Past (Im)Perfect Continuous

Trans-Cultural Articulations
of the Postmemory of WWII

edited by
Alice Balestrino

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In copertina: photo by Pilar Martínez Benedí, *Stumbling stones*, Rome.

This volume is dedicated to
Giulio Regeni and Patrick Zaky.
May Giulio's memory
bring justice to them both.

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Alice Balestrino

Introduction. Scandalous Memories.

> "We come after.
> We know now that a man can read
> Goethe or Rilke in the evening,
> that he can play Bach or Schubert,
> and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning."
> George Steiner, *Language and Silence*

In 1992 German artist Gunter Demnig inaugurated the *Stolpersteine* project, and four years later he installed the first "stumbling stone" in Berlin. The *Stolpersteine* project is the world's largest decentralized memorial, consisting of small, cobblestone-sized brass plaques set in the pavement in front of the buildings where the victims of the Nazi and Fascist regimes lived. This form of urban remembrance has flooded the streets of more than 24 countries, testifying to the global reach of Holocaust memories and the entanglement between private stories and public history. The project is still ongoing and as of 2020 there are over 75,000 stumbling stones; this memorial is hence diffused as well as continuous, always evolving so that generations to come may continue to stumble over the past.

      Approximately in the same years, Marianne Hirsch proposed the term "postmemory" to define the memorial condition of the offspring of Holocaust survivors; a concept eventually broadened into a cultural category, a structure that can accommodate both trans-/inter-generational and horizontal transmission of traumatic memories. Postmemory is, hence, a reflective and enabling gesture for the generations born after WWII. Postmemory delves into the past and its heritage by declining Holocaust remembrance into the present tense and by "reflecting an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture." It interrogates the agency of "the generation after" in dealing with traumatic memories by means of "imaginative investment, projection, and creation," as well as of "practices of citations and supplementarity" (*The Generation of Postmemory* 5-6).

Like the *Stolpersteine* project, postmemory is a past tense combined with the continuous form. Both are memory strategies that interrogate contemporary matters through the lens of past occurrences; both connote meanings that are continuous in historical as well as geographical terms. Continuity is key to establishing postmemorial acts that create new spaces of testimony and project new times when the past ruptures the present and vice versa. *Stolpersteine* and other postmemorial practices are never accomplished once and for all, but are always in the making, always in progress, always imperfect.

In being stumbling stones located in the present, postmemories of traumatic events are stumbling blocks but, in a maybe scandalous way, they are also opportunities. From Greek σκάνδᾰλον (*skandalon*), the original meaning of scandal is, indeed, that of "stumbling block," "a trap" as well as "a trigger." In this sense, postmemories are and should be scandalous. They represent the act of living the present "stumbling" into the past not as a way to be passively trapped in memory, but as an opportunity to trigger new futures. The scandalous cipher of memory, hence, resides in its gesturing toward unexpected openings that may sound controversial to some. The Jewish community of Munich and Bavaria, for instance, has strongly opposed the *Stolpersteine* as indecorous, yet in the words of the craftsman who creates them stumbling stones are an excellent form of remembrance because "If you want to read the stone, you must bow before the victim" (Apperly). Scandalous memories are always plural, debatable, dynamic. Their being a double-edged mode (a potential trap turned into a trigger, a pause on the past that propels the future) makes these memories scandalous in form and content, as well as in contextual terms.

Similarly, in the final essay of this volume, Marianne Hirsch conceptualizes a "stateless form of memory" that is, crucially, "a space of openness and potentiality," where the uncertainty of being stateless is not "merely a blockage to be overcome." Because it dwells on some affirmative and forward-looking aspects of being "stateless," a status which we see reflected in the dire conditions of millions of displaced people across the globe, stateless memory could be considered scandalous too. The applicability of the *skandalon* principle lies in the radical potentiality and the future-oriented model that stateless memory

associates to a desperate (as in hope-less, future-less) position, by means "of being and thinking outside or beyond the unforgiving strictures" of nation-states and of decentering the structures of the contemporary political *status quo*. In this respect, stateless memory could be an opportunity to remember the past and imagine the future, like postmemory.

In so doing, scandalous memories as stumbling stones accommodate the idea of *post-ness* emphasizing their continuity both with the original event and with new, multilayered temporal and spatial dimensions. First and foremost, the act of stumbling into the past delivers the idea of proximity with that which is other: the legacy of a trauma not directly experienced, or the yet unforeseen possibilities of the future, in light of that past. Memory may be scandalous, hence, when it is continuous with alterity, when it cherishes the connection with the other(s).[1]

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[1] Continuity with alterity means continuity with other historical moments too. Think, for example, of the comparison between the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis and European Jewish migration before World War II drawn by several historians and critics. Although these two historical moments are not completely symmetrical, some moral and political similarities between them have been rightly invoked. Controversial and scandalous to some, this parallel has been supported by opinion polls and politicians' statements that refer to similar concerns over accepting refugees of these two humanitarian crises. In "Anne Frank Today is a Syrian Girl," Nicholas Kristoff reported that "the obstacle was an American wariness toward refugees that outweighed sympathy. After the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom against Jews, a poll found that 94 percent of Americans disapproved of Nazi treatment of Jews, but 72 percent still objected to admitting large numbers of Jews. The reasons for the opposition then were the same as they are for rejecting Syrians or Hondurans today: We can't afford it, we should look after Americans first, we can't accept everybody, they'll take American jobs, they're dangerous and different." Like other US and European critics, Kristoff convincingly relates Holocaust (post)memory to humanitarian principles in trying to avoid "history" from "rhym[ing]" (Kristoff). On this subject see also Victor "Comparing Jewish Refugees of the 1930s with Syrians Today;" Tharoor "What Americans Thought of Jewish Refugees on the Eve of World War II;" Di Cesare *Stranieri resident. Una filosofia della migrazione.*

In his study on the notion of "afterness," Gerhard Richter highlights the implicit continuity that coming after has both with what it proceeds and with what it precedes. Like memory, afterness "requires us to think in a nonsynchronist, nonpresentist manner" because "every encounter ... must be read in terms of what it is no longer and what it is not yet" (4). When it comes to memory and mourning, Richter reflects on the "impossible affirmation" that cannot "proceed according to the curriculum of a described sequence." This nonsequential, nonlinear continuity is key to the ultimate encounter with the other that memory as an imperfect continuous act produces: "the thought of the mortal other that I bear within me." This gesture of (post)memorial proximity "exhibits me to myself as an other who is linked to other others in his mortality" and "whose memory always will have been that of the one who can die and who is capable of being entrusted with an other's memory of his or her mortality" (192).

Along these lines, when George Steiner states that "we come after," after the failure of the notion of "culture as a humanizing force," he refers to a continuity that has been disrupted and yet still defines its successors. For this reason, this continuity is an inheritance that needs to be resealed, because it is at once "that which has undermined and that which may restore the resources of insight in modern society" (9). Postmemorial enterprises orient the past toward a present and future reconstruction and, according to Steiner, this constitutes their radical scandal: "our languages have a future tense, which fact is of itself a radiant *scandal,* a subversion of mortality" that allows "to look beyond, to make of the word a reaching out past death" (72; my italics). The stumbling stone of the past brings about the articulation of future temporalities and future languages simultaneously (and paradoxically) continuous with and alienated from the wreckage of WWII.

Within such a framework of moral, cognitive, and ideological continuity and human solidarity, postmemories can resist structures and impositions of stability, becoming more and more dynamic, transformative, global. Continuous memories of WWII are scandalous in that they keep on stumbling into new stones, they encounter other histories. Scandalous memories are global and transhistorical itineraries. In the introduction to the special issue of *Parallax* on

transcultural memory, Richard Crownshaw associates the continuous form of memory to its "inherently social nature [that] means that memories can be shared, no matter our proximity or distance to the events remembered" (1). In so doing, cultural memory can be subject to "centripetal" as well as "centrifugal forces" that open up remembrance to its transnational and transcultural articulations and uncover stories of proximity and continuity with different histories of violence.

Therefore, transcultural articulations of the postmemory of WWII are global in scale and scope, have a transhistorical breadth and a multidirectional ethical stance. They represent future-oriented memorial trajectories and are also examples of affirmative "cross-pollination of memorial legacies [that] spur productive dialogue" (Sanyal 3). In the age of globalization, the diffusion of memory beyond the borders of nation-states and specific historical events comes as no surprise and this logic of continuity has had profitable consequences – think, for example, of the global proliferation of human rights norms as a response to the memories of WWII and Holocaust violations of these rights (Levy and Sznaider 4). Yet in setting a universal code of remembrance for different historical events we should also be careful, as a number of scholars studying the politics and poetics of global and transcultural memory have pointed out.

In his investigation of the strengths and limits of the interaction between memory and human rights discourse, Andreas Huyssen notices that in order to respond to the political and social challenges of a modernity that has become global, a certain level of abstraction from contextual contingencies is needed. The universalism of the memory of past genocides human rights movements get legitimation from is "both a problem and a promise" (608). Huyssen praises the transnational turn that "the concern with memory itself" has taken and the dynamics defining the migration of Holocaust memory "into other historically unrelated cases" (616). Yet he is skeptical that these epistemological phenomena could generate a global, cosmopolitan memory in practical terms.

The scandalous opportunity to engage with these postmemories as "connective histories" (*The Generation of Postmemory* 21) is, hence, a complex negotiation between the

universalistic tension of the empathic solidarity of "the thought of the mortal other" and the ethical demands of historical specificities. In this respect, Debarati Sanyal claims that the global memorial landscape should be studied as "a dangerous intersection as well as a productive multidirectional site," crafting a "pragmatic politics of memory in which [the Nazi] genocide is deployed toward other times, subjects, and bodies" without disregarding "the tensions between the ethics of testimony and its demands for specificity" (7). In a similar fashion, Michael Rothberg outlines the conceptual framework of "multidirectional memory" against which the "interaction of different historical memories illustrates [a] productive, intercultural dynamic," always subject to "negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing" (3).

The mobilization of the Holocaust as a paradigm for historical traumas within a global context brings to the fore the mobile, continuous nature of its remembrance. By exceeding the geographical boundaries of nations and states and overcoming contextual specificities, postmemory foregrounds continuous, active, connective, transcultural and always imperfect representations of violence. Accordingly, the intellectual trajectory that this book proposes underwrites the comprehension of the postmemory of WWII as a process rather than a condition, an engagement with the alterity of other histories and other subjects rather than a commitment to the uniqueness of the Holocaust. 75 years after the end of WWII, the articles gathered in this collection interrogate the referential power of postmemory, considering its interplay with different forms, media, frames of reference, conceptual registers and interdisciplinary structures.

Before being an edited volume, "Past (Im)Perfect Continuous. Trans-Cultural Articulations of the Postmemory of WWII" was an international conference hosted by Sapienza Università di Roma and the Centro Studi Americani in Rome on June 26-28, 2018. The essays collected in this book began life on that occasion and other articles, also developed from papers presented at the conference, have been published in a special issue of the journal *Status Quaestionis* (no. 18, 2020). The conference was part of a three-year research project on the

postmemory of WWII in European and American literature, cinema, and popular culture, coordinated by Giorgio Mariani and funded by Sapienza Università di Roma. In selecting and presenting these contributions we privileged a logic of convergence of postmemory with underexamined aspects of the history and aftermath of WWII, as well as with other sociopolitical anxieties and representational preoccupations. This logic offers authors and readers alike the occasion to continuously *stumble* into otherness, to pause and reflect on the past by contextualizing it within a non-linear, multidirectional spectrum that encompasses multiple temporalities, different spaces and languages. Ultimately, this book aims to be a *skandalon* itself: a trigger for "potential histories on the threshold of more open-ended futures" ("Carrying Memory" 62) that counters the memorial condition of being trapped in a paralyzing past.

This volume is organized into five sections. Each can be thought of as a memorial circuit that combines its articles and relates them to the wider network of the book itself. Each section opens on a work by artist Muriel Hasbun, who also participated in and presented her work at the 2018 conference in Rome. Her artistic oeuvre focuses on issues of cultural identity and postmemory through an intergenerational, transnational, transcultural, and multilingual lens, which reflects and magnifies the scope of this volume. Hasbun constructs contemporary narratives connecting the pastness of history to the post-ness of the present, often sparking questions regarding the migratory aesthetics of memory, the mobility of time and the stability of place, the interplay between individual and collective remembrance. The intent with which the images inaugurating the different sections were selected is to instantiate questions about the ethics and aesthetics of postmemorial practices, as well as to trigger erratic and connective hermeneutics of postmemorial histories and narratives.

The point of departure of this postmemorial itinerary is "Family," the subject most traditionally associated with the transgenerational transmission of histories of loss. Hasbun's image, *¿Sólo una sombra? (Familia Lódz)/ Only a Shadow? (Lódz Family),* interlaces the themes of her family's silenced voice and forced invisibility during WWII with the artist's postmemorial attempts to unearth the

echoes of those silences and absences in order to restore voices and images from the past. "[F]rom burnt ash into glimmering light."

The time of future encounters with the past and the space of its transformations are investigated by Elèna Mortara who recounts a family (hi)story in "Crowded-in (Post)memory: Of My Mother's Face as a Young Girl, and Other Stories." The author's mother, Lisa, discovers a photograph of her high school class in 1931 on the cover of a book by Ruth Beckermann, published in 1984. Subsequently, the same picture is picked by French artist Christian Boltanski for "his big altar-like installations made of tin boxes and large, violently illuminated photographs of faces of Jewish school kids." A photograph thought lost forever surprisingly remerges from the past in new forms, becoming an exemplum of how "familiar postmemory [can] bec[o]me part of collective memory, through a process of free artistic appropriation" and a familiar face can be "transformed into a universal symbol of loss and mortality."

Caught between family recollections and universalistic pulls are also the memorial experiences recounted by Zsuzsi Flohr and Rachel Gelfand. In "Woven Memory," Flohr explores this form of memory as a multilayered "process of aligning and weaving together all the fragments of historical research and conflicting narratives in the family" as a way to point "to the past, present, and future." Her own artwork, *Chances in Life– Grandpa's Backpack* illustrates this very concept in practice and, as an artistic strategy, it showcases "the potential of conjuring up ghosts of the past in order to engage with them in the present." Ultimately, this act of interweaving memories leads the author to an "interwoven memory," hinting at other histories such as her own experience as an emigrant.

Gelfand centers her essay, "Terezín Art: A (Queer) Family Postmemory," on the responsibilities that the third generation bears towards the inheritance of loss within a queer family, a context that puts pressure on assumptions of hereditary as biological ties. In the author's family, this postmemorial transmission is represented by her grandparents' collection of Terezín art hung in their TV room, which is, crucially, "a space of commemoration *and* a space of everyday life." Like in Mortara's and Flohr's essays, visual syntax resemanticizes the

personal into the collective, and these Terezín drawings turn memory "into matter at each stage of [their] life." The author's grandparents "walked [a] line of public/private and inside/outside in their curation of the room" where the drawings hung. A process which "was always ongoing. . . . [and] the collection was in a continuous process of becoming, accreting meaning in each stage." The same principle of continuous transformation applies to the reconceptualization of the notion of generation Gelfand auspices, one that "encompass[es] both biological ties that are not familial *and* nonbiological ties that are familial."

Xa White concludes this section with a reflection on the philosophical paradoxes of postmemory. "The Inevitable Actuality of the Postmemorial Child and the Search for Potentiality" focuses on the "overwhelming and seemingly inescapable bond between the contemporary existence of the [postmemorial] child and the harrowing wartime experiences of their predecessors," a connection which "can also be defined in terms of actuality and potentiality." One of the ontological paradoxes of postmemory is that, given its inherited nature, it subverts the logic dictating that "potentiality must precede actuality." As a result, the postmemorial child is "pre-determined to be actual," because he or she lacks the potential to "not be" a member of the second generation. However, this nonsequential continuity is constantly challenged by formal acts of postmemorial testimony; postmemorial authors can "construct narratives that free them from the derivative nature of their connections to the Holocaust" and achieve new potentialities, as the author illustrates in his analysis of Henri Raczymow's novel *Writing the Book of Esther.*

New potentialities are also key to the understandings of postmemory presented in the second section: "Society." For this part, Hasbun chose a triptych of images portraying paper boats, each an individual portrait and vessel carrying the relational power of individual and collective testimony. *barquitos from the archive* represents the mobility of memory which crosses borders, cultures, and lives; the light and tactile nature of the paper boats sharpens the courage of diasporic remembrance and "engenders connection, even healing."

Anne Roche builds on the postmemorial "panorama paradoxal" too: a framework at once broad and fragmented, personal and impersonal, yet always historical. The title of her essay, "Leur Siècle," connotes the questions and contradictions the author is concerned with: "le choix d'écarter l'adjectif possessif 'Notre'" claims the impossibility to erase the distinctions between victims and executioners, as if they had lived in the same century; Roche insists that "l'histoire n'est pas 'une', n'est pas consensuelle." In order to explore the "tabous mémoriels" regarding the Holocaust, Roche multidirectionally concentrates her attention on the Algerian War as an event that affected testimonies on WWII collected after the 1960s. In doing so, she refers primarily to oral testimonies and to the corpus of interviews she constituted, and which is now deposited at the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme (Aix-en-Provence). This connective memory based on orality foregrounds "la mémoire palimpseste," which accounts for one more conceptual paradox: "l'histoire est de l'ordre du reel – et non pas du 'vrai'". In this respect, this "reality" of history is to be constructed, through "le 'mille-feuilles' des récits", in an always conflictual way in order to be fruitful.

Valerio Cordiner's "Nazis dans le plateau. Résister en province d'après Bergounioux" explores Pierre Bergounioux's memorial work as a "réhistoricisation de la littérature contemporaine", by examining some memorial novels about the province and two stories set abroad, based not on an autobiographical affiliation, but on "une filiation d'un autre genre, moral ou politique". Social fabric is the site where this continuous memory develops; in this sense, memorial narratives are social recognitions of the emergence of the future and the "separation d'avec le 'temps d'avant'". But in history past and future resemble each other and, in the midst of these two boundaries, "il n'y a pas le 'présent pur'". Memorial writing takes on the task of furthering historical consciousness, of continuing "'ce qui demeure inaccompli' ... ce trajet interrompu à mi-chemin". Ultimately, in Bergounioux's oevre the subject is the culmination of an inherited past; an identity rooted in the land where its seed germinated: "un contexte, un climat, une culture; bref, le social", and this condition explains the centrality of community and collectivity in these texts.

Postmemorial counternarratives of WWII history having an impact on the social as well as political consciousness of a nation are interrogated also in "The *Human Smoke* Controversy, and Beyond: Remembering the Unpopular Pacifism of WW2." Giorgio Mariani discusses Nicholas Baker's *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization*, a work that proved to be controversial because it resists the myth of WWII as the "Good War," a narrative that has been instrumental to the justification of other subsequent military interventions. Baker's argument is that the Allies should have at least tried to negotiate an armistice with Hitler in order to save Jewish (and other persecuted peoples') lives. Mariani reads the harsh criticism this book received as proof that "it is . . . outrageous . . . to suggest that pacifism may figure in any significant way in discussions" of WWII. A central concern of this analysis is the potentially dangerous mobilization of "a selective memory of World War Two to pursue a political agenda." Yet in the postmemorial context "to avoid seeing [WWII events] through the lens of contemporary concerns" is impossible and, conversely, the "moral capital" of this war can be invoked to support human solidarity and peace too. To this end, a work like Baker's is much needed to engage the legacy of WWII, because "it insists that we should not forget the horrors which all participants in the war perpetrated."

The conclusive chapter of the "Society" part broadens the discussion to encompass different forms of government, from the nation-state to more dynamic, international structures of social organization in the age of globalization. Serguey Ehrilich's "From National Pride to Global Compassion and Admiration: Memory and Postmemory of the Second World War during the Transition from Modern Nation-State to a Global Information Civilization" elaborates three distinct forms of memory. "Memory of pride" is related to the nation-state "of industrial Modernity" and foregrounds "heroic myths" that do not "allow compassion towards foreign victims." "Memory of compassion" and "memory of admiration," instead, erase "the division of victims into 'ours' and 'foreign'" transcending "the container of the nation-state to a transnational level." For these forms of memory, human beings are all equal, regardless of their citizenships. As a result,

these memories are the alternative to "the heroic myth narrative" and are truly postmemorial enterprises.

The following section focuses on the narrative, graphic and aesthetic strategies employed to represent and conceive of the postmemory of WWII. The interplay between form and content provides a model for the expression of historical, conceptual, and ideological tensions implicit in this kind of memory. "Narratives" opens on Hasbun's image of a *Super 8mm film* exploring a subjective and diasporic space where absence and presence are negotiated. It also hints at the poetics and politics of recording narratives, paying attention to the postmemorial condition of in-betweenness, in-between the ephemerality of oral testimony and the solidity of the archive.

Pascale Bos pays particular attention to the "impending shift" from a communicative to a cultural postmemory of the Holocaust – a transition that is caused not merely by the passing of time. Indeed, "this process of memory construction by way of imagination already began during the war and has continued in the decades since." In "Pulping the Holocaust: The Shape of Early American Holocaust Memory and its Global Reach," Bos presents a form of Holocaust remembrance significantly different from canonical representations: US men's "so-called 'true adventure' magazines from the late-1950s through the mid-1970s." This medium circulated a pulped version of the Holocaust, "repackaged" in flashy fashion "to reach a new readership." This uncomfortable, "impious" depiction confronts problematic and "sometimes overlooked difficulties inherent in representing the Holocaust," namely its potentially "sensational" nature and commercial exploitability.

In "*Déuxieme generation* and *Maus*: The Visual Style of the Second Generations," Riccardo Capoferro highlights how Michel Kichka's *Déuxieme generation* "strives towards an aesthetic memory in light of which the Holocaust is not only a specific historical event but also a long-term, intergenerational, ongoing disruption." In this regard, Kichka's comic book reflects on "its formal textures and its models" and on how these "can be adjusted to articulate the experience . . . and ethical dilemmas" of the postmemorial generation, with several

references to the "meta-representational meaning of *Maus*," the foundational work of this genre. Kichka, hence, devises "a technology of remembering" with an important metanarrative dimension and far-reaching ethical implications, proposing "an aesthetic balance . . . between empathy and distance, identification and detachment, the past and an ongoing present."

Francesca Pangallo emphasizes postmemorial literature's connection to preceding narratives of the Holocaust. In particular, the case study of her essay "Antinarrative Memory: Primo Levi's Impossibility of Romance," Javier Cercas' novel *El impostor* (recounting the story of Enric Marco, who for years pretended to be a Holocaust survivor) "draws from the form and even quotes predecessors like [Primo] Levi." This narrative choice proves that "there is a link, a continuum, and not a fracture between two literary representations of one historical event." This is a key remark of Pangallo's investigation, because "Levi's fiction spreads from an *anti-narration* type of memory . . . develop[ed] against the traditional features of romance." This implies that Cercas' "novela sin ficción" "seeks to find closure and its reconciliation – narrative, moral, and structural – with the support of [Levi's] testimony," addressing a number of problems of Levi's – and, by extension, postmemorial – narrative legacy.

The investigation of postmemory as a genre is furthered in "Narrating the Holocaust in the Age of Mass Communication. Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*." Federico Rigamonti contributes to the debate on "the discrepancy between the massified role of a distant spectator and the impossibility to bear witness to the trauma that has been personally experienced" by focusing on Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*. This novel exemplifies the postmemorial "attempts to re-establish a connection with the historical trauma, searching its lost sense where it does not simply function as a narrative content but also as the category" structuring the postmemorial identity as "without trauma." In the end, against this historical background, "the choice of the romance is bound to collapse in the convergence of history and fiction." Once again, hence, postmemory synthesizes opposite forces, producing narratives crafted through "the conflagration of realistic reconstruction and fictional degeneration."

The continuity connecting postmemory of WWII to multiple subjects, histories, languages and forms, underlies also its geographical and spatial diffusion. The fourth section of the volume is dedicated to the space of postmemory or, rather, to a selection of physical places that define and are in turn defined by postmemorial commemoration. In *Protegida: Auvergne–Toi et Moi*, Hasbun reflects on the correspondences between the distant and the near, the personal and the public, eventually discovering links between peoples and places apparently disconnected. This combination of images seems to reveal that "nothing is so easily separated; . . . nothing, so neatly kept within its borders."

Berlin's Holocaust Tower is the focus of Xenia Tsiftsi's "Remembrance or Dis-memberment? Trauma, Victimhood and Space Appropriation in Berlin's Holocaust Tower." Tsiftsi discusses this postmemorial space as a site of confrontation between paradigms of appropriation and alterity. Her research identifies three distinct types of postmemorial visitors. The first group includes descendants of Holocaust survivors, revealing disengagement and "an attitude that tends to dispassionately experience or block confrontation with the anxiogenic conditions" of the Holocaust Tower. The second group, descendants of Holocaust victims, approached this space with a "need to identify with those who suffered, and [with] the disquieting belief that they themselves did not suffer enough." The last category includes "visitors less proximate to the historical event," who felt "overwhelmed, [and] were unable to elaborate a verbal description of their emotions." Tsiftsi acknowledges that these were the only visitors "open and responsive to [the] material experience of annihilation" provoked by this place and, in so doing, they truly and postmemorially experienced the "encounter with the absent Other."

Verbena Giambastiani and Andrea Schlosser address ethical questions regarding the phenomenon of "Holocaust tourism," investigating the subtle and often controversial line distinguishing commemorative sites and touristic destinations. In "Between Propriety and Self- Representation: Dark Tourism and Holocaust Remembrance in the Age of Selfie Culture," this matter is further

problematized by the emergence of "the selfie culture" as a way to experience and be present in a space. Giambastiani and Schlosser analyze Shahak Shapira's art project YOLOCAUST, which confronts the "disrespectful behavior" of taking selfies at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin by juxtaposing these selfies with images of the actual Holocaust as a way to condemn "voyeuristic . . . naïve and unconscious" sightseers. This controversial enterprise deepens the debate about "the 'right' and 'wrong' way of remembering the Holocaust," proposing "in a direct and unadulterated way . . . an approach on how the use of social media in a rapidly changing environment of communication is influenced by the behavior of a certain self-centered tourism."

The spatial and architectural contours of Holocaust remembrance are studied also by Aleksandra Ubertowska who focuses her attention on two art projects by female artists: Rachel Whiteread's *Holocaust-Monument* in Vienna, and Anna Baumgart and Agnieszka Kurant's art installation *Ellipsis* in Warsaw. In "Trajectories of Memory: Art Interventions in Post-Genocidal Space (Anna Baumgart's and Rachel Whiteread's Acts of Holocaust Commemoration)" Ubertowska dwells on the gender-specific aspects of these postmemorial acts of commemoration. Indeed, "the female element of these works can be found in the endeavor to break with the traditional pathos associated with monuments in a way that departs markedly from the mobile and mechanical strategies of [more traditional] anti-monuments" by male artists. This gendered perspective on postmemory situates history within the present "in an invisible, facultative way, through the negation of the traditional . . . formula of a solemn, heroic monument." In so doing, these spaces of postmemory succeed in being "purified of voyeurism and fetishization of the memory of the Holocaust."

The last two essays of this section are dedicated to Rome, the city that hosted our 2018 conference. In "The *Progetto Memoria* Experience: Fifteen Years of Communication in Italian Schools through Witness Narration," Sandra Terracina recounts her experience as the coordinator of *Progetto Memoria,* a cultural association founded in Rome in 2003, aimed at preserving and transmitting the history and

memory of the anti-Jewish persecution and the Shoah in Italy. This article addresses the cornerstones of memorial transmission to young generations, such as the institution of the Holocaust Remembrance Day in Italy. The growing importance of oral testimony in the "Era of the Witness" is also inspected within the *Progetto Memoria* experience, especially because oral testimony is inevitably approaching its end, and this raises questions about its legacy and the development of alternative forms of transmission. In this sense, "a useful way for students and teachers to counteract and prevent the denial of the Shoah" has been to participate in the *Stolpersteine* project, introduced in Italy by Adachiara Zevi and her *Arteinmemoria* organization and with which *Progetto Memoria* collaborates, as another way to restore names, homes, and history to the victims of Fascism.

Arteinmemoria, a biennial of contemporary art inaugurated in 2002 and held in the ruins of the synagogue of Ostia Antica, near Rome, is also the main focus of Laura Quercioli Mincer's "*ARTEINMEMORIA*: Presenza e oblio della Shoah fra le rovine della sinagoga di Ostia Antica". *Arteinmemoria* hosts site-specific art installations that interact with the particular location of the ancient synagogue (probably the second most ancient of the Diaspora), where memory and oblivion, center and periphery, constructions and ruins converge. In particular, Quercioli identifies four artists who participated in *Arteinmemoria* and have profitably interrogated the ethics and aesthetics of monuments, counter-monuments and anti-monuments, challenging the relationship between artist and visitor, and between the stability of construction and the passing of time. Rudolph Herz's *Title Under Construction* (2002), Jochen Gerz's *Noi e loro* (2011), Stih&Schnock's *Sinergia* (2015), and Horst Hoheisel's restoration work of some small parts of the Ostia Synagogue (2017) propose, in Quercioli's words, a radical and decidedly political answer to the postmemorial condition of in-betweenness.

The final section of this book is titled "Beyond the Holocaust," a qualifier that foregrounds the transhistorical and global breadth of postmemory today. This part is introduced by an image made of four pictures referring to the pastness and continuity, the past continuous

nature, of a trauma other than the Holocaust. *X post facto*, "after the fact," is an emotional register for Hasbun's experience during and after the Salvadoran civil war. These X-ray pictures of a person's teeth become a metaphor for violence "recorded in flesh," a territory of shared history with "crevices and strange fossils." "Beyond the Holocaust" aims to explore the intellectual and empathic site where various histories intersect and interact with each other, where postmemory interrogates its proximity and continuity with different histories of violence. The articles in this section recount multidirectional spaces (and times) of critical postmemorial commonality without disregarding, in fact exposing, its intrinsic tensions.

Guido Bartolini reconstructs the formation of WWII Italian literature, paying particular attention to those historical segments that were marginalized or neglected in the Italian memory discourse and constituted "areas of resistance to remembering." Indeed, episodes of the Axis War, such as the Italian occupation of foreign territories, were systematically considered unmentionable and, in "The Memory of the Axis War in Italian Literature: Ethical Counterforce or Uncritical Denial of responsibility?" Bartolini argues that this marginality spurred the transmission of memories linked to the Axis War through "cultural products . . . [which] mediated the personal memories of the veterans allowing their stories to circulate across society and reach an audience that did not have a direct experience of the war." This vicarious remembrance is similar to postmemory in its mediated nature and its intent to unearth marginal, counter narratives. However, the case of the Italian literature of the Axis War "shows that literary texts, rather than inevitably constituting an oppositional force or place of counter-discourse" can also "contribute to the formation and transmission of the dominant trends of a memory discourse." In this sense, these texts reproduce "a self-absolving representation" of Italian innocence, performing "self-exculpatory strategies" to "evade responsibility for the Italian Fascist past." The attempt to integrate the official history with stories that have been considered marginal, hence, is not always, and necessarily, an ethical act.

Rick Wallach's "Vietnam on the Border: The Shadow of a Misbegotten War in Cormac McCarthy's Southwestern Works"

addresses postmemory in a similar fashion, by investigating "the collision between 'history' and 'memory'" as potentially inviting "more pervasive form[s] of erasure." Wallach scrutinizes "the blunders occasioned by such erasures" in McCarthy's Southwestern novels in which, through "interlocking temporal frames[,] each war vectors the memories of the one which preceded it." Several of McCarthy's characters "expose ideological residues" of different wars: from WWII, "the good war," to the Vietnam, "the bad war of imperialist aggression," to the drug war whose "unspoken ideology" is capitalism. In particular, the Vietnam War sets the stage for "a vigorous interrogation of the ethics of warfare in general of which McCarthy's border novels are important examples." Ultimately, "the allegorical overlays of *Blood Meridian, No Country for Old Men* and *The Counselor*, taken together, memorialize the war in Vietnam as an unhealed wound whose ideological and cultural sepsis progressively infected American civilization and continues to do so."

Anna Di Giusto locates postmemory within the historical and geopolitical context of the Bosnian War in the Balkans and focuses her attention on the gendered postmemory of the Women in Black, a network of feminist associations "fight[ing] against government policy." The Women in Black "set themselves the task of giving voice to the memory of the witnesses of the new wars," and to bring "women's justice" to the victims. Their introduction of the "Women's Court" is grounded in these principles. Crucially, Women in Black pick from "the story of the victims to work for justice," a trait that turned the movement into an international feminist phenomenon, from Serb Women in Black to Israeli Women in Black. Against this background, the ultimate goal of this initiative has been "to prevent and avoid the exploitation of the memories of the Second World War, which helped to fuel the civil war and to exacerbate violence," proposing instead feminist postmemories to integrate or counter the official memorial discourse and "to establish another justice."

Finally, Marianne Hirsch's "Stateless Figures" projects scandalous memories onto the future. Exploring "feminist re-visions" of past narratives and mythologies, "Stateless figures" discusses the "participatory aesthetics staging stateless memory" in artworks such

as Mirta Kupferminc's "En Camino" and Wangechi Mutu's "The End of Carrying All." The notion of "stateless memory," as a continuous form, traces a "hiatus" containing "multiple temporalities, spaces, conceptions of identity and community, as well as multiple possibilities of encounter and transformation" that define the open-ended, future-oriented cipher of these acts of remembrance. In this sense, this final essay opens out to future articulations of postmemories of WWII and their ethical and aesthetic possibilities because stateless figures can imagine and practice a distinct form of "political community for the future."

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Family

Muriel Hasbun, *¿Sólo una sombra? (Familia Lódz)/ Only a Shadow? (Lódz Family)* , selenium gelatin silver print, 1994.
From the series *Santos y sombras/ Saints and Shadows* .

Santos y sombras is a refuge against silence and forgetting. The work becomes a personal diary where I mold the emotional aura surrounding my Palestinian/Salvadoran Christian and Polish/French Jewish family as I was growing up in El Salvador.

The *¿Sólo una sombra? (Only a Shadow?)* images take me into a world where silence is refuge; persecuted in France and in Poland during World War II, my maternal Jewish family had no alternative but to become invisible. Through my work, I begin to unearth the lingering echoes of those silenced voices, hoping to regenerate them, from burnt ash into glimmering light.

My grandfather Georges thought he was the last and only survivor of his family until he and Ester found each other in 1974. I learned about Ester 20 years after that. Esther survived Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen.

While still in the Lodz ghetto, Ester's father gathered the children and told them that if they were to survive they should all go to Palestine, where Ester's oldest sister lived. When I finally met Ester, she told me: "I remember, in the camp I worked...Every Sunday when we don't work, we sit all the girls and look at the pictures. It was not important it was the pictures of us, but pictures from the home... The first thing, when I came here, the first thing that I asked, "Have you pictures?" the first thing."

Elèna Mortara

Crowded-in (Post)memory:
Of My Mother's Face as a Young Girl,
and Other Stories

In this first attempt of mine of dealing in a public exposition with the experience of the Shoah and World War II lived by my family when I was a baby, I will tell you about the use of oral and visual sources for the reconstruction of a family history disrupted by the tragedy of the Shoah, focusing on the special and beloved figure of my mother, whose life course was radically changed by those events. And I will reflect on the peculiar condition, *between memory and postmemory*, of very young child survivors, who had their lives imprinted by that incipit, and whose personal memories have been mostly mediated by their parents' telling about those tragic years.

I am always a bit puzzled when I read that before the 1961 Eichmann trial the Nazi atrocities and war memories had been hushed and unconsciously repressed, even among Jewish survivors. My personal family experience is very different. Although the importance of the trial in Israel of that Nazi war criminal and its effects on international public opinion is undeniable, I cannot find that previous silence in my childhood memories. My experience is much closer to the one described by Marianne Hirsch when she speaks about the "magnitude of [her] parents' recollections" (*Generation of Postmemory* 4). In my family, the reality of the anti-Jewish persecution, the various episodes of the hiding, the decisions to be taken, the final dramatic escaping across the border, the web of friendly connections alleviating the crucible, and the knowledge of the antifascist political activity of my father, who was a member of the antifascist movement "Partito d'Azione" (where he, a cousin of the

Rosselli brothers,[1] was apparently known under the spicy nickname of "Pepe", i.e. "Pepper"), all this was part of a family story that we, my younger brother and sister and I, naturally absorbed in our postwar childhood.

I myself was a baby survivor, since I was born in Florence in mid-September 1943 and spent my first weeks of life at the Rosselli country house on a hill, "L'Apparita," before hiding with my family in a courageous workers' house—the Ricondas—downtown. The point is that I "remember" those events, whose memory I received through my parents' telling, as if I could remember them by first-hand experience; and indeed, I was there, I lived those times, but I was too small for personal recollections.[2] Yet the power of those repeated stories has made those moments of my own biography most vividly present to me. This is the peculiar condition of a generation that was born in wartime and is now living at the crossroads between memory and postmemory, simultaneously as witnesses and transmitters of a reported tale. But I do believe that my younger brother Carlo Andrea, who also lived the final, refugee part of that story, and even our youngest sister Paola, who was born in postwar times, also share, like me, the "sense of a living connection" (Hoffman xv) with those historical times. This is thanks to the power of that common parental storytelling and of a family atmosphere particularly filled with antifascist, Jewish memories and feelings. The truth is—and here's where our experience differs from Hirsch's— that we never felt "crowded out" (*Generation of Postmemory* 4) by our parents' recollections, but rather positively "crowded in," "filled in" by them.

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[1] The two brothers Carlo and Nello Rosselli, important Italian antifascist activists and intellectuals, were murdered by pro-Fascist killers in France in 1937. Carlo Rosselli, a political exile in France, was the founder of the antifascist movement "Giustizia e Libertà" (Justice and Liberty).

[2] The condition of very young child survivors is peculiar, among the ones described by Susan Rubin Suleiman, in her "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust" *American Imago*, vol. 59, no. 3, Fall 2002, pp. 277-295. Using Suleiman's definition, one can say that children who were born in 1942-45 belong to a "1.7 generation" (p. 281), in relation to the events of those times.

I have briefly mentioned my father, Alberto Mortara (1909-1990), and his antifascist political commitment. This time, however, I will not focus my attention on him and his experience; nor will I dig into the history of my paternal family, which would undoubtedly contain other important stories to be told. Among those stories, there is the one I already explored in a book of mine published in the United States, *Writing for Justice: Victor Séjour, the Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara, and the Age of Transatlantic Emancipations*.[3] In this book, looking through the lens of American transnational literature and going back to my paternal great-grandmother's time, I scrutinized a family event which achieved historical relevance and took place at the time of the Italian Risorgimento in the late 1850s. It is the so-called "Mortara affair" of 1858—the dramatic case of the six-year-old Jewish child Edgardo in Bologna, secretly baptized by a Catholic maid when he was about one year old and kidnapped from his family by order of the Inquisition in June 1858. This violent act created a huge international scandal and contributed to the cause of Italian national unity and the struggle for Jewish civil emancipation. In *Writing for Justice* I analyzed all this scene, and the larger context of contemporary transatlantic struggles for emancipation, through the eyes of an American-born playwright of that time, Victor Séjour.[4] Yet this time, as announced in the title of my article here, my recollections will come from another side of my family background and will rather concern my mother's very special story. In this peculiar story, one will find exemplary materials for reflection, concerning both how personal memory can be transmitted from one generation to the next and the surprising ways in which collective memory can develop.

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[3]Elèna Mortara, *Writing for Justice: Victor Séjour, the Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara, and the Age of Transatlantic Emancipations*, Dartmouth College Press, 2015; the book was awarded the 2016 American Studies Network Book Prize by EAAS, the European Association for American Studies.

[4]Victor Séjour (1817-1874) was a mixed-race "free man of color" from New Orleans, who since 1836 lived as an exile in Paris, where he became a famous playwright. In 1859, as a liberal Catholic, he wrote a play inspired by the Mortara affair, *La Tireuse de cartes*, which was performed in Paris for several months in 1859-1860.

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My mother, Alice Feldstein (1914-2008), was not originally Italian. She was an Austrian Jew, who was born in 1914 and grew up in Vienna. At the time of her childhood and youth in the twenties and thirties, there were approximately 200,000 Jews living in Vienna,[5] about 10% of the entire population; and in Vienna's second municipal district called Leopoldstadt, situated in the heart of the city, almost half of the population was Jewish. That's why that district was also nicknamed *Mazzesinsel* (i.e. "Matzo Island," the island of Hebrew *matzot*, or, *mazzes*, in their Yiddish pronunciation—the flat unleavened bread traditionally eaten by Jews during Passover). There was a very lively Jewish life in Vienna at that time.

As a young girl, my mother was an active part of that Jewish Viennese society. From kindergarten onward, she went to Jewish schools, completing her secondary school studies in the Jewish high school of the city, the Chajes "Jüdisches Realgymnasium," which was named after the former chief rabbi of Vienna Zvi Perez Chajes (1876-1927).[6] She was a very brilliant and dedicated student, and after high school she studied Biology at the University of Vienna. Ideologically, she was a socialist and a committed Zionist. In those years of growing antisemitism and strong Zionist ideals so common among the younger generation, her intention was to emigrate to Palestine after finishing University. In her youth movement, the goal was to complete one's cultural preparation before emigrating, in order to be able to make a contribution to the new land.

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[5] See figures about Jews living in Vienna in "Population: Jewish Communities of Austria," *Beit Hatfutsot, The Museum of the Jewish People*, Tel Aviv. https://www.bh.org.il/jewish-spotlight/austria/vienna/population/.

[6] After serving as rabbi in Florence and Trieste, Zvi Perez Chajes (also known as Hirsch Perez Chajes) was the chief rabbi of the Viennese Jewish community from 1918 until his death in 1927. He was also the Chairman of the Zionist General Council from 1921 to 1925. A revered figure in Jewish Vienna, he was remembered, so was I told by my mother, with great admiration and devotion by my maternal grandmother, Rosalie Löwy married Feldstein.

That's why—and here we come to a turning point in this story—in view of her future life in Palestine, after finishing all her University exams my mother chose as a subject for her thesis the *Mediterranean* vegetation, an appropriate study subject for what she thought would be her future environment. Because of this, at the beginning of the academic year 1937-1938, thanks to an academic agreement, she came to the University of Milan, in Northern Italy, to prepare her dissertation. And that's why, when the *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany, took place on March 12, 1938, at that traumatic historical time my mother Lizzie Feldstein, at 23 years of age, was not in her home country, but in Italy. An event that changed all her life. She never went back to Vienna, nor was she able to finish her University studies and go to Palestine. She remained in Italy, from where she could help her parents and two of her siblings to emigrate from Austria in those dangerous times; and there, in Italy, she met my father in Milan. So that's, very briefly, how their family story, and ours, began.

