hebrew Tombstones from Padua, 1529-1862* faces these complex issues. Firstly, the author explains in the introduction that «Padua is a representative community. Northern Italy was dotted with small to medium-sized Jewish communities with similar socioeconomic structures, and Padua was a variation on the general pattern. Its social and cultural norms can be reasonably projected on dozens of similar communities across the north of Italy, granting this study historical significance that is regional rather than local». In 1384 the Lord of Padua, Francesco da Carrara, allowed the Jews to buy land at the former *contrada* San Leonardo, nearby an existing cemetery. But the oldest existing Jewish cemetery is situated in via Isidoro Wiel, where the tomb of Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen can be found. The tomb still today is a pilgrimage destination for Jews from Israel and the United States. It was built in the sixteenth century, after the original one located outside Porta Codalunga was destroyed (in 1509) during the siege of Padua by the troops of Maximilian Habsburg. Three other cemeteries are located in what was called borgo Zodio: the two cemeteries in via Campagnola, where Isaac

Abravanel, Minister of Ferdinand II King of Spain was buried, and the cemetery of via Orti, now via Pietro Canal, in use since 1820. Finally, one still in use is located in via Sorio, outside Porta San Giovanni; it was inaugurated in 1861.

Malkiel focuses his attention on the study of the tombstones, considered “as a lens through which to examine the historical development of Jewish culture in Padua. Tombstones generally range from those of modest proportions, with minimal biographical information crudely incised, to towering monuments with elaborate architecture, finely carved with artistic motifs and flowery inscriptions. This breadth of possibilities is rooted in the freedom of client and craftsman to design the tombstone as they pleased, for this activity was never regulated by civil or religious authorities. Consequently, tombstones as cultural artifacts are snapshots of a society's social and cultural proclivities at particular moments in time.”

The author claims that there is another reason why the study of Jewish burial inscriptions of Padua is so interesting and unique: “The survival of tombstones from the ancient world and middle ages is serendipitous, making systematic study of a prolonged period impractical. Padua is different because its series spans over three centuries and is almost unbroken. Hence, in addition to the scrutiny of individual inscriptions and tombstones, the study of them globally, through quantitative analysis over time, be it of metrical schemes, dimensions or longevity. The numbers supply the broad contours of cultural flow, while individual cases focus attention on particular features and variations, granting greater depth to our analysis.” Malkiel argues that while graves are a well-plowed field in the study of European art history for the Middle Ages and the Modern period, Jewish cemeteries instead have been the subject of numerous studies—that have however overlooked the value of tombstones for cultural history. With this goal in mind, the author approaches the sources from the perspectives of literature (“Words”), art (“Stones”) and society (“Lives”). So, the book is characterized by a multi-level analysis of the subject that, based on several documentary sources of different nature and on a long-term study, constitutes an original interdisciplinary approach. The 1,224 surviving Jewish tombstone inscriptions of Padua express the cultural currents of their age, shedding light on the society of Padua's Jews and the social and cultural changes they underwent during the 330 years covered by this study.

In conclusion, the book *Stones Speak – Hebrew Tombstones from Padua, 1529-1862* is an important contribution to our historical knowledge of the Jewish cemeteries in Italy. It is our hope it will also contribute to the development of future conservation projects of the important and rich architectural and sculptural heritage of Italian Jewry.

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Inna Shtakser, *The Making of Jewish Revolutionaries in the Pale of Settlement: Community and Identity during the Russian Revolution and its Immediate Aftermath, 1905-07* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 205.

by Polly Zavadvker

In this first brief monograph, Inna Shtakser explores how young, working-class Jews subjectively experienced the 1905 Russian Revolution. The study's innovative approach and topic contribute to the historiography of Russia's working class and its Jewish minority in particular, and the sociology of social movements more broadly. Its reflections on the internal dynamics of radicalization are also particularly timely. It raises the questions: how did those young, working-class Jews in late imperial Russia feel about revolution? What compelled them, as workers, to adopt revolutionary identities, sometimes at the expense of becoming isolated from their families and communities? And how did their feelings about revolutionary socialism lead them to undertake actions in collective groups, such as strikes, protests and self-defense of fellow Jews during pogroms in 1905-06?

The protagonists of this study are poor and largely uneducated Jews born in the Pale of Settlement during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. During those years, the processes of economic industrialization in Russia and increasingly severe legal restrictions on Jews' residential and educational options produced a mass of impoverished Jewish workers. They bore grievances on two counts. As Jews, they faced discrimination as a national minority within the Russian Empire; and as poor and working-class Jews, they occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder in the Jewish community. While scholars such as Jonathan Frankel, Yoav Peled, and Ezra Mendelsohn have focused on educated revolutionary leaders among Russian Jews, Shtakser is interested in uneducated Jewish workers. She discusses both those who joined Jewish revolutionary parties, including the Bund and Poalei Zion, as well as those who joined non-Jewish Social Democratic and Socialist Revolutionary parties.