My mother was a very communicative person and a great transmitter of memories. She was the one who, from time to time, kept mentioning certain war episodes that became engraved in our mind. She had a fantastic repertoire of Jewish *Witze*, of Jewish jokes from Vienna, which are still alive in our family lexicon: it's enough to mention one keyword from those stories, to know what we are talking about. She was not at all nostalgic of the past and would never say "*bei uns*," *chez-nous*, when talking about Vienna. Her Vienna – her family, her friends – no longer existed; there was nothing to be nostalgic about. But she would often mention her school and her smart fellow students, offering details about her teachers and relating peculiar episodes taking place there. Her school life had been most important to her, and those memories, like the ones of the following years of war and persecution, came to us in vivid colors by way of *verbal transmission*, without any support of visual images. Since my mother had left Vienna without knowing it was forever, there were no pictures to be seen from those times in our home, nor did we feel any lack for that absence.

I will now proceed to explain what happened more than fifty years after Lizzie Feldstein was a student at the Chajes Jüdisches Realgymnasium. It was late 1986. At that time my mother, now Lisa Mortara, was already in her seventies. One day in Milan, she happened to meet a family acquaintance in the street, a painter by profession. He told her: "Mrs. Mortara, you know, I was in Vienna, and I think I recognized you as a young student in a class on the cover of a book about the old city." "I don't think that's possible," my mother said, "you know, the school I went to was not an ordinary Vienna school, it was a special Jewish school…" "But that's a book about Jewish Vienna! It's titled *Die Mazzesinsel*! Please come and see this book, which I have at home nearby." You can imagine her surprise when she was shown the book by Ruth Beckermann (Fig. 1).

The photograph on the cover was really her class! It was that famous class of students, with whom she had been for so many years and about whom she had told us so many stories, that had been selected to be on the cover of the book. And fifty-five years later, that acquaintance of her, with his painter's eye, had been able to spot her and recognize her as a sixteen-year-old girl, in that picture of 1931.

At that point, my mother immediately ordered some copies of the book from Vienna. And one day in early 1987, when she came to Rome, she brought a copy of the book for me, where she inscribed a dedication, written in Italian: "Rome, February 17, 1987. Years of tender childhood, years of engaged youth. With great affection, your mom."[7] That's how she synthesized her life in Vienna. And that's how we were all, for the first time, given the possibility of visualizing her face as a young girl and of getting to see that beloved school world that had already become so familiar to us through the power of her words.

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[7] In the Italian original: "*Roma, 17 febbraio 1987. Anni di tenera infanzia, anni di impegnata giovinezza. Con grande affetto, tua mamma.*"
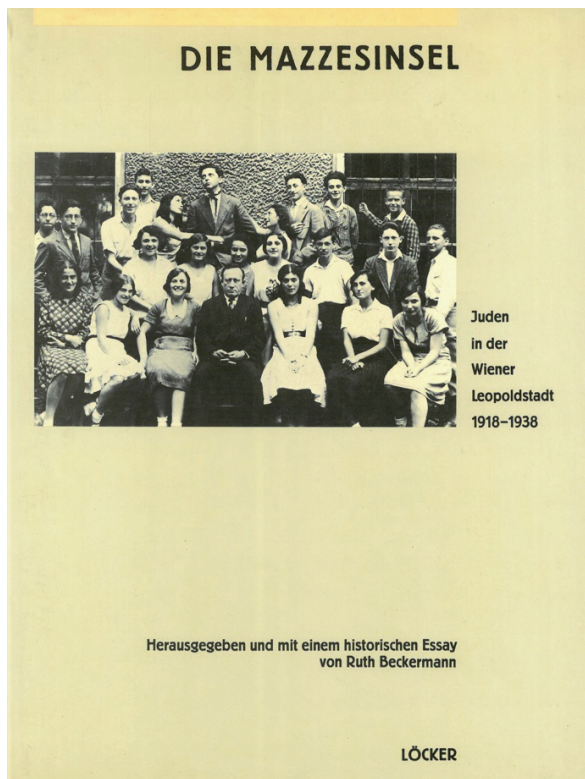
Figure 1. Courtesy of Löcker Verlag.

One can look at that class photograph closely in *Die Mazzesinsel*. There, that impressive photograph does not only appear on the book cover, but it is then reproduced again in greater two-page format inside the book (116-17), with the addition of some information about the school and the class. In that photo, my mother is the girl sitting on the first row, the second from the right (Fig. 2). On the same row, sitting in the middle, is their teacher of religion, who was also their class tutor that would accompany them to the final exams. On the top row, one can see a humorous scene improvised by one boy and two girls, putting on stage a scene of adoration, with the male unconventionally being the object of that reverence: an example of the ironic spirit and theatrical creativity which characterized some of those students.

Figure 2.

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One might think that the discovery of this photo marks the end of my narrative. Yet it is not so, for, on the contrary, here comes the most unexpected part of the whole story. It is at this point, in fact, that this family story gets totally out of its family frame and transforms itself into something else of larger scope. One will see in what way familiar postmemory became part of collective memory, through a process of free artistic appropriation.

The Vienna book *Die Mazzesinsel* came out in 1984, in the mid-1980s: a very creative time for artists belonging to this "generation of postmemory," to use Marianne Hirsch's influential definition. It was at about that time, in 1986, that Art Spiegelman eventually found a publisher for his graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, subtitled *My Father Bleeds History*, based on his father's recollections of the Holocaust, which he had already started publishing by installments as an insert in the graphic magazine *Raw* since December 1980. And it

was at about that time, in 1986-88, that another artist of this generation, Christian Boltanski, a by-now famous contemporary French avant-garde artist, born from a Jewish-born father and a Catholic mother in 1944, began creating his big altar-like installations made of tin boxes and large, violently illuminated photographs of faces of Jewish school kids, as a reminder of the loss and tragic mass murder of innocent Jews by the Nazis. The visual document that Christian Boltanski used for his most famous series of memorial artwork on the Holocaust—the culmination of a longer series of installations started in 1985 and grouped by him under the general title of *Leçons de ténèbres* (*Lessons of Darkness*)—was... my mother's class photograph of 1931, that impressive photograph from Chajes High School, which Boltanski also found in the book *Die Mazzesinsel*, published two years earlier. In this series of installations, originally called *Autel de Licée Chases* (1986-1988), and in English usually named *Altar to the Chases High School*, it was my mother's serious face as a young girl that Boltanski most often selected among the others and included in his various "altars," to represent that lost and annihilated world confronted with premature death and the tragedy of the Shoah.

I discovered the way in which my mother's young face had been transformed into a universal symbol of loss and mortality only several years later. In 2005, my brother Carlo Andrea, who had already happened to come across one of those amazing installations in an exhibition abroad, told me and our sister about an Italian publication on contemporary art, *Grandi arti contemporanee* by Gabriele Crepaldi, where Boltanski was represented by this single work of his, the *Altar to the Chases High School* (*Altare Chases*; Crepaldi 34) (Fig. 3). And that's probably how I first saw my mother's enlarged face as a young girl fixed on the right base of an artistic altar.
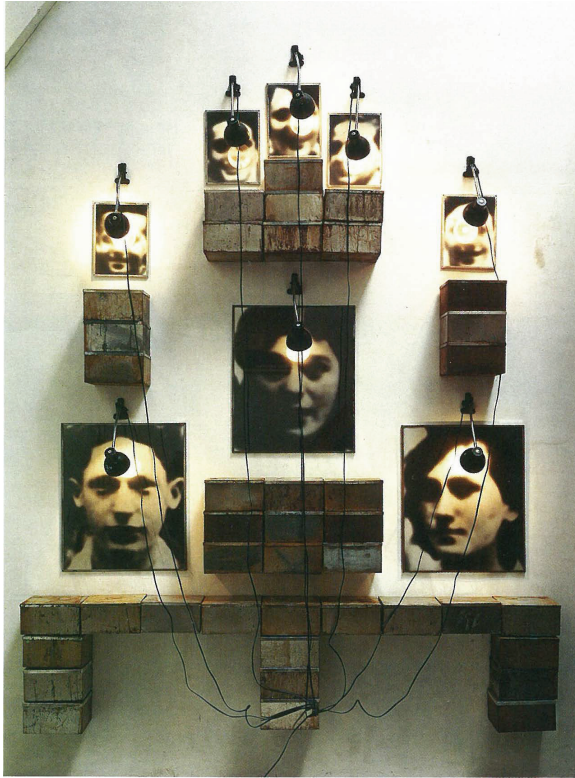
Figure 3. Courtesy of Christian Boltanski and Marian Goodman Gallery.

In the United States, Boltanski's *Lessons of Darkness* were first exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, in 1988.[8] When the exhibition reached the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in 1988-1989, a review of the exhibit by Kay Larson mentioned Boltanski's *Licée Chases* series as his most recent work. Larson describes the "bloated faces" of the photographs used in the new installations, specifying their source from a book on Vienna's Jews and then commenting: "The knowledge that these children were real, that they may still be walking among us

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[8] Close-up individual faces of the "Licée Chases" students and their class photograph were first exhibited in Vienna, Saint-Etienne (France), and Düsseldorf in 1987 (Boltanski, *Lessons of Darkness* 68-71, 101, and Boltanski, *Le Lycée Chases*).

unrecognized and adult—unless they all died in the concentration camps—moves Boltanski out of solipsism." The sepulchral atmosphere of the artwork is finally thus synthesized:

> In the series on the students of the Chases High School, Boltanski mounts small floodlights in front of the photographs and turns them against their subjects; the faces nearly drown in a sepulchral drenching of light. The lights, literal vehicles of illumination, are also potentially inquisitorial, vacillating between the forces of life and the forces of darkness, which extinguish. (Larson 76-77)

In the 1990s, this series by Boltanski started being discussed at depth by scholars dealing with the issue of a transmission of the memory of the Shoah in different works of art. In *Caught by History* (1997), Ernst van Alphen describes the artistic procedure by which Boltanski used the class photograph of 1931 and its effect, in this way:

> He rephotographed the eighteen students individually, enlarging their faces until their features became a blur. As a result, their eyes were transformed into empty black sockets while their smiling mouths turned into grimaces of death. The photographs, presented in tin frames perched on double stacks of rusty biscuit tins, were lighted from above by extendable desk lamps. The aggressive glare of these lamps evoked the lights used in interrogation rooms. Instead of illuminating they are blinding, obscuring the enlarged faces even further. (97-98)

As a matter of fact, the students in the original class photograph were twenty-three and not eighteen, but Boltanski had selected just eighteen of them, including my mother, for his *Lycée Chases* photos and his *Chases Altars*. It was only in 1991 that he completed printing the photogravures of all of them and put their twenty-three individual close-up faces into a print portfolio, titled *Chases Gymnasium*, showing a slightly-cut version of the original high school group picture on the cover. What had occurred, provoking this new creation, was the fact that

in 1989 he had received a letter from one of the students from that class, Leo Glückselig, a survivor living in New York. After having, just by chance, recognized his class as the source for the *Chases Altars*, Glückselig had written a letter to Boltanski, telling him that he was one of the "kids" of that picture, and mentioning the "emotional shock" he had experienced upon that discovery. The letter—partially transcribed by Andrea Liss in *Trespassing Through Shadows*—ended with words of gratitude to the artist and a final moving statement, expressing the man's feelings in front of Boltanski's artwork: "I stood in the dark room of the 'Lycee Chases' (what's the difference what name is used…?) and got in touch—touched again the fellow-lives of my youth and with them the whole period" (Liss 44).[9]

　　　Marianne Hirsch discusses Boltanski at length in her book *Family Frames* (1997), where she even reproduces on two contiguous pages (260-61) both the original 1931 class picture from Jewish Chajes Realgymnasium and one of the French artist's *Chases Altars*, showing my mother's face too (hers is the enlarged one placed on the right-hand side of the installation). In commenting on this work, the Romanian-born American scholar underlines the haunting feeling of loss communicated by that sculptural installation. She remarks that the biscuit boxes placed underneath and around the photographs, "empty containers of a life story and of individual memory, are stripped of their possessions, just as the faces themselves are stripped of individuality." "The images," she adds, "blown up to enormous proportions and thus depersonalized, become icons of untimely death, icons of mourning," being "[s]tripped of their connection to an actual abandoned and destroyed community, stripped of the narrative the actual class picture tells" (260). She also quotes a statement by Boltanski, where his poetics finds a clear expression:

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[9] The parenthetical clause refers to Glückselig's previous correction of the school's name, whose spelling, as specified by him, was "Chajes" and not "Chases." The letter was exhibited at the New York Public Library exhibition, *Boltanski: Books, Prints, Printed Matter, Ephemera*, 1993 (Liss, ch. 3, note 8).

"For me it's very important to start with a real image," he insists. "'Then I blow it up to make it universal'" (262).[10] Hirsch underlines the "postmemorial" quality of all of Boltanski's work. In his artwork, which defines a personal "aesthetic of postmemory," she remarks, while he is

> attempting both to re-create and to mourn a lost world of parental origin, Boltanski signals more clearly the gap between memory and postmemory, the difficult access to that world, and the complex suspicion that surrounds photography's documentary claims in a postmodern and post-Holocaust world. (*Family Frames* 257)

Most appropriately, the section devoted to Boltanski in Hirsch's book is called "*traces*," for that's what remains of the past evoked and conjured in his multimedia installations.

The *Altar to the Chases High School* series of installations by Boltanski, variously named and assembled, are now present in many catalogs, exhibitions, museums, and publications about the Holocaust, and are easily available online in all sorts of reproductions. Nowadays, these images are pervasively used to illustrate texts dealing with anti-Jewish persecutions, such as an article on Heidegger's antisemitism published in the Italian daily *Corriere della sera* on July 4, 2015, reproducing one of these installations under the bizarre name of *Furnace Bridge of Chases High School* (1986-87);[11] in this case, my mother's face appears on the left. The caption of this illustration states that these are photographs of "young Jewish victims of the Holocaust" (42).

An installation with my mother's face placed on the right-hand side of the artwork, titled with its most common bilingual name *Autel de Lycée Chases* (*Altar to the Chases High School*), can also be admired in a color photograph from Princeton University Art

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[10] The quotation by Boltanski is from a talk at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, January 25, 1995 (*Family Frames*, p. 288, note 22).

[11] For the peculiar English translation of this installation, see also 40.114.5.22/artworks/autel-de-lycee-chases-furnace-bridge-of-chases-high-school.

Museum, which shows the disquieting effect of the light on the young people's faces. The design of this artwork, one reads in the Gallery label, "deliberately mimics that of a medieval altarpiece, with its candles, reliquaries, and painted portraits."[12]

In the spring of 2005, at the exhibition *Christian Boltanski – Ultime Notizie (Latest News)*, which was held at the PAC-Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (Padillion of Contemporary Art) in Milan, my brother and sister met with Boltanski and told him about our mother. The exhibit in Milan was only one of the many that were organized about him in this country. In June-November 2017, there was another exhibition about him at the MAMbo, the Museum of Modern Art in Bologna. It was called *Anime. Di luogo in luogo (Souls: From Place to Place)*, and it included – effectively staged in a very dark room – one of the *Chajes High School* works: exactly the first one I mentioned in this varied series of images.

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When I first planned the topic of my presentation at the Rome conference on the Postmemory of World War II, I thought that in a final section I would also tell about the way the Swiss Archives recently helped me to get more information about my family, including the history of my maternal grandparents, who found the final shelter of their displaced lives in that country just across the Italian Alps: a research which gratified me enormously and was accompanied by very kind, non-bureaucratic messages by that institution. I also imagined that I would conclude by even sketching a concise, personal map of literary sources about these events, based on the experience of growing up in post-war Italy, and on the following experience as a reader and scholar of American literature. It was a project that would

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[12]The *Autel de Lycée Chases (Altar to the Chases High School)* held at the Princeton University Art Museum is similar to the one reproduced in G. Crepaldi's book, *Grandi arti contemporanee*, but it is not the same. In fact, next to my mother there are different classmates. The installation was exhibited at that Museum in 1997; cfr. Jill Guthrie, editor, *In celebration*, p. 345; cat. no. 331 (illus.).

have required the space of a book, rather than that of a shorter format. I finally realized it was better to concentrate all my attention on the exceptional story of my mother's face as a young girl, on the way it was portrayed in a lively class photograph of her beloved Chajes High School, on how we first learned about it and saw the picture, and finally on how it was used by an artist to represent the tragedy of the Holocaust.

It is the merging of the autobiographical with collective history that becomes visible in such a story. Boltanski's choice to leave the chords of the lamps exposed as they hang from photograph to photograph in his *Chases High School Altar* installations may be interpreted, it has been properly suggested by Twyla Hatt in her analysis of Boltanski's works on mourning, "as a reminder that we are all connected. The public spaces that Boltanski creates allow for new forms of community and togetherness, regardless of the viewers' interpretation of the piece" (7). It is because of this togetherness that I felt it meaningful to share a related fragment of my mother's story.

We shall now move away from Boltanski's creation, where those young people's faces have been transformed into icons of death, loss and murder, and move back to the real life once throbbing behind it and now fixed in the moving visual document of that class photograph. I hope that by telling the story of one of those faces, the story of my mother's displaced life and survival, I have been able to partially fill in the gap for at least one of those empty, blown up images, and bring the anonymity of that frozen gaze back to its wonderfully full individuality. At the Rome conference, the first image by which I visually presented the subject of my conversation was a composite figure, where one could see the title of this talk next to the brown cover of Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames*, her first book on postmemory. That was a way to show the conceptual frame and broad theme of my talk. But now, looking again at my selection of visual documents discovered on the way, in this final, spiral-like return back to a starting point that has hopefully become loaded with some new acquired knowledge, let me sketch a different composite figure. What is disclosed next to my title, in this newly enriched mental mosaic, is the revealing cover of *Die Mazzesinsel*, with its lively and no-longer

anonymous youth assembled in the Vienna photograph of 1931, replacing the useful and friendly cover, which at that initial stage helped me introduce my general subject while masking part of my story.

        And that is the story, emerging from my generational crowded-in (post)memory, I have tried to share here, hoping that the experience of history I received first-hand, in that "intersection of private and public history" (*Family Frames* 13) that is a family space when confronted with such enormous historic events, may not get completely lost and may perhaps pass with some meaning to the collective memory of future generations.

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Her book *Writing for Justice: Victor Séjour, the Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara,*

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Zsuzsi Flohr

Woven Memory

This article explores the notion of 'woven memory' and is rooted in various concepts of memorial narratives of the past embedded in a familial framework and the visual arts. The description of my art project *Chances in Life—Grandpa's Backpack* illustrates the concept of 'woven memory' in practice. *Chances in Life* addresses the life of my own grandfather, primarily by reconstructing through drawings the built environment in which it was framed, examining discovered family relics, and listening to conversations with Gyula Flohr's two children: my father, János and Marcsi, my aunt. *Chances in Life* presents contradictory narratives told by the family and the state, pointing to nuanced social and gender relations, and generally the diminished chances in life in Eastern Europe in an increasingly closed society. Departing from an exclusive discussion of the art project, the article further aims to introduce my concept of 'woven memory' transitioning to 'interwoven memory,' which resulted from my own experience as an emigrant and parallel exposure to new experiences, concepts, and work in the field of memory studies.

> I am sitting on the floor next to my cousins, looking up at my Opa with an expression of avoiding interest displayed on my childish face. It is Pesach night and it is two o'clock in the morning, but family tradition states that after every seder we sit around and Opa tells us yet another story of his experience in the Holocaust. He speaks and his eyes blaze with fire as he allows himself to relive the story. He weaves his words together beautifully, keeping us spellbound. Finally he concludes with a lesson that we as children can learn from that particular story. (Weinstock 12)

Figure 1. My grandfather's 75ᵗʰ birthday. My grandfather on his 75ᵗʰ birthday surrounded by his family (from left to right; his wife, Magda Sőtér, me in yellow dress, in the middle my grandfather, Gyula Flohr, my aunt, Mária Flohr, and my mother, Éva Korodi), Budapest 1987, photo taken by my father, János Flohr.

My story, for different reasons, cannot start like this, since we never had Passover evening at home, and definitely not with my grandfather. My grandfather did not want to share any story with me or pass on any ultimate wisdom of life. There was not a single word on the Holocaust, my Grandfather rarely looked at me when we met and even if he did so, he was unhappy with my body, as he always pointed out: *I was thin and my legs were like matchsticks, and all in all, I was not a child just a girl.* He would say this after gazing at me briefly from a distance, as a complaint to my parents and worriedly to my grandmother.

After that, I had to go to him, he grabbed me by my arms, my body was clenched in between, he raised and shook me and put me down again to the floor. Then he instructed me to adjust the fringe of the carpet.

Basically, this ceremony was our relationship. My first memories of him are from when I was four to five years old. When I turned eleven years old and reached the height of one and a half meters, he gave up shaking me, and shortly after, he died.
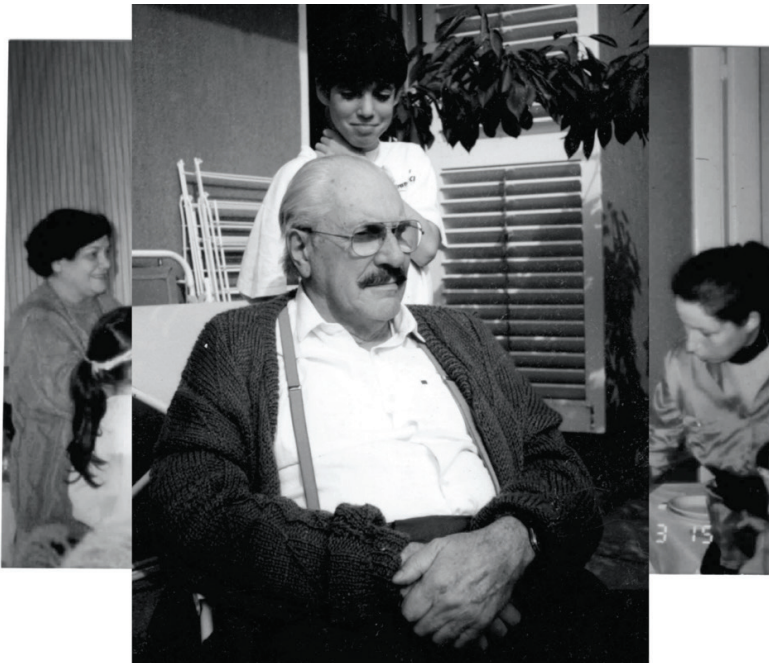
Figure 2. My Grandfather and me. Leányfalu, circa 1992, photo taken by one of my parents. Digital collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018.

This is how I remember my grandfather: he was tall, silent, neatly groomed, his skin always smelled faintly of soap. I was a bit afraid of him, since he always took me and shook me, it was a bit painful. Now I know that it was just a game, the sign of his affection.

Despite the tension around my memories of him, currently my artistic

focus is on a project entitled *Chances in Life—Grandpa's Backpack*.[1]
The project centers on a series of absent objects, which played a major
role in the legendary story of my grandfather's survival of the Shoah
according to the family parable. The story I compiled in my early
teenage years from anecdotes and fragments. I have pondered my
paternal grandfather's life, before, after, and during the war for years.
Although we did not have a close relationship, I was very intimate
with his wife, my grandmother. She told me many stories about their
life, but she was not permitted to share anything about his time during
the war. My grandfather decided not to talk about forced labor, about
Bor, and about how his family perished in different concentration
camps.

I can tell you in a few sentences all I then knew about his life during
the Shoah:

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[1] *Chances in Life* (Életlehetőségek) an exhibition by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2B Gallery
Budapest from November 22, 2018 to January 6th, 2019. See: http://www.2b-
org.hu/eletlehetosegek/info_English.pdf interview at the Klubrádió by Réka
Kinga Papp: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvC3uo8xOTU review at
Artportal by Hedvig Turai https://artportal.hu/magazin/az-.- eltunt-.-targy-.-
nyomaban/

Figure 3. Digital collage with my grandfather's ID/1. My Grandfather's ID from circa 1945. Digital Collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018 .

My grandfather adored high-quality objects, especially if they were meticulously crafted. In 1944 my grandfather was deported from Budapest to Bor, a mining town in Serbia, for forced labor. When he realized that he was going to be deported, he ordered custom-made hiking boots from a shoemaker and a backpack with secret pockets from a tailor. This investment was to pay off, the hiking boots and the backpack provided him with a valuable service during his time as a forced laborer, enabling him to survive.

These objects saved his life in Bor and on his way back to Budapest. Later on, my father grew up with these objects and they became the carriers of the story of my Grandfather. This story centered on the two sugar cubes and one liter of water per day that my Grandfather consumed while he was walking back from Bor to Budapest. When, a decade after the war, my father found these

objects—the boots and the backpack— my grandfather was forced to explain their unique shape and function. Unfortunately, however, they were lost. I never saw them.

Figure 4. My father's drawings. Digital collage with my father's drawing from 2017 of the backpack and the boots of my Grandfather. Collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018.

This and nothing else is all I knew about my grandfather's fate during the war. Because no detailed list of forced laborers of Bor exists, my archival research has thus far uncovered almost nothing about the life of my grandfather. All I know about this period of his life derives from various stories told by my father and my aunt. The contemporary witnesses have in the meantime passed away; my father and his sister remain the sole bearers of the stories. Even the objects have disappeared and exist only in the memory of my father and my aunt.

As I began to develop *Chances in Life* I took up the research again: I sat down with my father and we talked about my grandfather.

I asked him about his memories related to the backpack and recorded our conversation. My father recalled that once he wore this backpack while hiking as a child and his shoulder was swollen by wearing it. At home after the hike, my grandmother asked my grandfather, "Why is this backpack so heavy?", at which point my grandfather realized that he had not removed the sugar cubes, hidden in 1944, from the shoulder straps.

Figure 5. The process of making the backpack. Digital collage with my father's drawing from 2017 and digital photographs (by me) on the process of making the backpack from 2017. Collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018.

While we talked, I asked my father to draw the backpack relying on his childhood memories. This process lasted several weeks over a series of interviews. My father inherited a love for objects from my grandfather and, correspondingly, I asked him to concentrate on

the details of the backpack while drawing. Based on this information, I asked a tailor who still has the skills to craft custom-made items to make sketches and a model of simple material relying on my instructions and drawings. In the meanwhile, I had discovered written evidence that my grandfather was taken to Bor, at some point in time escaped, and subsequently became a partisan.[2] Also, my aunt found two original letters in her cupboard, written by my grandfather to his mother from Bor. Finally, when the reconstructed backpack was finished, I showed it to my aunt, and she made her critical remarks.
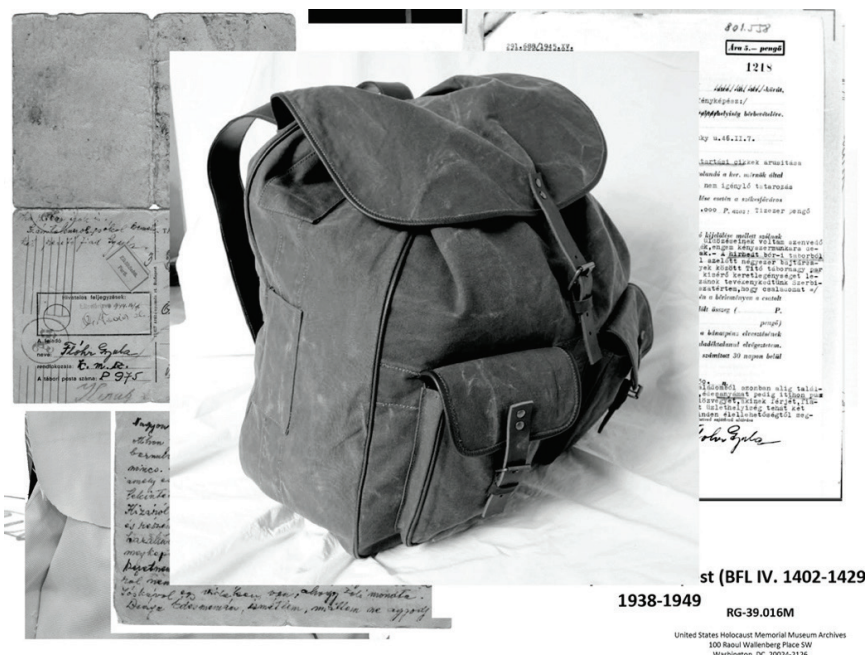
Figure 6. The backpack No. 1. The backpack was made based on my father's drawings. Digital collage with my photo of the backpack from 2017, in the background the letters from Bor and the shop rental request by my grandfather from 1945, from the Archives of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018.

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[2] See RG-39.016M, Records of the Mayor of Budapest (BFL IV. 1402-1429), 1938-1945. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

She announced, *"Well, it is nicely done but has nothing to do with the original backpack."* At this point I realized I must also take her narrative into account. I began the same process of interviews with my aunt. As I compared the interviews conducted with my aunt and my father, contradicting narrative elements appeared sharply in their stories. For example, my father built up an image of his father as a hero, while my aunt saw my grandfather increasingly as an anti-hero, who had a negative impact on her personally and on their family life. Furthermore, they contradicted one another on dates and facts, the shape and the size of the backpack, the size of the sugar cubes in it, what they knew about my grandfather's life before they were born, how they remembered him as a child and how they view him from an adult perspective, then and now.

Chances in Life—Grandpa's Backpack had been sparked from my desire to fill in the gaps and holes in familial memory, from a desire to reconstruct my grandfather's personality, to try to get to know him, to uncover the "truth" about him. But I was alone with this need through almost the entire project. Neither my father nor my aunt wanted to talk about their father on their own initiative. They were trapped between revisiting memories or keeping silent. The process of reconstructing the backpack turned the backpack into a symbol, an object bearing a reconstructed family history. The contradictions and fundamental disagreements between my father and aunt point to a very compelling and problematic aspect of memory work, especially in Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe where memory work from the second generation, the generation of postmemory, exactly spanning the age of my father and aunt, is frequently missing. Evidently the story itself is embedded within a family story, but it is also very important to realize that my grandfather becomes paradigmatic of a specific time and place. But it is in light of and due to the very contradictions and conflicting narratives that I chose his story to illustrate 'woven memory:' the process of aligning and weaving together all these fragments of historical research and conflicting

narratives in the family points to the past, present, and future, and gradually forms the concept of 'woven memory.'

Despite the fact that their knowledge about my grandfather was limited, the lives of my father and aunt were indelibly marked by the story of their father. Nevertheless, I felt that it was not their story, not only because there was so much they did not remember, but also because they never pursued the knowledge. The response of my aunt and father to the project was neither self-evident nor smooth, as my bluntly masculine grandfather had deeply impacted their lives. They were not totally opposed to conducting the interviews, but my aunt especially had a difficult time as she started the dialogue with me about my grandfather and later, when we spoke with my father. I gradually came to realize that the creation of the project and the resulting intergenerational discussions on the Holocaust and forced labor had forced my father and aunt not just to appropriate the story of their father but indeed, their own histories. For the first time in their lives they exchanged what they thought and knew about their own father and about the time in which he lived. The most interesting outcome of the artistic project was the dialogue itself between myself, my father and my aunt, which was displayed in each station of the exhibition alongside the drawings depicting the built environment of my grandfather's life. The exhibition's order was reverse-chronological, starting with my grandfather's elderly years and ending with his youth. At each stage a conflicting or agreeing interview between my father and my aunt is shown. Exposing the gaps within the familial narrative of the Holocaust served to re-position my grandfather's legacy both positively and negatively, by admitting that a coherent narrative may not exist. Reflecting on intergenerational trauma, Kahane-Nissenbaum argues, "the third generation appears to be reconstructing their grandparents" history, resurfacing their legacy, and in doing so they are realizing the strength and heroic battles their grandparents fought in order to get to the place they are today (16).

The act of reproducing my grandfather's backpack, which aimed in some way and ultimately impossibly, to reconstruct his

personality and his life story, to humanize him for myself, felt like using a loom, weaving different materials together.

Figure 7. Digital collage with my grandfather's ID/2. Collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018.

At some point I began to call the process in which I was engaged "interweaving memories," which ultimately resulted in "woven memory." What I discovered by working on *Chances in Life—Grandpa's Backpack* was that my sources were primarily fragmented images and stories, difficult to match and understand. When talking about personal experience, there are many narrative gaps in the family archive, partly because the material has disappeared with time, partly because there are no witnesses left to speak with me in the family.

I filled in the gaps relying on my knowledge based on historical readings and testimonies of other Bor-inmates, movies, and archival photographs. But as I wove together the existent strands of family

memories and narratives from secondary sources, holes remained. These I found myself compelled to fill, several of the threads derive solely from my own imagination. The result is a complex tapestry of "woven memory."

Regarding the literature of the third generation, Megan Reynolds writes that this generation strives to describe lost worlds while at the same time feeling uncertain about how to portray the Holocaust. Faced with this troubling conflict and trying to piece together fragments of memory, the third generation uses imaginative elements to fill in the gaps (25). In line with her assertion, my imagined world is populated by ghosts of past stories, objects that have disappeared, photos never seen, letters never read, abandoned places of horror or intimacy, homes without addresses, missing information, and the shadows of nameless people who were unable to say farewell. By weaving together reported narrative elements, research findings, and my own imagined impressions, I create at the end a multi-threaded portrayal, with some sections creating an integral image and others standing solitary and apart. I see woven memory as a process. Tatiana Weiser writes, "when a traumatic experience is put into classical narrative, the text itself undergoes the following changes: it rejects linear narration, plot, or conflict; its syntax breaks into segments or becomes deformed" (210). I have woven different materials together, illuminating the pitfalls and holes. The non-linear narratives reflect the conflicting stories that arose from the process of remembering. I chose to show all these broken stories, images, fragments, layered archival materials, like these collages in this article and in doing so to demonstrate that the weaving process itself is flawed, punctured, sometimes successful, and at other places woven incorrectly.

Figure 8. Digital collage with my grandfather's ID/3. Collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018.

Interweaving Memory

Transmission and transfer are important parts of my research. As a Jewish woman in Budapest I frequently felt or experienced otheredness, as a result of my name or my appearance. When in 2014 I moved to Vienna, a far more diverse city than Budapest, for the first time I experienced myself as white, as I was often exposed to the question in social situations: are you white or a PoC?[3] Based on my

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[3] This was one of several contradictory experiences within my social scene in Vienna. I wondered how it was possible to ask a white person whether s/he is white or PoC. I learned that there was a phenomenon within certain circles of emigrants from former Yugoslavia or the communist bloc identifying as marginalized and using the concept PoC to describe their perception of their position within Viennese or Austrian society. This is clearly a complex situation that deserves close examination, it is however outside the scope of this paper.

looks I blended in easily with the majority of the population. At the same time because I did not speak German and my English wasn't so advanced, I frequently felt ostracized and was often socially uncomfortable. This juxtaposition of acceptance and discomfort fundamentally shaped and continues to shape my experience. Thus, I underwent a process of understanding what it is to be an Eastern European in Vienna. Moving to Vienna meant leaving my world of familial and local memory and having to translate my knowledge and language into the local vocabulary and cultural references. After I moved to Vienna, I began thinking about art as a space for knowledge production, especially for sharing different narratives and endeavoring to understand diverse histories. As I crossed the border and changed cities, I encountered in Vienna a transborder, transnational space in which diverse memories of genocides, colonization, slavery could no longer be delimited or separated from each other. Shuttling back and forth between a traditionally East-Central and a West European country—Hungary and Austria—I had the opportunity to experience different concepts of memory, strategies of commemoration, and shared, yet also divergent, histories.

In short, my own migration meant that a new realm of "affiliative postmemory" opened up, as Marianne Hirsch writes:

> To delineate the border between these respective structures of transmission—between what I would like to refer to as familial and as 'affiliative' postmemory—we would have to account for the difference between an intergenerational vertical identification of child and parent occurring within the family and the intra-generational horizontal identification that makes that child's position more broadly available to other contemporaries. . . . It is the result of contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation, combined with a set of structures of mediation that would be broadly available, appropriable, and indeed, compelling enough to encompass a larger collective in an organic web of transmission. (Hirsch 36)

Figure 9. Digital collage with different projects. Digital collage of The Jewish Renaissance Boxing Club (Zsuzsi Flohr, Tatiana Kai-Browne, Veronica Lion and Sarah Mendelsohn, Vienna 2014), Gipsy stop Dancing (Ro- manoSvato, 2011) New World Academy Reader #5: Stateless Democracy (Design by Remco van Bladel, 2015). Collage by Zsuzsi Flohr, 2018.

Stepping out of the *familial postmemory* means that I have had to raise questions such as: What does it mean to leave my locality, my familial discourse, the native language with which I grew up? How can I connect to others' histories, and who can connect to my story? The borders and limits of interweaving different memories and histories became a challenge. I often saw that the weaving process led to divided groups and I had to ask myself: what can I do with and about these divisions; how is the conflict to be dealt with?

In recent years, in discussions related to my art projects in Vienna, I faced the limitations of connectedness and the question of how much interweaving memory can take, when interwoven memory

becomes an illusion. I have wondered whether the dialogue required is possible at all. When it comes to connecting with different approaches of memory politics, it is important to bring forward exiled, unspoken, and hidden narratives. As we emigrate and immigrate, histories migrate as well, and they can conflict and challenge each other. New approaches create new questions and possibilities for connecting various constructions of unique histories.

As I interweave memories, I want to walk on this horizontal line further as a conceptual extension of affiliative postmemory; I claim it for the third generation and their contemporaries, where other histories and traumatic pasts accompany each other. I want to see how the lines of affiliation can cross, connect or divide borders. In the process of interweaving, I want to emphasize the importance of the ghosts of the past, and the ghosts of different, hidden narratives. As an artistic strategy, my work explores the potential of conjuring up ghosts of the past in order to engage with them in the present. When involved in situations where different histories come up and collide with each other, it is difficult to avoid memory clashes. Taking the concept of interwoven memory seriously implies thinking about how to allow for ghosts to meet and confront one another within the same space populated by different people, in diverse societies, with different histories.

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Rachel Gelfand

Terezín Art: A (Queer) Family Postmemory

"Loss leaves a long trail in its wake. Sometimes, if the
loss is large enough, the trail seeps and winds like
invisible psychic ink through individual lives, decades,
and generations. When the losses are as enormous as
those that followed from the Holocaust—when what
was lost was not only individuals but a world—the
disappearances and the absences may haunt us unto
the third generation; and they may inform our very
vision of the world."
Eva Hoffman, "The Long Afterlife of Loss."

"Trauma challenges common understandings of what
constitutes an archive…[it] puts pressure on
conventional forms of documentation, representation,
and commemoration, giving rise to new genres of
expression, such as testimony, and new forms of
monuments, rituals, and performances that can call
into being collective witnesses and publics."
Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling*.

Housing Memory

Figure 1: Hartman Road House, Google Maps Image Capture: September 2013.

Arriving at my grandparents' ranch-style suburban home for birthdays and holiday dinners, I never paid much attention to what was hung on the walls. Upon entering there were hugs, kisses, smells of Czech dumplings, and mushroom soup. I would rush passed the dining table and down the narrow hallway to the back room, the TV room, where I would quickly drop my coat. Here, I never noticed the collection of drawings, portraits of my grandfather in his youth and muted landscapes, which formed a circle around the room. Drawn in the Nazi camp of Terezín (*Theriesenstadt*), where my grandparents and their families were imprisoned, these pieces of art were mediums of remembering, mourning, and intergenerational transmission.

My relationship with my grandparents, Hana and Edgar Krasa, who lived in the same suburb of Boston I grew up in, was a unique one. They were both Czech Jews, both survivors of the Holocaust held mostly in Terezín. I was their first grandchild. I was also the child of lesbian mothers and their son, Dani, was my known donor. It was an untraditional family structure in the mid-1980s, but there I was. A new generation.

While there is a lack of language for the contours of memory transmission, Eva Hoffman hits on something when she writes that loss winds. Trauma and "the poetics of compounding loss" (Woubshet 3) create the need for ephemeral and "unorthodox archives" (Cvetkovich 7). Trauma overwhelms and arrests. As Cathy Caruth writes, it is trauma's "overwhelming immediacy, that produces its belated uncertainty" (34). The event does not go away, but rather is always returning and always fractured. For my grandparents, who passed away in 2015 and 2017, the room of the drawings was space of commemoration *and* a space of everyday life. It was a place they could enter but also leave. For the next generation, what Marianne Hirsch termed the generation of postmemory, life and creativity is often "shaped by the child's confusion and responsibility, by a desire to repair, and by the consciousness that her own existence may well be a form of compensation for unspeakable loss" (34). Hirsch's questions concerning the inheritances of loss are crucial to my project. "How can we best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them?" (Hirsch 2). As a living connection, what are my responsibilities? What

is not mine to know?[1] In the words of Elizabeth Jelin, "What do those who are supposed to receive the transmission incorporate?" (96).

In this chapter, I analyze four pieces in the collection of Terezín art that hung in the TV room of my donor's parents. Art in Terezín was a tool of documentation, reflection, and a way of countering Nazi narratives in international settings. How did these drawings transmit traumatic historical experience differently from US narratives of Holocaust commemoration? How was this transmission framed by the queer lineage of our connection? As the parents of my biological father and not lesbian mothers, my grandparents sat outside my "family" in some ways; in equal measure, I was outside their family. Our relationship complicates notions of heredity and "biological traceability" (Eng 33) embedded in concepts of memory, diaspora, and belonging.

Scholarship on Holocaust commemoration innovatively contends with the afterlife of trauma and the residual importance of its materials, but it is entrenched in heteronormative family. My work puts pressure on generational frameworks by arguing scholarship devoted to postmemory and "third generationality" must consider the assumptions hereditary holds. Thinking queerly about postmemory means detaching inheritance from biology while at the same time discussing biological ties *within* the queer family.

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[1] Beyond these questions, what will not be known? Grappling with this, Hirsch looks to Gayatri C. Spivak and Toni Morrison. As Morrison asserts in *Beloved* some stories are not to be passed on. This "historical withholding," as Spivak describes it, recognizes what will not be transmitted. This is not presented as a choice, but rather as elemental. "Historical withholding intervenes" (Spivak via Hirsch 81).

Terezín and Its Artists

Figure 2: Krasa Collection in TV Room, Photo Credit: Rachel Gelfand.

From 1941 to 1945, prisoners in Terezín made art. In a second shift, supported by community members such as my grandfather who was a teenage cook, the artists pilfered supplies from the Nazis art production spaces and drew the realities of the camp. In this work, the artists utilized their prior training, which ranged from Bauhaus and German Expressionism to political satire and commercial drafting. In Terezín, they documented everyday life, depicted individuals through portrait, and created objects for the camp's barter economy. For the artists, clandestine art was a way to process Terezín's chaotic world (Constanza 33). The walled garrison town and Hapsburg fortress, which had been created in the late 1700s for 8,000 inhabitants, held over 60,000 prisoners during the war with a constant flux of transports east. It is estimated that 33,400 died in Terezín of illness, starvation, and violence. By war's end, Terezín had imprisoned 140,000 Jews and sent 88,000 to death camps (Lamberti 106).

Amidst death and transports, Terezín was full of cultural activity. The Czech camp held some of Central Europe's most skilled artists, musicians, architects, actors, and scientists. It was a crucible for artistic creation with an abundance of plays, lectures, and operas. Many of these works survived their makers. Nazis famously utilized

Terezín as a propaganda tool. Framing the camp as a "paradise ghetto," the Nazis created a Potempkin Village-esque façade for a Red Cross visit in 1943. After the camp served its propaganda purpose, artists and Jewish leadership were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Transports in 1944 included my grandmother's parents, Oskar and Rosa Fuchs, who did not survive, and my grandfather, Edgar Krasa, who did. My grandfather's parents, Elsa and Alois Krasa, and my grandmother Hana stayed in Terezín until liberation. Before leaving on the transport, Edgar, an only child, left his collection of drawings with his mother. After the war, Edgar and Hana met in Prague. They moved to Haifa, Israel in 1951 and to the US in 1962. Elsa Krasa, my great-grandmother, remained in Czechoslovakia and kept the drawings. With each visit to the US beginning in 1964, Elsa smuggled the Terezín drawings out of the Soviet country. She had held on to them when many had thrown such materials away.

  In 1970, Hana and Edgar moved into the ochre house I would come to know. By the 1980s, my great-grandmother Elsa was experiencing dementia symptoms and lived in the US with my grandparents. Despite not sharing a common language, Elsa and I bonded over chocolates she snuck past my baby boomer mothers. A shared desire for new family connected my Jewish New Yorker mothers with Dani's Czech immigrant family. For my mothers, the '80s and '90s were the years of Boston's "lesbian baby boom" as well as a rising number of AIDS deaths amongst family and friends; for the Krasas, the same years coincided with new public discussion of the Holocaust. My experience with the drawings—saved and smuggled by Elsa, framed and hung by Hana and Edgar—existed in tandem with a boom in Holocaust narratives in US popular culture, what theorists sometimes call the "Americanization of the Holocaust" (Huyssen 23). My time with the room of the drawings was framed by the queer context of my birth and by familial figures navigating genes, legal guardianship, and attachments.

Figure 3: Elsa Krasa, Hana Krasa, Rachel Gelfand, 1987, Photo Credit: Dani Krasa.

Queering Postmemory

How does daughter-donor relation fit into narratives of postmemory and inheritance? The idea of postmemory was first theorized by Marianne Hirsch in the 1990s in the context of children of Holocaust survivors. Postmemory describes Dani's generation, what Eva Hoffman calls "the hinge generation," or the next generation who held the closest proximity to those who were there. It is a structure through which to think about the back and forth dynamic of parent and child. Hirsch's concept has been taken up as a useful frame in thinking about the children of the children of those who experience trauma: the third generation. Within this generational frame, scholars investigate how recall and its reverberations move through storytelling, objects, images, and the family archive. While Hirsch's recursive concept does not require genetic connection, heredity has remained central to memory studies and its understanding of family and diaspora. As Stefan Helmreich points out, diaspora shares an etymological root with sperm, with spores. Diaspora refers to a scattering (245).

This question of queer life in diaspora has been taken up by scholars under the rubric of "queer diaspora." Gayatri Gopinath, David L. Eng, and Jarrod Hayes argue diaspora is premised on heteronormative lineage. Queer studies, queer of color critique, and

works on queer diaspora challenge the binary constructions of nation/diaspora, home/exile. Eng writes, "queer entitlements to home and nation-state remain doubtful" (32). For Gopinath, queer diaspora is a critique of national narratives of home. Queer theory on diaspora shows how ideas of family and nation are set at odds with queer ways of being. Defining this frame of analysis, Eng writes, queer diaspora "investigates what might be gained politically by reconceptualizing diaspora not in conventional terms of ethnic dispersion, filiation, and biological traceability, but rather in terms of queerness, affiliation, and social contingency" (33). This reconceptualization urges studies of diaspora, memory, and trauma to unravel assumptions of genetic ties.

In a queer reframing of postmemory, it is evident that the concept of third generation must be defined. As Hirsch writes, "grandchildren of Holocaust survivors have a particular relationship to the Holocaust" (1) as they hold both intimacy to and remoteness from that mid-century moment. In the 2016 Australian-based anthology *In the Shadows of Memory: The Holocaust and The Third Generation*, the editors write the third generation is "simultaneously broad and quite specific, connoting relationally and investment in Holocaust histories, a sense of 'bearing witness' to the aftermath of the Holocaust, a distance from the events, and a way of making use of these connections. The third generation is defined in relation to ancestors, to the Holocaust, and to each other. It is never only one thing" (Jilovsky et al. 1). This wide concept attends to how memory is mediated for the grandchild generation through parents, grandparents, Jewish communities, and "global Holocaust discourse" (Jilovsky et al. 6). With greater distance from the moment of trauma, grandchildren from the US to Australia often note their ability to connect directly about Holocaust experiences in a way the second generation could not.

This transnational framing offers insight into commonalities of experience between members of a grandchild generation, but it does not hone in on settler or "arrivant" (Byrd xix) histories. If memory is social, the location of the grandchild generation matters, as memories are products of the imagined communities they circulate within. Examples of how milieu shapes descendants' ideological relationship

to Holocaust history, diaspora, and displacement abound. In Hoffman's memoir *Lost in Translation,* she moved to Vancouver and became close with the Steiners, a Jewish family who ran a lumber mill on expropriated forest. In my family, the Krasas arrived in Boston during the days of desegregation and moved to a predominantly white suburb. Their curation of home exhibit was informed by this setting and their decade spent in Haifa.

The third generational perspective also struggles with questions of heredity and proximity. The editors of *In the Shadows of Memory* write with some regret that they have "primarily relied upon hereditary notions of generation" (Jilovsky et al. 2). In the next sentence, the editors refer to Erik Jensen's writings on gay activists who attributed political consciousness to their awareness of Nazis persecution of prior homosexual "generations" (Jensen 319). My work sits in the uncomfortable space between these two sentences. The counter example to heredity is a queer generation, or a connection to the past through shared sexuality but not through childrearing or biology. Rather than one or the other, generation must encompass both biological ties that are not familial *and* nonbiological ties that are familial. Queer studies offer memory studies this new analytical framework.

Following Hirsch's call for feminism in memory studies, my analysis is grounded in a feminist and queer perspective. Transmissions of the past are gendered, and generation has always been less hetero than it is formally defined. I do not carry traditional markings of the third generation. I did not grow up in Dani's house and did not absorb his "emotional sequelae" (Hoffman 407) to his parents' traumatic experience. Yet, if trauma is transmitted, early and often, in images and in structures, my time spent in my grandparents' house for holidays, birthdays, and other gatherings is significant. The back room was a site of everyday play, daydreaming, solitude, and TV watching.

Home Exhibit

The house was a space of healing, nesting, and deterioration. Each grandparent had multiple knee replacements and the walls covered with art came to serve a dual purpose as a useful support. As they walked around the house (mobilizing space), their hands moved, balanced, and steadied themselves from chair, to table, to the walls their bodies tilted forward towards a slight hunch. For them, the room existed in the back of the house was a literal storehouse of memories (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 375). Entering the space of the TV room, I will focus on four pieces by Hilda Zadiková, Leo Haas, and Fritta. Each piece is reflective of Terezín cultural production and the Krasas's spatial practice.

The Washroom

Figure 4: "The Washroom," Hilda Zadiková, Estate of Hana and Edgar Krasa, Photo Credit: Marcy Kagan.

While the majority of my grandparents' drawings were portraits and landscapes, "The Washroom" by Hilda Zadiková, shows an interior scene of Terezín. It hung on one's left when entering the room and is significant because it represents the copious production of

drawings portraying quotidian Terezín experience. Born in Prague, Zadiková trained in Munich as a painter and was married to a well-known sculptor ("Short Biographies" 81). The drawing shows a crowded space of women washing themselves. They talk to each other or take a moment for themselves. Zadiková's piece is an example of documentation through art, of reproducing reality. Without photography, artists secretly drew what they saw. Because of Terezín gender divisions, Zadiková had access to spaces distinct from male artists. As a woman, she also interpreted scenes[2] and hid her works[3] differently than male counterparts. The washroom sketch is one of the few pieces in the Krasas' collection that is a reproduction rather than an original. My grandparents remained close with the artist's daughter, Mariánka Zadikow, who they knew in Terezín and who sent them this Xeroxed copy in the 1990s. This piece, thus, alludes to a network of Terezín survivors who saved and shared art with each other.

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[2] Elizabeth Jelin argues observations and memory are gendered processes in which men and women are likely to attend to different details and hold on to different aspects of a narrative (82).

[3] Zadiková "was able to save fragments of them, and carried them in a pouch hung around her neck and hidden inside her dress." Joanna Branson, "Seeing through 'paradise:' Art and Propaganda in Terezín." *Seeing through "paradise:" Artists and the Terezín Concentration Camp."* (Boston: Massachusetts College of Art, 1991), 40.

Edgar Krasa: A Portrait

Figure 5: "Edgar Krasa Portrait" Leo Haas, Estate of Hana and Edgar Krasa, Photo Credit: Marcy Kagan.

Of the collection of twelve pieces, three are portraits of my paternal grandfather Edgar, who worked as a cook in Terezín. They are all originals sketched by Leo Haas with pencil on wrapping paper. This drawing was a birthday present for Edgar's mother, Elsa. The suit and tie were imagined for the occasion. As a barter object, this piece was a means of the artist's survival. It was also an object of immaterial value—a prized gift and a way for a mother to "see" her son. In a gender and age-segregated space, the portrait offered mobility, or mobility of one's likeness, within the camp. With no personal possessions remaining, Jews sometimes used and traded art to decorate bunks ("Art in the Terezín Ghetto" 50).

Born in 1901, Haas studied art in Paris and Berlin. In Opava, he worked in advertising and set design before becoming known for portraiture and political satire ("Short Biographies 85). Portraits in Terezín offered, for those depicted, "a sense of permanent presence

among the living, extremely important when temporal physical presence was so fragile and tenuous" (Milton 23). They portrayed Jews as individuals rather than the transport numbers. Often portraits by Haas were co-signed by himself and the sitter—as a signal of their co-constitution. The framing of this piece signals the memorial nature of its presentation. For Edgar, the drawings held memories of friendship with those who did not survive and the profound risks artists took to produce mediums of memory.

A Violin at the Window

Figure 6: "A Violin at the Window" Fritta, Estate of Hana and Edgar Krasa, Photo Credit: Marcy Kagan.

This piece by Fritta has become an iconic image. The original was in the TV room but the digital form became ubiquitous and synonymous with Terezín. Distinct from the rest of the collection, this pen and ink piece does not sketch a realist scene but rather presents symbols of musical resistance. Fritta, or Fritz Taussig, was born in 1906 in Bohemia. He studied in Paris until 1930 when he moved to Prague to work as a draftsman, graphic designer, and satirist. Viewing this image within the TV room, you were placed inside the enclosed space of Terezín. The image contains a double tension between incarceration and the outside view marked by hopeful rays of light. It carries the position of the moment it was made and the moment of

viewing. In 1944, four artists including Fritta and Haas were caught. They had smuggled works out to Switzerland. The Nazis interrogated the artists and sent them to Auschwitz where only Haas survived (Green 97).

Figure 7. "Charles Bridge," Fritta. Estate of Hana and Edgar Krasa, Photo Credit: D. Krasa

Fritta's versatility is demonstrated in a landscape of Prague's Charles Bridge that was also in the TV room. This piece offers insight into the breadth of work made in the camp. Art making offered an escape for the maker and a moment of privacy. Unlike the dead trees of Terezín, the image contains greenery and the viewer is placed underneath the arbor, on the river's shores. The piece reflects nostalgia for life in Prague and musters Czech identity.

In the center of the landscape, there's a crease down the middle. My great-grandmother Elsa folded this piece and put it in her suitcase on her first trip to the US in 1964. The crease signals the journey of these pieces—drawn, hidden, saved, smuggled, and now framed. As a whole, the pieces construct a space of memory, where memory can reside.

Leaving/Returning

Lisa Saltzman writes, "It is those visual forms, the particular visual strategies that are used to give the past a place in the present, the

aesthetic inheritances that are mobilized to make memory *matter*" (7). Memory is turned into matter at each stage of the Terezín drawings' life. In making the works, the artists were profoundly recording, remembering, and tracing their very present terror and deterioration. In saving, smuggling, and arriving with the works, my great-grandmother turned art to testimonial object. As the works became a collection within a home, my grandparents constructed and maintained a space-to-be. My grandparents' coexistence with the room brings up questions of loss, trauma, recovery, and spatial reverberations. Why is it "those visual forms" that so affect? Hugging the walls of the room, the drawings invoke a bodily space. The air matter in the center of the room is psychic, physical, and cut by story.

    With Edgar's passing in 2017, the *shiva* became the last family gathering with the drawings in place. It was also the first time no one who had been in Terezín and knew the context of the drawings was present. After the house was sold, it was razed and redeveloped to match the large houses that now characterized the neighborhood. In this way, the space of the drawings was always temporary, its work ephemeral.

    In form and function, the collection may have resembled a museum model. Yet, the room's quotidian activities of exercising and watering the plants took it far out of the museum framework. A museum you can go home from, but this is not so in home-curation. Hana and Edgar walked this line of public/private and inside/outside in their curation of the room. This process was always ongoing. In 2014, my grandparents added two drawings, a caricature of Hana's father, Oskar Fuchs, and a portrait of Rafael Schächter held at Yad Vashem. The Krasa family first viewed these works, of which they had no prior knowledge, via email. They were sent copies, which they hung in the TV room. The collection was in a continuous process of becoming, accreting meaning in each stage. The room was always arriving, but never fully there; its life followed a belated course.

    As a space of memory, the back room gave a spatial articulation to my grandparents' trauma. In entering the space, my grandparents cared for and lived among works sketched in a moment of chaotic loss. In closing the door, my grandparents could leave the

storehouse of memory in some measure. Like the body, the house stores trauma. Of trauma, Caruth writes there is constant "oscillation between a *crisis of death* and a correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (7). This oscillation was encapsulated in Hana and Edgar's spatial practice.

In curating and maintaining this space, they carried forth the aesthetic inheritance that my great-grandmother Elsa intended. As viewer of the drawings, I became a part of their memorial project. This transmission was direct and indirect, mobile and immobile, as it wound through a queer lineage. My experience of transmission happened near and far from the house itself. Returning and leaving the house of my memory, I take part in the long afterlife and many oscillations of loss.

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Xa White

The Inevitable Actuality of the Postmemorial Child and the Search for Potentiality

As coined by Marianne Hirsch, the term "postmemory" refers to the "stories, images, and behaviours" that are inherited by and "mediate" events (*The Generation of Postmemory* 5). This paper explores the theory of postmemory – and more specifically the experience of the postmemorial child – through a series of theoretical frameworks, ranging from Aristotelian understandings of actuality and potentiality, to explorations of Bundle Theory. Through such lenses, I highlight the ways in which postmemory's paradoxical fusion of past and present, objective and subjective, and self and other, both dismantle and transform conventional understandings of memory, identity, and time. Thereafter, with reference to a number of psychological theories, as well as a work of fiction about surrogate memory, I explore potential ways in which the ubiquity of the events of the past can be challenged, illuminating how narrative structure promotes assessments of causation, and thus allows the postmemorial child a deeper understanding of the origins of their postmemories and the emotions that they elicit.

Conventional understandings of potentiality and actuality suggest that "actuality is the end, and it is for the sake of this that the potentiality is acquired" (Aristotle 1658). However, this notion is challenged when considering postmemory, and the effect that postmemory has on the child's status as that which "signifies potentiality" (Faulkner 210). For many members of the second generation, the Holocaust represents "the only place which can provide access to the life that existed before their birth" (Felman and Laub 64), an abstraction of being that complicates the very identity of the second-generation witnesses who inherit painful memories and images of the past. For these postmemorial children, the self is so deeply entwined with the necessary origins of their own birth

(Agamben 261) that their biological relation to the parent – as well as their inherited memories – come to pertain to a composite identity which not only presupposes subjective understandings of self and actualises the child in the process, but also contradicts the temporal realities of their existence.

      To help frame this disharmony, it is pertinent first to establish an understanding of what postmemory is. Originally applied exclusively to the memories passed down from Holocaust survivors to their children, Pascale Bos describes postmemory as that which "provides a framework through which to examine more specifically the individual and cultural memory through which the Holocaust has come to function in the personal and cultural imagination of those born after 1945" (51). Its foundations lie in the witness of the original trauma, one that is manifested in the children of these witnesses – and in secondary witnesses more generally – through the "stories, images, and behaviors" that they inherit (*The Generation of Postmemory* 5). Yet this trauma is perhaps most powerfully expressed through silence – a typical symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder, when the "[s]ufferers avoid reminders of the trauma ... [and] ... may try to suppress memories or avoid thinking about the worst aspects" of this trauma (Knott), a silence which is buttressed by Dori Laub's affirmation that it is only in "testify[ing] to an absence" of an event, that the event truly "come[s] into existence" (Felman and Laub 57). Laub further writes of an aftermath to the Holocaust in which "[p]arents explained nothing, children asked nothing ... [where to] ... speak up and thus realize the grip of danger, which was the grip of silence, seems to have represented for these parents too grave a danger for such an action to seem possible" (64). Yet whilst this silence is intended to create distance between self and event, it, in fact, inextricably ties the two together. Whilst the silence ensures that nothing is said about the event, it simultaneously ensures that it is ever-present; in verbal terms the event is non-existent, yet the silence that replaces it is all pervading. In attempting to make it nothing, it becomes everything.

      Whether manifested through stories and images or the silence that replaces them, the traumatic experiences of the parent are

"transmitted to [the child] so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right," forging a relationship between child and un-experienced past that is "mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (*The Generation of Postmemory* 5). The complication with this, in Hirsch's words, is that:

> To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced ... It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. (*The Generation of Postmemory* 5)

Laub affirms the incapacitating power of the past, and its ability to redefine the present, in his and Shoshana Felman's seminal work, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. He writes that, "the greatest density of silence ... [the Holocaust itself] ... paradoxically becomes, for those children of survivors, the only place which can provide access to the *life* that existed before their birth" (64).

The postmemorial child's simultaneous attachment to, and abstraction from, this defining period of time, as well as the contingent understanding of the temporal relativity of historical events, is exemplified through Roland Barthes' analysis of a photograph of the Lincoln assassination conspirator Lewis Powell. The photograph, taken by Alexander Gardner, shows Powell in wrist irons as he awaits his execution. Of this photograph, Barthes writes, "I read at the same time *This will be* and *this has been;* I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake" (qtd. in "Past Lives" 674). Whilst accentuated in this particular case, Barthes' sentiment applies to all photography, that whilst it is accurate to say that the moment in the photograph is located in the "past" relative to our own position in the "present," it is equally true to say that our "present" exists as the relative "future" of that photographed "past." We look at the photograph and say, "this has been," and the photograph looks back at us and silently

responds, "this will be." Past, present, and future are all relative terms; their meaning is dependent on the position from which they are observed.

This re-evaluation of linear time highlights the intertemporality of the position of the postmemorial child. Born after World War Two, the children of postmemory are isolated from the time that Nadine Fresco refers to as that of "identity itself" (qtd. in "Past Lives" 662). Yet, despite not having actually experienced the Holocaust, memories and narratives of that event nonetheless "dominate" the lives of the second-generation ("Past Lives" 659), shaping both the identity of the postmemorial child and their relationship to the present in which they live, redefining it as a present which can exist only as the relative future of an absent past, to which the child does not, and can never, have full access.

The capacity of that which does not explicitly concern the self to nonetheless contribute to the formation of identity is observed by Marya Schechtman. Schechtman states in her exploration of the connections between memory and identity that memories "do not inform us about ourselves only when they are explicitly *about* us," rather they "help us fix our trajectory through the world in something like the way a person's spatial point of view informs her about her location ... without [literally] *representing* her or her location" (76–77). Yet whilst such contextually informative memories are beneficial to self-awareness and constructive for identity, in the case of the postmemorial child the "spatial point of view" attributed to them by postmemory is so drastically unfamiliar and foreign – yet felt to be so powerfully subjective – that the child is denied any logical sense of "location" whatsoever, and is thus both alienated from self-awareness, and abstracted from potentiality.

The inescapability of the postmemorial child's condition is further clarified when put into the context of Bundle Theory as understood by the philosopher Michael Losonsky. Losonsky states that all individuals have "a haecceity, a unique spatio-temporal

location, or unique origins,"[1] and that the "impure properties that Bundle Theory needs [to differentiate otherwise identical substances] are individuating properties" (191). For example, whilst two substances, or people, Alpha and Zeta, may be made up of identical properties, the two can nonetheless be individuated through their spatio-temporal relation to one another, or to a third universal substance. The individuating property Losonsky provides by way of example is related to the inception of the individual, that "Alpha [in our case, the postmemorial child] can have the haecceity *being Alpha* ... [because] ... it is the only object that grew out of Zeta," in our case, the parent and original witness (191). Yet, regardless of whether we use Losonsky's means of individuation, or an individuation based on universal relational properties,[2] the inherited nature of postmemory means that any such individuation is impaired. As previously observed by Schechtman, in a similar vein to Bundle Theory, our memories do not have to be explicitly about ourselves in order to shape our identity, but can do so through providing a context within which we are able to place ourselves. Thus, whilst the necessary relational connection between parent and child would typically serve as a means of individuating each party, the inherited nature of postmemory undermines this very individuation, as both individuals are in possession of memories, or quasi-memories, that situate them in the exact same spatio-temporal location.

This overwhelming and seemingly inescapable bond between the contemporary existence of the child and the harrowing wartime experiences of their predecessors can also be defined in terms of actuality and potentiality. Whilst logic dictates that potentiality must precede actuality, that an oak tree cannot exist without first being an acorn with potential, the inherited nature of postmemory subverts such understandings. From the moment that the postmemorial child

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[1] Haecceity – "That property or quality of a thing by virtue of which it is unique or describable as 'this (one)'" ("Definition of 'Haecceity' in English by Oxford Dictionaries")

[2] Where Alpha and Zeta are individuated through their inability to occupy the same spatio-temporal location relative to some other universal substance.

is born, they are powerfully connected to an event that has historical, cultural, and social meanings over which they have no control, in addition to inheriting through their very birth the culturally revered position of survivor, or, more accurately, survivor-by-proxy. This position transforms the postmemorial child into a living memorial to survival against the odds, identifying them more for what they represent with regard to the Holocaust, than for the individual uniqueness of their character. They are de-individuated, their actualised condition not only made seemingly inescapable through their ancestry and the context of their birth, but regularly reaffirmed through the social and cultural contexts in which they are considered, referred to as members of the second or third-generation, rather than being observed as fully present and autonomous individuals. It is as if the acorn born of the oak tree were considered first and foremost as a pre-actualised second-generation oak tree, and only afterwards as an acorn.

Such cultural influences remove the potential substance of the child before they are conscious enough to question them, a process of actualisation highlighted through Giorgio Agamben's thoughts on potentiality and actuality. Daniel-Heller Roazen, in his introduction to Agamben's *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, highlights the contingency that underlies potentiality, that "every potential to be (or do)[must] be 'at the same time' a potential not to be (or do)" (16). Yet the potential to "not-be" a member of the second-generation is not extended to the postmemorial child. The acorn, in the moment that it is born, exists solely as an acorn, and this acorn may or may not grow into an oak tree depending on the conditions that surround it. Contrastingly, the postmemorial child – from the very moment of birth, and forever after – will always be identified as a member of the second generation, and their genealogical and environmental connection to the experiences of their ancestors will always exist. The acorn thus remains "potential," whilst, simply through the context of their birth, the postmemorial child is predetermined to be "actual."

The pre-actualised position of the postmemorial child is complicated further by the aforementioned fact that the postmemories that these children inherit "*seem* to constitute memories in their own

right," a form of recollection that exceeds the boundaries of conventional memory. In this way, postmemory is an epistemological paradox. The origins of the postmemorial child's knowledge – from a time before they were born – and the limits of what the child can actually know – that which has occurred since birth – do not agree with one another.

This contradiction is made clearer when one attempts to fit postmemory into the paradigms of more conventional cognitive neuro-scientific memory categories. The features of postmemory suggest that it sits somewhere between the boundaries of episodic and implicit memory[3] (Cronin and Mandich 116). Postmemory holds similarities to the historical and autobiographical qualities of episodic memory – regardless of the fact that the inherited memory has not actually been experienced – whilst being similar to implicit memory in that this previous (non)-experience affects the postmemorial child without their making a conscious effort to recall it. Both of these forms of memory are personal and subjective, and yet logic dictates that these inherited memories should, in reality, be more akin to the generalised and impersonal form that semantic memory takes[4] (Cronin and Mandich 112). The epistemological paradox of postmemory can thus be rephrased in the terms of these memory groups. Whilst postmemory manifests itself in a way that fuses episodic and implicit memories, the realities of the child's existence mean that postmemory cannot, in truth, be as subjective and personal as these categories of memory suggest.[5]

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[3] Episodic memory – "a category of long-term memory involving the recollection of specific events, situations, and experiences."
Implicit memory – "information that you remember unconsciously and effortlessly."
[4] Semantic memory – "memory for language and facts", as well as things such as concepts and names.
[5] Recent studies in epigenetics (see Dias and Ressler) have found evidence of intergenerational transmission of traumatic responses akin to postmemories in mice. Regardless of whether such responses exist within humans, it is the subjectively truthful feeling of having inherited postmemories, rather than the existence of literally inherited memories, that this paper explores.

Indeed, the identification of these inherited postmemories as seeming to be memories "in their own right" completely contradicts conventional understandings of memory transmission. Schechtman suggests that for a memory to be transferable it must be an "*extroversive memory*" (a memory concerning things external to the self) that is presented "*in the third-person,*" and contains only "*propositional content*" (67). Postmemory, however, opposes all of these conditions. It is introversive rather than extroversive, contains transcendent, quasi-autobiographical content rather than propositional content, and is felt in the first person rather than the third person. Where transferred memories should be based in fact and objectivity, postmemory is based in emotion and subjectivity, and pertains more to personal identity than it does to substantive fact. As such, Hirsch's allusion to the risk of having "one's own life stories displaced" by "overwhelming inherited memories" becomes even more ominous (*The Generation of Postmemory* 5); the difficulty of confining postmemory to any singular paradigm of memory meaning that it is not restricted in its domination of identity, coming to represent that which is personal and subjective, despite the fact that rationality dictates that it should be objective.

A work of fiction that exemplifies the powerful omnipresence of postmemory, as well as its epistemologically paradoxical essence, is the novel *Writing the Book of Esther*, by the French author, grandchild of Polish-Jewish immigrants, and member of the third-generation, Henri Raczymow. Raczymow's novel is presented as having been written by its own fictional protagonist, Mathieu, and starts with Mathieu writing about how the memory of his deceased sister, Esther, prompted him to write about her as if she had lived in the Warsaw ghetto. Next, the reader is presented with the narrative that Mathieu has written, as he fictionalises his sister into Holocaust-era Warsaw. The final section follows Mathieu as he writes about his youth with Esther, and talks to family members in order to learn about their own experiences of the Holocaust, thus allowing him to shape the very narrative that we, as readers, are reading. Even through this structure alone, we see temporally disruptive patterns similar to those of postmemory and Barthes' photograph. The opening section of the

novel occurs last chronologically, the majority of the final section of the novel occurs first chronologically, and the middle section is written from a present that is the relative future of the past that it imagines.

In *Writing the Book of Esther* both Mathieu and his sister Esther are pre-actualised by the contexts of their birth, Mathieu as a member of the second generation, and Esther, born during the war but too young to fully understand it, as a member of what Susan Rubin Suleiman labels the 1.5 generation. In fact, this 0.5-generation difference between Esther and Mathieu largely distinguishes their respective associations with the Holocaust. As a member of the 1.5 generation, Esther has, in Mathieu's words, "been threatened" by the Holocaust (Raczymow 106). Yet whilst this makes Mathieu increasingly conscious of the fact that he himself has not been threatened, Esther's own feelings about her experiences, or lack thereof, are more ambiguous. Esther's inability to consciously recall memories of the Holocaust manifests itself as a form of survivor's guilt, wherein she comes to obsess about the trauma that the women of the Warsaw ghetto went through, an atrocity that she feels intensely affected by despite not having experienced it, and one that she consequently attempts to enact upon herself. Esther reads books about the Warsaw ghetto uprising and studies photographs of the women of the ghetto "so intensely that she succeed[s] in believing herself one of the fighters" (Raczymow 105). Esther wears a cap like the women in the Warsaw ghetto photo, and, later on in the novel, shaves her head, wears camp inmate clothes, and starves herself, before finally committing suicide by gassing herself in an oven. Here we see how Esther's prescribed actuality as a survivor eats away at her, simultaneously enforcing her claim to this title and nurturing her insecurities about this claim, the memories and experiences of those who experienced the Holocaust first-hand coming to dominate her entire being, and nullify all other elements of her identity.

Just as Esther feels guilt about having survived the Holocaust without the burden of having consciously experienced it, Mathieu feels shame at the fact that he "hadn't yet been born when *that* was going on" (Raczymow 123), leading him to believe that "[h]e doesn't have the right to talk ... to have an opinion, [to] put forward a

hypothesis or a doubt" (170). Despite feeling a profound connection to the Holocaust, and wanting to explore this connection, Mathieu also feels the need to hide his interest. He only looks at Esther's photos of the Warsaw ghetto women when he thinks no one is looking, and only tries on Esther's wartime cap – tries on the position of sufferer – when he's sure he's alone. This conflict between Mathieu's "need to speak" about the "burden of memories" that the Holocaust has passed down to him (127), and the feelings of shame and illegitimacy that this need to speak evokes, is paralleled in Raczymow's description of his own experience of being "caught in the abyss between ... [his] ... imperious need to speak and the prohibition on speaking" (Raczymow and Astro 102–03). Both Raczymow and Mathieu are compelled to put forward hypotheses, articulate doubt, and embrace potentiality, but, having not suffered during the Holocaust, they feel unable to do so.

It is only through writing about Esther that Mathieu can overcome these feelings of illegitimacy. Through fictionalising Esther, Mathieu is not only able to connect to her in a way that seemed impossible in life, but is also able to establish a middle ground between his own enforced dissociation from the Holocaust, and Esther's complete and overwhelming identification with it. Suddenly the cap that he was previously self-conscious about wearing even in solitude, a symbol of both Holocaust suffering and Esther's own pain, becomes an essential part of Mathieu's creative process. Mathieu "wears ... [Esther's cap] ... as he writes" (Raczymow 106), this writing of the Holocaust allowing Mathieu to recognise his own pain, helping him to "map out his shame," "embod[y] his guilt" (124), and legitimise his suffering.

Mathieu, here, functions as an author-surrogate, replicating Raczymow's own views on the liberating power of writing. In his essay "Memory Shot Through With Holes," Raczymow states that his difficulty as a member of the third-generation "was not 'how to speak' but 'by what right could I speak,' I who was not a victim, survivor, or witness" (Raczymow and Astro 102). He continues, "[w]riting was and still is the only way I could deal with the past, the *whole* past, the only way I could tell myself about the past – even if it is, by definition, a recreated past" (103).

It is this emphasis on the process of writing, rather than the product of the writing or the writing's historical accuracy, that is so important. A 2004 paper by R. Sherlock Campbell and James W. Pennebaker exploring the health benefits of different writing styles states that the process of "[t]ranslating a traumatic event into language calls on cognitive, emotional, and linguistic processes ... [including] ... introducing and describing main characters, contexts, and events" (64). The authors further state that "[o]nce these components are introduced, their interrelationships need to be described" (64). Here we see how the translation of trauma into writing, whether testimony or fiction, demands that the author contextualise the events that occurred, an act which forces the author into considering not only their present self, but their past and future selves, as well as entirely other selves, and the contexts in which all of these selves are situated.

Through this contextualisation of the seemingly inexorable and unidentifiable emotions of postmemory into terms that can be understood, a new space is created where these conflicted emotions once lay. Furthermore, these exiled emotions – now in writing, extroversive, tangible, and made to sit within a subjective psychological context – are ready for re-ingestion, able to be re-integrated as a functional part of the self with logical and accessible triggers.

As a result of this process, a new causal chain for the emotional impact of postmemory is established. Schechtman posits that good prose can qualify as quasi-memory, as there is a "temporally and spatially contiguous chain of information leading from the original experience to its reproduction" (74). She describes this as somewhat similar to manual coding from one computer – or brain – to another, with the written memory essentially being uploaded from paper to brain. Thus not only is the process of writing a means through which complicated and disorientating intergenerational postmemories can be made external, but this externalisation, in turn, desegregates these postmemories, creating new, logical, and comprehensible traces for the emotions that they elicit. These emotions are thus no longer anomalous and unsettling, but instead now occupy a rational place

within the individual's understanding of self, as they become a part of the author's own chronology.

It is through a similar externalisation and reintegration of his painful relationship with the Holocaust, through the authorial exploration of Esther's story, that Mathieu is finally able to come to terms with his own suffering. When Mathieu finishes writing about Esther, he feels that he has exorcised her. Mathieu writes, on the final page of the novel, "Esther is no longer in me. I've ejected her," "[o]nly words can do that, erase her memory, just as the confession of a crime, they say, brings the criminal a semblance of peace" (Raczymow 204). Yet whilst Mathieu presents the book as one which has ousted Esther and will keep her "at a distance" (204), the self-conscious reference to how confession, "they say," brings the criminal peace, suggests that the exploration of Esther's story – and thus that of the Holocaust – has not so much exorcised Esther, as it has emancipated Mathieu. Through writing, both Mathieu, and his creator Raczymow, are able to construct narratives that free them from the derivative nature of their connections to the Holocaust, desegregating their painful postmemories and emotions, and creating new, coherent, and comprehensible structures for these postmemories to sit within. Their hypotheses have been articulated, their doubts have been voiced, their opinions have been heard, and their suffering has been recognised.

For Raczymow, and for all children of postmemory, the authorial exploration of the past represents a means through which a prescribed actuality can be challenged, and a new potentiality obtained. Through externalising the painful memories inherited from the previous generation, postmemorial children are able to explore the Holocaust beyond the burden of historical fact, and, in doing so, forge an intimate, personalised, and subjectively honest understanding of a trauma that is otherwise defined by absence.

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Society
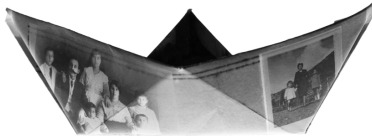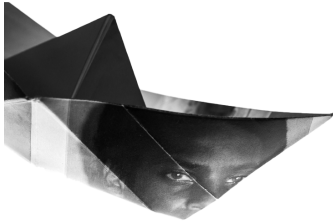
barquitos from the archive is inspired by the hundreds of paper boats that individuals have contributed to the *barquitos de papel* collective archive and video installation since it premiered in San Salvador in 2006.

Each barquito is an individual portrait, and as little vessels, carry the power of our individual and collective testimony. From San Salvador to Buenos Aires to Newark to Dallas, to Brussels and to Washington, D.C., we're encouraged to remember, to come together to (re)discover our own story, using copies of our family documents and photographs. The tactile process of making paper boats engenders connection, even healing. Through the act of participating, we claim our individual story in the communal space. In photographing these barquitos, I realize that the details hidden behind the folds resonate as much as those readily seen.

These photos of paper boats stand on their own as documents of our diverse journeys. They highlight our individuality while gesturing that together, we may find our belonging.

Anne Roche

Leur Siècle

Ce titre s'inspire en le détournant de *Mon siècle* (Grass), de l'écrivain allemand Günter Grass. Dans ce livre, Grass propose cent histoires, une par année, racontées en première personne, mais qui ne sont pas toutes liées à des souvenirs personnels: la plupart relatent des événements historiques, dont beaucoup sont même antérieurs à sa naissance. *Mon siècle* offre donc un panorama paradoxal: à la fois ample et pulvérisé, personnel et impersonnel, mais toujours très chargé en histoire, et où les guerres tiennent une place importante.

Cet exemple – mais on pourrait en trouver bien d'autres – ouvre sur un certain nombre de questions. Qu'en est-il du récit mémoriel aujourd'hui (2018), où des concepts comme la postmémoire (Hirsch) ou la mémoire multidirectionnelle (Rothberg) ont modifié la perception que les témoins, mais aussi les historiens de 1945, pouvaient avoir de leurs propos? En particulier, comment penser la dialectique entre la mémoire individuelle (celle de l'historien ou du théoricien au même titre que celle du témoin) et les logiques collectives qui l'informent et la traversent: logiques qui vont des formes narratives (genres littéraires, art du récit) aux mécanismes psychiques et aux polarités politiques? Et comment rendre compte des variations de focale temporelle qui accompagnent des réalités elles-mêmes mouvantes?

Je me propose de réfléchir à quelques-unes de ces questions, à partir notamment de mes recherches sur l'histoire orale. J'avais envisagé de présenter également quelques éléments d'un travail en cours sur certains aspects du refoulement mémoriel en Allemagne depuis 1989-1990, mais j'ai préféré me centrer sur l'histoire en France *et en Algérie*, en tant que la guerre d'Algérie serait comme une 'suite' de la seconde guerre mondiale, ce dont je m'expliquerai.

Le titre

Pourquoi dire 'Leur Siècle' et non pas 'Notre Siècle', alors que nous avons tous vécu, plus ou moins, la même période temporelle? est-ce une manière de se mettre hors histoire?

En fait, le choix d'écarter l'adjectif possessif 'Notre' a ici deux significations.

En premier lieu, l'historien, l'écrivain, ou tout simplement le sujet, peut-il dire 'Nous' à propos d'une expérience qu'il n'a pas vécue? et si oui, à quelles conditions, avec quelles précautions?

En second lieu, et plus important encore, l'emploi du 'Nous', du 'Notre', pourrait être entendu comme une manière de gommer les contradictions: comme si victimes et bourreaux avaient vécu le même siècle. Il s'agit d'insister sur le fait que l'histoire n'est pas 'une', n'est pas consensuelle – ce qui ne veut pas dire que la mémoire est une 'contre-histoire' comme on le croit parfois. Telle ou telle mémoire, tel témoignage, peuvent parfois faire émerger une histoire différente du récit dominant, mais ils peuvent également forger une histoire tout aussi idéologisée, aussi sujette à caution, que l'histoire dominante.

Un petit peu d'ego-histoire

Dans les années 70, chacun était sommé de dire 'd'où il parlait'.

C'était supposer que, premièrement on dirait la vérité, deuxièmement que l'on savait véritablement 'd'où on parlait'. Ce n'est que tardivement, au prix d'un certain travail sur soi, que l'on peut espérer répondre, et encore.

Ce qu'il faut conserver de cette injonction, c'est un des fondements de l'éthique du chercheur: dire sa date de naissance (1938), dire son lieu de naissance, dire les expériences qui l'ont façonné, dire aussi tout ce qui ne relève pas de son vécu personnel mais qui l'a également construit: quand je dis que je me souviens de la Commune de Paris, cela ne veut pas dire que j'y étais, en 1871, mais cela signifie bien que c'est pour moi une expérience fondatrice.

Il est donc indispensable de préciser le cadre à la fois vécu et conceptuel dans lequel les travaux de recherche s'inscrivent.

Mais ce n'est que maintenant (tardivement) que je peux désigner l'origine, ou l'une des origines possibles, de ma vocation de chercheur, et les détours qu'elle a pris.

Comme toute ma génération, née avec la seconde guerre mondiale, j'ai été sensibilisée à l'Allemagne. Mais à cela s'ajoute un élément plus spécifique: en 1934, soit quelques années avant ma naissance, mon oncle André a traduit *Mein Kampf*. Ce fut longtemps, sinon un secret de famille, du moins un sujet dont on ne parlait pas, et je l'ai su fort tard. (C'est d'ailleurs la première fois que j'en parle en public!)[2] Ces deux faits, générationnel et personnel, devaient me prédisposer à travailler sur l'Allemagne – or j'ai travaillé sur l'Algérie – et seulement après, sur l'Allemagne, cela par le double biais de lectures, et, pour l'Algérie, du témoignage oral.

Avec ce tressage improbable d'un vécu longtemps obscur, opaque, de l'enfance (*infans*) et d'une expérience qui commençait à être politique (avec l'Algérie, les luttes anti-impérialistes), vécu et expérience que j'ai mis longtemps à connecter, je constate aujourd'hui que si mes centres d'intérêt scientifiques pouvaient paraître dispersés, j'en percevais subjectivement la cohérence. Et c'est entre autres grâce au concept de mémoire multidirectionnelle, forgé par Michael Rothberg, que je suis en mesure d'expliquer, sinon de justifier, cet apparent détour, et de poser quelques-unes des questions méthodologiques qui nous réunissent – j'en ai fini avec l'ego-histoire.

Comment travailler à partir des 'tabous mémoriels'?

La problématique même du colloque est une réponse à l'idée, jadis assez répandue, 'qu'on ne doit pas toucher' à la Shoah. Un exemple entre mille, les reproches faits au film de Steven Spielberg *La Liste de*

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[1] Hitler, Adolf. *Mein Kampf*. Translated by Godefroy-Demonbynes, Jean, and Calmettes, André (1934). Le livre fut saisi par autorité de justice, sur plainte des éditions Eher (éditeurs de l'original allemand.) Ma cousine Ingrid Calmettes prépare actuellement une biographie de son père.

[2] Ceci est un mensonge. J'ai mentionné la traduction de *Mein Kampf* à Berlin, lors d'une conférence à l'*Akademie der Wissenschaften*, avant la chute du Mur, mais cela n'a pas donné lieu à une trace écrite.

Schindler (1993). La destruction des Juifs d'Europe, drame historique sans précédent, serait à ce titre 'interdite de représentation', et on connaît l'inflation de termes comme 'ineffable', 'indicible', 'impensable', etc. Termes qui sont autant de renoncements programmés à la pensée. Or "aucun événement du passé n'est au-delà de la compréhension historique ni hors de portée de l'investigation historique" (Snyder 24). Exemplaire en ce sens, l'analyse que propose Omer Bartov sur le film très controversé d'Asher Tlalim, *Don't touch my holocaust* : ce film, dit-il, est "implacable lorsqu'il expose à la fois les effets destructeurs de la mémoire de l'atrocité au présent, et la déformation de l'identité et de la conscience contemporaines causée par une ignorance cynique du passé" (Bartov 66). C'est donc entre deux écueils, entre la sidération devant un passé terrible et la fausse conscience de ce passé refoulé, que le créateur et le spectateur, l'écrivain et le lecteur, doivent passer: mais l'art devrait permettre d'échapper au dilemme. Est-ce que les récits des 'gens ordinaires' y échappent? est-ce qu'ils permettent une élaboration?

Un tabou du même ordre, quoique sans doute plus restreint, pour des raisons à la fois historiques, géographiques, et structurelles, touche la guerre d'Algérie et ses acteurs. Pendant les années de la guerre d'Indépendance, la censure gouvernementale a frappé nombre de livres et de périodiques. Mais après la guerre, les ouvrages historiques et les récits de vie se sont multipliés, contrairement à ce qu'affirment trop rapidement certains[3]. Si la littérature a depuis une trentaine d'années pris le relais, il n'en reste pas moins que, subjectivement, nombre d'acteurs de la période conservent le sentiment de n'avoir pas été écoutés ou pas suffisamment (Roche 1992). C'est ce qui ressort des récits de mon corpus, que je vais brièvement présenter.