Chapters 1 and 2 describe the backgrounds of young, poor Jews who adopted revolutionary identities. Because they lacked the financial means and social connections that wealthier Jews possessed and were necessary to obtain higher education, they often resorted to taking apprenticeships to learn crafts. In autobiographies and letters, young Jewish apprentices recounted experiences of physical abuse and exploitation at the hands of older co-

workers or employers. Then came a moment—perhaps a revolutionary idea gathered from reading, conversations, or observing others—when it was no longer possible or necessary to accept one’s lot. They realized they could run away, or fight back, pursue education on their own, and take steps to acquire dignity, security and legitimacy as workers. From that point, individual youth transformed their erstwhile passive feelings of despair and humiliation into active expressions of struggle and rebellion. They rebelled not only against their employers, but also against religion and community, including the social structure of their communities and the notion of what it meant to be Jewish. Their adoption of anarchist or socialist values compelled them to adopt a self-image as active, militant people.

A crucial point for Shtakser is that young Jewish workers did not aspire to earn a higher wage or obtain education as ends in themselves. Rather, they sought an entirely new status and image as respected and self-reliant individuals. Socialism appealed not only, and perhaps for them, not primarily to the intellect, but to the emotions. Related to this key idea, Shtakser discusses how poor young Jews’ emotional attachments to revolutionary ideals led them to create social circles where they found “an ideological and social framework that could provide them with emotional support”(5). Forming groups with like-minded youth buffered the isolation they might have otherwise experienced as they challenged traditional norms of behavior in their respective communities, such as early marriage, observing the Sabbath, and kashrut.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine how Jewish revolutionary youth acted on their feelings: they instigated strikes in the workplaces, organized self-defense units in their neighborhoods, produced revolutionary literature in Yiddish, and formed study circles. Shtakser argues that the impact of young Jewish workers’ radicalization can be gauged in their reaction to outbreak of pogroms following the 1905 Revolution. Compelled by feelings of moral outrage and pride, and the desire to demonstrate their identities as militant people and as Jews, the young revolutionaries raised money for weapons, learned to shoot, and went into the streets to fight pogromists. They did this despite having previously rejected and become estranged from the Jewish community’s established norms and authorities. Yet they achieved a modicum of respect from the community, for the pogroms of 1905-06 caught Jewish leaders unprepared. Young Jewish radicals earned reputations as protectors of Jews, and Shtakser suggests this is because as revolutionaries, they understood the language of violence. Self-defense units varied in their effectiveness: in Odessa, 5 of 13 members of a group were killed, the rest

wounded. In Bialystok, a self-defense group successfully stopped violence in one neighborhood. Regardless of the outcomes, self-defense members earned respect for their activism, and in this manner, fulfilled their goals of acquiring legitimacy in the Jewish community as workers and revolutionaries.

One of the most interesting aspects of this study is its sources. Shtakser closely read and cited from 105 autobiographies and 165 letters from two collections at the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow. The autobiographies were written between 1924 and 1934, and submitted as part of membership applications to the Society of Former Political Prisoners and Exiles. From 1921 to 1935 this organization provided health and employment benefits to aging revolutionaries who could prove they had spent time in exile or prison for their revolutionary activities, and demonstrated loyalty to the Soviet regime. Although the autobiographies were written with the intent to provide evidence of the applicants' revolutionary credentials, Shtakser insists they are reliable, not necessarily with regard to facts, but because the descriptions of subjective experience would have been authentic: "the autobiography writers knew that the readers and evaluators were their contemporaries who were also activists...[and] would be quick to sense a false note in self-presentation and point it out" (154).

Despite this study's original approach and subject matter, a number of weaknesses might be noted. The most problematic aspect of the book is the lack of basic demographic information, such as numbers of working-class young Jews at the turn of the twentieth century, how many of them became revolutionaries, and how many joined self-defense units in 1905. Although these data may not have been available in the autobiographies and letters, a more systematic or quantitative approach to the source base might have yielded tentative estimates or other significant categories. Stories drawn from autobiographies and letters are anecdotally strong, but they are frequently generalized to otherwise unsupported statements about significant social trends, such as the following: "most Jewish radicals married relatively late in life. Some, particularly women, did not marry at all" (50). In another instance, a very interesting table is given listing numbers and sizes of self-defense units in 1905. This is a valuable source of data and could have been explored in detail, but it receives little attention in the text. Similarly, I read the book eagerly anticipating to learn more about the history of the self-defense units, but the story is confined to the last 18 pages of the book. Given the centrality of self-defense for the author's argument about radicalization, one would have expected greater attention to this topic. These shortcomings, together with the rich source base that informs this study, suggest the need

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for, and possibility of, additional research into this important, and timely subject.

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