Présentation de mon corpus

Le savoir historique, en général, repose sur trois types de sources: les témoignages des personnes qui ont vécu la période, les archives, et la

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[3] Les ouvrages de Catherine Brun, notamment *Guerre d'Algérie* et *Algérie, d'une guerre à l'autre*, prouvent l'abondance de la production d'écrits sur la "guerre sans nom".

littérature, ce dernier terme englobant les travaux des historiens, les témoignages écrits, les fictions, et les récits de seconde ou troisième génération.

Sur ce dernier point, les historiens ont compris depuis quelque temps que les ouvrages dits de fiction, en particulier les romans, pouvaient leur apporter, non seulement des informations factuelles, mais une meilleure compréhension des 'facteurs humains': ce que savaient les historiens du dix-neuvième siècle, mais que ceux du vingtième avaient un peu oublié.

Mes recherches se sont fondées sur ces trois types de sources, mais je vais aujourd'hui parler essentiellement du témoignage oral, tout en le croisant avec certains exemples tirés de la littérature. Le corpus constitué par mon équipe et moi-même comporte un ensemble d'entretiens enregistrés et transcrits, au cours d'une recherche sur une quinzaine d'années, ce qui a donné lieu à diverses publications[4]. Le corpus, déposé à la Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme (Aix-en-Provence) est en voie de numérisation et ouvert aux chercheurs[5]. Il porte, quant aux sujets, sur la seconde guerre mondiale[6] et la guerre d'Algérie[7].

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[4] Entre autres, Roche and Taranger.

[5] Accessible par http://phonotheque.hypotheses.org. Exemples https://amubox.univ-amu.fr:443/index.php/s/8lEDpyElI6pjGX6; https://www.historypin.org/en/recits-de-vie-de-francais-au-maghreb-1920-1962/geo/25.642208,2.460415,3/bounds/-37.717992,-47.549351,68.007854,52.470181.

[6] Notre corpus est mixte, mais nous avons privilégié les récits de femmes dans *Celles qui n'ont pas écrit*. Dans la mesure où Marseille et sa région ont été, pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, un lieu de *transit*, le corpus comprend notamment des entretiens de Juives allemandes, autrichiennes ou polonaises chassées de leurs pays par le nazisme (Fanny Pressnitzer, Rosa Scharnopol), d'Italiennes quittant leur pays à cause du fascisme ou, souvent, de la pauvreté (Vindica Cini, Dilia), d'Espagnoles à cause du franquisme (Anna Sagit). Certains entretiens ont été filmés, notamment ceux de deux Allemands résidant en Provence pendant la guerre, Ruth Fabian, militante antinazie, et le peintre Ferdinand Springer qui fut interné au camp des Milles, près d'Aix-en-Provence.

[7] Français nés en Afrique du Nord (Algérie surtout, Tunisie et Maroc) et rapatriés bien malgré eux après les Indépendances dans une métropole qu'ils ne connaissaient pas, appelés du contingent (entre 1956 et 1962), quelques Français militants pour l'indépendance de l'Algérie.

Seconde guerre mondiale et guerre d'Algérie?

Cette articulation entre les deux guerres peut faire question. Il ne s'agit pas de défendre l'idée que la guerre d'Algérie serait la conséquence – ou la suite logique – de la seconde guerre mondiale. On pourrait certes arguer qu'elle commence en 1945 avec les émeutes de Sétif et de Guelma, mais ce n'est pas le sujet. Le sujet, c'est la constitution des mémoires des événements, dans leur complexité, voire leur conflictualité. Si l'on suit l'hypothèse de Rothberg, les mémoires des deux guerres sont liées dans la mesure où la guerre d'Algérie, et plus généralement le contexte de la décolonisation, ont impacté les témoignages sur la seconde guerre mondiale, recueillis après les années 60.

J'ouvre à ce propos une parenthèse, et en même temps un nouveau chantier: la 'décennie noire' en Algérie, terme controversé par les Algériens eux-mêmes. Si la violence apparemment 'ressurgit' dans les années 1990 en Algérie, c'est que les violences du passé n'ont pas été purgées. La 'décennie noire' n'est pas un OVNI – elle est une 'suite'… 'Terminée' il y a maintenant près de vingt ans, elle n'est pas encore élaborée dans la mémoire – même si elle commence à l'être dans les arts et la littérature (Leperlier 2015 and 2018). Les obstacles à la mémoire sont nombreux au plan psychique, mais en Algérie il en existe un au plan institutionnel, c'est la 'Loi de réconciliation nationale'[8], qui interdit officiellement d'évoquer les événements de la guerre civile. On peut censurer l'expression de la mémoire, mais peut-on refouler, bloquer, la mémoire? Est-ce bien souhaitable? Je ferme la parenthèse.

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[8] "Il y a comme un esseulement à revenir sur des périodes dont on ne peut parler pour de multiples raisons dont quelques-unes 'légales'. Je ne reviendrai pas sur cette loi de février 2005 sur la Réconciliation nationale, mais je trouve qu'il n'est ni juste, ni sain qu'elle nous prive d'évoquer ces centaines de milliers de victimes de l'épuration intégriste qui ont payé de leur vie la sauvegarde de la Nation. Pour moins que ça, certains pays ont éclaté. […] [l'Algérie est] livrée pieds et poings liés à l'émiettement mafieux et à celui de l'oubli" (Metref).

Quelques principes d'analyse

La thèse de Michael Rothberg, rappelons-le, est que le contexte de la décolonisation, des luttes pour les Indépendances, a modifié les récits mémoriels de la seconde guerre mondiale. Il le démontre sur un grand nombre d'exemples pris dans des aires culturelles différentes et des genres différents. Par exemple, il analyse un tableau de Fougeron intitulé *La Civilisation atlantique* (1953), montrant que ce tableau, par son montage d'éléments hétérogènes, suggère un schéma multidirectionnel, où le nazisme et le génocide comptent au même titre que le colonialisme et la lutte ouvrière (Rothberg 55). Cette hypothèse est d'une réelle fécondité par les rapprochements qu'elle autorise. J'y reviendrai.

De nos jours, les témoins directs de la seconde guerre mondiale, par définition, disparaissent: même quand leur témoignage est enregistré, après leur disparition, il manquera toujours la mise en contexte que seul le témoin présent peut apporter. De ce point de vue, la constitution même de notre corpus comporte un élément de co-présence important: le témoin parle pour quelqu'un qui appartient à la génération de ses petits-enfants, et ceux-ci sont inclus dans le geste de transmission, non pas passivement, mais de façon potentiellement critique – j'en donnerai un exemple.

Or un témoignage n'est pas un "objet" simple, et n'est pas justiciable d'une simple analyse de contenu. Pour l'analyser, il faut tout d'abord savoir comment il a été recueilli, dans quel contexte, dans quelle situation, avec quelle intention, etc. Dans le cas de notre corpus, le cadre universitaire, s'il offrait en principe des garanties de rigueur, a pu quelque peu intimider certains témoins, comme cette grand-mère qui met son plus beau tablier pour répondre aux questions… alors que l'entretien n'est pas en vidéo! Les étudiants, souvent novices en matière d'interview, ont parfois induit, ou au contraire bloqué, des réponses. Et comment maintenir un équilibre entre une écoute bienveillante et une indispensable distance critique? Les récits, portant sur des périodes souvent dramatiques, sont pour la plupart très chargés émotionnellement, et les étudiants, souvent captés par la force du témoignage, ont eu du mal à construire le recul critique nécessaire pour

l'analyse. Je vais en donner un exemple extrême, qui met en jeu la notion – délicate à utiliser – de souvenir-écran.

Il s'agit d'une femme que j'ai surnommée Cosette[9], âgée de sept ans en 1940. Elle et sa famille vivent dans un petit village du Vaucluse, qui est occupé par les Allemands, mais où il n'y a pas eu d'exactions particulières. Or, Cosette raconte des atrocités particulièrement horribles (qui sont attestées, mais ailleurs, et qu'elle n'a pas pu connaître directement), puis relate l'anecdote personnelle suivante: les Allemands, trop bien nourris, jetaient des brioches dans les fossés du château où ils avaient installé la Kommandantur, et elle et son petit frère, affamés, allaient repêcher les brioches. Ces diverses histoires sont racontées avec une extrême émotion (des larmes interrompent à plusieurs reprises le récit enregistré) et l'étudiante qui a réalisé l'enregistrement est captée sans aucun recul critique par ce récit bouleversant. Il m'a été désagréable de dire à l'étudiante que 1. les atrocités en question ne pouvaient avoir eu lieu au moment et au lieu racontés, et que par conséquent la narratrice ne pouvait en avoir été témoin, et que 2. l'histoire de la brioche venait tout droit des *Misérables*: c'est l'épisode où un enfant riche, gavé, jette sa brioche à peine entamée dans le bassin du jardin du Luxembourg, brioche repêchée par deux petits pauvres – texte qui figure dans divers *Morceaux choisis* d'école primaire en usage au moment de la scolarité de Cosette. Ce double constat (l'erreur historique et le modèle narratif scolaire) n'épuise évidemment pas la recherche des causes: traumatisme réel, imaginaire? Cosette adulte a épousé un Arménien, et a pu recueillir dans sa belle-famille un stock narratif des persécutions subies: mais pour qu'elle se le soit approprié, il faut évidemment un dérapage qu'en l'absence d'autres informations on ne peut analyser.

L'un des intérêts de cet exemple est qu'il est 'multi-directionnel' au sens de Rothberg: il croise la mémoire du génocide arménien (implicite dans le récit, peut-être inconscient dans la subjectivité de la narratrice) avec la mémoire de la seconde guerre mondiale. On pourrait trouver des exemples analogues dans la littérature: par exemple, le roman de Daniel Arsand, *Je suis en vie et tu ne m'entends pas*, a pour

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[9] Du nom du personnage des *Misérables*.

sujet évident la persécution des homosexuels sous le Troisième Reich, et pour sujet caché le génocide arménien, subi par le père de l'auteur, mais jamais raconté par lui à ses enfants.

L'exemple qui vient d'être évoqué (Cosette) est évidemment de l'ordre du souvenir écran, ce qui n'en invalide pas l'intérêt mais le déplace. D'autres exemples mettent en évidence les mécanismes de *déplacement*, de *substitution*, de *réminiscence* à l'œuvre dans les récits des témoins. Mon apport dans ce domaine est d'inspiration psychanalytique, comme les termes de *déplacement* ou de *substitution* l'indiquent, mais aussi d'inspiration narratologique, ce qui est plus spécifique: peu de chercheurs littéraires, à ma connaissance, ont travaillé sur l'oral, qu'ils laissent aux historiens, aux sociologues, aux ethnologues, et aux linguistes. Or le récit de vie oral, je l'ai déjà suggéré, est un objet complexe: quelle que soit la visée initiale du chercheur qui suscite le récit, la production du récit draine au passage des savoirs historiques, linguistiques, sociologiques, psychiques, etc. qui sont susceptibles de fournir des matériaux à ces sciences, mais cette production peut aussi fonctionner comme un *analyseur* – au sens de Georges Lapassade –, c'est-à-dire un élément qui dissocie, par son existence même, un ensemble compact, opaque, et par là en permet une certaine compréhension.

Les mécanismes que je viens d'évoquer (refoulement, déplacement...), repérés sur le plan des individus, permettent d'analyser 'en partie'[10] ce qui est à l'œuvre dans les mécanismes politiques, et notamment dans les politiques de choix mémoriels. Que ce soit en effet sur la seconde guerre mondiale ou sur la guerre d'Algérie, le consensus est loin d'être fait.

Précisons qu'il faut ici distinguer entre les interprétations divergentes de l'histoire, ses accentuations divergentes, et la contestation même d'un fait. Par exemple, l'entreprise de destruction des juifs d'Europe, ou le Goulag[11], ont été en leur temps occultés par leurs responsables, mais sont à présent des faits reconnus, même si leur

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[10] 'En partie' parce que l'analyse ici ne prend pas en compte tout ce qui est de l'ordre du socio-économique.

[11] On lira avec profit *Le Goulag. Témoignages et archives*.

interprétation et leurs éventuels rapprochements sont évidemment sujets de controverses[12]. Or, comme si les communautés nationales présentaient un tout homogène, les gouvernements successifs se proposent souvent de 'dire le vrai' sur telle ou telle période du passé: j'ai évoqué pour l'Algérie la loi de 2015 sur la 'Réconciliation nationale'. En France, il faudrait pouvoir citer en détail les politiques qui se sont succédé depuis la fin de la guerre sur l'historiographie de Vichy et de la Résistance[13], sur la dénégation de la guerre d'Algérie, sur les bienfaits de la colonisation. Ou en Allemagne, la monumentalisation de la seconde guerre mondiale et les réécritures de l'histoire depuis la réunification (Roche 2014). Sur ce dernier point, je renvoie au remarquable ouvrage de Sonia Combe *Une vie contre une autre. Échange de victimes et modalités de survie dans le camp de Buchenwald*. Après avoir relaté les stratégies de survie à Buchenwald, l'auteur analyse les usages politiques du passé dans la nouvelle Allemagne et la mise en place d'une nouvelle historiographie, concluant: "Quelle Allemagne a produit les mythes les plus contraires à la vérité historique: l'histoire 'épurée' de la résistance à Buchenwald ou bien la version d'une armée et d'une diplomatie allemandes étrangères au génocide des Juifs et des Tsiganes, version qui fit partie du discours dominant jusqu'au milieu des années 1990 pour la Wehrmacht et jusqu'en 2010 pour la diplomatie?"[14]

La mémoire palimpseste

Ce constat de la réécriture de l'histoire au fil du temps, en fonction des intérêts des différents pouvoirs, doit-il nous amener à une sorte de 'relativisme' généralisé, qui s'interdirait de chercher 'le vrai'? En fait, c'est ici que la notion de multi-directionnel peut se révéler vraiment opératoire. Le croisement des mémoires, leur multiplicité même, et leur

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[12] Pour le premier point, la 'Querelle des historiens' (*Historikerstreit*), voir *Devant l'histoire*.

[13] Voir Laborie, et *Mémoires occupées*.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 300.

"feuilletage", peuvent être porteurs d'une charge critique. Mais cette multi-directionnalité peut s'entendre de plusieurs manières.

Il peut s'agir de la rencontre entre deux expériences appartenant à des champs différents: un des exemples donnés par Rothberg est l'essai de William Du Bois, "The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto", où, visitant le ghetto de Varsovie en 1949, le militant des droits de l'homme *noir* prend conscience d'une *autre* violence raciale qui s'est exercée contre des '*blancs*'. Dans mon corpus, il arrive que les témoins fassent une sorte de 'superposition' entre leur passé et le présent et que cette superposition elle-même les amène à une vision critique: mais il peut arriver aussi que ce soit l'interviewer qui, en comparant les différentes strates du passé, en vienne à relativiser ses propres croyances ou options sur l'histoire. Par exemple, une étudiante, découvrant en 1997 l'existence des massacres d'Oran de 1962, écrit: "finalement ce qu'on érige en manifestation du mal absolu [l'Holocauste] n'en est peut-être qu'une parmi d'autres. [...] Il ne faut donc pas condenser tout ce qu'il y a eu de mal en un seul souvenir cathartique, mais tenter, dans la mesure du possible, de se les rappeler tous"[15]. L'un des mérites de l'histoire orale est peut-être précisément de nous amener à mesurer les apories du 'devoir de mémoire'.

L'exemple précédent met en jeu des plans temporels différents, ce qui est souvent le cas dans le 'multi-directionnel'. Le plan temporel intervient également, mais avec d'autres modalités, dans le cas de la transmission générationnelle. Je n'aurai pas le loisir de développer ici les récits de deuxième ou troisième génération (*postmemory*), je me bornerai à rappeler que la transmission est ambivalente. Quand elle se fait de manière inconsciente, quand le parent ne verbalise pas son expérience, pour 'protéger' l'enfant ou se protéger lui-même, le phénomène peut être mortifère, comme c'est le cas dans le récit de Guy Walter, *Un jour en moins* (Walter): l'enfant de parents déportés est né plusieurs années après la guerre, mais la terreur vécue par les parents, et dont ils ne parlent pas, 'filtre' vers lui, jusqu'à ce que l'enfant fasse un passage à l'acte suicidaire. Mais la transmission peut être l'objet d'une enquête finalement constructive, comme dans le récit d'Ivan Jablonka,

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[15] Interview 704 par Virginie Firpi.

Histoire des grands-parents que je n'ai pas eus (Jablonka). Ces deux textes, malgré leurs différences, ont en commun d'être gagés sur un vécu, et d'être parvenus à une élaboration littéraire. Mais la littérature a d'autres missions, qui ne sont pas nécessairement gagées sur un vécu, ou pas directement. Expliquons-nous.

Le terme d'expérience' doit être élargi à l'ensemble de ce qu'un sujet apprend au cours de sa vie, y compris par les livres. J'ai dit en commençant que la Commune de 1871 faisait partie de mon expérience, ce qui ne peut évidemment pas s'entendre de façon réaliste. D'où viennent les souvenirs que je n'ai pas vécus? Ils peuvent venir d'une transmission orale, familiale ou militante. Et ils viennent aussi, évidemment, des livres. Opposer les livres à 'la vie' serait une conception bien pauvre, et des livres, et de la vie. Les livres ne nous donnent pas seulement une information sur des lieux et des temps que nous ne connaissons pas de façon directe: ils sont des médiateurs 'multi-directionnels' vers 'd'autres vies que la mienne' (Carrère). J'en donnerai un dernier exemple, emprunté à Antoine Volodine.

Dans *Écrivains*, il met en intrigue la manière dont un souvenir refoulé (les massacres de la Grande Terreur stalinienne) fait retour. La scène se situe dans la banlieue de Moscou. Le narrateur, Nikita, est né un dimanche, le 27 juin 1938, et sa grand-mère lui a raconté que les cloches sonnaient à toute volée pendant que sa mère mourait d'une hémorragie. Adulte, Nikita met en doute l'exactitude de ce récit: en 1938, la religion était encore persécutée, les cloches ne pouvaient pas sonner. Après de nombreuses recherches infructueuses, il finit par apprendre que Iemerovo, son lieu de naissance, a été choisi par le NKVD pour fusiller vingt mille personnes pendant les purges. Autodidacte, presque analphabète, il s'efforce d'écrire un texte qui unirait le récit de sa naissance et la terrible découverte qu'il vient de faire, sans y parvenir. Il finit par comprendre que les 'cloches' de sa grand'mère étaient l'écho des fusillades, que ce souvenir-écran était destiné à masquer. Puis, le 27 juin 1988, il se suicide. Or, les massacres de 1938 au polygone de Boutovo, près de Moscou, sont historiques, mais bien sûr l'histoire de Nikita est inventée: c'est la jonction entre l'imaginaire d'un écrivain et le fil à plomb du réel historique qui fait l'efficacité, sur le lecteur, de ce récit. De ce point de vue, un écrit 'réaliste'

n'aura pas le même impact; au contraire, les "écarts d'imagination [de l'écrivain, de l'artiste] [...] *renforcent* notre connaissance du réel tout en nous en suggérant d'autres versions" (Suleiman 73).

C'est sur ce paradoxe que je voudrais conclure. L'histoire est de l'ordre du *réel* – et non pas du 'vrai' au sens où le législateur, à un moment donné, voudrait dire le vrai d'une époque, comme l'a prouvé en France la controverse sur la loi sur les bienfaits de la colonisation. Mais ce *réel* est à construire, par le 'mille-feuilles' des récits, des témoignages, des mémoires. Et il est à construire dans sa conflictualité. La paix n'existe peut-être que dans les cimetières. Les conflits, les contradictions, sont le signe finalement bénéfique qu'une mémoire est vivante, même si ça peut faire mal.

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Anne Roche, ancienne élève de l'École Normale Supérieure, professeur émérite à l'Université d'Aix-Marseille, spécialiste de littérature française et francophone des XXème et XXIème siècles, est l'auteur d'une vingtaine d'ouvrages de théorie littéraire ainsi que de fiction (romans, théâtre.) Elle a publié notamment *Exercices sur le tracé des ombres – Walter Benjamin* (Éditions chemin de ronde, 2010) qui a obtenu le Prix de l'Essai européen Walter Benjamin en 2018, *Algérie : écritures de l'autre* (Kimé, 2019), et a édité les *Écrits complets de Laure* (Éditions les Cahiers, novembre 2019.)

Valerio Cordiner

Nazis dans le plateau. Résister en province d'après Bergounioux

> "L'évolution, en tant que telle, est dans la nature une calme éclosion, car elle est à la fois une extériorisation et une conservation de l'égalité et de l'identité avec soi-même. Pour l'Esprit, elle constitue une lutte dure, infinie, contre lui-même".
> G.W.F. Hegel, *Leçons sur la philosophie de l'histoire*

Dans le morne panorama du roman français contemporain portant sur la IIe guerre mondiale[1], l'œuvre mémorielle de Pierre Bergounioux fait heureusement exception. Si elle témoigne en fait de la réhistoricisation de la littérature contemporaine, elle ne se soustrait pas au dialogue avec les disciplines sociales, l'économie surtout, et même avec les sciences exactes, dont les données objectives s'intègrent, parfois en les révisant, aux acquis "de l'expérience immédiate" (Barraband 2009 59). Et encore, si l'éthique de la mémoire est à la base de sa poétique[2], le

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[1] Voir à ce propos: Hamel Y., Jacquet M., Kæmpfer, et les recueils d'études *Mémoires occupées*, *Écrire la guerre*, et *Violence guerrière et fiction*.

[2] Pierre Bergounioux du reste "prétend surtout écrire pour les morts", en leur donnant "de manière posthume, les lumières qui auraient favorisé leur émancipation" (Coyault-Dublanchet 167). Je cite à ce sujet un autre passage éclairant tiré du même ouvrage critique: "Certes tous ces livres du fils se rapportent à une double tradition littéraire: celle de l'autobiographie, et celle du récit de filiation. Toutefois ces œuvres s'écartent de plus en plus nettement des fouilles psychologiques et des investigations de l'individualité. Même si chacun part de soi, il généralise très vite la question de la mémoire et de la filiation à celle d'une société, voire d'une civilisation. La famille redevient ce qu'elle était dans la tragédie grecque, une figure de la *Polis*: dès lors il ne

souvenir qu'elle ambitionne à perpétuer se veut le patrimoine d'une civilisation en son entier, et non pas d'une communauté parcellaire, fût-ce la sienne propre. Si enfin le passé qu'elle met en scène est celui de la province retardataire, ce temps et ce lieu sont jugés par lui non répétables, parce que relevant d'un stade inférieur du processus évolutif: du périmé, donc, avant d'être du révolu, dont il faut se séparer, à son corps défendant, pour ne pas sortir du fleuve du devenir. Dans une perspective cartésienne, c'est bien par la distance prise vis-à-vis de ce chronotope – pour Bergounioux vers sa dix-septième année – que le sujet accède à "une conscience accrue de [son] monde" (Coyault-Dublanchet 150). Exactement le contraire, chacun en conviendra, de la "célébration mystifiée" (Hordé and Bergounioux), dont le roman régionaliste s'est fait porteur obtusément.

Et il y a bien plus que cela. Vu que la province, en tant que certitude sensible dépassée dans le concept, loin d'être un contenu replié sur lui-même, est en revanche considérée par Bergounioux comme une forme de cette mutation générale qui s'appelle le progrès[3]; et dans laquelle il ne cesse pas de croire, ni d'espérer, nonobstant le coup d'arrêt de 1989. Puisque le présent, tel qu'il est après le déluge, ne peut aucunement l'assouvir[4] et que son moi, comme d'ailleurs tout moi,

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s'agit plus seulement d'appliquer la vulgate freudienne à son propre roman familial, mais de l'élargir à la société contemporaine" (267).

[3] La critique reconnaît, en l'odyssée de la conscience tracée par la *Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*, le métarécit fondateur des fictions bergouniennes. Cf. entre autres: Barraband 2009 61, Coyault-Dublanchet 61, Inkel 158.

[4] C'est bien l'argument d'un mémorable essai, dont je tire un passage significatif: "Non seulement nous n'avons ni la paix perpétuelle ni la loi morale pour guide, mais leur absence est d'autant plus cruelle que nous avons cru, longtemps, les atteindre bientôt. Nous sommes pareils à des ensevelis après que la terre a tremblé. Nous tâchons à nous extraire de la ruine d'un siècle. Nous trébuchons parmi les piliers abattus de grandes espérances. Nous avons presque tout perdu: la foi en un beau lendemain, l'approche de l'aurore. Nous ne verrons pas s'accomplir les souhaits que nous formions. Il n'est plus temps, pour nous. C'est à d'autres qu'il appartiendra de voir le monde s'ouvrir et se ranger à sa loi propre, les bonheurs singuliers confluer dans la félicité commune. Peut-être se souviendront-ils de nous, du goût décevant, doux-amer, que nous avons trouvé à cette heure, à mi chemin des joies simples, sévères, isolées, que Kant a connues jadis, et du bonheur sans restrictions ni réserves,

lui est trop étroit et haïssable[5] pour en faire un refuge ou une compensation à la perte, la résignation complaisante à l'état de choses ne trouve pas de place dans ses œuvres de fiction[6]. Bien au contraire, la littérature y est censée fournir des réponses valables, en termes de connaissance (préliminaire à tout acte), au sentiment de dépossession qui tenaille notre époque aveugle et disgraciée[7]. Elle est même, pour lui qui dit écrire pour aider ses lecteurs à comprendre – les jeunes surtout, à qui il incombe de se faire en faisant dans leur monde (Barraband 2016 36) –, un outil de cette praxis collective, sans laquelle l'être humain ne saurait se concevoir en tant qu'espèce, hors laquelle il retombe à l'état de nature, *i. e.* à l'esclavage.

Une fois ces prémisses posées, je m'engage à suivre le traitement du souvenir de la guerre et de l'occupation dans la production bergounienne. Un premier volet de mon article sera consacré à des romans mémoriels sur la province: *La Mort de Brune*, *Miette* et *La Maison rose*. Ensuite j'élargirai mon analyse à deux récits situés à l'étranger, à des centaines de kilomètres de sa Corrèze natale, et de ce fait agencés à partir d'une filiation d'un autre genre, moral ou politique: *B-17 G* et *Le Baiser de la sorcière*. Enfin, je formulerai, à l'aide d'un essai intitulé *La Puissance du souvenir dans l'écriture*, des

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effectivement universel, dont son œuvre, là-bas, a porté la promesse" (Bergounioux 2006[2] 15-16).

[5] S. Coyault-Dublanchet a remarqué que les métaphores avilissantes qui désignent, chez lui, son moi et le moi en général "empruntent le ton des moralistes classiques" (Coyault-Dublanchet 164).

[6] M. T. Jacquet, dans celui qui est à juste titre considéré comme l'ouvrage de référence sur la production romanesque de Pierre Bergounioux, a magnifiquement décrit les mobiles sous-jacentes à sa décision d'écrire: "L'écriture naît sans doute d'une blessure que le sujet n'accepte pas et qui va, comme aimantée, dénicher toutes les blessures du monde, reposant, sans le dire explicitement, l'éternelle question de ce que, selon les points de vue, on définira le Mal, l'Injuste et qui constitue, tout compte fait, simplement l'ambivalence spécifique de notre condition d'homme" (Jacquet M.T. 303).

[7] D'après S. Inkel, "l'écriture, chez Bergounioux, quel que soit son registre, est toujours une passion du connaître, c'est-à-dire non pas simple *désir* de savoir mais *nécessité*, à ce titre vitale, de connaître les conditions de son propre présent" (Inkel 57).

considérations d'ensemble sur la nature et la valeur de l'expérience de remémoration dans ces œuvres si émouvantes, lucides et originelles[8].

C'est bien du côté paternel, dans la ville endormie de Brive, que se déroule *La Mort de Brune*, au tréfonds donc du Limousin sous-développé, où le meurtre du Maréchal par la Contre-révolution a condamné les 'maigrillots' atrabilaires qui le peuplaient à l'ignorance, à la misère, puis à l'exode ou à la vétusté (Bergounioux 1997 80). Dans cette ambiance mortifère, le temps a repris sa marche pour un instant, et sous contrainte, à l'arrivée des chemises brunes, quand la partie la plus saine de la population a réagi vigoureusement à la défaite et à la captivité (121): se refusant par exemple de collaborer avec les vainqueurs, comme le père du narrateur qui procure des faux papiers à un voisin juif (98); s'échappant à plusieurs reprises, et toujours au risque de la vie, à la tutelle des geôliers nazis, comme l'enseignant communiste qui apprend à ses élèves à "vaincre le poids des choses, l'empire des ombres et des spectres" (123); se livrant, encore qu'en petit nombre, "à une gamme d'activités qui allait du sabotage des voies ferrées, des pylônes et des centraux téléphoniques à l'agression ouverte contre l'occupant" (70). C'est ainsi que pour quelques mois, et en reprenant le fil de la Révolution inachevée, la contrée s'était remise à vivre et à "particip[er] au mouvement général" (61), c'est-à-dire à la lutte de Libération nationale. Ceci avant que la normalisation de l'après-guerre ne la fasse de nouveau reculer à son atavisme coutumier.

La Seconde guerre mondiale est comme annoncée, dans *Miette*, par le souvenir récent de la Première, qui, pour avoir dévoré "la moitié des jeunes hommes qui peuplaient le hameau" (Bergounioux 1996 36), n'a pas pour autant manqué de ranimer la fierté ancestrale de ceux du Plateau de Millevaches. Quand, vingt ans plus tard, l'ouragan Blitzkrieg dévaste la France de long en large, ils décident quant à eux de déterrer la bipenne de leurs aïeux les Gaulois. Ceci veut dire, pour Adrien, évadé d'un Stalag, marcher une semaine durant, sans dormir ni manger, de la Prusse à sa montagne, afin de "s'absenter à l'espèce d'absence" à laquelle l'ennemi "prétendait le condamner" (145). Pour

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[8] Bergounioux 1997; Bergounioux 1996; Bergounioux 1987; Bergounioux 2006[1]; Bergounioux 2010[1]; Bergounioux 2000.

Baptiste, son aîné, appliquant d'ordinaire sa violence contre les rochers, les arbres et les bêtes sauvages, le tour est venu de s'en prendre avec la même fureur aux tanks, aux camions, aux motos et aux cannibales qui les conduisent à vive allure vers son réduit; de les fuir, si nécessaire, mais pour les reprendre après, les cogner dur comme une brute, les réduire à néant à force de coups (14-15, 115 ss.)[9]. Miette, la matriarche austère de ces gens entraînés dès leur naissance à faire face, lorsque les Boches, l'arme au poing, montent jusqu'à sa maison, les accueille sur le seuil, sans mot dire, sans rien entendre, ni bouger d'un pas, immobile dans ses trois millénaires de permanence là-dessus envers et contre tous, les barbares compris, ceux d'autrefois comme ceux d'aujourd'hui[10]. Ce maintien, si ferme et dédaigneux, de la part d'une femme habituée à bourrer les chaussures racornies "de journaux qui parlent du Front populaire" (31), est une manière à elle, qui ne manie pas le fusil, de rester fidèle à ses ancêtres guerriers, tout en assurant à sa descendance des lendemains plus paisibles et, qui sait, plus heureux.

Dans le Quercy maternel de *La Maison rose*, les deux guerres mondiales se distinguent plus nettement. La Première est la mangeuse

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[9] À signaler que Baptiste, maire communiste du lieu, avait été destitué de ses fonctions par le gouvernement Daladier suite à la signature du pacte germano-soviétique (Bergounioux 1996 42, 115).

[10] Le passage de la fouille dans la maison de Miette est tellement émouvant qu'il mérite qu'on le cite en entier: "J'ignore s'il avait pu s'arranger pour faire prévenir Jeanne et Miette, si elles surent qu'il était vivant et libre avant que le camion déguisé en boqueteau ne s'arrête brusquement devant la maison et vomisse une douzaine d'Arlequins qui la visitèrent de fond en comble, l'arme au poing. Ils purent admirer le coq de bronze avec le casque amoché, pareil à celui qu'ils portaient, sous sa patte altière, le mobilier en chêne, les tableaux de Cottin. Ce n'est pas leurs fusils, leurs bandes de cartouches qu'ils portaient en sautoir, leurs tenues sylvestres ni leur parlure gothique qui allaient impressionner Miette. Les Goths, les Vandales et les Alamans, elle les avait déjà vus passer mille cinq cents ans plus tôt. Elle les reçut sur le seuil, s'effaça pour qu'ils aillent traîner leurs bottes cloutées dans le bureau, les caves, la chambre verte, partout. Mais quelque chose était resté en travers de leur chemin. Ils l'avaient rencontré, heurté à chaque pas et ça les avait gênés puisque l'officier, au moment de partir, les mains vides, se tourna vers Miette (Jeanne l'a entendu, dit, plus tard) pour lui présenter ses excuses. Ils auraient pu revenir mais ils ne revinrent jamais" (Bergounioux 1996 120-121).

d'hommes venue de l'extérieur – de la patrie des riches dont on se fout d'instinct – pour étriper les paysans des deux rivages du Rhin (Bergounioux 1987 81, 99). L'autre est toute différente. Parce que ce n'est plus aux Allemands à qui on a à faire, mais bien aux fascistes, qui – fussent-ils encore Allemands – sont une race à part, dont on a le droit, le devoir même de nettoyer à jamais la surface de la terre. L'oncle René le sait bien, qui est gravement blessé au cours d'un accrochage avec la division *Das Reich* (160 ss.)[11]; l'oncle René pour lequel risquer la mort dans les *FTP* est un choix médité, volontaire et rationnel, dépassant dans la conscience le sacrifice aveugle des poilus de la Grande Guerre[12]. Un acte, donc, et non pas un sacrifice, et l'acte par lequel son neveu pourra un jour "retourner en sa demeure. Près de soi" (117) et réconcilié. "La vie qui supporte une telle mort et se maintient en elle" (Hegel 80) – entendez la Résistance – pour l'instant est le fait de ses parents et conjoints. Mais tellement cette bataille tisse de liens de consanguinité que Bergounioux s'annexe à la mémoire familiale des victimes du fascisme provenant de très loin. C'est le cas de l'aviateur Smith et du tankiste Ivan, héros de deux récits gémellaires inspirés par des images d'archives[13]. La vision répétée du film en noir et blanc d'un bombardier américain abattu par les nazis permet au narrateur de *B-17 G* de s'identifier avec son équipage (Bergounioux 2006 7 ss.)[14]. Leur jeunesse était la sienne au moment de la transmission, et semblable au sien est leur niveau d'instruction. Comme lui, qui abandonne la

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[11] L'échange entre lui et le narrateur est éclairant à ce propos: "J'ai dit oui, les Allemands. Et lui, aussitôt: non, les fascistes. Et moi: c'étaient des. Et lui: ç'aurait pu être n'importe qui. Puis, après un temps pendant lequel il n'y a plus eu que le bruit paisible, bien rond, du moteur: mais c'étaient encore les Allemands" (Bergounioux 1987 159 ss.).

[12] Jean H. Duffy a nettement établi cette différence: "Despite the ostensible similarities in their stories, René forcefully distances himself from his uncle and distinguishes between his uncle's behaviour and his own participation in the Resistance: whereas the uncle responded to the national call to fight in a senseless war, René had taken a personal, conscious, and rational decision to fight a different sort of enemy, that is Fascism" (Duffy 66-67).

[13] Pour une lecture critique de ces deux ouvrages, voir: Van Montfrans, et Vray.

[14] La postface ingénieuse que Pierre Michon a ajoutée à la réédition de ce récit révèle les astuces textuelles qui appuient cette identification.

province arriérée pour émigrer en ville, ils furent, mais à un plus haut niveau, "les protagonistes d'une mutation sans exemple ni précédent de la civilisation matérielle et morale" (16), susceptible dans l'après-guerre de propulser les États-Unis aux sommets de la terre. Épouser le grand mouvement consiste pour eux à piloter leur quadrimoteur chargé de bombes vers les "cités maudites" (46) adorant le swastika. Leur "entreprise massive, stratégique, rationnelle destinée à mettre le fascisme à genoux" (35) est également animée par un "élément moral" (27), revenant, en cette même Prusse où Kant l'avait énoncé, mais sous forme d'un déluge de feu qui la lavera à fond de ses "colonies bactériennes" (57). Peu importe, alors, si la mort les attends, la leur propre ou celle de leurs ennemis, vu qu'ils agissent selon la "règle universelle" (29) qui enjoint de sauver la vie, celle de la race humaine, fût-ce en bravant la mort, voire en la donnant. Et Bergounioux d'ajouter que c'est bien "cette conviction informulée à laquelle il serait ridicule de faire la moindre allusion [qui], au moment du péril, scelle l'unité du petit groupe" (29).

À des morts du même rang est consacré cet autre tombeau qui est *Le Baiser de la sorcière*[15]: les jeunes tankistes de l'Armée soviétique qui entrent à Berlin en mai 45. Mais la conscience qui guide leur avancée libératrice est bien plus accomplie que celle de leurs homologues de l'USAF, car ils sont issus, comme son "bras armé" (Bergounioux 2010[2] 78), de cette société qui, "pour la première fois dans l'Histoire", s'est constituée "en claire connaissance de cause, d'elle-même, de ses fondements et de ses fins" (Bergounioux 2010[2] 9). Et s'ils ont peur, comme tous les gosses du monde, qu'une balle ne les descende (Bergounioux 2010[1] 34) – en l'occurrence les projectiles creux des lance-fusées allemands –, le "vent d'allégresse" (Bergounioux 2010[1] 13), qui leur dérive du fait d'être en première ligne et pour la bonne cause, balaie de leur vue les fantômes de la nuit. Ils sont les héritiers de ces hommes sans pareil qui en 1917 ont pris la responsabilité d'arrêter "le conflit suicidaire" (Bergounioux 2010[2] 15) déclenché par les

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[15] Ce texte est accompagné d'un autre essai, *Le Récit absent* (Bergounioux 2010[2]), qui porte sur la Révolution d'Octobre. Je l'emploierai ici comme support explicatif à certains passages du *Baiser de la sorcière*.

puissances impérialistes, pour gagner à leur peuple une paix plus décisive que toute victoire. Et ils sentent ce même peuple derrière eux et avec eux, "des femmes, des enfants, des hommes âgés, amaigris, déguenillés, les acclam[a]nt au passage" (Bergounioux 2010[1] 20), lorsqu'ils foncent tête baisse vers "l'antre du monstre" (Bergounioux 2010[1] 26). C'est ainsi que l'effort collectif d'une Nation que le Blitzkrieg n'a pu plier (Bergounioux 2010[1] 25), aboutit cette fois-là par les armes au même résultat: assommer l'ennemi de toujours qui est le grand capital, autrement dit la barbarie. Le fascisme, de l'avis de Polanyi, en est tout simplement la plus abjecte des variantes: le capitalisme devenu, après l'abolition de la sphère politique, l'ensemble de la société (Bergounioux 2010[2] 44). Et, quoiqu'en disent dans l'abstrait les théoriciens du totalitarisme, son seul ennemi naturel est le Bolchevisme, qui lance en meute de chiens ses divisions blindées contre le "repaire de la bête" (Bergounioux 2010[1] 25) pour la mettre en pièces. Aussi n'est-ce pas proprement l'instinct de survie qui pousse ces soldats à flinguer à bout pourtant les SS, mais au contraire le fait de se connaître comme l'avant-garde objective du progrès: l'Esprit en marche sur des chenilles d'acier. Et tant pis si Ivan et les siens ne parviennent pas à gagner la partie, car un *panzerfaust* en arrête la course tout près du Reichstag. Parce que d'autres camarades y réussiront "en contourn[ant] leur char en éruption" (Bergounioux 2010[1] 37). C'est ainsi que la 'sainte Armée rouge' (comme l'appelle Grosmann devant Mejdanek), en entrant à Berlin le drapeau rouge au poing, efface la faute des cosaques tsaristes qui, cent trente ans auparavant, avaient tué en son berceau une autre Révolution (Bergounioux 2010[2] 78).

Au bout de ce parcours exégétique on se retrouve devant le même épisode par lequel tout avait pris commencement: la République jacobine de l'an II qui réveille l'Europe de sa léthargie féodale, en exportant l'idée neuve de bonheur jusqu'au fond de la province rurale. C'est bien ce processus, inexorable par ses avancées en spirale, dont *La Puissance du souvenir dans l'écriture* rend compte. Bergounioux y remarque dans l'incipit que l'on doit à l'émergence du futur, mettant fin à la reproduction simple comme règle d'existence, que "les gens de [s]on âge, et de [s]a sorte, se sont sentis dépositaires

d'un passé" (Bergounioux 2000 7). Cela revient à dire que le récit mémoriel, à savoir la reconnaissance sociale de ce qui ne persiste qu'en tant qu'habitude, n'est survenu qu'après la séparation d'avec le "temps d'avant" (8). Toutes les crises de la modernité – y compris le "hurlement vertical du Blitzkrieg" (17) – sont de la sorte autant de moments où le sujet collectif accède à la conscience de soi-même et de son monde. À cela se ramène tout l'extérieur que le progrès a introduit dans la région: la science technique, l'économie de marché, la scolarisation obligatoire, la justice sociale et plus souvent son contraire (21 ss.). Cet ensemble de phénomènes, qui vont de pair avec l'instauration du capitalisme, sont la matière de l'histoire; l'histoire qui s'accompagne de son fardeau de contradictions; l'histoire, dont l'origine lointaine et le terme à venir se ressemblent à l'apparence, comme la lueur du soir rappelle celle du matin. Au milieu de ces deux bornes, il n'y a pas le "présent pur" (40) de sa viduité – le nôtre, hélas!, pire que tant d'autres – mais bien la mémoire, étant pour Zeigarnik la conscience de "ce qui demeure inaccompli" (39), de ce trajet interrompu à mi-chemin, mais non pas rayé de la carte, auquel l'écriture se charge de donner une suite, en l'attente que le monde ne se remette en marche. La Révolution, donc, les révolutions: celle de l'An II comme celle de 1944, qui sont pour la province le seuls moment où elle a agi en connaissance de cause, où elle a été vivante dans son temps en sachant de l'être, et d'y être à sa place y faisant sa part.

Tout cela implique qu'à l'opposée d'une tradition misonéiste et sciemment réactionnaire – entre autres celle de la terre qui "ne ment pas", mais qui a trahi ses propres fils – pour Bergounioux la province est elle aussi dans le monde et donc sujette au changement. Elle vit, parce qu'elle devient, dans la "durée linéaire, inventive" (Hordé and Bergounioux) qui est la condition propre d'existence accordée à l'Esprit, voire à la Chose sur notre terre. Pour la province l'avènement à l'histoire, son être-là et maintenant quand l'extériorité frappe à sa porte – armée de pied en cap, en l'occurrence – requiert d'elle une fidélité singulière, qui la projette vers l'avenir par l'oblation de son présent au souvenir de ce qu'elle fut, au projet de ce qu'elle, "reven[ant] en arrière pour aller de l'avant" (Bergounioux 2000 37), tôt ou tard se fera: toujours indépendante, même sous l'occupation, et toujours

aspirant à une émancipation plus complète; non pas hypostase de la fatalité, comme les chantres du 'Vieux con' serinaient en chœur, mais depuis la nuit des temps "figuration de la résistance" (Coyault-Dublanchet 188).

En cela même que la mémoire a tracé pour ses légataires un parcours obligé, l'engagement des individus dans la lutte antifasciste doit être envisagé comme une affaire de famille. Mais laquelle? Celle qui remonte en arrière à la Patrie en danger et aux invasions des Goths. Celle qui demain tiendra face à d'autres envahisseurs, allemands ou pas peu importe, par la force des liens qui la rattachent, corps et âme, à ses ascendants dans la liberté. Ainsi conçu, dès la naissance et avant même, le sujet bergounien est "le fruit d'un héritage, l'aboutissement d'un passé" (Jacquet M.T. 13), une identité que détermine son ancrage à la terre où germa sa semence: un contexte, un climat, une culture; bref, le social[16]. Le souffle épique, ou pour mieux dire la respiration collective que la critique a signalée dans l'œuvre de Bergounioux – et ce avec d'autant plus de scandale que ce registre est formellement banni des Lettres françaises depuis au moins une cinquantaine d'années – vient tout droit de là, en tant que bande sonore des hauts-faits accomplis, en l'espèce contre le nazisme, par la "communauté en marche" (Viart 143), sur les pas de ses ancêtres, vers des jours plus lumineux. Faire, raconter, comprendre, agir. Tout dans ces livres est mu et orienté par l'exigence primaire de réaliser au pluriel "la forme entière de notre condition" (Bergounioux 2016 13). C'est çà le politique, dont l'écriture fait état ou formule le regret, qu'elle met en branle et pousse en avant, quand d'autres moyens sont interdits ou encore

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[16] À ce propos, Bergounioux ne saurait être plus assertif: "Le moi n'est pas consubstantiel à l'individu biologiquement individué. La tremblante lueur de la conscience réfléchie ne sourd pas d'on ne sait quels replis secrets du cœur, circonvolutions du cerveau, mais de la contrainte externe, politique, de la confiscation de la violence physique légitime par l'État" (Bergounioux 2010 28). Et encore: "Le compère matériel, la 'statue de terre', est, comme nos travaux, nos pensées, notre espérance, de l'histoire faite chair. Michelet l'a senti profondément, écrit merveilleusement. Du duc Victor-Emmanuel, il dit qu'il était 'bossu de Savoie, ventru de Piémont', du roi d'Espagne Philippe II qu'à la fin, il devenait velu, il lui poussait des griffes" (Hordé and Bergounioux).

inexplorés. Par exemple quand la barbarie, fasciste ou postmoderne, sature l'horizon de sa hideur, et que les gens réclament – pour survivre à la morosité – de grands récits légitimant, par le poids de la tradition, leur urgence de se révolter. C'est au fond de la vieille France que Bergounioux va, chez lui, les déterrer, pour les mettre au jour et en faire du nouveau. De quoi étonner fatalement ceux qui récusent la dialectique, que cette coïncidence – qui n'en est pas une car les âges y passent à travers – entre l'"origine pure" et la "fin extatique" (Hamel J.F. 97), les "temps immobiles de l'enfance" et "les 'enthousiasmes', éclairés et bâtisseurs (Viart 146)"!

Tout bien considéré, et à la lumière de Marx, cette prétendue contradiction ne cache en son sein que la faim de toujours, l'envie inapaisée – et aigrie par la mémoire (de l'harmonie perdue et des occasions manquées) – de ce présent sans besoin qui fera suite à la division en classes, de ce temps situé après l'histoire de nos servitudes, où l'on verra finalement "le monde s'ouvrir et se ranger à sa loi propre, les bonheurs singuliers confluer dans la félicité commune" (Bergounioux 2006² 16). Un rêve de provinciaux attardés, rétorqueront les néolibéraux. Et pourtant, à ma connaissance, c'est là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur... Et ce n'est pas fini.

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Giorgio Mariani

The *Human Smoke* Controversy, and Beyond: Remembering the Unpopular Pacifism of WW2

I would like to begin with a brief mention of two recent examples of World War Two cinematic postmemory, as film is a form of memorialization and post-memorialization which is, and will most likely continue to be, enormously influential. The first is *The Darkest Hour*, the movie that allowed Gary Oldman to garner an Oscar for what many considered his stellar performance as Winston Churchill, and indeed managed to keep alive the myth that has grown around this historical figure as if he, almost single-handedly, stood up against the Nazis until the Stars and Stripes army joined the fray. As only a few critics observed, by watching the movie one would never know that this champion of democracy was also the man who, among other things, was "strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes," who thought that Indians were "a beastly people with a beastly religion," or who referred to Palestinians as "barbaric hoards who ate little but camel dung."[1] This darkest side of Churchill is, of course, well-known to serious historians, but there is hardly any trace of it in Joe Wright's movie. If, however, you happen to have read the text which I refer to in the title of this essay, you would definitely know not only about Churchill's opinions about people of color and, more generally, non-English people; you might also begin to question the wisdom of both his war tactics and strategy. But a bit more on this later.

The other movie I want to mention here, to frame my main argument, is *Hacksaw Ridge*, the Mel Gibson take on the story of Desmond Doss, the World War Two conscientious objector who was awarded the Medal of Honor "for outstanding gallantry far above and

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[1] Quotations of Churchill's views are taken from Seymour. The dark side of Churchill's legacy is emphasized especially by Callum Alexander Scott's review, while Adrian Smith points to the film's historical inaccuracies.

beyond the call of duty" ("Desmond Doss") during the Battle of
Okinawa. While at least one reviewer lamented that the movie "makes
hash of its plainly stated moral code by reveling in the same blood-lust
it condemns" (Seitz), it must be conceded that the film has the merit of
raising a topic largely ignored in literary, cinematic, and even historical
representations of the Second World War: that of how pacifism
confronted a war in which the enemy could be easily perceived as
embodying pure, undiluted evil. The utterly perverse nature of the Nazi
regime is most likely the main reason why pacifism and anti-warism
have been virtually erased from most discourses on the war. Here was
an enemy with not even a shred of human decency and with whom,
therefore, no appeasement or dialogue seemed possible. There is also
another motive, particularly significant in the US context, why
opposition to World War Two has been largely forgotten. While anti-
war movements are as a rule routinely accused of sympathizing with the
enemy whether that is true or not, in this case there were indeed pro-
Nazi sympathizers among the ranks of those opposing US
participation in the war, and especially among the most vocal and
influential anti-war group of the day, the America First Committee
(AFS).[2] The best-known case is perhaps that of Charles Lindbergh,
whose anti-Semitism was shared by other AFS members—but, it must
be added, also by many who supported US intervention.[3] These two

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[2] In his study of AFC, Wayne S. Cole argues that while one could not consider the
organization as being overall pro-Nazi, several Nazi sympathizers as well as the KKK,
were openly supportive of its goals. The contradictory nature of the anti-war front is
not overlooked in Baker's *Human Smoke*. For example, he reports that Rabbi
Goldstein, a member of the John Hayne Holmes' War Resisters League, though
opposed to America's participation in the war, chose not to speak at the Second
National Anti-War Congress because Senator Burton Wheeler was also on the
program. "In view of the anti-Jewish statements Senator Wheeler has made privately
and publicly, Rabbi Goldstein said, 'I can not as a matter of self-respect appear upon
the same platform with him'" (as quoted in Baker, *Human Smoke* 330).

[3] As Cole and many others have noted, while Lindbergh did denounce the persecution
suffered by the Jews in Nazi Germany, he continued to entertain anti-Semitic feelings.
In his well-know Des Moines speech of September 11, 1941, he stated that "the
persecution they [the Jews] suffered in Germany would be sufficient to make bitter
enemies of any race. But no person of honesty and vision can look on their pro-war

facts, along with a common-sense perception that the best that can be said of sincere opponents of World War Two is that they were completely mistaken about the situation at hand, has by and large prevented giving pacifist arguments a fair hearing.

Gibson's movie manages to pay homage to Doss by showing that it was possible for a man who as a Seventh-Day Adventist refused to carry let alone fire a weapon, to display not only moral but also immense physical courage. On the other hand, as none of the reviews I read suggests, one could easily argue that while the film pays tribute to a forgotten and heroic character, it also chooses to focus on a pacifist who by no means refused to take an active part in the war. Though it is perhaps understandable that in a movie bent on emphasizing his courage in battle certain moral and political questions would be downplayed, it seems odd that the story never questions Doss's pacifist wisdom. Of course, we know that pacifism is not a monolithic ideology, and that it comes in various degrees, but as World War Two-resisters from Union Theological Seminary put it in their statement "Why We Refused to Register," while they felt "a deep bond of unity with those who decide to register as conscientious objectors," they also realized that gaining "personal exemption from the most crassly un-Christian requirements of the act does not compensate for the fact that we are complying with it and accepting its protection" (Benedict, et al.). In short, without questioning the good intentions of *Hacksaw Ridge*'s story, and Doss's utmost good faith, the movie treats its viewers to a sort of sanitized version of pacifism—a pacifism that aimed at safeguarding one's individual conscience but certainly not at turning it into "the counter-friction to stop the machine" (211), as Henry David Thoreau would have put it.

It is to this second kind of active and militant pacifism that novelist Nicholas Baker dedicates *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of*

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policy here today without seeing the dangers involved in such a policy, both for us and for them. . . . A few farsighted Jewish people realize this and stand opposed to intervention. But the majority still do not. Their greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government" (as quoted in Cole 144).

World War II, the End of Civilization , published in 2008 by Simon & Schuster, an odd kind of book that proved to be enormously controversial. Before I say something about the book's content, however, a few words about its form are in order. The text is a collage of, mostly snippets or sections, from newspaper articles (in large part) as well as government transcripts and personal diaries of the time. The authorial voice is hardly audible, which is not to say that the book does not bear a strong authorial imprint. Covering the period that goes from the aftermath of World War One to American entry into World War Two after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the montage seems to advance an implicit thesis, even though—at least to my mind—such thesis is not as absolute as Baker's detractors argue. What is Baker's controversial argument? In a nutshell what he wants to suggest is that the allies should have at least *tried* to negotiate an armistice with Hitler, as that was the only way in which Jews and other persecuted minorities might have been saved. This, as Baker himself has made abundantly clear in an essay that he wrote for *Harper's* in reply to his critics three years after the publication of *Human Smoke* , is by no means his own original idea. Abraham Kaufman and Jessie Wallace Hughan, respectively the secretary and the founder of the War Resisters League, in the early 1940's gave speeches, wrote letters, and handed out leaflets calling for a peace "conditional upon the release of Jews and other political prisoners" ("Myth" 749). Dorothy Day, too, wrote on the front page of the *Catholic Worker* that "Peace Now Without Victory Will Save Jews," a notion echoed by the Jewish Peace Fellowship, which also called for an armistice that would "make an end to the world-wide slaughter" (qtd. in "Myth" 749). In the *Harper's* essay, Baker also mentions that the British publisher Victor Gollancz sold 250,000 copies of a pamphlet called "Let My People Go," in which the wisdom of Churchill's carpet-bombing and fire-storming strategy was strongly called into question. "This 'policy'—Gollancz wrote—it must be plainly said, will not save a single Jewish life." His concern was, "and he put it in italics, *the saving of life now* . The German government had to be approached immediately and asked to allow Jews to emigrate." If the Nazis refused such a proposal, the Allies would lose nothing and it

"would strip Hitler of the excuse that he cannot afford to feed useless mouths" ("Myth" 750).

One may well find these propositions ill-conceived and argue that negotiations with the Third Reich would not have brought about the desired results. But let me say this once again, they are not Baker's own invention—these were the notions that at least some pacifists (and some non-pacifists, too) entertained at the time. I doubt, however, that the examples quoted by Baker would in any way make his critics relent. In fact, what several of them seem to find particularly irritating is nothing less than Baker's dedication (in his afterword) "to the memory of Clarence Pickett and other American and British pacifists. They've never really gotten their due. They tried to save Jewish refugees, feed Europe, reconcile the United States and Japan, and stop the war from happening. They failed, but they were right" (*Human Smoke* 474). It's especially the last sentence, I suppose, that many find unacceptable— the notion that Baker would know *now*, seven decades plus after the fact, what was the right thing to do *then*, and, moreover, that the right thing to do was not add fuel to fire but seek peace. What clearly transpires from the criticism that the book has received, from Left, Right, and Center, is that it is either outrageous or ludicrous, or both, to suggest that pacifism may figure in any way significant in discussions of World War Two. In the lapidary words of David Cesarani, writing for the *Independent*, by reading Baker's book we learn that some pacifists "were truly honourable people who ... succoured refugees from Nazism when the US administration was most stony-hearted. But some of them were idiots, and a few managed to be both at the same time."

Perhaps because I share at least some of Baker's admiration for the "absolute pacifists" who did not compromise on their principles and—at least in cases like those of Don Benedict, David Dellinger, and Bayard Rustin— paid dearly for their ideas by serving prison sentences and constant abuse from guards and some fellow prisoners, I have a different understanding of what *Human Smoke* tries to accomplish. While I do agree that, as Katha Pollit has put it in another devastatingly critical review for *The Nation*, "Baker's cut-and-paste method suggests without stating outright, much less making a coherent argument," to

my mind what his collage implies is not so much that, as Pollit argues, "lives would have been spared had Churchill made a separate peace and Roosevelt stayed out of the war," but that—to quote from Baker's *Harper's* piece—"the pacifists were the only ones, during a time of catastrophic violence, who repeatedly put forward proposals that had any chance of saving a threatened people."[4] Pollit candidly admits that reading the book made her feel "something I had never felt before: fury at pacifists." If on the one hand I find such fury oddly misplaced considering the gallery of war criminals peopling the pages of *Human Smoke*, on the other Pollit's comment hits the right target of this whole diatribe: the unwillingness to concede that, as Baker has put it, "the P-word" may be used "in any positive way ... especially in connection with the Second World War" ("Myth 738).

I realize that at this point the discussion would seem to revolve around the merit (or demerit) of Baker's, by his own admission, tentative historical argument.[5] Since I am not a historian of World War Two, I would have little to contribute to this debate. But before finally suggesting why *Human Smoke* and the controversy that surrounds it,

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[4] This is a complex, somewhat slippery, issue. Bakers does indeed seem to imply, as I myself noted above, that a negotiated peace and America's non-entry in the war might have saved lives—mostly, though not only, Jewish lives—but that would have happened *only if the pacifist agenda had been fully implemented*. If, in other words, the first, most important political objective of the anti-Nazi camp had truly been that of sparing the suffering of millions of civilians. Baker himself concedes that he does not expect readers of *Human Smoke* to agree necessarily with him that pacifists "were right in their principled opposition to that enormous war—the war that Hitler began," but that their position should be taken "seriously," so as to see "whether there was some wisdom in it" ("Myth" 739). I am not sure that Baker's collage ultimately suggests that, by following a pacifist strategy, the war would have been avoided. The main point of his book is that war was not the means to save the Jews, because "The Jews needed immigration visas, not Flying Fortresses. And who was doing the best to get them visas, as well as food, money, and hiding places? Pacifists were" (739).

[5] "[P]acifists opposed the counterproductive barbarity of the Allied bombing campaign, and they offered positive proposals to save the Jews: create safe havens, call an armistice, negotiate a peace that would guarantee the passage of refugees. We should have tried. If the armistice plan failed, then it failed. We could always have resumed the battle. Not trying leaves us culpable" ("Myth 754).

may be relevant to postmemory, understood as an imaginative practice, in need of constant renegotiations and recalibrations, let me say that much as we may remain unconvinced by Baker's ideas, the book's insistence on the fact that—as Pollit herself acknowledges—"neither Roosevelt nor Churchill did a thing to prevent the Holocaust" is certainly praiseworthy.[6] That the US State Department actually refused to grant visas for Jewish refugees, may not be news for people well versed in World War Two history, but is something not to be forgotten if we wish to resist—as personally I think we should—what Baker calls "the dangerous myth of the good war."

The Call for Papers of the conference for which an earlier draft of this essay was written reminds us that the memory of World War Two is also currently being threatened by the rise of far-right populism.[7] This dangerous mix of nationalism, sexism and hatred of foreigners, and especially "dark" people, has taken in some European countries a

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[6] In this essay, as in many of the papers originally presented at the conference *Past (Im)Perfect Continuous. Trans-Cultural Articulations of the Postmemory of WWII*, the term "postmemory" is used in a much looser sense than how it was originally conceived by Marianne Hirsch. Rather than focusing on how individuals imagine, and re-member, traumatic experiences lived by their forefathers, I concentrate on how writers, activists, and politicians who understand, shape, and rhetorically deploy the legacy of the war for what are eminently public purposes. Hirsch writes that "Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (662). One may argue that, though its nature is different, and differently motivated, also what we might wish to call historical-cultural-political postmemory is sustained by "imaginative investment and creation" and as such is always tempted to rewrite past events to bring them in line with some contemporary script. As I think it will be clear to readers of this essay, I don't think this is a practice that can be avoided, as long as the rewriting concerns the *meaning* and the *political-cultural value* of facts, not their actual occurrence, or the reasons why they took place, when such reasons have been ascertained with a reasonable degree of objectivity. By calling attention to pacifist resistance or approaches to the war, this essay is a modest attempt to complicate the moral and political "lessons" to be drawn today the war.

[7] "The rise of the far right both in Europe and in the US precisely at a time in which the direct witnesses and survivors of the dramatic events of WWII (including the Holocaust, but not only) are dying out, makes the need for a strong memorialization—for a solid stone to stumble upon, as it were—as urgent today as ever" ("Call for Papers").

distinct polemical tone vis-à-vis the legacy of World War Two. One
need only think of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán condoning
the commemorations of Miklos Horthy and Jozsef Nyiro: the first, the
Admiral who ruled Hungary between 1920 and 1944, and was an ally of
Nazi Germany; the second, a raging anti-Semitic writer and supporter
of the Hungarian fascist party. Equally shocking are some remarks on
their countries' respective Nazi and Fascist past that have come from
the German *Alternative für Deutschland* and the Italian *Lega*. One of
the *AfD* party leaders, Alexander Gauland, "during the election
campaign, in Sept. 2017 ... gave a speech in which he said that 'no other
people have been so clearly presented with a false past as the Germans.'
Gauland called for 'the past to be returned to the people of Germany,'
by which he meant a past in which Germans were free to be 'proud of
the accomplishments of our soldiers in both world wars'" (Stanley).
More recently, *Afd* lawmakers "staged a walk out from the Bavarian
parliament during a service to remember Holocaust victims"
(Batchelor) after their party had been accused of playing down the
criminal record of Germany's Nazi past. On his part, the Italian *Lega*'s
leader Matteo Salvini is on record for publicly declaring that while such
things as the Fascist racial laws were "mad," "many things were done in
the Fascist period, such as the introduction of the pension system and
the reclamation of marshland areas" ("Lot done"), which is like saying
that the autobahn system Germany built in the 1930's is a "merit" of the
Hitler regime, which unfortunately also masterminded the Holocaust
and launched a war that cost the lives of millions of people. Perhaps the
most troubling of these revisionist moves—also because it has been
passed by the parliament of a supposedly democratic state—is the
outrageous Polish law that criminalizes any mention of Poles as "being
responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the Third
German Reich" (John).

However, the odious revisionism of the far right is not the only
way in which the memory of the immense human catastrophe of World
War Two is smeared. As several political commentators have observed,
and as no scholar has better and more convincingly argued than David
Hoogland Noon, in his article "Operation Enduring Analogy: World
War II, the War on Terror, and the Uses of Historical Memory," a

questionable and often downright cynical use of World War Two analogies has been one of the chief propaganda instruments employed by the George W. Bush administration to sell the war on terrorism to the world's public opinion. In fact, one may wish to add that Bush senior, at the time of the First Gulf War, was perhaps the first politician to deploy the "Good War" as a weapon useful to kick, along with Saddam Hussein's ass (Bush's own words—see Hunt), also the noxious "Vietnam syndrome" hindering the US army's role as global super-cop (see Dionne Jr.). The Bushes have not been alone at playing this rhetorical game. At the time of the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, during Bill Clinton's presidency, Kosovars were compared to Jews, and Milosevic was renamed Hitlerovic.[8] Moreover, it must be observed that if, in the late historian Marilyn Young's words, "There are, it seems, only two kinds of war the United States can fight: World War II or Vietnam. Anything that can be made to look like World War II is OK," World War Two analogies have been employed also outside the US. In 1999, the then "Green" German minister Joschka Fischer "told the congress that Serbian repression of the Kosovars would be 'another Auschwitz'; anyone who opposed NATO intervention would thereby be responsible for a second holocaust. ... Thus the German military's return to offensive warfare, explicitly outlawed by the Constitution because of Nazi war crimes, was legitimated through the moral exploitation of the very same" (97).[9]

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[8]The analogies between World War Two and Kosovo are briefly analyzed in Alexander 46-49. His lengthy discussion of how the Holocaust has become instrumental in the construction of a new moral universalism, while valuable in its own right as a sociological analysis, seems to miss or downplay the intricate and often very contradictory political ramifications of the current rhetoric of human rights, with its corollary notion of "humanitarian warfare."

[9] Alexander, in a footnote of his essay, quotes a *San Francisco Chronicle* article in which Germany's deputy foreign minister for U.S. relations explained that if Germany was able to participate in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia it was because the "68ers," that is the veterans of the student movement, "used to tell their elders, 'We will not stand by, as you did while minority rights are trampled and massacres take place.' Slobodan Milosevic gave them a chance to prove it" (as qtd. in Alexander 79). From this perspective, Germany's act of war would be an explicit repudiation of its Nazi past. But from Jachnow's perspective, the very opposite is true: by taking part in a

In his already-mentioned *Independent* review of *Human Smoke*, Cesarani suspects "that Baker is really writing about Iraq. What we have here is 1933 viewed through the lens of 2003." And if Baker may have good reasons for feeling angry at the lies and manipulations that paved the way to the Allied attack on Iraq—which in all likelihood could have been avoided through diplomatic means, thus sparing tens of thousands of lives—he should have known better than apply retroactively this notion to an altogether different context, as "history is too serious a thing to be left to novelists." Cesarani, as a professional historian, has of course every right to defend his trade, even though even skeptic readers of the late Hayden White's work would probably be more cautious in drawing clear-cut boundaries between the province of history and that of literature. At any rate, if on the one hand it might be argued that Baker ends up committing the same sin he deplores in others—that of mobilizing a selective memory of World War Two to pursue a political agenda—on the other we must honestly ask ourselves if *anyone* looking at World War Two today, and especially anyone who was not a direct witness of those events, can really avoid seeing them through the lens of contemporary concerns. The question I raise is an epistemological, not an ontological one. It concerns the realm of interpretation, not whether certain facts occurred or not. No meaningful conversation about the issues under consideration can take place if one does not share a respect for what are the incontrovertible facts of the matter. So, I can understand some of Baker's readers irritation because the documents he quotes (none of which, however, is false) appear to insinuate that Franklin Delano Roosevelt goaded the Japanese into attacking the US fleet so that he could have the *casus belli* he needed to lead a reluctant country into yet another World War. This

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military operation (which, by the way, took place in territories formerly devastated by the Wehrmacht) the German state contravened a law created precisely to prevent any type of offensive war. This may well be a paradigmatic example of how the memory and post-memory of World War Two become entangled in both individual and collective histories, and in the politics in which such histories are inevitably imbricated.

conspiratorial thesis is rejected by most historians, as far as I can tell, but to conclude from this that the US were not expecting to clash sooner or later with Japanese imperialism to defend their own imperial interests in the Far East, would seem to be equally misconceived. At any rate, these are disagreements that have to do with how we *interpret* certain facts, and to imagine that how we interpret the past may not be influenced by our beliefs about the present is simply chimerical.

There is hardly any question that, while researching and writing *Human Smoke*, Baker would have had the so-called War on Terror on his mind.[10] His *Harper's* essay gives explicit indication that this was indeed the case. There, he insistently laments US readiness to bomb any corner of the planet where things appear to take turns Washington disapproves. From the First Gulf War and the bombing of Belgrade, to the endless, intermittent pounding of both Iraq and Afghanistan and the havoc let loose in Lybia, World War Two is routinely invoked as "pacifism's great smoking counterexample." As Baker writes, "we" always have no choice but intervene—and bomb— "because *look at World War II*" ("Myth" 742). His book was certainly not the first one to call into question simple-minded, Manichean readings of World War Two, and thus debunk the myth of the "good war." Michael C. C Adams' *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (1994), Michael Zezima's *Saving Private Power: The Hidden History of the Good War* (2000), Jacques Pawels' *Le myth de la bonne guerre* (2005), each in its own way, have raised serious questions not only about the Allied conduct of the war, but especially about the way the war has been

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[10] Or, for that matter, that his antipathy for the allied conduct of the war against Japan may well have been influenced by the legacy of the Vietnam War, a conflict that would show how—from at least the assault on the Philippines in 1898 during the Spanish-American war—US imperialism in the Far East was anything but an invention of Japanese war propaganda (though of course Japan used it to cover its own criminal imperialism in China and elsewhere).

memorialized to fit political agendas that usually contemplate the recourse to military force. Of course, any criticism of how the Allies fought the war is likely to elicit *reductio ad hitlerum* counterarguments, as if questioning, say, the firebombing of German cities is tantamount to arguing that Hitler and Churchill were war criminals of the same ilk. They obviously were not, and it strikes me as somewhat intellectually dishonest to argue that this is what Baker wishes to suggest. The fact remains, however, that the fire-bombing of German cities was not only—objectively speaking—as savage an act of war as the Blitz, but that as a member of Churchill's cabinet observed as early as 1941, "Bombing does NOT affect German morale." On the other hand, as General Raymond Lee argued, it was good for "The morale of the British people . . . if the bombing stopped, their spirit would immediately suffer" (*Human Smoke* 434).

One may continue to believe that, notwithstanding Churchill's predilection for bombing—to quote Baker—"as a form of pedagogy—a way of enlightening city dwellers as to the hellishness of remote battlefields" (*Human Smoke* 191)—and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's refusal to allow Jewish refugees into the country, any comparison of the evils committed by the two sides is out of the question. Personally, I don't think our primary aim should be to compare evils—our moral imperative should be to tell the truth. And yes, all truths of course must be contextualized, but how else would we call fire-bombing a city, knowing you will kill thousands of civilians and with the intention of provoking terror and endless human misery if not a war crime? If one wishes to defend or in any case justify the destruction of Dresden, the firebombing of Tokyo, or the dropping of the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, one must be ready to argue that in some instances recourse to terrorism and criminal violence may be necessary—this is what implicitly Churchill himself admitted when he declared "that the Germans should be made to suffer in their homeland and cities something of the torments they have let loose upon their neighbors and upon the world" (as qtd. in *Human Smoke* 358). The torments inflicted on Germany had to be equal to those the Nazis had visited on their enemies, and to be equal they had to be meted out in the same ruthless fashion. Again, I am no historian nor a military strategist

but even assuming historians and strategists had all the right answers and they were able to offer decisive evidence that only by pursuing the war the ways the Allied did, the Third Reich could be defeated, I would still want to call a spade a spade.

In a way I can understand the anger of some reviews. To claim that pacifism was a viable alternative, or, worse still, to feel sympathy for those who, consistently with their beliefs, actively opposed the war effort by refusing even to serve in labor camps the way David Dillinger did, may be irritating to whomever thinks not only that the Axis could be defeated only by military force but because—I suspect—it seems to imply that amid so much chaos and ambiguity one could preserve intact one's most deeply felt beliefs. What lies behind *Human Smoke*'s hostile reviews, I think, is "fury" against would-be "Beautiful Souls" who did not wish to compromise their abstract love of non-violence. I don't think, however, that this is how people like Bayard Rustin, Don Benedict, David Dellinger, Rabbi Cronbach, or Milton Mayer saw themselves. These war resisters held a strong belief in the *power* of non-violence— they may have been mistaken, of course, but they sincerely believed lives could be saved not by looking the other way, but by *fighting* in a different way. As Baker writes summarizing Milton Mayer's argument, "we couldn't fight fascism by acting like animals—we could fight it only by trying to stay human" (*Human Smoke* 150). In Mayer's own words, "War is at once the essence and apotheosis, the beginning and the triumph, of Fascism" (187).

Even though, unlike him, we may feel that in those days war was the only way, we should never, I think, make the mistake of arguing that it was a "good" way. It may have been a necessary way but even if we don't like to admit it, I think Mayer *was* by and large right: to fight Fascism in several instances the "good guys" had to resort to the kind of savage warfare that also the Fascists practiced. That Etty Hillesum could write in her diary, on March 15, 1941, "It is the problem of our age: hatred of Germans poisons everyone's mind," is something that should give everyone pause. She certainly didn't mean to suggest that hatred of Jews was unimportant. What she meant was that "Indiscriminate hatred is the worst thing there is. It is the sickness of the soul" (as qtd. in *Human Smoke* 296). Perhaps there are extreme conditions under

which most of us are forced to hate. Indeed, one may wish to observe that even Hillesum implicitly acknowledged that what made hate unbearable was its lack of discrimination—that it was not able to make distinctions between those who might have deserved it and those who did not, or not to the same extent. In other words, in Hillesum's phrase, hate was the equivalent of the bombings (conducted by both the Allies and the Luftwaffe), which would not distinguish between military and civilian targets. Should we be "furious" at those like her, who resisted the spirit of the times and interrogated—not many years later, but in the thick of it—the sanity of the war? I cannot bring myself—I have to admit that—to join with utter conviction Baker in declaring that pacifists "were right." But on the other hand, I also refuse to believe that they were certainly wrong, as many hostile reviewers of *Human Smoke* have either stated or implied in their assaults on the book. Most importantly, they were no armchair war resisters. Not only they were willing to go to jail to uphold their principles and hold on to their conscience. "They tried to save Jewish refugees, feed Europe, reconcile the United States and Japan" (*Human Smoke* 474), and they refused to give in to the barbarous common-sense of the day.

As the memory of the horrendous conflict that devastated the world inevitably gives way to postmemory, its legacy will continue to be intensely, and at times fiercely contested. It is hard to imagine that it could be otherwise. Hence, we will most likely continue to see the war invoked any time a "sanctifying touch" (Noon 339) is needed to justify mostly US-led military interventions around the planet, while in some countries the effort to whitewash their participation in the horrors and slaughters of the war will be instrumental to the pursuit of xenophobic and authoritarian political agendas. But there will be also other ways in which the "moral capital" of the war will be invoked. As I write these lines, activists engaged in saving the lives of immigrants who try to reach the shores of Europe are invoking a new Nuremberg against those politicians who, like Italian former deputy prime minister and minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini, have closed seaports to ships carrying refugees. Considering that many of the ships that are forced to go back end up returning migrants to Lybian detention camps—where, according to the UN, they are held "in horrific conditions" (see *United*

Nations), and many end up dead, raped or otherwise abused—the analogy to the ways in which many western countries, and the US in particular, responded to the Jewish refugee crisis from the 1930's onwards, seems legitimate. That is also why we need a book like Baker's *Human Smoke*. Regardless of how convinced we might be of its overarching thesis, by resisting the myth of the "Good War," far from belittling or excusing in any way the crimes of Nazi and Japanese imperialism, it insists that we should not forget the horrors which all participants in the war perpetrated. If, as my generation was taught, the ultimate legacy of World War II was that war and violence are not the answer to political and social conflicts, wouldn't it be absurd to forget the work done by those who preached this moral also *before* the catastrophe took place?

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Serguey Ehrlich

From National Pride to Global Compassion and Admiration: Memory and Postmemory of the Second World War during the Transition from Modern Nation-State to a Global Information Civilization

In this paper I will present three new concepts – *memory of pride*, *memory of compassion* and *memory of admiration*. The first one is related to the obsolete reality of the nation-state of industrial Modernity and the others are essential components of the emerging Global information civilization. The limited space of this article allows me to describe only the principal characteristics of these concepts in their application to the memory and postmemory of the Second World War. Therefore, I suggest that my text be considered as a set of hypotheses and an invitation for a discussion, which could have some productive results.

1. Memory of Pride

Memory of Pride presents the pride in heroic ancestors who won a war against Nazi Germany and the Axis powers sacrificing their lives. Memory of pride is supported by the nation-state not only in the former republics of the USSR, the US and Great Britain, but also in countries which were occupied by the Nazis, some former Nazi allies and even in Germany itself; these nations support the same type of memory by using the narrative of Resistance (Berger 48). This memory is based on the narrative of heroic myth, which is a product of industrial Modernity, and creates the ideological pillar of the nation-state. The structure of heroic myth includes our heroes, our martyrs and our victims mainly women, children and elderly people. Heroic myth views the world in black-and-white. In opposition to our heroes, martyrs and victims are

the foreign enemies who are depicted as infernal beings. It is not surprising that the battle of Saint Warrior George against the dragon, which personifies infernal evil, is a common Christian symbol of heroic myth. One of the best examples of applying this symbol to the memory of the Second World War is the Monument to the Victory of the Russian Soldier on Poklonnaya Hill (Moscow), which was opened in 1995 during Boris Yeltsin's presidency: "Saint George appears on horseback, with a spear, striking a dragon beneath him ... thus transformed the specificity of the Soviet-Nazi struggle into an age-old Christian story about Russian military courage forever prevailing against the enemy's plot" (Krylova 97).

In many European cities there are monuments combining memories of the First and Second World Wars. In France there is a tradition to commemorate all people who "died for France" since the First World War until now including the participants of colonial wars and of the controversial invasions of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya ("Les monuments"). That tradition was adopted in other francophone countries such as Belgium, Luxembourg and Canada.

This equation of wars, which significantly differed in their intentions, indicates that the struggle against the Nazis does not play the main role in the context of the national memory of pride. It is only one of many manifestations of the heroic myth's dominant message, which suggests sacrificing your own life for your own country. Memory of pride is not just information about events in the distant past. It is also instructions for future actions and a sacral example, encouraging new generations to repeat the heroic deeds of their ancestors.

Heroic myth does not allow compassion towards "foreign victims" who are also women, children and elderly people. Compassion towards any foreigners becomes an obstacle in the fight against foreign enemies. In a confessional passage, Curtis E. LeMay, an American air force officer, who participated in the carpet bombing of Germany during the Second World War, writes:

> You drop a load of bombs and, if you're cursed with any imagination at all you have at least one quick horrid glimpse of a child lying in bed

with a whole ton of masonry tumbling down on top of him; or a
three-year-old girl wailing for Mutter . . . Mutter . . . because she
has been burned. Then you have to turn away from the picture if you
intend to retain your sanity. And also if you intend to keep on doing
the work your Nation expects of you. (LeMay and Kantor 425)

The "your Nation" means the nation-state of Modernity, whose
ideology permits the casualties of foreign women, children and elderly
people for the sake of achieving victory. It is noticeable that none of the
winning states of the Second World War apologized for actions such as
the carpet bombing of Dresden and other German cities or for the
nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which evidently had the
aim to terrify the enemy and as a result most of the victims were civilians
(Grayling).

The current situation proves that the aggressive nature of heroic
myth transforms the state memory of pride about the Second World
War into a provocative source for a nuclear war, which would be the
suicide of humanity (Robock, et al.). In Putin's Russia the slogan "We
Can Do it Again!" is very popular, which is an obvious antonym to the
famous "Never Again." Donald Trump's campaign slogan "America
First" is a clear allusion to "Deutschland über Alles," as Konstantin von
Notz, a Green Party parliamentarian in the German Bundestag, noted
when he tweeted, "America First is an update of Deutschland,
Deutschland über alles. . ." In 2018 these mad characteristics of the
heroic myth aggravated the American-Russian conflict in Syria and put
the world again on the edge of a nuclear catastrophe. To stop this self-
destruction of humankind we must find a narrative of memory, which
provides a real alternative to the heroic myth.

2. Memory of Compassion

Memory of compassion is an alternative to Memory of pride. In the
former, the victims play the main role and most of them are victims of
nation-states. The main difference with the memory of pride is that in
the framework of the memory of compassion the division of victims into

"ours" and "foreign" does not exist (Nguyen). From this perspective, all victims of violence are "ours" and we have a sincere compassion towards them. Thereby, the memory of compassion transcends the container of the nation-state to a transnational level. In this framework national identity loses its dominance. For memory of compassion, human beings are more important than their citizenships, such as being Russian or American. Its narrative is the myth of self-sacrifice, which is based on compassion and love for all human beings. It has a long and influential tradition originated by Prometheus and Christ, who sacrificed themselves because they felt compassion and love not only for the ancient Greeks and Jews, but for all humanity.

The first "icon" of the memory of compassion, which reached the global scale, is the memory of the Holocaust (Assmann). Victims of the Jewish nation, who traditionally were paradigmatic "strangers" and "scapegoats" for all Christians, became "ours" and received a sincere compassion from Germans and others. It was a long process. President Jacques Chirac publicly took responsibility for Vichy regime crimes against Jewish citizens of France only in 1995 (Simons). In many Central and East European countries, international memory of the Holocaust still conflicts with a national memory of pride. One of the many examples of that conflict is the decree of president Poroshenko, which awarded the status of "Heroes of Ukraine" to the members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Ukrainian Rebel Army, many of whom were Nazi collaborators and took part in the mass murder of Jewish and Polish people (Umland).

Western Powers also need to recognize their disgraceful past attitudes towards Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, including the strict limitation of immigration to the US and Great Britain's mandate Palestine. It is well known that in 1939 Cuba, the US and Canada turned away 907 asylum seeking German Jews, who were passengers of the MS St. Louis. In 2009 the US Senate adopted "A resolution recognizing June 6, 2009, as the 70th anniversary of the tragic date when the M.S. St. Louis, a ship carrying Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, returned to Europe after its passengers were refused admittance to the United States" ("A resolution"). In 2012 the U.S. Department of State apologized for "a very dark chapter in State

Department history" when the MS Saint Louis passengers did not get permission to enter the US ("The legacy"). In 2018 the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivered a formal apology for the fate of the Jewish refugee ship MS St. Louis (Trudeau). I hope these noble examples will encourage the leaders of other Western democracies to offer formal apologies for the indifference of their authorities towards Jewish refugees prior to and during the War.

There is a serious obstacle to the memory of compassion's growth and that is the attempt to elect Jews as the principle victims of the Second World War. The main reason of such a point of view is that "only Jews were killed because they were Jews" (Kosharovsky 45). As a Jew I cannot agree with such an argument. Firstly, it is immoral to divide victims into categories. Such an approach perversely imitates the logic of the memory of pride – "we are the best!" – and destroys the values of the memory of compassion. Secondarily, there is clear evidence that not only Jews and Roma were killed because they were Jews and Roma.

The German academic journal *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* has published a document "Comments and suggestions concerning the Generalplan Ost," which was composed by Alfred Rosenberg's adviser Erhard Wetzel. This document shows that Nazis discussed what to do with Russians after the victory; there were two options: "The complete extermination of Russians or alternatively to Germanize the part of the population with obvious Nordic Race features" (Heiber). The second option also led towards the extermination of most Russians just because they were Russians. According to the same document, Poles, Czechs, Belarusians and Ukrainians would be subjected to harsh repressions and mass deportations. The "Generalplan Ost" reveals that Nazis had genocidal intentions towards many Slavic nations. The elaboration of that plan ended after Stalingrad and Kursk. However, it is well known that mass extermination of Jewish people started long before the Wannsee Conference decisions. The same situation occurred with the extermination of Russians and other Slavic nations by the Nazis. Towards Poles and Eastern Slavic people the Nazis acted in the same genocidal way right from the beginning of the war.

For instance, about sixty percent of Soviet war prisoners died in German concentration camps, as compared to three percent of French detained soldiers (Durand 21). We must conceptualize that massive difference! More than two million unarmed people did not simply die but were intentionally killed by starvation, frost and diseases. The same harsh methods of extermination were used by Romanian authorities towards Jewish people deported to Transnistrian concentration camps. There were no gas chambers there. Despite that, we rightfully call that crime *The Romanian Holocaust* (Hirsch and Spitzer). Therefore, it is impossible to deny that Nazis used "genocidal massacre," which "tended toward genocide, [for] destroying most of the 'Russian' prisoners" (Berkhoff 790).

Soviet war prisoners were not the only Russian victims of genocide. In occupied territories of the USSR, Nazis and their collaborators burned thousands of villages, on many occasions without saving their residents. With regard to this, there are no generalized data, but in one Russian region alone, Bryanskaya oblasti, 1016 villages were burned (Sozhzhennye 9). It is a typical Russian oral memory story: the retreating Nazis forced people into their houses and burned them alive. There is a lot of evidence confirming that this corresponds to reality. An excerpt from a German soldier's letter reads: "All the towns and villages in the areas that we are now evacuating are being set ablaze. . . The Russians are to find nothing but a field of rubble. . . It is a terribly beautiful picture" (Fritz 372).

According to the data of Russian military historians, in occupied Soviet territories Nazis intentionally exterminated 7,420,379 civilians, while another 2,164,313 Soviet civilians died in Germany during forced labor and at least 4,100,000 were victims of diseases and starvation caused by the harsh conditions of the occupation regime. The total death toll is 13,684,692 and this figure does not include the 641,000 victims of the Siege of Leningrad and the more than one hundred thousand people who died in the territory controlled by the Soviet authorities as a result of bombing and shelling attacks (Rossia 222–224).

Therefore, in modern German historiography there exists an obligatory term for the military campaign in the East: "The War of extermination" (Vernichtungskrieg). This term is based on many

historical sources. For instance, the head of the General Staff of the German Army colonel-general Franz Halder recorded in his dairy on March 30, 1941 the content of Hitler's speech: "This is a war of extermination . . . This war will be very different from the war in the West. In the East, harshness today means lenience in the future. Commanders must make the sacrifice of overcoming their personal scruples" (*The Halder Diaries* 42–43). From the point of view of the comprehensive memory of compassion we should commemorate millions of Slavic victims in the same way as we commemorate millions of exterminated Jews.

A third category of victims should be included in the list of Second World War victims: German civilians and POWs. The joint American-British "carpet bombing" of German cities, which in many cases had no significant military infrastructure, as well as the robberies and rapes of German civilians by Soviet soldiers were both crimes against humanity. We must remember the awful fate of German POWs in Soviet camps, including about a hundred thousand captured after the Stalingrad battle, of whom only five thousand returned home after the war (Ellis 124). Of course, there were a lot of war criminals, including members of the SS, among the German POWs and they deserved severe punishments after trials, but there was no investigation of their crimes. They were doomed to death through starvation, frost and diseases. We should not forget their awful crimes but at the same time we also should include those perpetrators in the list of victims of other perpetrators. We should not forget also the robberies, rapes and murders of German civilians during their postwar deportation from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and other countries, when at least twelve million people were evicted from their houses and about half million of them lost their lives. Perpetrators were neighbors of deported Germans (Douglas).

According to the memory of compassion, where all victims are ours, it is immoral to create a "hierarchy" of victims. Commemorating all victims of the Second World War as equal in terms of suffering and harrowing death would mean that the humanitarian values of the memory of compassion will prevail, and this would prevent any political

manipulations of memory, such as the "memory wars," which can provoke real wars.

3. Memory of Admiration

The main function of the memory of pride is the preparation of new wars. The memory of compassion has the opposite objective, i.e. to prevent new wars and to provide serious criticism of the aggressive ideas of the heroic myth as well as the harsh reality of the modern world, which is divided into nation-states. But compassion for the victims is not enough to ensure a significant influence of the narrative of the self-sacrificing myth. To inspire we need a dream! In order to achieve this we should acknowledge that the heroic myth is a narrative connected to political memory, while the myth of the self-sacrifice is a narrative of cultural memory. Not surprisingly, national memory pantheons, which include politicians as national heroes, are boundaries that divide nations.

For instance, we can mention recent protests in India against the Oscar-winning British movie *The Darkest Hour,* which glorifies Churchill in a way similar to the memory of pride: "Churchill was no different from Adolf Hitler or Josef Stalin or Mao Zedong when it came to sanctioning the deaths of millions [during the Bengal famine of 1943]" (Guruswamy). Along the lines of *The Darkest Hour*, we should glorify Stalin in Russia, who played not less an important role than Churchill in defeating the Nazis. Fortunately, a significant part of Russian society believes that Stalin's personal input towards the victory over Nazi Germany does not justify his crimes against humanity and it protests loudly against the glorification of the *Generalissimo.* In Great Britain protests against the glorification of Churchill, who was explicitly racist and who as the Prime Minister bore full responsibility for crimes against humanity such as the British Holodomor (the Bengal famine of 1943) and British Gulag (detention camps in Kenia during the 1950s) are still marginal (Toye). Maybe the example of Russian liberal intellectuals could inspire their British colleagues.

This evidently shows that politicians, who usually divide people, must be excluded from memory's pantheons. Who should replace the

politicians in new pantheons of collective memory? Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky were always "ours" for Russian, English and other nations. Our admiration of those geniuses of humankind has never been influenced by the political *goblins*, which rule our countries and aim to divide us. Americans expressed sincere admiration for Sputnik and Gagarin to the same extent as Russians admired the American astronauts who landed on the Moon. In commemorating those significant events, everyone should be grateful ("A man in Space!" and "People on the Moon!") for a common victory of humankind.

The real alternative to the memory of pride and the heroic myth narrative is a combination of the memory of compassion and the memory of admiration, both based on the narrative of the myth of the self-sacrifice. This narrative teaches us to feel compassion for all victims of violence and express sincere admiration for heroes of all humankind, who since Antiquity have been uniting people and making us human in the full sense of that word. The myth of self-sacrifice meets a lot of obstacles in the present situation of ubiquitously growing ultra-nationalism, but if we do not persevere in the right direction, we will not move forward.

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Narratives

Muriel Hasbun, *Super 8mm film*, 2014.09.20, from the archive, c. 1960s, Washington, DC, archival pigment print, 2015. From the series *si je meurs/if I die*.

An extended portrait, the photographs of *si je meurs/if I die* explore the fragile space between absence and presence and continue the conversation about identity that I've had with my mother, Janine Janowski, and my family and my communities, through my work, over 30 years.

Moving through a subjective, diasporic space infused with "a sense memory of loss," the photos evolved naturally as we confronted the most human of destinies.

--As if I could ever get used to it
--As if the picture would somehow wish it away...

In the process, I discover, examine and reconfigure an archive that brings the personal and the collective together. The resulting photographs pay homage to our relationship and allude to the legacy that she left behind.

A survivor of the Holocaust by hiding together with her immediate family in the Auvergne region of France, Janine went to El Salvador in 1958 to work as the teacher of the French Consul's children. A few years later, she married Antonio Hasbun Z., a Palestinian/Salvadoran dentist and a photographer, making El Salvador her new home.

With these photographs, I share my intimate perspective to the historically-significant, public narrative of Janine's life as a cultural promoter and founder of the renowned Galería el laberinto in El Salvador during the civil war and its aftermath, now reactivated through laberinto projects, a socially engaged, arts, education and cultural legacy platform, also inspired by her.

Both projects are inextricably bound: preserving her legacy in intimate and public ways reinforces my belief in the power of art to construct a first person narrative that affirms an individual's own history and culture, while galvanizing communities with a sense of collective identity.

Pascale R. Bos

Pulping the Holocaust: The Shape of Early American Holocaust Memory and its Global Reach

Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory—the "intergenerational act of adoption and identification" of the memory of cultural or collective trauma of survivors, by generations born after such trauma—has been a useful framework from which to understand how memories of the Holocaust can move beyond the inner circle of survivors and their families and become part of a broader cultural memory ("Projected Memory" 6). Whereas the model of postmemory is based on familial inheritance, the relationship of children of Holocaust survivors born after the war to the traumatic experiences of their parents, Hirsch argues that postmemory should be seen "as an intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance . . . defined through an identification with the victim or witness of trauma" and "need not be strictly an identity position" ("Surviving Images" 9, 10). Nevertheless, most work on Holocaust postmemory tends to look at this kind of familial or filial postmemory among direct descendants of survivors, among Jewish individuals, and/or within Jewish communities more broadly. With such familial postmemory, figuring out which stories or representations constitute the reservoir of memory from which the postwar generation draws is usually relatively straightforward: much of the narratives and images will be located within the realm of what Jan Assmann calls "communicative memory,"[1] such as family photographs, written stories, or oral narratives (*Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* 56). The

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[1] This term stems from Jan Assmann and refers to memories which are based on the historical experiences of contemporaries. He contrasts (changeable) communicative memory with cultural memory, which are material objectifications of memories considered foundational and thus worth preserving within a particular community, and which are maintained and interpreted by specialists (historians, religious leaders, lawyers, archivists, journalists, and so on) (Assmann *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* 56).

link to the direct experience of the parents is seemingly apparent and somewhat transparent.

Yet, much of Holocaust memory and postmemory resides not within the realm of communicative memory but rather in that of cultural memory. For as Holocaust memory has circulated beyond the boundaries of survivor families, that is, "beyond the actual bounds of lived, remembered experience (and beyond the geographical where the 'real' took place), it seeps into the imaginary of other cultures (and other geographical spaces), as postmemory" as Leslie Morris argues (291).

In the coming decade, as the last survivors pass on, there will be a necessary transition from the primacy of and reliance on cultural rather than communicative memory of the Holocaust. This impending shift is often approached with anxiety as critics fear that what is remembered "can become distorted and shifted to such an extent that the result is closer to fiction than past reality" because cultural memory is geared towards the needs and interests of the cultural group in the present and it tends to be highly selective and constructive (Erll 17). However, as Morris suggests, and as this essay illustrates in some detail, it is not merely the passing of time and of survivors that leads to the transformation of lived memory into cultural memory. Geographical distance has long forced communities far removed from Europe to base their understanding of the Holocaust on imagination more so than on communicative memory.

This process of memory construction by way of imagination already began during the war and has continued in the decades since. I offer here a brief look at one specific case of cultural memory production outside of Europe and analyze the various forces at work in its particular formation. Its contours prove to be revealing and surprisingly provocative. As the form of some of these kinds of memories differs significantly from the canon of memorial forms we are accustomed to and comfortable with, they confront us with one of the sometimes overlooked difficulties inherent in representing the Holocaust, namely that the violent and genocidal acts of the Nazis are in the literal sense of the word sensational: they arouse the senses, they excite. Such excitement can in turn be used to sell a product, and some producers

may choose to emphasize the sensational in these events to heighten the appeal of their product.

Indeed, if one is concerned about the potential for inappropriate, impious, and even potentially exploitative use of such memory in the future, my findings will prove disquieting. As I show, the commercial exploitation of the Holocaust's memory has been a longstanding phenomenon that is far more widespread than we have previously assumed. Yet as it is also a cultural phenomenon that has become more invisible over time, as it has been forgotten—or perhaps "repressed" is the better term—it permeates present-day memorial culture unwittingly. Seventy-five years after the end of WWII, it may prove to be particularly salient to make what has long been mostly invisible, visible again.

This essay investigates specifically how the memory of the Holocaust initially came to circulate as cultural memory in the mid-1950s to mid-1960s in the nation with the largest Jewish community which remained relatively unaffected by the Holocaust: the United States. Whereas in Europe the postwar reservoir of communicative memory of eyewitnesses (the considerable percentage of the population who had seen evidence of or experienced Nazi violence first-hand) would set the tone for postwar discussions of the atrocities, geographic distance from the Nazi killing fields meant that among the U.S. population there was, by necessity, a far greater reliance on media-supported forms of cultural remembrance (historical writing, movies, literature). It is this material that helped bring about early Holocaust consciousness in the U.S. and from which most Americans culled their impressions, which in turn produced a particular kind of postmemory. I show that the media that were central to this U.S. memory are not ones that we typically associate with such a process, such as serious newspaper reports, works of history, memoirs, or documentaries. The latter three would come to gain prominence as sources of memory in the U.S. from the late 1960s on, but until that time, they found remarkably small audiences. Instead, to reach a broader audience beyond survivors or the larger Jewish community, the story of the Holocaust had to be popularized and packaged in very particular ways in order to bridge an imaginative gap far greater for Americans than for

Europeans. What the particular U.S. cultural medium that this essay describes illustrates is that this material, recounted as first-hand memory discourse (such as memoirs by survivors or U.S. soldiers), had to go through a significant transformation to reach a mass audience of any kind.

I lay out how this transformation process took place in the medium of U.S. men's so-called "true adventure" magazines during the period from the late-1950s through the mid-1970s. The extremely successful magazines bridged the geographical and cultural gap of both experience and imagination for American readers by way of a particular kind of packaging which Paula Rabinowitz has called "pulping." This is a practice whereby serious literature "often created for an educated and elite audience" is remediated and redistributed and repackaged in a flashy, titillating fashion to take on new lives to reach a new readership (35). This repackaging in attractive commercial fashion facilitates a so-called "demotic reading" whereby broader audiences are exposed to texts that used to be marked as belonging to, and were aimed at, the cultural elite. Whereas Rabinowitz discusses this phenomenon within the context of the paperback revolution, the magazines apply a similar formula.[2] Both authentic historical narratives and photos of Nazi atrocity more generally and the Holocaust specifically, and fictionalized narratives written up by professional authors (on the basis of historical material), were sold as "true stories," and packaged in dramatic and often intentionally sensationalized fashion. Textually, the standard practice was to add alluring titles, advertisements, and blurbs, and often, entirely invented plotlines. Visually, the stories were accompanied with vivid illustrations and suggestive selection and/or cropping and captioning of photographs.

This seductive but also often seriously misleading packaging facilitated this gruesome and dark history's entry into a wider market and overcame both a relative lack of information and interest, and a reticence on the part of the U.S. audience to purchase material deemed

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[2] Rabinowitz argues that "virtually anything could be pulped…In America, modernism cannot be separated from kitsch, mass culture, vernacular, and other popular forms" (35).

"depressing." What American market forces created in the process was a visual and narrative pulp product unapologetically intended to appeal to the masses by way of titillation in a fashion that today would be deemed a wholly inappropriate treatment for this subject.

As a product that found an enormous mass market audience, these heretofore nearly unknown publications deserve our attention. It is this material that served as a significant reservoir of images and narratives from which early wartime and postwar generations of Americans in part derived their knowledge and understanding of the events during a time period when the Holocaust had not yet come to be understood as a "discrete and coherent event with a distinctive narrative structure and set of moral incitements" (Hartouni 18) with possible "moral universal" implications (Alexander 5). For generations of young Americans (men in particular), they shaped the understanding of what the war and Nazi atrocity were all about, including the crimes that would eventually come to be labeled separately from WWII as "the Holocaust." And as an immensely successful product of popular culture, these particular representations of Nazis and Nazi crimes would also come to influence subgenres of cultural products internationally, and would do so for decades to follow.

Nazis in Men's Adventure Magazines

The so-called "men's true adventure" magazine genre took off in America in the early 1950s and died out by the mid-1970s, thus spanning both the Korean and Vietnam wars.[3] A subgenre of American popular

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[3] Eventually the genre would die a quick and complete death in the 1970s (after their circulation had already dropped precipitously in the mid-1960s) as their audience was lured away by much more sexually explicit magazines with nude photos which became available after anti-pornography censorship laws loosened. By 1980, the genre had entirely disappeared, and by the 1990s it was already forgotten. In great part these magazines remain so today as the medium was per definition disposable (the pulps were printed on poor quality paper that did not preserve well). The magazines are not available in any public archive but instead are primarily in the possession of private collectors. As the issues with the most sensational Nazi covers are most sought after by collectors, they have become prohibitively expensive to procure and examine. My

culture that is now nearly forgotten as it is not housed in any archive, these "postwar pulps" were a unique middle-brow product which reached its height of circulation between 1955 and 1965 with a peak circulation of around twelve million issues a month. Almost one hundred and twenty separate monthly or bi-monthly titles appeared over the course of its twenty-five year existence. Well-known are the titles put out by Magazine Management publishing: STAG, FOR MEN ONLY, MALE, MAN's WORLD.[4] Mixing elements from several earlier pop culture genres, most notably the sensationalist prewar pulp novels, romance, adventure, and horror comic books, and so-called "true crime" magazines, its covers featured large color illustrations of rugged, muscular white men fighting animal or human foe, often while rescuing a "damsel in distress."[5] Inside, the magazines always contained a pin-up, a "real life" exposé, and a variety of so-called "true adventure" stories about men facing (and overcoming) dangerous situations, flanked by self-improvement ads. The magazines prominently featured war stories, as their target audience consisted of (young) American men, in particular active GIs stationed around the

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examination of this material is based on my own personal collection of around 100 magazines and PDF copies from collectors.

[4] While the individual circulations of an issue ranged anywhere from 100-250,000, the large volume of different magazine titles makes for a significant overall circulation of around 12 million a month. The magazines were sold at newsstands, drug stores, military postal exchange ("PX") stores, and supermarkets across the country and through subscription.

[5] For a popular introduction to the history of these magazines, see Oberg and Parfrey. For a nuanced reading of the "no-nonsense brand of ruggedly heterosexual masculinity" the magazines espoused, see Osgerby, "Muscular Manhood" 125-150. Osgerby argues that the over-the-top representations of men and their fight against beast and foe disguised an unease and insecurity about masculinity, the changing role of both men and women in post WWII America and the pressures to conform to a new Cold War ethos of domestic containment which prescribed a breadwinner ethic of masculine self-restraint. In response, the adventure magazines presented a macho, virile, non-conformist rugged male individuality, offering the forbidden fruits of promiscuity, contact with prostitutes, and violence, including violence against women. See also Osgerby "Giving 'Em Hell" 28-49, and Osgerby "Two-Fisted Tales" 163-189.

world, former GIs who fought in WWII or Korea, and those men who never saw action but wished they had.

What sold magazines were unambiguous war narratives of good and evil, stories that highlighted American bravery and ingenuity. As the ongoing Cold War conflicts—in particular Korea and Vietnam—proved decidedly unpopular with readers, the majority of these war stories were set during WWII. This war presented a natural fit as the readers loved stories about clear-cut American heroism and undisputed Nazi or Jap villainy.

While WWII was initially recounted in these magazines mainly through suspenseful battlefield narratives, my research on hundreds of individual issues has uncovered that they are also one of the earliest and most consistent mass culture outlets for representations of Nazi atrocity. And the magazines published such stories during a time period (1957-1965 in particular) of which we usually presume that the extent and nature of the crimes of the Nazis were no longer discussed as publicly as they were immediately after the war. As these kinds of magazines were immensely popular, however, I argue that they need to be understood as an important and thus far entirely overlooked site of dissemination of knowledge, of cultural representations about Nazi brutality more generally and the Holocaust specifically in the U.S.[6] Moreover, since the magazines promised its readers veracity—stories were billed as true and contained authentic historical photographs—they functioned as a medium of memory (Erll 141)[7] and came to shape the later memory and postmemory of the Holocaust in the U.S. in ways that have not been considered before.

The WWII material published in these magazines is strikingly different—in content or packaging, and sometimes in both respects—

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[6] One can also think of the magazines in terms of a "circulation medium," that is, as "collective texts" that create, circulate, and shape cultural memory (as opposed to canonical "cultural texts" which carry normative and formative authority) See Erll 164. Erll bases these distinctions on Assmann (*Religion and Cultural Memory* 104).

[7] The recycled historical material added to the reality effect of this new hybrid product. The photos in particular are powerful as they seem to indexically link the narratives they accompany to the historical events they depict. Erll calls such strategies "hypermediacy" and "remediation" (141).

from the representations of the canon: serious (literary) representations that spoke in a mostly somber tone from the perspective of the Holocaust victim, and that placed the Nazi crimes in the context of European history and culture and avoided sensational or overly graphic details.[8] These popular magazines instead billed the Holocaust as an exciting and graphic event with erotic features. It added an American angle where possible, and depicted its violence in detail as it marketed itself to an audience of men who wanted gritty true stories.

One may wonder how Holocaust narratives (excerpts of survivor memoirs, narratives about Nazi medical experiments, concentration camps, etc.) came to be included among these sensationalized and eroticized stories, and how such stories may have been received. I suspect that the key for their inclusion lays in the peculiarities of the sensationalism of the "true adventure" magazine genre, which sought out "real" stories of explicit and brutal suspense and violence. Editors put a premium on narratives that were new and/or shocking and that had "true" gruesome deeds and evil perpetrators, and preferred those that included female characters. Fitting those criteria, WWII atrocity narratives based on historical accounts or written by actual eyewitnesses were a great source for the editors. Moreover, the unusual historical circumstance of the imprisonment of women in Nazi concentration camps lent itself to adding a potentially eroticized angle to the narratives, either by packaging authentic historical accounts in this fashion, or by having the stories serve as background material for more fictionalized stories written by staff or freelance writers.

Indeed, the general formula for the stories in the "true adventure" genre was that they were based on research but then embellished with an eye towards suspense, the sensational, and the

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[8] Most of these canonical narratives mirrored the production of cultural memory in Western Europe as they were written by survivors from Europe or were translations of texts that had first been published in Europe. Such works shaped the critical reception of Holocaust literature and its preference for serious literature of a testimonial rather than fictional nature, written by survivors or those with close and personal knowledge of the events. This literature is understood to bear witness rather than entertain or produce catharsis in the reader.

erotic. The Nazi stories received the same basic treatment.[9] Many of these Nazi stories (and I estimate the total to be around one thousand) involve one of two or three basic plots. Somewhere in Europe, around late 1944 or early 1945, male Nazis hold one or more women imprisoned as slaves in either a concentration camp or other location and physically (and often also sexually) torture them. Eventually American GIs liberate the victims and avenge the women by brutally killing the Nazis. In a second scenario, female Nazi camp guards—often directly based on notorious historical figures such as Ilse Koch and Irma Grese—are running (or help run) a Nazi POW *Stammlager* camp where they hold American GIs imprisoned and torture them physically, and often sexually. The GIs plot escape and revenge and once they break out, kill their Nazi guards. A third and minor plot variation of the WWII story adds in young scantily dressed women from the local resistance who aid the GIs in defeating the Nazis. Most of these narratives thus contain either a classic "damsel in distress" pulp plot whereby the reader identifies with the muscular male protagonist who rescues the girl from the evil Nazis, or to a "she-devil" plot that titillates in a more illicit, mildly sadomasochistic fashion. Here, the reader derives pleasure from a scenario in which a dominatrix forces male protagonist to sexually perform under the threat of death.

As indecency and censorship laws loosened in the late 1950s and again in the mid-1960s, a few small publishers hoped to cash in on the popularity of the genre by creating ever more racy magazines that today are seen by collectors as a distinct subgenre, the so-called "sweat magazines."[10] In magazines such as these, the stories became

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[9] As a general rule, the larger publishing companies with bigger staff and budget such as Magazine Management (which published twenty separate magazines) made sure that the WWII stories were well researched and written with care, as many had WWII veterans working on the staff, and they took great pride in doing such stories justice. Within the publications of the low budget publishers such as Em-Tee/Reese and Stanley/Normandy, however (who published seven and eighteen different magazines respectively), many of the war and Nazi atrocity stories were in great part or even wholly invented.

[10] Stanley Publication/Normandy Associates and Em-Tee/Reese were the main publishers in this genre. Nearly all their magazines had sensationalist Nazi covers,

increasingly sensationalist and honed in on the more dramatic aspects of Nazi violence: torture, sexual violence, mass atrocities, and on the worst kinds of Nazi criminals, and on increasingly graphic narratives of sadistic sexual acts against women. Notably, many of these stories no longer featured GIs as characters. This means that whereas in the earlier depictions the GI who is fighting for his life and attempts to defend the (sexual) "honor" of a young woman would offer a visual and narrative focal point with whom the American reader could identify, in this more risqué subgenre, the rescuing GIs disappeared from the picture, quite literally. In these so-called "bondage and torture" stories which came to dominate the adventure magazine market, Nazi officers and camp guards were depicted as brutal, sadistic, sexually predatory, and often, perverse villains with which readers could identify if they wished.

Considering both the earlier and these later narratives up close, the particular pulpy, impious, irreverent, and commercial context in which this subject matter is couched is arresting. There is such an obvious clash in perceived genres and registers of the Holocaust narrative and this kind of magazine: high versus low brow culture, serious and somber style and tone versus the sensational and eroticized, art versus commerce. Yet the editors and the readers of these magazines did not seem to experience this same incongruity in the late 1950s and 1960s.[11] Indeed, what is apparent is how absolutely different, yet due to the high frequency of appearance also completely ordinary, these peculiar low brow, sensational, "pulpy" Holocaust presentations were at the time of their publication. Their audience did not seem to consider the packaging inappropriate, or shocking. Indeed, what the postwar explosion of pulp culture—or rather, pulp as a technology—brought about was a cultural landscape in which the boundaries between high

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Em-Tee often with bondage and torture themes. Some examples: *Man's Story, Men Today, World of Men, Man's Book, All Men, Real Men*.

[11] I base this conclusion on my interviews with Bob Deis, one of the major collectors and experts on these magazines, and on interviews I conducted with a number of former editors and illustrators of the adventure magazines (and in one case, with the son of one of the main editors, Bruce Jay Friedman). See Josh Alan Friedman, Clark Dimond, Ted Lewin.

and low blurred, not so as to make low more acceptable, but so as to elevate the low to the level of the ordinary (Rabinowitz 22).

When one analyzes these narratives and illustrations from today's vantage point, however, we find ourselves confronted with the uncomfortable fact that so many of them seem to relish in the depiction of brutal wartime violence. Moreover, quite a few of these stories offer identification with the perpetrating Nazi rather than empathy with the victims, and seem only to only superficially condemn such violence. One wonders what they tell us about the American popular imagination about Nazis and Nazi violence in the late 1950s through the late 1960s. Most notable is the complete lack of reverence for the topic, and in many cases, a seeming lack of sympathy for or identification with the victims of Nazism. The audience here is situated as spectator, onlooker, rather than as a witness.

I argue that what my discovery of this large cache of Nazi atrocity stories in these popular magazines suggests is that while the Holocaust may have circulated in the first postwar decades in the United States within the narrow context of the communicative memory of families of survivors and their interlocutors, it would not become an American cultural memory until it found a broad market by way of its sensationalized, commercialized depiction in the men's adventure magazine. As a commodity that was created by American editors and publishers, these texts thus offer a glimpse into the production of a uniquely American popular memory of the Holocaust. And this Americanization which made the Holocaust relevant, relatable, and "consumable" for a broader U.S. audience took place through the use of a pulp formula. By mixing explicit violence and (less explicit) sex and an emphasis on the sensational, grotesque, and gruesome aspects of WWII and the Holocaust, the Holocaust found its way to a much broader American, mainly male audience. Perhaps this should not surprise us as we live in "a culture obsessed with both [Eros and Thanatos], a culture that has long fatally connected the two—a culture that has grown dependent on their union for commercial and entertainment success" as James Young points out (1781).

What the popularity and wide dissemination of the magazines draw attention to is a complication of the market for the early Holocaust

reception in America. Whereas the Holocaust was available in the U.S. in the late 1940s to early 1960s as a serious object of knowledge by way of a number of memoirs, a few films, and newspaper coverage, low circulation numbers show that it did not find a large audience in this form. In order to produce and market the Holocaust as a story to a broad public beyond the affected Jewish community, authors and publishers needed to find a framework of reference and form and outlet that would suit an audience of Americans who neither experienced the event nor witnessed it first-hand. As the Holocaust was neither part of their personal memory nor of their community's communicative memory, this story had to be made relevant to them, and it had to be commodified. What the success of the Nazi atrocity stories in the magazines suggests is that the pulp formula indeed succeeded in producing Holocaust narratives as a commodity: as an object of desire to be purchased and consumed again and again. As the Nazi stories in these magazines reached an audience of millions, at a time that texts belonging to the canon had not gained any traction and historical scholarship on the Holocaust, too, had a relatively limited audience, these pulp magazines need to be understood as contributing to the shaping of early Holocaust memory in the U.S.[12]

By the 1970s, however, in the wake of the loss of the Vietnam war and the first postwar recession which led to a greater focus inward and on the individual, cultural mores changed in ways that would also

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[12] Early survivor memoirs by Gerda Weisman Klein (1957), Primo Levi (published in the U.S. in 1959), Miklos Nyiszli (1960), and Elie Wiesel (published in the U.S. in 1960) were not widely read till well after 1961. Early memoirs such as Olga Lengyel's *Five Chimneys* (1947), and Gisella Perl's *I was a Doctor in Auschwitz* (1948) cannot even be considered to be part of this early canon as they were not sufficiently widely read at the time of their publication. Even Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* (American edition published in 1952) would only become more widely read after it was adapted for American radio and television audiences and for theatre and film (in 1952, 1955, and 1959, respectively). The scholarly works by survivors Eugen Kogon (1950) and Bruno Bettelheim (1960) only became more well-known at a later date. The one exception here is William Shirer's *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (1959), which sold over a million copies in its first year and was reprinted in *Reader's Digest*. This is a history of the Third Reich rather than a Holocaust history, however.

affect the American understanding and treatment of the Holocaust. Now the survivors and their voices and suffering became the central lens through which to approach the Nazi period, rather than the perpetrators and their crimes, and a new consensus emerged over what constituted the suitable form, content, tone, and outlet for Holocaust representations. The more comprehensive understanding of what the Holocaust meant and the new tendency to identify with the victims, now renamed "survivors," led to a quiet but swift end to the kinds of exploitative depictions found in the magazines.[13] This cultural shift to an appropriate cultural memory of the Holocaust—properly focused on the victims and their pain—shaped expectations of literary critics, Holocaust scholars, and the general audience. The resulting formation of a Holocaust canon made serious Holocaust representations more visible, but would exclude difficult-to-classify popular material such as these magazines that disappeared from public view.

Yet I argue that looking at the unorthodox content and/or form of these earlier products enables us to get a sense of the contours of alternative media of memory, and the narrative forms, interpretations, and genres that since seem to have disappeared, but that have left traces both in popular mass culture and in underground genres both in the U.S. and internationally.[14] There is, for instance, a clear and direct connection between the adventure magazines and the "Stalagim," the short Israeli erotic pulp novels that appeared from 1961-1964. My research suggests that many of the plotlines of these Israeli pulps are directly based on (or plagiarized from, if you will) the American men's adventure magazines (and then expanded upon for length), and even the covers are often direct copies of the American adventure magazines. This means that the Stalagim do not represent an original Israeli

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[13] Thus, we have moved in the U.S. from the 1940s and 1950s during which reader identification was primarily focused on the experience of soldiers—in particular American GIs—to a fascination with Nazi criminals from the 1950s on, increased by ongoing Nazi trials which lasted well into the 1970s, after which, for the next thirty years the perspective of the victims has dominated.

[14] I borrow this concept of the trace from Sybille Krämer, who suggests that while the particular transformative role of the medium usually remains hidden from an audience, each medium nevertheless leaves a trace in the message it conveys (51).

product as is usually assumed,[15] but rather a transcontinental echo of the unorthodox treatment of the subject in these American magazines. The Nazisploitation cinema of the late 1960s and 1970s, first emerging in Italy, but subsequently expanding into an international genre, also takes stories and tropes from the men's magazines, now blowing them up to their pornographic extreme. Perhaps it is no wonder that we discuss such exploitative genres as if they emerged in isolation, rather than understanding them as an outgrowth of what once was a widely read, culturally acceptable form of Holocaust pulp!

Conclusion

The implications that the (re-)discovery of this genre of representation hold for a discussion of American Holocaust postmemory are considerable. As suggested earlier, postmemory is not merely based on communicative memory, on authentic artifacts available in survivor families. On the contrary, far more Americans, Jewish or not, encountered the stories of the Holocaust within products of American popular culture such as these magazines, rather than the more serious material we usually associate with the canon. As an immense reservoir of readily available narratives and images, this particular, peculiar, problematic material needs to be understood as constituting part of the early cultural memory of the Holocaust. These publications became, as it were, part of a Holocaust unconscious.[16] Because this genre has been so thoroughly forgotten, however, we continue to be surprised when elements of sensationalism show up in more established products of mass culture. We also fail to make the connection between these

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[15] See for instance Amit Pinchevski and Roy Brand, "Holocaust Perversions."

[16] Walter Benjamin coined the term "the optical unconscious" in his 1931 essay on photography to refer to the technical capability of photography to make visible phenomena previously imperceptible to the human eye because they occur too fast or are too small to be seen. Photography "makes aware for the first time the optical unconscious just as psychoanalysis discloses the instinctual unconscious" (7). The magazines created the material conditions through which the Holocaust could be made visible (as a violent spectacle directed at male readers) and they were subsequently forgotten/repressed as having done so when other forms of Holocaust memory emerged.

publications and underground genres such as the "Stalag" pulp novels and Nazi exploitation cinema. This genre of magazine and the particular form of Holocaust memory it produced thus complicates the notion that later "impious" forms of Holocaust representation emerged in isolation from each other and can only be understood in their respective national contexts. Research on this American genre suggests that these later representations are in fact part of a transcontinental movement of (an unorthodox form of) cultural (post-) memory of the Holocaust originally produced in the United States.

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Riccardo Capoferro

Déuxieme génération and *Maus*:
The Visual Style of the Second Generation

As from the publication of *Maus* in 1986 and 1991, the ethical implications of aesthetic representation have become of crucial relevance across a broad range of media and discourses that center on the Holocaust. In the awareness of critics and theorists, the death camp has become the touchstone of all narrative languages, a quasi-unspeakable object that calls into question their techniques and purposes. Holocaust representation and fictionalization have posed a number of problems, sparking discussion and criticisms, most of which have thrown into relief the dangers of an unreflective aesthetic consumption. Two examples of highly problematic – and hotly debated – Holocaust stories suggest themselves: *Schindler's List*, considered "kitsch" by many, and Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*, which Art Spiegelman has defined "meretricious."[1] In what follows I will discuss, in particular, how these issues bear on a graphic memoir published in 2012, *Déuxieme génération*, by Israeli artist Michel Kichka, Belgian born. As the title of this memoir shows, *Déuxieme génération* does not focus on the Holocaust itself, but on its aftermath, namely, on the peculiar experience of the children of Holocaust survivors, both in post-war years and today. This work falls, therefore, into the discursive field of postmemory, theorized by Marianne Hirsch to define second-generation narratives of the Holocaust and epitomized by *Maus* itself,

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[1] On *Schinder's List* and "kitsch," see Rina Dudai, *Pain and Pleasure in Poetic Representations of the Holocaust*, in Amos Goldberg, Haim Hazan, *Marking Evil: Holocaust Memory in the Global Age* (Berghahn Books, 2015), pp. 233-265. Spiegelman has expressed his view of *Life is Beautiful* in *MetaMaus* (Phantom Books, 2011), p. 70. The precursor of all debates on the representability of the Holocaust is, of course, T. W. Adorno, whose statement about the barbarism of poetry after Auschwitz has been quoted and discussed many times.

now a standard post-memorial work.[2] Taking my cue from Hirsch, I will highlight how *Déuxieme génération* makes an original contribution to the literature of postmemory, stimulating the feedback loop between theory and texts which has marked the emergence and subsequent use of the category.

Focusing on the difficult relationship between Michel Kichka and his father, Auschwitz survivor Henri Kichka, *Déuxieme génération* explores a realm of experience that goes far beyond World War II and its direct aftermath. It strives towards an aesthetic memory in light of which the Holocaust is not only a specific historical event, but also a long-term, intergenerational, ongoing disruption. In her study, Hirsch has specifically focused on the impact of the Holocaust on the second generation, foregrounding family dynamics and the intergenerational transmission of trauma. Hirsch refers to the work of psychoanalysts that have investigated the identification of children with their parents and their perpetual re-enactment of trauma. Discussing this phenomenon and its aesthetic impact, she writes that "for postmemorial artists the challenge is to define an aesthetic based on a form of identification and projection that can include the transmission of the bodily memory of trauma without leading to the self-wounding and retraumatization that is rememory."[3] Kichka's work with narrative and family memory can be understood especially in light of this pattern of experience, which centers on trauma as an inter-generational phenomenon. However, it also shows a way in which family trauma is overcome. *Déuxieme génération* is concerned not so much with seeking "identification and projection" as with the need of the second generation to achieve a safe distance from trauma, to objectify the impact and the emotional

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[2] See Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (Columbia University Press, 2012). Hirsch's theoretical work took shape as a response to *Maus*: see her "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory", in "Discourse", vol. 15, no. 2, Special Issue: The Emotions, Gender, and the Politics of Subjectivity (Winter 1992-93), pp. 3-29.

[3] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, p. 86. The aesthetic representation of the Holocaust has been a main concern of trauma studies. See, in particular, Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Cornell University Press, 1994).

consequences of the Holocaust, to sympathize with the previous generation without taking the burden of "identification and projection." This concern, I will argue, can also be found at the level of graphic representation. In a self-reflexive fashion, *Déuxieme génération* seeks to achieve an aesthetic approach to memory, both individual and familial, that is meant to combine empathy and detachment.[4] This happens both at the level of story – that is, in the narrative of Michel Kichka's self-development – and at the level of discourse, the visual style of *Déuxieme generation* striking a balance between a mimetic and an anti-mimetic representation with a view to regulating emotional identification.

Reflecting on itself, its formal texture and its models, *Déuxieme génération* shows ways in which established techniques of representation can be adjusted to articulate the experience – both emotional and cultural – and the ethical dilemmas of the second generation. To do so, it also engages in a conversation with *Maus*. Kichka uses and acknowledges the model established by Spiegelman while at the same time breaking new representational ground. Going back to *Maus* as a foundational, seminal work, it builds a postmemorial discourse, highlighting its historicity and plasticity. *Déuxieme génération* picks up, moreover, questions that *Maus* has largely contributed to shaping, which concern the possibility of representing the Holocaust in media culture. These questions were raised by Adorno in his oft-quoted aphorism on poetry after Auschwitz and have resonated with increasing strength both in works of art and in literary, historical, and anthropological studies. As many commentators have highlighted, Spiegelman's approach to the representation of the Holocaust rearticulated the issues at stake and offered its own distinctive solution to them by incapsulating the reflection on representation into representation itself. With this move – which made

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[4] My use of "empathy" draws from reflections on the term that have marked Holocaust studies. "Empathy" – a concept that has replaced the idea of "sympathy," crucial in 18th century thinking – has been particularly useful to define both the transmission of trauma and the (sometimes necessary, sometimes pathological) persistence of pain in the aftermath of the Holocaust. See Carolyn Janice Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* (Cornell University Press, 2004).

the metafictional devices of postmodern narratives ethically significant[5] – Spiegelman made an important contribution to the aesthetic discourse on the Holocaust, one that has become more and more relevant as the Holocaust has gradually turned from a lived to a mediated experience: Spiegelman's seminal work captured the problems raised by a waning traumatic past, by the transformation of experience into history.

The first and most obvious meta-representational meaning of *Maus* arises, needless to say, out of Spiegelman's decision to use anthropomorphous animals to depict the Germans and the Jews. This solution has a wide range of implications, the most apparent of which being the idea that a search for absolute realism is neither possible not ethically sound. Spiegelman's anthropomorphous figures, by whose means comic-books figures – most notably Disney characters – are put to a new use, alert us to the flaws of what we may call "naive realism". These flaws consist, first and foremost, in cultivating an unreliable illusion of impersonality, the deceptive sense that an extreme experience like the Holocaust can be recuperated and narrated from a completely neutral, disinterested viewpoint. Spiegelman's style debunks easy claims to realism, foregrounding that the attempts to narrate the Holocaust cannot rely on conventional, run-of-the-mill languages that claim to be objective. *Maus* suggests that narrators that are genuinely committed to historical fidelity should choose to situate themselves and lay bare their tools. In *Maus,* especially in *Maus II,* the post-modern penchant for meta-fictionality is turned, therefore, into a meta-narrative attitude that encompasses the relation between historical experience, both public and private, and aesthetic form. At the most visible level, this meta-narrative dimension is implied by Spiegelman's use of mice and cats, figures that are allegorically and metaphorically connected to the past and at same time appear heavily stylized. But it is also made

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[5] On this, see Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (Routledge, 1988). Hutcheon has also investigated the relation between *Maus* and the postmodern aesthetic: see Linda Hutcheon, "Postmodern Provocation: History and 'Graphic' Literature," *La Torre: Revista de la Universidad de Puerto Rico,* 2.4-5 (1997): 299-308.

apparent, in *Maus II*, by overtly meta-narrative sequences that have become landmarks in the history of the medium. At one point, for example, the Art character reflects on how to represent characters that are not Jewish. In another panel, he shows himself working on *Maus* on a heap of corpses, thereby suggesting that his achievement, which is also a commercial one, has been made possible by his use of the past. These sequences bring to the fore, and push further, the reflection on narrative that informs *Maus* throughout (*Maus II* 11; 41). Exploiting to its fullest the status of comics as a non-canonical art form, Spiegelman has established a new model. The non-canonicity of graphic narratives has made it easier for him to use a great range of styles, especially popular styles. As he has stressed in *MetaMaus*, *Maus* draws from a great variety of sources, such as Disney cartoons, the satiric strips by Harvey Kurtzman – a powerful influence on Spiegelman – and the racist propaganda of Nazi Germany, which portrayed Jews as vermin (*MetaMaus* 114-115; 189). In *Maus*, aesthetic hierarchies are not shattered, they are simply ignored, because they do not serve Spiegelman's purpose.

The pattern set by *Maus* also informs Michel Kichka's work. In *Déuxieme génération*, dealing with the Holocaust and its aftermath means making visible choices at the level of graphic and narrative style. As in *Maus*, in *Déuxieme génération* the narrative language raises questions about its relation to historical experience and brings to the fore the historical and emotional position on which representation depends. This language, moreover, turns out to be itself psychologically and affectively significant. As the character of Michel Kichka gradually comes to terms with his father's experience as an Auschwitz survivor, we find a correlation between Kichka's visual style and the view of the past that his character has finally developed. The narrative, both story and discourse, appears to be the outcome of a long emotional and cognitive process, of a work through trauma, memory, and artistic expression. This correlation also involves the body of visual culture that Kichka's style both quotes and reworks, with an archival recuperation that defines his own – and his generation's – experience in visual terms.

As in *Maus* , the backbone of the narrative is a relation between father and son, in particular Michel Kichka's difficult relationship with his father, who stands out as the other main figure of the memoir. Henri Kichka is an incisive though at the same time elusive character, his diminutive figure casting a shadow on the entire narrative. Henri is obviously defined by his status as a survivor. Initially, however, he looks eccentric rather than compulsive. But his past looms large in the life of his family. When Michel is a kid, Henri occasionally tells him and his siblings anecdotes about Auschwitz. Moreover, his body carries the marks of the death camp: his toes are twisted by the long marches in the ice with wooden clogs in Buchenwald. Henri enjoys special privileges in the family, a constant and tacit reminder of what he went through and a cause of emotional distance from his four children. The narrative suggests that he is absorbed in his undisclosed memories. He and his wife run a clothing store, and he spends hours alone, in the back, compiling the price labels. Retrospectively, Michel imagines that his father was sharing the room with the haunting memories of the camp (Kichka 22).   Henri Kichka's inner life seems inaccessible, with *Déuxieme génération* fully embracing Michel's limited, questioning point of view. The narrative traces his carefree school years and his growing interest in art and comic books. It also shows how his Jewish background came to condition his personal life. This line of events, however, is never distinct from the story of his family and of his father, whose emotional seclusion raises in readers expectations of, and desire for, change. *Déuxieme génération* builds narrative interest by showing parallel lines of character development and suggesting that these lines may cross sooner or later, with Michel and his father finally connecting. In fact, much like his son, Henri Kichka undergoes visible changes. Later in his life, after retiring, he begins to publicly share his memories. Like other survivors, he crafts for himself the role of witness. He writes a memoir and begins to release interviews and accompany school groups to Auschwitz. Even at this stage, however, Henri cannot establish a relationship with his children, being wholly invested in his public identity as a survivor. This is expressed by a panel in which Henri and Michel's backs are turned against each other, and the lettering inside

the former's balloon is made with typeset characters, which convey the public-oriented nature of his narratives (Kichka 57).

By showing the disjunct trajectories of Michel's and his father's and bringing into focus the long-term emotional impact of the Holocaust, *Déuxieme génération* implies that Henri Kichka's experience took a toll on family life. In its climactic episode, this becomes manifest. Inexplicably, Michel's younger brother, Charly, commits suicide. This event is a blind spot in the narrative. At the beginning, no one really understands Charly's reasons. Michel, who lives now in Israel with his own family, feels hurt and guilty. A few months later, he receives a letter in which Charly has revealed his pain and feeling of inadequacy. Significantly, the letter is exposed by way of a quick summary: much remains unspoken. The few clues the narrative discloses, however, suggest that Charly's suicide was, to a certain extent, a result of Henri Kichka's experience in the death camp. Shortly after Charlie's death, his siblings trace it back to Michel's father's trauma, and on the night of the funeral the death of Charly has the effect of awakening Henri Kichka's memories, which become the object of a long, relentless tale. The death of his son seems to have reminded him many other deaths, Auschwitz being the epitome of all human pain. This response fully expresses Henri Kichka's failure to overcome the burden of his past: unable to mourn his son, he has to go back to his years in the death camp, re-living them, with the logic of re-memory typical of post-traumatic stress disorder. Concomitantly, it shows connection between Auschwitz and Charly's death, because Henri equates his son with those who found their end in the camp.

The narrative does not provide any conclusive truth on Charly, although his suicide constitutes a turning point, being also mentioned on the back cover. Kichka's purpose is not to rationalise his brother's decision. His purpose is, instead, to stake out a realm of experience that may make the public more deeply aware of the aftermath of the Holocaust while at the same time showing, and valuing, a path that leads away from traumatic memories. It is significant that towards the end, during a dinner, all the family members joke about the horrors of Auschwitz. At this point, Michel and his father, who will die shortly

afterwards, seem closer. They can share the memories of Auschwitz, but also look at them from a distance.

The path that leads away from trauma entails a quest for form, one that takes its cue from *Maus* but ventures into new ground. *Déuxieme génération* also traces how Michel manages to find a suitable language for the story of his family: a process that, as in Spiegelman's own case, is eased by a therapist. Michel's attitude towards family memory ultimately results in a narrative and, inseparably, in the definition of a formal approach, of a visual style whose affective presuppositions can be identified in retrospect, going back to the story after its ending. The epilogue of *Déuxieme génération* shows Michel working hectically and, on the final page, fully enjoying his artistic self-expression. What we have just read can therefore be re-framed as the result of an emotional elaboration, of a need to aesthetically re-organize past experience.

The ending invites an understanding of the self-consciously cartoonish style of *Déuxieme génération* as a tool to strike a balance between empathy – mimesis – and distance – anti-mimesis – and at the same time capture, in terms that are both cultural and emotional, the generational identity of Michel, the private history of *Déuxieme génération* also showing its public meaning. Significantly, this style does not entail breaking with the past. The narrative provides the history of its own visual language, which is a familial, inter-generational one. It appears to be the result of a fruitful exchange between Michel and his father, of a legacy of humorous detachment. Focusing on his early years, Michel dwells on his father's gift for drawing. After the war, in a sanatorium, Henri resumed to draw, making caricatures of Nazi characters. He kept sketching these caricatures even when Michel was a kid, passing on him his love for comics and laying the ground for his future work (Kichka 38).

Both the ending of *Déuxieme génération* and this episode of family transmission activate, in hindsight, a metanarrative subtext. They foreground a continuity between the style of *Déuxieme génération* and the long process of self-analysis that has led Michel Kicka out of the shadow of his father's trauma. But metanarrativity operates at many other levels, such as the intertextual one. Kichka's

work engages in conversation with *Maus*, explicitly mentioned in the narrative: Michel tries to convince his father of the importance of Spiegelman's work, although to no avail, and on a wall of his office there is a poster representing the cover of *Maus* (Kichka 81-82; 60). The focus on the second generation coalesces, moreover, by means of a well-established device of comic books, already adopted and re-inflected by Spiegelman. *Maus* makes use of diagrams and captions to provide exhaustive and clear descriptions of the camp (*Maus* 110). Kichka applies this device to his own private world. He uses it to describe his and his brother's room, magnifying details of their childhood (Kichka 63). In doing so, he suggests that their lives too have value as narrative objects, although they have experienced trauma only indirectly. It is precisely by virtue of the connection between *Déuxieme génération* and Maus that Kichka's captions acquire this meaning. In evoking *Maus*, Kickha aims both at contributing to the narrative discourse initiated by Spiegelman and to push it in a new direction.

References to *Maus*, however, are not meant to take center stage. They appear to be part of a broader field of allusions, gesturing towards a history that is both private and communal. In *Déuxieme generation*, metanarrativity functions as a tool to define Kichka's – and the second generation's – identity. Self-consciously, *Déuxieme génération* is informed by the experience of those who were born after WWII and lived in a different period and a different culture. Kichka's visual quotations throw into relief his models, which are also the objects of his childhood memories. He highlights the Belgian comic strips he used to read, which shaped his own style as a cartoonist: Tintin, Gaston Lagaffe, the Smurfs. The cartoon characters young Michel loved appear in many panels, bringing to the fore his loving appropriation of the comic book culture of his childhood years (Kichka 16; 17; 30; 48).

Concentrating on those who belong to the second generation also means, however, showing their sense of a larger history. It means, more specifically, showing's one concern with the past as a mediated object. In keeping with the self-consciousness that characterizes the depiction of death camps in *Maus*, Kichka shows that history does not exist independently, especially when it comes to private lives. Memory is either a burden that conditions daily actions or a set of affective

responses to the past bound up with an individual viewpoint. While Kichka avoids embarking on an objective reconstruction of the past, he deems it necessary and useful to strive towards the terrifying otherness of the Nazi regime. He makes use of splash pages with iconic, allegorical images, at times reminiscent of propaganda and advertising posters, which appear shaped by his visual sensibility (Kichka 9; 54). Much like Spiegelman, Kichka is also committed to historical truth, and provides reminders that the persistence of history is empirically verifiable. His cartoonish style leaves room for the traces of a lost world, for a past which can in part can be recuperated by means of documentary evidence. His style accommodates photographs, apparently closer to history than self-reflexive graphic reconstructions (Kichka 11). Both Spiegelman and Kichka remind readers of the fact that skepticism and self-reflexivity should not lead us to forget that documents are the cornerstones of collective memory.

As I have shown, *Déuxieme génération* engages in a conversation with *Maus* to strengthen and at the same time elaborate on what, elaborating on Marianne Hirsch's theory, we may call the graphic discourse of postmemory. And it provides an important contribution to this discourse. *Déuxieme génération* uses, and values, a language that may express the post-traumatic experience of the second generation while also capturing its distinctive identity, both emotional and cultural. At the levels of story and discourse, the narrative brings to the fore the cultural materials out of which has been built, sketching a genealogy that is personal, communal, and aesthetic. The metanarrative dimension of *Déuxieme génération* has, at the same time, far-ranging ethical implications. Dealing with the Holocaust and its effects from the point of view of the second generation, one is bound to use aesthetic devices, which constitute a powerful, maybe the most powerful, technology for remembering. What kind of style can one use, however? Kichka's work suggests that an aesthetic balance can and should be achieved between empathy and distance, identification and detachment, the past and an ongoing present. In *Déuxieme génération*, this search for balance appears to have been sparked by *Maus*'s self-reflexive use of its medium. But influence does not constitute a source of anxiety: *Déuxieme génération* presupposes *Maus* and builds on its

achievements, suggesting that memory is an ever-expanding polyphony, and that narratives, as well as people, can help each other.

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Francesca Pangallo

Antinarrative Memory: Primo Levi's Impossibility of Romance

The dichotomy between fiction and reality has always been at the core of literary investigation. Recently, reality has established a new type of supremacy in relationship with what was considered pure fictional narration. Holocaust stories represent good examples of a real historical account which led contemporary authors to use a new approach in storytelling (Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*). As a literary genre characterized by fictional contents, romance has evolved in its declination after WWII: in contemporary narrations, postmodern contents can employ real standards the same way imaginative forms were employed in the past.

At the same time, both the Holocaust and the concept of history have been explored within a new theoretical frame in the second half of the 21st century: there is on one side what Anna Bravo called "the historiographical 'discovery' of the Shoah" (18) from the late 1950s onwards and, on the other, history as a discipline which has been re-discovered as mere "textual knowledge" (Currie 88), more than scientific content. History-narration follows similar plot schemes and shares the same composition norms which make it a discipline closer to literature – "history and literature are discourses which construct rather than reflect, invent rather than discover, the past" (88).

Specifically, in the case of Holocaust literature, historical deeds already provide most of the elements Northrop Frye claimed to be necessary for writing a powerful, engaging piece of fiction. Holocaust stories give a wide spectrum of characterization assets since "the romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes" (304): in general, protagonists and antagonists have a complex but defined outlook when it comes to describing the Jewish and Nazi counterparts. This specific point constitutes a key remark for the core of the present investigation:

in order to understand why Primo Levi's fiction spreads from an *anti-narration* type of memory (which means his record of the Genocide develops against the traditional features of romance), it is necessary to analyze first what postmemorial Holocaust narrations look like in terms of content and style, so as to highlight Levi's narrative choices according to what type of memory the Holocaust represents for its victims.

In the 21st century, postmemory literary works mark a clear change in interpreting Holocaust-related testimony since many writers have overcome the impossibility of narrating Holocaust events: seventy years ago, the same events were extremely hard for Holocaust survivors to recount. Among the most recent cases, Javier Cercas' novel about Enric Marco – a liar who for years pretended to be a Holocaust survivor only to be unmasked by a historian in 2005 – represents an interesting example of a postmemorial fictional statement. After Marco's fraud was revealed, Cercas chose to narrate Marco's life in his 2014 novel *El impostor* (*The Impostor*), as he claimed Marco represented the perfect model of a fictional character: his personal life experience matches with conventional rules of romance and storytelling, even though Marco is nothing but a man who lied to himself and to everyone around him.

In the last chapter of *El impostor*, Cercas cites Primo Levi to address the lesson of *If This Is a Man* in reference to moral judgment towards his protagonist, Enric Marco. Cercas' "novela sin ficción" (literally a novel 'without the use of fiction') seeks to find its closure and its reconciliation – narrative, moral, and structural – with the support of one of the strongest accounts published over the 20th century in Holocaust testimony. All the ethical and emotional problems of Levi's narrative legacy are presented and kept in Cercas' book, even if the typology of novels and characters described by each author contrast with one another.

First, the reader must proceed with caution when considering the words "memory," "novel," and "character" in this context. Despite the fact that postmemorial literature uses different character experiences and narrative techniques, it does not clash with preceding literary representations of the Holocaust. Since postmemorial literature, like Cercas' *El impostor*, draws from the form and even quotes predecessors

like Levi, there is a link, a continuum, and not a fracture between two literary representations of one historical event. Postmemorial authors look for a conjunction with Holocaust testimony accounts, as they still recognize the importance of the witness's voice, both ethically and narratologically. It is as if postmemorial literature seeks legitimation from its literary predecessors, including Levi, for whom it would have been impossible to think that someone like Marco could imagine participating in the greatest misfortune of history, and just as implausible that someone like Cercas could successfully write about it.

In *El impostor*, Cercas cites William Faulkner as a reminder that it is not only the past that does not pass, but it is perhaps also difficult to classify literature into new and old, when memory and postmemory are concerned. The forms of romance have evolved and so has the notion of Auschwitz as it has taken on new cultural meaning. The concentration camp is now a social idea and Holocaust literature has taken new roads: contemporary writers attempt new solutions and direct them to a different humanity which can now sit comfortably as reader of the same events that once were a suffering for both the survivor and the listener. The main reason that distinguishes Levi's work from other Holocaust testimonies resides in its compositional time and features. Levi witnessed, then wrote about a precise historical moment *in* a precise historical moment when the Holocaust had not yet found its own name – in part, this explains Levi's struggle to find at first a major publisher willing to purchase his first and most acclaimed book —*If This Is a Man*.

Thanks to his particular narrative dimension and linguistic ability, Levi digested and offered to the public the account of a past more than ever present in the years in which he wrote. He was able to create a canon which today we continue to read and narrate in different forms of fiction, experimenting and expanding the very categories of romance. And yet, it is fair to say that Levi too – indeed Levi first – composed and defined a specific form of literary account suitable to expose his content, and within which to move his characters. To maintain that the pages of his books are only testimony or only narrative is clearly a partial and improper judgment. Instead, an extremely fluid dimension of the narrative emerges from his pages and anecdotes: an

emotional involvement in the story together with a clear resistance to romance from the purest and properly understood forms of the literary canon – at least from that of the mid-20th century.

Take the category of character, for example: Enric Marco is described throughout *El impostor* as a bold Don Quixote who dared to mark his untruthful existence not within the narrative dimension, but in factual reality. He is therefore the nemesis, in a certain sense, of so many of Levi's anti-heroes: of all the comrades mentioned in *The Truce*, of all "the saved" but also of all "the drowned" to whom Levi has tried to give a voice – indeed, *The Drowned and the Saved* expanded from being a single chapter inside *If This Is a Man* to the main title of his last and most philosophical work. Precisely because they are witnesses, Levi's characters needed an author who, as a survivor, restored their voice through narrative. These fictional figures, derived from real people and their stories, act in a literary space without abusing their fictional features. However, since these accounts are about real humans not being treated as humans, the reader is morally impacted with a stronger sense of sympathy. Because of this exception, Levi's characters surpass a standard structure used in other narrative examples which adhere to the peculiar storytelling practices of traditional romance – as the typical *idealization* of life in romance fiction (Frye 151-158).

The characters to whom Levi attributed the vicissitudes that took place in the concentration camp are real and romantic at the same time, but there is a profound difference between them and Enric Marco. While they subsist as characters in the narrative dimension, the reader remembers their reality and perceives an extra-fictional element beyond their characterization: this is possible because Levi's novelistic form is also testimony– it is a justified narration of the transmission of events. As Mario Barenghi pointed out, "the equilibrium that characterizes Levi's masterpiece is the product of a narrative strategy based on a precise economy of memory" (26). Without the author's necessity of writing, Cesare and the Greek Mordo Nahum of *The Truce* would probably never have been characters of a book. They do not have "narrative potentiality," they are not samples of extraordinary human beings that should therefore be rewarded, leading them to break through the barrier between reality and fiction and becoming literary

champions of romance. This is instead the case of our Don Quixote–
Enric Marco.

Marco represents the perfect romantic character because of his
kitsch tendency to manipulate real facts and documents in order to feed
his ego of superhuman and supernatural contexts. "El kitsch histórico
es una mentira histórica" (Cercas 188): while Levi avoided false
narcissistic portrait-types in his characters, the protagonist of
postmemorial works became a different character compared to those of
memory fiction. He performs, in effect, as a post-character in this
horizon of meaning: he is an heir, an epigone on both generational and
narrative levels compared to all the human types presented by Primo
Levi.

In particular, we must also reflect upon what account the
character should transmit to the reader. The historian Tzvetan
Todorov remarked how the simple remembrance of an evil past does
not protect from its return. The warning should be addressed always
with "instructions for use" ("istruzioni per l'uso;" my trans.; 49). If the
key purpose of Levi's testimony is, therefore, the prevention of the
return, individual memory and collective memory must merge into a
dimension of historical memory that protects human beings from the
return of evil. In order to do this, the reader needed directions from the
author, who had to be always careful in not exceeding with moral
judgment or ambiguous definitions of facts and behaviors.

Levi sought a compromise with this narrated matter by
adapting his historical report to the rules of fiction (we have a
beginning, an epilogue, a development, a dense interweaving of good
and bad characters in various degrees). He also needed to adjust his
non-fictional content to the constraints of objectivity and historical
impartiality in order to make the narrative suitable for a legitimate
moral judgment. Levi looked for a model of superior romance so that
the upside-down tale of the Holocaust could transmit not only a
marvelous yet visceral sense of horror, but most importantly a moral
lesson: without placing victims and oppressors within fixed categories
– there is a *grey zone* (Levi 2430) – Levi analyzed the results of Nazism
and blind intolerance, yet never mixed the two groups (Todorov 49).

It is important not to misunderstand, justify, or even deny the events related to the Holocaust– which was one attitude taken by Holocaust denying theses for example during the 1970s. Before remembering past events, and especially in order to give an accurate and lasting account of what transpired, it was essential to understand what rules managed memory when writing for those present and for posterity. Back at that time, it also felt crucial to comprehend the effects oral or written testimony could have on those who did not participate in the "gigantic biological and social experiment" named "Lager" (Levi 82).

In ordinary usage, memory is instinctively associated with the experience of the single human being; its function was traditionally connected to the record of either a shared or individual episode. Since almost all the direct witnesses have died and, as a consequence, it is now very rare to experience direct memory of the Genocide, scholars are inclined to speak of "postmemory" with regard to Holocaust testimony: those authors who did not directly experience the Nazi genocide are still entitled to compose meaningful narration to support Holocaust memory in present times. However, immediately after World War II and throughout the 20th century, the definition of memory itself encountered several obstacles. First, it was unclear whether memory was a disposition ruled by the unconscious or human intellect. Second, there was no full understanding of how memory could relate in a collective way out of the individual's own record of an event.

The concept of "collective memory" was coined by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs during the first half of the 20th century. Starting from Henri Bergson's duality of the concepts of memory as both a "habit" and an "image" (*Matière et mémoire* 1896), Halbwachs developed his analysis by multiplying and overturning the Bergsonian perspective of memory: Halbwachs outlined the possibility of memory as a collective idea, where remembrance might be a plural and shared entity before and rather than an individual record. This relocation of memory necessarily rebounds towards another problem: what is the collocation of the individual as a participant of a certain social time and therefore of a specific collective memory? According to Halbwachs, remembering coincides with the act of producing a 'group' memory:

"nos souvenirs demeurent collectifs, et ils nous sont rappelés par les autres ... nous portons toujours avec nous et en nous une quantité de personnes qui ne se confondent pas" (6).

If the act of remembering must be placed within the parameters of a collective segment of thinking rather than of an individual experience, we should necessarily clarify that history and memory, or rather, *historical* memory and *collective* memory, remain two distinct concepts. History differs from memory since the latter, by being collective, is valid for a group and within the limits of the group itself: that is to say that when the group is dismembered, when its representatives die or, as the group of Holocaust witnesses, no longer share the same memories with another group (which for example may be the next generation) that specific memory content becomes inactive, in a sense: "L'histoire, qui se place hors des groupes et au-dessus d'eux, n'hésite pas à introduire dans le courant des faits des divisions simples, et dont la place est fixée une fois pour toutes. Elle n'obéit pas, ce faisant, qu'à un besoin didactique de schématisation" (Halbwachs 46).

Primo Levi agrees with Halbwachs in seeing an irrepressible tendency to schematize facts in history. In the chapter "The Grey Zone" of *The Drowned and the Saved*, as a foreword to the key notion of the "grey zone" itself, we read:

> Have we survivors succeeded in understanding and making other people understand our experience? What we commonly mean by the verb "to understand" coincides with "to simplify" ... We tend to simplify history, too ... our need to divide the field between "us" and "them" is so strong ... that this one scheme, the friend-enemy dichotomy, prevails over all others. The *desire* for simplification is justified: simplification itself not always ... The network of human relationships inside the concentration camps was not simple: it could not be reduced to two blocs, victims and persecutors. (2430-2431)

Dividing the evil from the good may seem apparently immediate and legitimate, especially in a context where one group has acted rationally in the direction of the extermination of another, yet Levi

instead warns us against this simplification: "anyone with sufficient experience of human affairs knows that the distinction (which a linguistic would call opposition) between good and bad fate is optimistic and enlightened" (2423). Even if only those who perished – the drowned – had fully experienced the Holocaust, Primo Levi's 'incomplete' journey inside the concentration camp represents a more complex issue to solve. According to both the author and the witness, there is absolutely no benefit in trivially dissolving the twisted-reality of the camps in the watershed of 'good and bad guys,' like in a Western movie.

While it is better to speak rather than to be silent, it is preferable to give testimony of the Holocaust considering the limits and grey areas that still linger in the history of the camps. The "grey zone" makes it impossible for the audience to issue a sentence that appeals to the conceptual extremes of right and wrong, positive and negative as inherited slants of post-Enlightenment Europe. "Human memory is a wonderful but fallible instrument" and this is "a hackneyed truth" (Levi 2420). Our memories are not always reliable when recalled at a different time: there is a further increasing complexity in considering the reports of both the victims and the perpetrators who passed through the Nazi camps. "The truth about the Lagers came to light over a long road and through a narrow door" (2602) said Levi. By the end of 1944, that truth had been subjected to either physical repression of witnesses or to a psychological removal by both Jewish and Nazi survivors, since their shared past, by being never dead (as Faulkner claimed), was too heavy, too present to recall.

Before becoming postmemory, individual memory passed through the bond of collective memory, which is the agent responsible for transmitting a specific historical memory that Levi defined as "memory of the offense" (2420). The memory of the offense branches off in two directions: the one of those who offended and that of those who were offended. However, the reader should keep in mind that the concentration camp experience twisted memory skills to the point that, as Levi argues, "we are dealing here with a paradoxical analogy between victim and oppressor" (2421). Who offended is a liar, and "in the act of lying he is an actor completely at one with his character" (2426): this

feature precisely resembles what Enric Marco did by having lived his whole life like a fictional character, having taken advantages of reality in a romantic way.

Yet, Marco belongs to another category: his fictional role-play goes beyond Levi's "memory of the offense" as he offended Holocaust victims by pretending to be one of them. By portraying himself as a victim to preserve the memory of real victims, Marco falls into the sphere of a postmemorial character. Examples of postmemorial literary heroes are available on both extremes of the archetypical evil/good dichotomy within romantic fiction. One of the most interesting cases of a postmemorial *antihero* is the protagonist of the novel *Les Bienveillantes* (*The Kindly Ones*) by Jonathan Littell: here, the Holocaust account is addressed from the perspective of a Nazi SS, Maximilien Aue. Being part of the 'offensive team,' Aue can be easily enlisted in the group of murderers who lie without knowing they are lying, as actors do. Marco's attitude can strike the reader even more though since he genuinely lied by choosing to take the side of the victim– the Nazi concentration camp victim. There is a fundamental contradiction in Marco's behavior because during the time Levi wrote on Holocaust events the victim could *not* be a hero. The two roles could not coincide: we do not find any successful example of a survivor in Levi's novels. None of "the saved" or of "the drowned" enjoys the privilege of being a winner.

Primo Levi's fictional works on the Holocaust therefore represent an *anti-narrative* memory as any truthful use of memory is rejected by the existence of Auschwitz itself. Also, even if contemporary writers still test new narrative strategies in producing Holocaust fiction, for Levi the *Lager*-system has denied every effort to give testimony of the Genocide. The memory of the offense itself is an anti-narrative memory as it does not allow any demarcation: there is no good or bad, no evolution from a positive to a negative pole or vice versa. Since nothing dealing with Auschwitz is completely black or white, Holocaust-related fiction should avoid any excess, fabulous or kitsch element. The only shade Levi chose to apply to what Rousset named the "univers concentrationnaire" is grey, a neutral color where the line between right and wrong, and winners or losers, disappears.

The use of language in Levi's prose remains emblematic and innovative while working as a fitting element to express a non-existing shade. As Halbwachs argued, memory can be understood as collective because of its very nature in recording an episode: we always remember in the language we share with a particular group of people who belong to the same culture and linguistic strain. The memory of the offense behaves in a similar way: it is unspeakable because it does not belong to a common language, although it embraces a collective number of individuals that range from the victim to the executioner. Consequently, Levi's usage of language is connected to a specific group of addressees: national boundaries are overcome by choosing, for example, plurilingual descriptions of events inside one single anti-romantic narrative frame. *If This Is a Man* is not just a novel thought exclusively for an Italian audience; Italian works in fact as the background language in which other idioms are allowed to shine and paint the hell of the camps.

Language and fictional writing merge with the same contradictions that memory and men in Auschwitz were subjected to, according to Levi (240). The memory of the offence and the truth on concentration camps is imperfect and never intended as a closed past. It continuously proves Faulkner's claim about the past being not even past. The historian Ernst Nolte said something similar to Faulkner in relation to Nazi Germany and the phenomenon of Auschwitz. By comparing, or rather combining, the experience of the Bolshevik Gulag with the Nazi camp, Nolte's neo-revisionism looks at the historical past in a dialogic perspective, trying to make the scandal of the "final solution" less that of a unique historical event, in order to lead the community to an effective condemnation and elaboration of the Genocide's trauma: according to Nolte, only through the appropriation of such an uncomfortable past to recount, did a redemption for German future generations seem to be possible.

Nolte's point of view caused a sensation and aroused the criticism of the academic community in the 1980s. Despite the reaction his theory provoked (especially from the philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas), Nolte indeed thought about Faulkner's definition of the past from a different angle – both in relation to memory and to

postmemorial literature. Actually, the renewed immanent feature of the past, together with the persistence of grey shadows around a moral evaluation on evil could represent two of the main reasons why postmemorial fiction is today authorized to write about what could not be narrated. Literature still feels the need to recall and treat as present the undying past dimension related to Holocaust memory:

> The "past that will not pass" can only mean the National-Socialist past of the Germans or Germany. The theme implies the notion that normally the past passes and that thus this nonpassing must be something exceptional. Still, in normally passing, the past cannot be seen as disappearing. The age of Napoleon I, for example, is repeatedly made present in historical studies. The same is true for the age of Augustus. But these pasts have apparently lost the vividness that they had for their contemporaries. For this reason, they can be left to the historians. The National-Socialist past, however, appears not to be subject to this process of attenuation ... It seems to be becoming more vital and more powerful – not as a representative model but as a bugaboo, as a past that is in the process of establishing itself in the present or that is suspended above the present like an executioner's sword. (Nolte 18)

First, by highlighting a resistance to the schematization of Holocaust-related events, Nolte observed (as Levi had) the strong legacy of those crimes perpetrated by the Third Reich along the parable of Western history. This heavy past has not yet found a way to be digested: perhaps, standard forms of narration are not the most suitable tool for attempting both a moral comprehension and a renewable testimony of the event itself. The memory of the offense, whose features reject a linear development and a standard plot of bad/good poles typical of fictional narration, excludes also romance as an option of accounting, especially if romance represents a potential vehicle of kitsch– which, as we have seen, is the enemy par excellence of truth in literature.

Any kind of emphasis is a form of concealment or deception, for Cercas: "todo énfasis en la verdad es una forma de ocultación, o de

engaño" (243), but twisting the truth about Auschwitz might be a dangerous operation– even if only on a fictional level. What is the right medium then, *the final solution* for telling the truth about the final solution– which meant the extermination of thousands of innocent people? Primo Levi's first short story collection opens with a science fiction literary piece entitled "The Mnemagogs." The story is about a young man, a doctor who visits an old colleague who now lives isolated from the world, and whose unique merit was to synthesize olfactory sensations into chemical compounds that can recall memories of past events or people. "Mnemagogs" or "memory evokers" (409) are memories to smell, sensations kept inside test tubes and made available for use for those who do not want to let the past pass away. The old Dr. Montesanto, the inventor of mnemagogs, says:

> There are those who don't care about the past, who let the dead bury the dead. There are those who, instead, are galvanized about the past, and saddened by its continual disappearance. There are still others who have the diligence to keep a diary, day after day, so that everything of theirs is saved from oblivion, and who preserve in their houses and their persons material memories ... As for myself, it horrifies me to think that even one of my memories might be erased, and ... I just took advantage of my pharmacological experience to reconstruct, with precision and in preservable form, a certain number of sensations that mean something to me. (409)

Taking care of the past is every person's duty– not only a novelist or a historian's task. Postmemory takes care of that one past which, as read in Nolte's previous quote, is suspended "above the present like an executioner's sword," and investigates the effects that caused meta-narrative phenomena and hyper-fictional characters – as in the cases of both Cercas and Littell. Their mutual ancestor in Holocaust writings – Levi – tried to find ways to preserve the memory of the offense before it could vanish, being eventually ingested by people's indifference and time passing. The picture described in the last quote – where smell becomes a reliable tool for remembering – paves the way to what might

be already called postmemory, perhaps, for the next generation of readers. In contrast to those who do not care for the past, Levi went in the opposite direction, and with the same diligence of those who keep a diary, reconstructed "with precision and in preservable form" (409) his account of the Holocaust.

More than a bulky past, Levi's Holocaust interpretation and account outline how horribly humans can offend other humans, and how history can revert the category of history itself. There are many reasons why we should keep in mind that the difference between evil and good is a small and ephemeral one: among all of them, an honest preservation of its memory might reject romance, but it might also protect the reader when reality becomes too fictional– therefore too dangerous.

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Federico Rigamonti

Narrating the Holocaust in the Age of Mass Communication. Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*

Despite the immense number of narratives relating to the Shoah, for a long time, the tragic event par excellence remained elusive and difficult to grasp. For example, Claude Lanzmann's assertions, or some of Elie Wiesel's most radical claims have contributed to question the possibility of narrating this Jewish tragedy. The Shoah was unspeakable. Claiming the capability of describing its horror would have constituted the worst transgression (Boswell 7). For example, while discussing the making of *Shoah* (1985), Lanzmann observed an "absolute obscenity in the very project of understanding. Not to understand was my iron law during all the eleven years of the production of *Shoah*. I had clung to this refusal of understanding as the only possible ethical and at the same time the only possible operative attitude" (204). Likewise, Wiesel launched a sort of anathema, "The Holocaust? The ultimate event, the ultimate mystery, never to be comprehended or transmitted" (21).

Yet, as direct witnesses and the following generations fade away, those who started writing about the Shoah have tried to emancipate their texts from the ongoing debate and resort to a different approach. Giorgio Agamben seems dubious about attributing the prestige of mysticism to the extermination of the Jews, and evoked the theologian Giovanni Crisostomo, who argued the absolute incomprehensibility of God because he knew it was the best way to glorification: "[d]ire che Auschwitz è «indicibile» o «incomprensibile» equivale a *eunphēmein*, ad adorarlo in silenzio, come si fa con un dio; significa, cioè, quali che siano le intenzioni di ciascuno, contribuire alla sua gloria. Noi, invece, «non ci vergogniamo di tenere fisso lo sguardo nell'inenarrabile». Anche a costo di scoprire che ciò che il male sa di sé, lo troviamo facilmente anche in noi" (30).

These reflections problematize the crucial aspect of the representation of the Shoah, i.e. it is the dogma of the unspeakable that is being questioned through the use of narratives which tend more and more toward a fictional *mise en scene* of the event. In this sense, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's list* (1993) is antithetical to Lanzmann's film, insofar as it attempts to merge the survivors' perspectives and the report of History. In Spielberg's movie, the Shoah is portrayed as an event that is recognizable in the life of individuals rather than a metaphysical and improbable entity – although Spielberg chose to blur and dissolve the image of Auschwitz.

For the generations after the one which experienced the concentration camps, reconstructing and narrating the trauma remain urgent and necessary, and fictional narratives start to spread out more significantly than before.

1.   The witness has two faces. It is the age of inexperience

While a debate on the legitimacy of aesthetically representing the Shoah was blazing, contemporary memory has begun to deal with the progressive disappearance of the survivors' voices; a condition that originated a problematic ambiguity. Not only are the survivors witnesses of a traumatic event, but they have become spectators of the narration of somebody else's life. From the conclusion of the Second World War a new era has started, namely what Annette Wieviorka has defined as l'*ère du témoin*: witnesses emerge from the Shoah and display a significant role in contemporary culture, starting from Adolf Eichmann's trial: "un véritable tournant dans l'émergence de la mémoire du génocide" (81). Wieviorka claims that with the trial: "s'ouvre une ère nouvelle: celle où la mémoire du génocide devient constitutive d'une certaine identité juive tout en revendiquant fortement sa présence dans l'espace public. Pour la première fois, un procès se fixe comme objectif explicite de donner une leçon d'histoire. Pour la première fois apparaît le thème de la pédagogie et de la transmission" (81).

A year after the publication of Wieviorka's *L'ère du témoin*, mass media scholar John Ellis started working on the notion of the *witness* from a different standpoint. Starting from the 1950s and the

massified development of television, the multitudes of TV viewers assumed the role of distant spectators of the life of others, and the domestic presence of television "has made witness into an everyday, intimate and commonplace act" (36): "Witness is a new form of experience. [It] allows us to experience events at a distance, safe but also powerless, able to over-look but under-act. And, further, we are now able to understand how witness brings us into a complicity with those events" (15).

Ellis underlines the dissolution of the bond between the witness and first-hand experience since the act of witnessing has progressively unbound itself from any form of personal experience. As a consequence, although originally "le témoin est associé à la destinée de celui dont il témoigne" (Léon-Dufour 520), according to Wieviorka, authoritative victims were (and are) still personally connected to the traumatic event although approaching the end of their lives. However, nowadays, an undistinguished mass of individuals passively participates in each other's suffering, though remaining safely distant from the tangible effects of suffering. What consequences are implied by the discrepancy between the massified role of a distant spectator and the impossibility to bear witness to the trauma that has been personally experienced?

Following a well-known reading of the postmodern rationale, it could be argued that the real has been absorbed by the virtual. The contemporary world seems destined to produce a condition of indistinctness between event-objects and their representations, in which the latter tend to overlap the former, thus counterfeiting their authenticity. The impact of new and old media on the individuals' life seems able to separate them from their direct experience of "historical" events. Reality disappears – not from a materialistic point of view, but rather from a semiological one, as part of a consistent system of artificial signs – and the real is absorbed by its fabrication, first visual, then telematic. In other words, what emerges is the progressive reduction of ontological space, which is compressed into a single dimension, a "télémorphose intégrale de la société" (*Télémorphose* 29), in which fact and fiction converge and originate a unique and indivisible world: "[p]lus de fiction ni de réalité, c'est l'hyperréalité qui abolit les deux" (*Simulacra et simulation* 175).

Antonio Scurati reflects on the relation between transmission and reception of a traumatic event in the mass media age: building on Baudrillard's argument, he contends that all grand historical events have been media events to us, from the Gulf War, which was broadcast live in January 1991,[1] to the 9/11 terrorist attacks: "[l]a Prima guerra del Golfo stabilì il paradigma della odierna prevalenza dell'immaginario imponendo un rapporto di proporzionalità inversa tra spettacolarità e visibilità: a un aumento esponenziale delle immagini di guerra, corrisponde una progressiva diminuzione della capacità del telespettatore di stabilire, attraverso l'esercizio della vista, una presa conoscitiva sulla realtà" (*Dal tragico all'osceno* 66). Within a sort of historical exclusion in which the knowledge of the world is not accessible through experience, the society of information does not contribute to produce experience itself, but rather, it acquires it, and makes it impossible to describe without incorporating other images that are not part of everyday existence ("Dietro il muro della finzione" 18). Scurati defines this dynamic as "l'età dell'inesperienza," the age of inexperience, in which the individual does not live reality and does not access knowledge through first-hand experience:

> è la struttura stessa dell'esperienza a essere andata distrutta nelle condizioni di vita della società tardo-moderna. Il mondo oggi non 'si vive', e la sua conoscenza non riposa più sull'esperienza. Al contrario, l'*inesperienza* è la condizione trascendentale dell'esperienza attuale. L'*inesperienza* è la nuova forma di indigenza, il nuovo senso di "nullatenenza assoluta" da cui nascono i romanzi oggi. L'*inesperienza*, questo è il nostro stato di povertà oggi, da cui siamo chiamati a fare letteratura . . . Oggi, più viviamo più siamo inesperti della vita. L'inesperienza si accumula innaturalmente come un tempo si cumulava, naturalmente, l'esperienza.
> (*La letteratura dell'inesperienza*, 34-35)

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[1] For a similar view about the effects of reality and the relation between the Gulf War and television, see the French movie critic Daney, in particular for his key concepts of *visual* and *image*.

What emerges is the "illusione della presenza, la finzione dell'esperienza" (*Dal tragico all'osceno* 10), which allows the witness-spectator to be present at any possible form of traumatic experience by identifying with the focalization of the witness and exposing themselves to the violence of a trauma, yet remaining shielded from its effects. This generates a new kind of witness, positioned in a comfort perspective and relieved from the responsibility of somebody else's death. By comparing this behavior with a form of perversion, Slavoj Žižek affirms that "a universe in which, as in cartoons, a human being can survive any catastrophe; . . . in which one is not forced to die . . . . As such, [it] is the universe of pure symbolic order, of the signifier's game running its course, unencumbered by the Real of human finitude" (262).

To sum up: in the age of postmemory, a critical transit is taking place between the enlarging void of direct witnesses of the Shoah, and, at the individual level, the inevitable structural absence of direct experience of historical events. The new social role of the witness transforms individuals into indifferent subjects, anesthetized and devoid of their ethical responsability about the understanding of reality. In the age of "*grève des événements*" (Baudrillard), characterized by "il trauma dell'*assenza di trauma*" (Giglioli 7), this condition of inexperience could be intended as a spasmodic research of a traumatic experience, meant as a self-standing principle on which to build one's identity, lost in the absence of a real trauma, as Giglioli claims

> [l]'identità contemporanea riesce a pensarsi solo tramite il dispositivo dell'identificazione vittimaria. Io sono ciò che ho subito. E se non ho subito nulla sono nulla. Al vissuto, al centro esatto del vissuto, manca qualcosa di decisivo. Qualcosa di intrattabile, irriducibile, impossibile: per questo devo continuamente mendicare immagini e parole da esperienze che non solo non ho vissuto, ma che non potrei mai in coscienza auspicare di vivere davvero. (10)

In Jonathan Littell's novel *Les Bienveillantes*, this process is represented through a form of extreme writing, "una tensione verso qualcosa che eccede costitutivamente i limiti della rappresentazione"

(Giglioli 14). Littell's work asks some questions whose importance is historically momentous: can literature ethically perform an aesthetic representation of the unimaginable? How can literature bear the responsibility of transmitting the memory of the Shoah in the age of postmemory within a society that is habituated to the role of a distant witness?

2. *Les Bienveillantes*

Les Bienveillantes includes all these issues and reacts ambiguously and provocatively to the Nazi atrocities by addressing the reader through the audacious use of a first-person narrator, represented by the SS protagonist. The novel narrates the story of officer Maximilien Aue, whose point of view accompanies the reader along the most significant places of the Nazi crimes: his horror voyage begins in 1941 on the Eastern Front, where, following the *Einsatzgruppen*, he participates in the Babij Jar Massacre, in Ukraine, and arrives in Stalingrad on the day before the defeat of Von Paulus's sixth army. After being seriously wounded, Maximilien is repatriated and instructed by Himmler to design a logistics network that allows maximizing the productivity of the concentration camp inmates. Aue visits Auschwitz and, finally, escapes from Berlin in May 1945. The historical and collective layer intertwines with the private one, which is complex and emblematic in its own way: Aue is a closeted homosexual, a matricide, disturbed by physical problems, and, most significantly, morbidly attracted to his twin sister Una, with whom he has incestuous intercourse.

Critics have attempted several – and discordant – interpretations in order to clarify the ambiguous meaning of the text. This essay will focus on some of the aspects of the novel in order to highlight their exemplary value. Littell tries to tear the surface of reality in order to investigate the origin of the trauma, face the drama of *Endlösung der Judenfrage*, and to wake the reader-witness from their condition of indifference. Throughout this process, he also tries to delineate a path in the search for the meaning of the Shoah in the age of postmemory. In analyzing Littell's novel, this essay will concentrate on the significance of the use of the archive as a reliable source, the

powerful strength of the romance genre, and the never-accomplished attempt to intersect two registers throughout the entire length of the book.

2.1. The archive

What characterizes the age of postmemory is that neither those who write nor those who read have experienced the trauma of the Shoah. Following this pattern, *Les Bienveillantes* constitutes the narrative representation of *dopo storia* (Scurati): the text draws its content from the tragedy of the XX century, yet, it is written by an author who belongs to the postmemorial generation, a generation which is able to embrace meaning retrospectively and, at the same time, to confer sense and shape to its experience "solo attraverso lo splendore straniato di un'assenza – il trauma che non subiamo, le vittime che non siamo" ("Dietro il muro della finzione" 10).

Littell's case is paradigmatic: he was born in 1967 from a Jewish family that migrated to the United States at the end of the XIX century; the author consulted an immense documentary archive from which he draws matter from a multilayered experience with the purpose of compensating for his lack of direct experience. When writing about a traumatic event is not possible for the lack of experience,

> il "fuori", è l'informazione, è il sapere, non più il vissuto, che si tenta di trasformare in flusso di coscienza. L'immaginazione arriva dall'esterno. La memoria si appropria della storia, la parassita ... Tra la scrittura e la realtà si interpone come un corpo luteo, – insieme garante e schermo, filtro e supporto – la materialità del documento, scritto o visivo, memoriale o ufficiale, diretto o indiretto. Da profonda e produttiva, l'immaginazione si fa riproduttiva e intermediale. ("Il buco e l'evento" 283-284)

Littell wrote an erudite and hyper-documented novel, in which the traces of the author's studies permeate the construction of the text, providing a myriad of historical and literary sources, both implicit and

explicit   (Scurati).   For   example,   the   opening   of *Les Bienveillantes* presents   a   detailed   body   count   – "Faisons   des   mathématiques.   Les   mathématiques,   c'est utile,   ça   donne   des   perspectives" (20) – based   on   the calculations   proposed   by   Raul   Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*:

> Va donc pour le chiffre du professeur Hilberg, ce qui nous fait pour récapituler:

Morts soviétiques	20 millions
Morts allemands	3 millions
Sous-total (guerre à l'Est)	23 millions
Endlösung	5,1 millions
Total	26.6 millions en sachant que 1,5 million de Juifs ont aussi été comptabilisés comme morts soviétiques («Citoyens soviétiques tués par l'envahisseur germano-fasciste» comme l'indique si discrètement l'extraordinaire monument de Kiev). (21)

Later on in the text, Aue argues that the Shoah should not be considered as an event of epistemological fracture from History, but rather as a "choc en retour" (Césaire 36) of the European colonial practices. This interpretation of the event, which Hannah Arendt had discussed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), represents Littell's intention to reconstruct the main readings of the Shoah proposed in the field of Holocaust Studies. In particular, Littell seems to build on those works that have analyzed the Shoah in relation to decolonization – Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (1961), Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950), among others – particularly echoing what Michael Rothberg defines as "the colonial turn in Holocaust studies" (31).

The continuity between the European colonial administration and Nazi totalitarianism is well-represented in Littell's novel through

two specific characters: the first is General gouverneur Hans Frank, who exposes to Himmler his architectural project in honor of Hitler:

> C'est, pour parler comme les Viennois, un *Menschengarten*, un jardin anthropologique que je souhaite établir ici, à Cracovie ... [Il] sera permanente, comme un zoo. Et ce ne sera pas un amusement public, mon cher Reichsführer, mais un outil pédagogique et scientifique. Nous réunirons des spécimens de tous les peuples disparus ou en voie de disparition en Europe, pour en préserver ainsi une trace vivante. Les écoliers allemands viendront en autocar s'instruire ici! (628-629)

Inspired by French colonialism, Frank proposes to Himmler the idea of financing the zoo on the commercial base as it had already happened in France in the end of the XIX century: "Le Jardin d'acclimatation, à Paris, perdait régulièrement de l'argent jusqu'à ce que son directeur, en 1877, organise des expositions ethnologiques de Nubiens et d'Esquimaux. La première année, ils ont eu un million d'entrées payantes. Ça a continué jusqu'à la Grande Guerre" (630).

The second character is Herr Leland, director of the chemical company IG Farben, and former colonial administrator of Namibia. By remembering his experience in Africa, Leland associates Cecil Rhodes' practices of colonial exploitation with general Lothar Von Trotha: "En 1907 j'ai travaillé avec le général von Trotha. Les Hereros et les Namas s'étaient soulevés, mais von Trotha était un homme qui avait compris l'idée de Rhodes dans toute sa force. Il le disait franchement: *J'écrase les tribus rebelles avec des rivières de sang et des rivières d'argent. Ce n'est qu'après un tel nettoyage que quelque chose de neuf pourra émerger*" (650-651).

2.2. The romance

A powerful romantic connotation constitutes the other side of Littell's "quest" for trauma. Liberated from the burden of direct responsibility towards the Shoah, the author is finally able to investigate the meaning

of the event. It is indeed the structure of the romance[2] that shapes *Les Bienveillantes*: Littell's literary models, as well as his preparatory studies, are contaminated by a narrative flux that repositions the historical archive in the fictionality of the romance form (Scurati). In this way, the romance distorts the shape of the apparently incontestable events, exasperating their meaning and overtly disturbing the readers' safe position.

In his book, Littell stages several strategies that are typical of the romance, generating images and scenes that are progressively exasperated throughout the narrative. This literary process gives meaning to numerous narrative choices, such as the repetitive and interminable descriptions of the Nazi atrocities or of the massacres perpetrated by the *Einsatzgruppen* in Ukraine, the use of Nazi *clichés* as pornography, and *kitsch*. The substantial presence of fictional mechanisms in the text allows the reader-spectator to feel the illusion of presence, yet, at the same time, the image loses solidity, and it consequently loses its testimonial scope. In this way, *Les Bienveillantes* clearly demonstrates how easily the trauma of the Shoah can be represented through degraded images which "invece di 'strappare', invece di sederci sul bordo di un'esperienza lacerante, le fa[nno] velo", thus producing a "banalizzazione della banalità del male" (*Dal tragico all'osceno* 11). The imaginary of the romance runs the risk of de-realizing reality, similarly to mass media's *total flow* (Raymond Williams), so that for the new witness figure, "nemmeno l'annientamento dell'essere umano significa più qualcosa in se stesso, ma assume il proprio significato per rifrazione dalla diffusione mediatica delle immagini della sua distruzione" (*Dal tragico all'osceno* 66). As Giglioli would probably argue, what *Les Bienveillantes* elaborates "non è tanto un sapere sullo sterminio quanto un lento apprendistato all'indifferenza, all'assuefazione, alla perdita di valore del mondo e della vita" ("Dietro il muro della finzione" 27).

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[2] According to the classical interpretation of Northrop Frye, the main difference between novel and romance lies in characterization, as the romancer does not create "real people" but "stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes" (304).

As outrageous as it may seem, adopting the point of view of SS Aue could probably be read as a form of re-appropriation of the possibilities of fiction. From the very beginning of the text, Aue addresses his readers in the name of some sort of shared fraternity "Frères humains, laissez-moi vous raconter comment ça s'est passé" (11).

If this particular form of focalization is a consequence of the age of inexperience, so is the undifferentiation between victims and perpetrators: the novel provocatively positions the pair victim-perpetrator on one side, and the duo reader-spectator on the other (Scurati). The current condition of the emptying of the glance, as well as the lack of responsibility for other people's traumas, are represented in Littel's novel by the overlapping of the perpetrator above the victim and the merging of both entities in a relativized character which belongs to a past that is impossible to experience again. In this way, the trauma ends up as something that is only "watched."

Oftentimes in the novel, Jews and Nazi are compared, and the reader is exposed to a constant flow of images that obliterate any identity difference. If "[l]es Juifs sont les premiers vrais nationaux-socialistes" (420) and "tous étaient interchangeables, les victimes comme les bourreaux" (101), the Nazi must have intended to exterminate the Jews in order to self-annihilate themselves, in order to

> tuer le Juif en nous, tuer ce qui en nous ressemblait à l'idée que nous nous faisons du Juif ..., tuer toutes ces belles vertus allemandes. Car nous n'avons jamais compris que ces qualités que nous attribuions aux Juifs en les nommant bassesse, veulerie, avarice, avidité, soif de domination et méchanceté facile sont des qualités foncièrement allemandes, et que si les Juifs font preuve de ces qualités, c'est parce qu'ils ont rêvé de ressembler aux Allemands, d'être allemands. . . . Et nous, au contraire, notre rêve d'Allemands, c'était d'être juifs, purs, indestructibles, fidèles à une Loi, différents de tous et sous la main de Dieu (802)

One of the most significant examples is represented by Hitler, the epitome of this wicked dynamic:

le Führer fit son apparition. J'écarquillai les yeux: sur la tête et les
épaules, par-dessus son simple uniforme feldgrau, il me semblait
apercevoir le grand châle rayé bleu et blanc des rabbins. . . . Je voyais
nettement sa casquette; mais en dessous, je croyais distinguer de
longues papillotes, déroulées le long de ses tempes par-dessus ses
revers, et sur son front, les phylactères et le *tefillin*, la petite boîte en
cuir contenant des versets de la Torah. Lorsqu'il leva le bras, je crus
discerner à sa manche d'autres phylactères de cuir; et sous son veston,
n'étaient-ce pas les franges blanches de ce que les Juifs nomment le
petit talit qui pointaient? (431)

2.3. Collapse. The Impossible Narration

On the one hand, the choice of the romance may imply a powerful
impulse for the transmission of memory. On the other hand, its
distinctive lack of adherence to reality may equally be dangerous.
Distancing from historical truth might falsify it. *Les Bienveillantes* has
been written and published in the age in which the last witnesses are
passing away, and it attempts to re-establish a connection with the
historical trauma, searching its lost sense where it does not simply
function as a narrative content but also as the category at which one
should look in order to structure their own identity "without trauma."
In this historical framework, the choice of the romance is bound to
collapse in the convergence of history and fiction.

  The redundantly detailed reality that the novel describes (the
archive), and the implausibility of the character Aue (the romance),
converge in the key episode in which he is wounded; an event that
provokes the conflagration of realistic reconstruction and fictional
degeneration. The epitome of such a collision, in which historicity and
fiction overlap, is a hole – etymologically, the word trauma originates
from ancient Greek *trôma*, wound, perforation, connected to a *ti-tràô*,
hole (Giglioli). The hole is the hole in Aue's forehead:

[l]'idée qu'un trou puisse aussi être un tout ne me serait pas venue à
l'esprit. . . . Mais, à en croire ces médecins si sûrs de leur science, un
trou me traversait la tête, un étroit corridor circulaire, un puits

> fabuleux, fermé, inaccessible à la pensée, et si cela était vrai alors plus rien n'était pareil, comment aurait-ce pu l'être? Ma pensée du monde devait maintenant se réorganiser autour de ce trou. Mais tout ce que je pouvais dire de concret était: Je me suis réveillé, et plus rien ne sera jamais pareil. (403-404)

This passage exemplifies what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub label as a "crisis of witnessing:" the burden of the trauma is such that it does not allow the witnesses to keep in contact with the reality they experienced. Aue's wound can be interpreted as a third eye:

> J'avais le sentiment que le trou dans mon front s'était ouvert sur un troisième œil, un œil pinéal, non tourné vers le soleil, capable de contempler la lumière aveuglante du soleil, mais dirigé vers le ténèbres, doué du pouvoir de regarder le visage nu de la mort, et de le saisir, ce visage, derrière chaque visage de chair, sous les sourires, à travers les peaux les plus blanches et les plus saines, les yeux les plus rieurs. . . . Qu'avait donc fait cette balle à ma tête? M'avait-elle irrémédiablement brouillé le monde, ou m'avait-elle réellement ouvert un troisième œil, celui qui voit à travers l'opacité des choses? (410-434)

However, this episode may also be read from a different perspective: first, as a failure in the representation of the trauma of the Shoah. Second, not as a crisis of witnessing in the generation of direct witnesses, but rather as a new epistemological crisis in the generation of inexperience, namely, not in the victims, but in the so-called "generation after" (Boswell 18-19).

Les Bienveillantes could represent the collapse of the fictional *mise en scene* staged by the narrator, a defeat in the attempt to fuse together History and romance. In light of this failure, it seems that, in the age of postmemory, the traumatic event must remain ungraspable.

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Spaces and Places
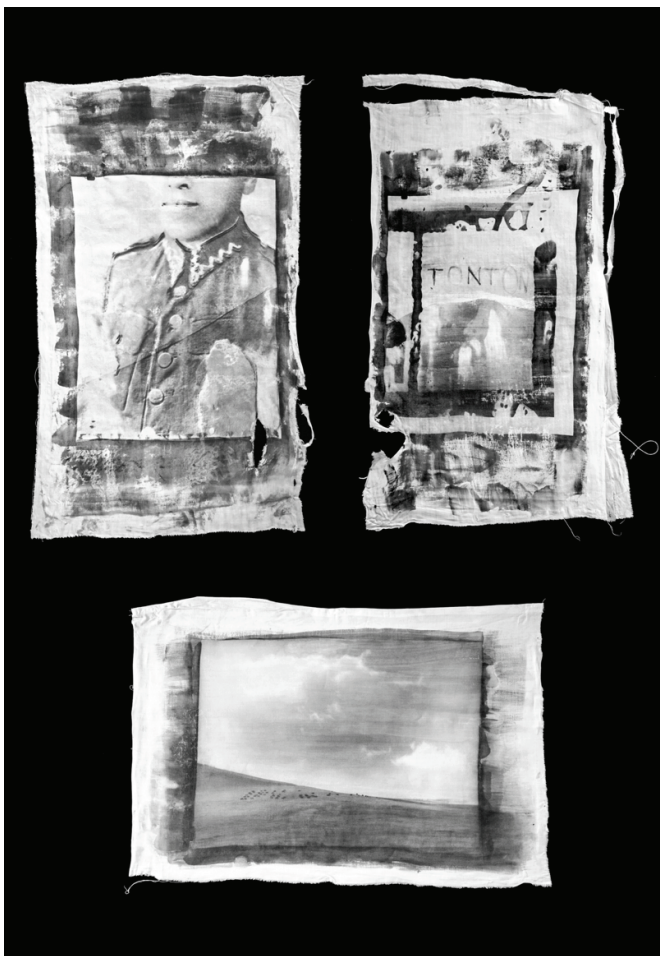
Muriel Hasbun, *Wigdor, circa 1938*, *Tonton*, and *Le Mont Dore*, gelatin silver emulsion on my grandmother's linens, 1998. From the mixed media installation *Protegida: Auvergne--Toi et Moi.*

With *Protegida: Auvergne–Toi et Moi*, I journey across the Atlantic Ocean into Europe's history, in a search for clues that will help me establish correspondences between the past and the present, the distant and the near, the actual and the imagined, the personal and the public. In doing so, I discover links between peoples and places apparently disconnected. But as I examine the strangely familiar outlines of the Auvergnac volcanos on my photographic proof sheets, I realize that nothing is so easily separated; nothing, so easily forgotten; nothing, so neatly kept within its borders.

The little town of Le Mont-Dore gave refuge to my mother when she was two years old in Nazi occupied Vichy France. Recently I treaded through its rugged landscape photographing fastmoving, opaline clouds that filtered light onto its broken horizon line. As I photographed, I carried two small, nearly indistinguishable, red rocks in my camera bag, one Auvergnac, the other Salvadoran. I wondered, and I still do, how coincidental could it be that my mother chose to settle in a land whose volcanic contour mirrored the place of her childhood refuge.

Xenia Tsiftsi

Re-Membrance or Dis-Memberment?
Trauma, Victimhood and Space Appropriation
in Berlin's Holocaust Tower

1. Introduction

According to Marianne Hirsch, we belong to the generation of postmemory, which does not mean the end but the troubling continuity of Holocaust memory in the era of its inter- and intragenerational transmission and mediation (106). In the case of a space like the Holocaust Tower at the Jewish Museum Berlin, postmemory issues are not restricted to the "uneasy oscillation" between a profound interrelation and a critical distance from the absent Other; the visitor has to confront the power of the symbolic form as well. As Juhani Pallasmaa and Robert McCarter argue:

> As we enter an architectural space, an immediate unconscious projection, identification and exchange takes place; we occupy the space and the space settles in us. We grasp the space through our senses and we measure it with our bodies and movements. We project our body scheme, personal memories and meanings into the space; the space extends the experience of our bodies beyond our skin, and the physical space and our mental spaces fuse with each other. (14)

In the title of this essay, I employed figuratively the term "dismemberment" in opposition to "re-membrance" as I aim to discuss appropriation versus alterity with regards to three paradigms of postmemorial visitors to the Holocaust Tower; a space that constitutes a starting point and an instrument to exemplify my theory, drawing upon the results of my empirical research—word association test and personal interviews with the visitors.

2. Three Post-Holocaust Groups: Symptomatology and Etiology

The first case, *descendants of Holocaust survivors*, resorted to denial, disengagement and emotional insulation. Negation to enter this part of the building and claims of disbelief or even skepticism such as "I do not need grey bare concrete walls to tell me how I feel" and "This space made zero impression on me. I have coped with this story for all these years" reveal an attitude that tends to dispassionately experience or block confrontation with the anxiogenic conditions of this space—a high, enclosed, dark, unheated tower (fig. 1, 2). Similar attitudes were initially reported by therapists who worked with Holocaust survivors and claimed that they were shocked by the rigid language used when they described the horrors they had suffered (Schacter et al. 482-3). This expression of emptiness was aptly labeled "affective anesthesia" by French psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski and constituted an adaptive defensive pattern and coping mechanism induced by the concentration camps (Barocas 89). But to what extent were those descendants exposed to their predecessors' trauma and how can one associate the two reactions?
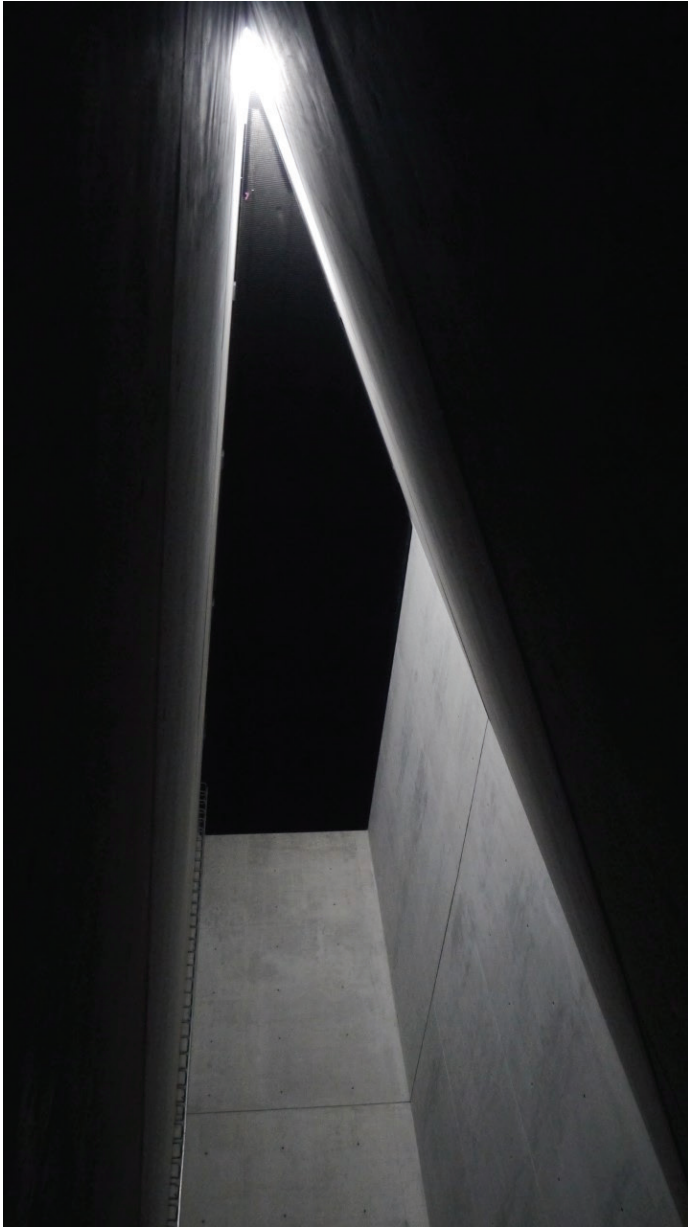
Figures 1, 2. The exterior and the interior of the Holocaust Tower (Jewish Museum Berlin). © Xenia Tsiftsi.

From writings by and about children of Holocaust survivors, it appears that survivor-parents usually adopted one of two behavioral patterns: complete silence about their past or incessant reference to it. There are not many examples of an in-between, more reasoned approach where questions were answered in a measured way (Wolf 23). Many of the survivors who migrated to the US lived in a state of apathy often combined with lack of concentration and insomnia. Being severely affected by the stress of incarceration, they were characterized by pessimism and mistrust, they restricted the social lives of their families and they lacked the vitality, warmth and zest needed for satisfactory resettlement (Barocas 91). According to clinical psychologist Yael Danieli, survivors taught their children how to be resilient and transmitted their own survival approaches to them (283). There were also survivors that even after the unexpected liberation were left without anchorage in the world; they returned to the postwar world to find their homes destroyed, their families and friends perished, and their dreams fading into oblivion. It seems reasonable to assume that their subsequent bitterness and resentment towards a still hostile and indifferent world would contribute to and possibly add new elements to their symptomatology (Barocas 91). On the other hand, Holocaust survivor and psychiatrist Stanislas Tomkiewicz contends that certain survivors kept "poisoning" their children's lives by continuously talking about their pain, as if they wanted to turn their children into psychotherapists (236). In many of these homes, the parent-child relationship was indeed inverted, with children feeling as though they had to protect their fragile parents (Kellermann 263). In the 1960s and 1970s, psychotherapists realized that survivors' children suffered from "secondary traumatic stress," a disorder they believed to be related to this emotional contagion which resulted in compassion fatigue (Barocas and Barocas 820-1). They felt overwhelmed by the weight of their responsibility, either subjugating their own needs to their parents' or choosing a cold detachment (Stein 80).

Descendants of Holocaust victims described symptoms "similar" to their ancestors—pain, muscular tension, cold, suffocation, claustrophobia, physical discomfort, and anguish. Their attitude reflects the need to identify with those who suffered, and the

disquieting belief that they themselves did not suffer enough. In their hearts they feel they have been spared something they should have experienced—just as their less fortunate relatives (Hass 31). A German visitor—a victims' granddaughter—stated that she cannot claim she is a survivor because this word makes her feel guilty. According to Aaron Hass, this guilt is a reflexive response to preferential survivorhood. From a psychodynamic viewpoint, it is the embodiment of anger directed towards the self. As he reported, relatives that survived feel compelled to maintain the victim identity by perpetually pricking their wounds, which they never want to heal (24). Additionally, this descendant category consists of the transferential recipients of an "unconscious and unexpressed rage" as the perished predecessor would never have an opportunity to share his/ her story (Barocas 92). They will then act out an aggression which will gratify their ancestors' unmet needs. Apart from the feelings of culpability, relatives of victims also experience a vague sense of having committed something of which they should feel ashamed (Krystal 330). This guilt also derives from a feeling of inwardly questioning their entitlement to abundance and safety as they frequently compare it with their ancestors' situation. It is the penance they pay for their "gift" (Hass 25).

The third post-Holocaust category is constituted of *visitors less proximate to the historical event* who, being overwhelmed, were unable to elaborate a verbal description of their emotions. They presented a failure of words in the face of what they encountered. This reaction reminds us of Jean-François Lyotard's argument that when they have to do with the Holocaust, "human beings endowed with language are placed in such a situation that none is now able to tell about it" (4). It can also be argued that this group had an experience of a negative sublimity. This encounter with the "sublime" has been widely theorized as founded upon terror, though "transmogrified into thrill and awe" (Bourque 166). For Immanuel Kant (100), the "sublime" is an experience or feeling resulting from an interaction with an "object"—in our case, a space—which possesses a large magnitude or infatuates us with its immensity. It is the failure of the imagination's capacity to grasp the infinity of the "object." This is why we consider it to be "negative." A person in the grip of actual terror enjoys nothing; the emotion

overwhelms and produces intolerable distress. However, if it is possible to achieve a psychological distance that offers a position of relative safety, then one may be exhilarated with the thrill of the "sublime," recognizing grandeur, magnificence, and an ineffable endlessness (Burke 73).

Daniel Libeskind's architectural conception of this tower is inspired by the erasure and absence caused by the Holocaust itself. He created a negative space, a place of "both being and nonbeing" (Libeskind 44), a quality which, along with the absence of reference points and the inability to perceive the dimensions of this space, caused disorientation and confusion. Moreover, this group recorded a bodily shrinking and a feeling of being swallowed by this "black hole." Rudolf Arnheim in *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* explains that the lack of visual stimuli intensified by sounds of undetectable origin causes a sense of threat (21). Then, as the visitor understands the scale of this space, s/he realizes her/his own substance within it: s/he is a small, shrunken body in an immense void. As a German interviewee confirmed, she felt her body "unladen" floating empty in an empty space. This status was exacerbated by the colors and materials. A typical example was an American visitor who claimed that she felt "soft and plastic" referring to her flesh in contrast to the roughness of the bare concrete. As a result, this fragility left her unprotected within an unmanageable space. This metaphor of heavy turned to light, and of solid and confined turned to vaporous and expansive, is also a reference to the chemical "sublime;" the state of a substance when it passes directly from solid to gaseous with no interval of liquid (Andrews 247).

3. Role Models and Identity Negotiation

If we follow a meta-genealogical path of the terminology used by travelling back in time to the camps' liberation at the end of WWII, we will be able to comprehend how each generation of *survivor descendants* identified themselves and why. We know that the prisoners discovered by American soldiers are now referred to as "camp survivors;" however, that term was not widely used at that time. Although those who were still alive were victims, many rejected that

term, because they considered the true victims to be those who perished (Stein 105). In the mid-to-late 1970s, the term "Holocaust survivor" began to enter popular discourse in the American Jewish community but referred only to those who had been in concentration camps (Wolf 20). During the same period, the offspring of Holocaust survivors referred to themselves as "children of survivors" or the "second generation," abbreviated as 2G. These terms were also widely circulated by psychiatrists. 2Gs strived to reconcile the tension they felt between fulfilling their own needs and meeting their parents' expectations. They were caught between two worlds: their parents, who demanded loyalty, and a dominant individualism, accentuated by the generational rebellion of the decades of the 1960s and 1970s (Stein 76-78).

In recent years, Holocaust survivors' very existence has elevated them to hero/heroine status and their stories have been treated as sacrosanct (Wolf 22). There are now references to "third-generation survivors" (3Gs) who have grown up with the Holocaust as at least a peripheral factor in how they understand broader social values. Therefore, the Holocaust has become a central event around which contemporary Jewish understanding provides a common social experience and sense of community that transcends political or national affiliation (Burton 6). Sociologist Janet Jacobs introduces another terminology, referring to the children and grandchildren of survivors as "the first and second generation of Holocaust descendants," and characterizing them as "Holocaust carrier groups" and "Holocaust culture bearers" (2-3). The creation of all these terms not only "made up people," as Ian Hacking argued, but also mapped a social group with distinct boundaries and created a collective identity that reflected a genealogical link not only to their forbearers' experiences, but also to their trauma (23-26). This terminology invokes a generational number in the family chain but also makes claims about the actual experience of the Holocaust. As a result, it reflects what Wolf would term "privileged victimhood" or "elite victimization" (21).

Victim descendants are characterized by, what Max Scheler names "idiopathic identification," which effects "the total eclipse and absorption of another self by one's own, it being thus, as it were,

completely dispossessed and deprived of all rights in its conscious existence and character" (19). This relation to the absent Other not only represents a "delusory unity" but ends up being completely "annihilatory" (Silverman 23). Eva Hoffman argues that at the crux of this group's engagement with the past lies the following difficulty: "that it has inherited not experience, but its shadows" and claims that it experiences its relationship to the events of the Holocaust as uncanny and spectral (66). Similarly, Henri Raczymow speaks of "Memory Shot Through with Holes" which he describes as "[a] memory devoid of memory, without content" (100), and emphasizes the inherent absences, which, according to Marianne Hirsch, are filled through a process of imaginative investment, projection and creation (107). Indeed, those visitors see the Holocaust Tower as a reference to gas chambers in order to satisfy their projection and act in a specific way, so as to fully understand what their ancestors suffered. To some extent, this attitude reflects a competitive victimization: they want to assert their own victimhood too, and the Holocaust Tower provides fertile ground for this. As an elderly visitor from Lithuania confirmed, "now I know how they must have felt moments before they died." Froma I. Zeitlin argues that their sentiments are colored by their sense of "their own belatedness" and that "common to their attempts is an obsessive quest to assume the burden of rememoration, by means of which one might become a witness oneself" (6, 8). They reveal a "debt to the past" and express a need for "moral continuity" (Klein 130). Moreover, members of this group were often named after close relatives who perished and, in this way, they became "memorial candles" (Wardi 31). This has caused them serious identity problems. Wardi describes: "Now I have no choice but to carry the dead on my back" (28). As social scientist Hannah Starman argues, we still live in a society of victims that uses this status as a weapon of social advantage. Being a victim is perceived to be a social asset; therefore, recognizing that trauma is transmitted transgenerationally becomes a means with which victimhood is passed down (qtd. in Burton 23).

        With reference to the last post-Holocaust—*less familiar*—group's reaction to a voided space, Rudolf Arnheim states: "this extreme emptiness, this lack of external definition destroys the internal

sense of identity" (21). The awareness of smallness and worthlessness—almost diminished to the level of immateriality—along with loneliness and neglect created a feeling of degradation and annihilation, exactly as the camp prisoners would have felt. It is a feeling of existential disregard and physical decrepitude. Rudolf Arnheim explains:

> The absence of matter creates the sense of self-destruction of the subject's own body. What is more, the social equivalent of a void is the experience of a person who feels totally abandoned: the environment is complete without him; nothing refers to him, needs him, calls him, or responds to him. The observer's glance finds itself in the same place wherever it tries to anchor. In consequence, the viewer experiences forlornness, because he projects himself onto the place that he scans with his glance; he drifts rudderless within the anonymous expanse. (21)

Kaja Silverman suggests that it depends on the integration of the visual image and the proprioceptive ego, which are always disjunctive with each other, and which can only be brought together to form a unified bodily ego by a laborious stitching (17). Finally, for those whose experience was indescribable, the silence is such that constitutes a trauma itself. Under such circumstances, there is an utter deprivation of speech. This silence is characteristic of "the aporia of Auschwitz," which, according to Giorgio Agamben, is indicative of a "lacuna" specifically imbedded in the nature of testimony itself, an irremediable gap that separates the living from the speaking being (12).

4. Postmemorial "Witnessing": Between Appropriation and Alterity

On the one hand, the Holocaust has made witnessing more urgent than ever. On the other hand, postmemory has drawn attention to the body as the site of interpretation, displacing the traditional mind-body dichotomy in aesthetic modes of reception and disrupting the complacency of viewing. By mobilizing the seemingly mutually exclusive categories of affect and critical reflection, following Marianne

Hirsch, Daniel Libeskind proposes generation-specific modes of engagement that redefine the notion of "secondary witnessing" (Heckner 62). For Libeskind "secondary witnessing" means that visitors become subject to the materiality of trauma. He aims to capture a bodily experience instead of offering representations intended to appeal solely to the intellect. Here, the first two visitor groups affirmed that postmemory is not identical to memory. As Hirsch defines it, it is "post;" but at the same time, it approximates memory in its affective force and its psychic effects (106).

Descendants of survivors were subjected, both verbally and bodily, to mainly precognitive acts of memory transfer, often taking the form of symptoms. Their expressions are shaped by the attempt to represent the long-term effects of living in close proximity to the pain, depression and dissociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma (Hirsch 112). Thus, these visitors deny any mediation or representation of the event. They want to avoid a pseudo-experience of the Holocaust, for they desire to be the absolute and unique witnesses as they carry an unprecedented and incomparable burden. But being a witness to such a testimony is a hazardous task as it gives rise to what Dominick La Capra calls "empathic unsettlement." The listener becomes a "secondary witness," but when this act of witnessing involves people who are very closely related, there is a greater danger that this unsettlement will lead to "vicarious identification" (125). As traumatizing events "blind those who have seen too much," these visitors can at best bear witness to the "breakdown of witnessing" (Welz 106). As psychiatrist Joseph Albeck states, they are considered to have acquired the "scars without the wounds" (106). Moreover, bearing witness to one's own oppression is paradoxical because the subject's sense of agency is annihilated when it is objectified (Oliver 95).

For *victim descendants*, the Holocaust is not only a wound that bleeds from one generation to the next, but also a major rupture, a radical break in familial and generational continuity, a traumatic interruption that they strive to counteract. Therefore, they "use" phantasies that sometimes have both "acquisitive" and "attributive" properties, meaning that they involve not only getting rid of aspects of

one's own psyche but also of entering the mind of the Other, in order to acquire desired aspects of his/her psyche (Rosenfeld 130). But is this loss they are trying to repair real? As they have no family history to look back to, they have to "live with a multitude of lost 'objects' that they never had a chance to know" (Hoffman 73). And it is this feeling of absence that is transferred into a feeling of loss, as if they have actually lost those people instead of never having known them. Efraim Sicher stresses this "loss of unknown family members that feels like a limb that has been amputated: it is a phantom pain" (30). Both these groups carry what Alison Landsberg calls "prosthetic memories." Like an artificial limb, these memories are actually worn on the body and enable "a sensuous engagement with the past, which is the foundation for more than simply individual subjectivity; it becomes the basis for mediated collective identification and for the production of potentially counterhegemonic public spheres" (149-150).

The 3rd group–*the less affected by the Holocaust* —reminds us that, here, the task is bearing witness to the impossibility of witnessing. Saul Friedlander comments: "The numbing or distancing effect . . . is unavoidable and necessary," as this deep memory "continues to exist beyond the search of meaning," remaining difficult or impossible to process and articulate (130-2). Yet, witnessing here involves a nonverbal embodied communication ("saying without the said"). Emmanuel Levinas emphasizes this pragmatic dimension of witnessing more than the semantic dimension of it. Apart from the convergence of speech with acts, this category involves an ethical openness or exposure to the Other (144-5). Contrary to the previous groups, they do not know that they are witnesses at the time of their experience. For them, "witnessing" has the structure of repentance: retroactively caring about what they were once careless of. According to Emmanuel Levinas, the virtue of this kind of witness is vigilance; it is an opening prior to intentionality, an awakening on demand of another within oneself, an "insomnia" (208). Intentionality comes into play as soon as one feels remorse for one's wrongdoing in the past and becomes aware of an imminent danger, or fears a future mistake (Welz 111).

In order to open up her notion of postmemory to a more general position not necessarily based on relations of kinship or ethnicity,

Hirsch takes up Geoffrey Hartman's concept of "witnesses by adoption," which, according to her, should be understood as the building of an empathetic but crucially tentative and neither assimilatory nor totalizing identification with Holocaust victims (qtd. in Heckner 64). While acts of analogy and projection can be imperializing, colonizing and conquering, rather than making space for the Other's feelings, empathy is a fellow-feeling, a position of high moral value, which is in opposition to "emotional infection" and "emotional reproduction." Through empathy, one can easily participate in someone else's joy or sorrow without having lived through, or "sampled that particular quality of experience before" (Scheler 47).

5. Conclusion

To sum up, Libeskind's Holocaust Tower is an unsettling void that disrupts the sense of physical well-being and does not allow one to remain in a distant, safe position of spectatorship. Here, I presented three categories of visitors to this space: the first two were dominated by narratives that preceded their birth or consciousness, yet they were characterized by an inherent intentionality; they appropriated trauma or victimhood either reproaching or justifying the responsible Other. Their common feature is that they both claimed agency while concealing victimhood—even if they keep claiming their ancestors' trauma or absence, they have not managed to work through their own issues—emotional contagion and compassion fatigue for survivors' descendants, remorse and anger for their familial discontinuities reinforced by a moral debt and a haunting desire for unity, being the descendants of victims, with their predecessors. However, there is a third visitor category which acted beyond intentionality and claimed victimhood while reflecting agency. Coming without extra "baggage," they were open and responsive to a material experience of annihilation—as proved by their feeling of disembodiment and their subliminal "muteness"—and, by extension, to an encounter with the absent Other. In the end, as Eva Hoffman says, there is a point where we must all let go and the role of atrocities like the Holocaust in collective memory will not be to inform individual or group identities

but to establish structures that confront how we deal with hatred and prejudice (266).

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Verbena Giambastiani

Andrea Schlosser

Between Propriety and Self-Representation: Dark Tourism and Holocaust Remembrance in the Age of Selfie Culture

In January 2017, a new and controversial art project by the German-Israeli satirist, Shahak Shapira, called YOLOCAUST, created an international stir. Headlines reporting about this project appeared in newspapers from Germany to America to the United Kingdom, and eventually, to Israel. *Haaretz*, the Israeli daily newspaper, for example, published an article titled, "Shoah Selfies: Israeli Satirist Shames Holocaust Tourists Who Pose 'On Dead Jews,'" the American *Tablet Magazine* both stated and asked, "Blow Up the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: What's the Right Way to Remember Both Victims and Perpetrators of Great Crimes?," while the British *Telegraph* admonished, "Dark Tourism Can Be Rewarding But Selfie Sticks Have No Place at Memorials." The latter headline positioned Shapira's art project and its accompanying controversy about 'right' and 'wrong' behavior at memorial spaces within the emerging academic field of tourism studies. This paper aims at analyzing Shapira's art project, YOLOCAUST, from the standpoint of dark tourism in the wake of controversial tourist behavior and the omnipresence of selfie culture.

Dark Tourism

Dark tourism can be defined as a way of conceptualizing a form of tourism that is related to death, suffering, atrocity, tragedy, or crime. As Richard Sharpley notes in his article, "Shedding Light on Dark Tourism: An Introduction," people have developed a "fascination in death and dying" (7) during the last decades. Pioneering work in the classification of the phenomenon has been done by A.V. Seaton. In his

seminal essay, "Guided by the Dark: From Thanatopsis to Thanatourism" he coined the term 'thanatourism.' Derived from the Greek 'thanatos,' meaning 'death,' Seaton classified five travel activities thanatourism, or dark tourism, incorporates: "[t]ravel to witness public enactments to death," "[t]ravel to see the sites of mass or individual deaths, after they have occurred," "[t]travel to internment sites of, and memorials to, the dead," "[t]ravel to view the material evidence, or symbolic representations of death, in locations unconnected with their occurrence," as well as "[t]ravel for re-enactment or simulation of death." Hence, the occurrence of dark tourism has become a significant phenomenon, especially online. This is exemplified in the rising popularity of websites such as www.dark-tourism.com pointing their visitors to dark tourism sites all over the world. A Google search on 'dark tourism,' for example, results in 253.000.000 hits (Google, accessed January 2018). Jumping on the bandwagon of dark tourism, travel organizations, such as GetYourGuide.com, offer morbid trips to places connected with death and suffering. On their website, for instance, the German travel company feature day trips to Chernobyl, topping them off with a luncheon and the visit to "[unforgettable] iconic locations within Chernobyl, Prypiat, and DUGA" (getyourguide.com). The offer is accompanied by aerial pictures of the (almost romanticized) landscape and the abandoned area, as well as with tourists taking pictures of themselves in the reactor zone.

Figure 1. Day trip advertisement to Chernobyl, www.getyourguide.com, January 2020. Reproduced by permission of Gamma Travel, Ukraine.

As originally formulated by Michael Foley and J. John Lennon in the special issue of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* in 1996, dark tourism is a phenomenon rooted in the circumstances of the late twentieth century. However, despite Foley and Lennon's positioning of the phenomenon in the current era, academics still debate the accurate temporal classification of dark tourism. While some scholars define the concept as a postmodern phenomenon, others position its origins in the Middle Ages. Hence, Richard Sharpley observes that "for as long as people have been able to travel, they have been drawn – purposefully or otherwise – toward sites, attractions or events that are linked in one way or another with death, suffering, violence or disaster" (3). As a consequence, dark tourism has often been intimately connected to a broader politics of remembrance (cf. Seaton) and many places of dark tourism also have an important political role as spaces of collective/national memory. Lennon and Foley maintain that

the objects of dark tourism introduce "anxiety and doubt" (3), challenging the certainty and optimism of modernity. While the tourism industry itself has been slower to embrace the term, some destinations and places have started using it in their favor and for self-promotion. It seems self-evident that places associated with death and tragedy have the potential to produce profoundly emotional reactions and that visitors expect such experiences prior to their visit.

When applied to tourism, the universal term 'dark' is too broad, however. The presence of dark tourism is diverse and widespread. The consensus among scholars in the field is that dark tourism has a typology depending on the visitors' motivations and the sites visited, e.g. prison tourism, cemetery tourism, disaster tourism, and Holocaust tourism. The expression 'Dark camps of genocide,' refers to sites which mark a concentration of death and atrocity, to places where cruel historical events have occurred, especially areas connected to extermination. In his essay, "Engaging Auschwitz: An Analysis of Young Travelers' Experience of Holocaust Tourism," Thomas Thurnell-Read writes that Holocaust tourism appeals to young travelers born long after the events such sites represent, as such sites present the perpetuated errors committed in the past. Regarding this, Auschwitz remains the most important site of Holocaust remembrance and collective mourning. Historic artifacts or survivors' testimonies at secondary sites, such as museums or memorials, may provide a sense of objective authenticity (cf. Reisinger & Steiner; Wang). However, visiting historically authentic sites or viewing authentic relics does not automatically provide tourists with an experience which helps them to understand the events that took place. The term 'Holocaust tourism' can be regarded as controversial and inappropriate, as it recalls superficial and recreational motivations – that visits are motivated by voyeurism, curiosity, and even enjoyment. This phenomenon raises several ethical questions such as, 'Should these sites be places for tourism?' and 'How might they be compromised as historical and commemorative sites by the demands of tourism?' Hence, it merges an ethical debate involving tourist behavior about the presentation of places of death and suffering. For some scholars, therefore, tourism to places of death and suffering raised issues about

the acceptability and propriety of presenting places associated with death for tourist purposes, and the broader question of whether it is acceptable to profit from death or the macabre arises. Other debates have focused on the visitors themselves: Ashworth and Hartmann repeat the argument that atrocity tourism "may anaesthetize rather than sensitize visitors, and increased contact with horror and suffering may make it more normal or acceptable, rather than shocking and unacceptable" (282). The danger is that, by making a site more accessible to tourists, the message of the camp's history becomes diluted or simplified, or that authenticity is compromised by the need to reconstruct camp structures, or to modernize other parts of the site to create a tourist-friendly image. Furthermore, there is also the risk of distancing and objectifying the past if too much emphasis is put on museum displays of relics as the primary means of preserving memory. There is something inherently uncomfortable in this, because it points to a practice that is related to constructing a space of personal consumption and public attraction, aimed at tourists with spending power.

Moreover, the culture of social media is changing the way we represent ourselves and our lives on the internet. In the *Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism* (2018), John J. Lennon has written that "Tourist photography in the past was a matter of centrality, frontality, clear and centered images of the objects, natural and built heritages." With the emergence of smart phones and their high-resolution cameras there has been a paradigm shift not only in the representation of dark tourism sites but also in the narcissistic self-representation of the individual, which, consequently, permeates the boundaries of ethics. Lennon aptly notes that "[n]ow [photography] is ubiquitous, mobile based and almost unlimited. It provides visual options, incorporating self-imagery, which is uploaded to the internet and is circulated globally on a range of social media platforms" (Lennon 585 f.). In line with this, the selfie, for instance, has become an integral part of our everyday life, as Kate Douglas points out in her essay, "Youth, Trauma and Memorialisation: The Selfie as Witnessing." Defining the practice of portraying the self, Douglas explains, "Selfies, or self-portraits taken with mobile phones at arm's length or in front of a mirror with reverse

cameras, are currently a ubiquitous part of everyday culture, a performance of identity, often for interpersonal exchange" (2). Anja Dinhopl and Ulrike Grezel further add that "While tourist photography and the tourist gaze shape each other, tourist photography is also a *performance* of the self in tourism" (132; emphasis added). However, taking a selfie, especially at mourning sites or places of trauma, is a controversial and much-debated topic. In her text, Douglas points to this controversy by juxtaposing the positive and negative effects of taking selfies at such sites. While, on the one hand,

> commentators [regard such a practice] as an example of 'the superficial nature of young digital media users [which] epitomize[s] their vanity, conceit, and lack of respect,' others direct their critique towards the ways in which contemporary cultural contexts (including social media) have changed the way we think about death, trauma, and mourning. (Meese qtd. in Douglas, 1818 f.)

Douglas further elaborates that "Cultural and media discourses surrounding selfies commonly describe the act of taking a selfie as motivated by ... narcissism and fakery or from insecurity and conformity" (2). Following this line of argumentation, consequently, what the social media has brought forth is not a Holocaust awareness among adolescents and young adults but a 'defamiliarization' of the Holocaust and its memory. The social media age has produced a self-centered society where everything is reduced to an image of the personal Self and the amount of 'clicks' and 'likes' one's posts generate. In the article "From Chernobyl to Concentration Camps: Why the Morbid Fascination with Places of Death and Disaster," recently published in *The Guardian*, Jessica Alice paraphrases Maria Tumarkin who states that "there's a difference between tourism and visiting a place to pay respect, the motivations can overlap. People feel an instinctual urge to physically mark sites of tragedy out of respect and to gather there together" (Alice). However, by taking a selfie for sheer self-promotion on social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, Holocaust trivialization is only one among various categories of

Holocaust distortion. In this regard, the selfies that have received the most public scorn are those taken at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin and at Auschwitz. In most cases the selfies can be interpreted as vain, disrespectful, uninformed and, above all, lacking empathy. The cult of the self(ie) merges with the tendency towards treating solemn historical sites like mere tourist attractions and nothing more.

Selfie Culture & YOLOCAUST

An art project clearly critiquing the practice of self-fashioning through the selfie and the lack of propriety at Holocaust memorial sites is that of the previously mentioned Israeli artist and satirist Shahak Shapira. In 2017, Shapira, who has been living in Germany since the age of 14, attracted worldwide attention with his internet art project entitled YOLOCAUST. A compound word of the acronym "YOLO," "You Only Live Once," and the Holocaust, Shapira's project connects the topics of dark tourism, selfie culture, as well as the disrespectful behavior by several tourists visiting the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. Shapira criticizes tourists' use of this memorial space as a backdrop for all kinds of selfies and self-representation on the internet. In a piece entitled, "Monuments and Memory: Europe's Holocaust Memorials," Marjorie Ingall of *Tablet Magazine* observes that Shapira's YOLOCAUST "juxtaposed selfies on social media [like Facebook, Instagram, and even Grindr] (showing people acting narcissistically and frivolously in the moment) with images of the actual Holocaust." More precisely, the project is characterized by colorful selfies of young people taken at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin and "includes captions like 'Jumping on dead Jews @ Holocaust Memorial,'" as Allison Kaplan Sommer notes. Moreover, "when the viewer moves their computer's mouse over the photos – without even a click – they [the photomontages by Shapira] suddenly transform to black and white, and graphic black and white photographs of the extermination camps appear in the background" (Kaplan Sommer). As an introductory note to the visitors of his website YOLOCAUST, but predominantly addressing those people affected

by his photomontages, Shapira offers to remove their photoshopped pictures from his website if they apologize for their unethical behavior at the memorial site. For this purpose, he provides an email address on his website www.undoucheme.de thereby not only publicly shaming the persons who have in his opinion "desecrated" the memorial site but also ridiculing and mocking them by providing an insulting website address they are forced to use in order for their pictures to be deleted from his website and, hence, the public sphere. 'Unethical' in Shapira's opinion, means people whose poses at the memorial include photos of "visitors jumping, juggling, skating, biking and even doing gymnastics in, around, and on top of the 2,711 concrete slabs of the massive structure [of the memorial site], designed to pay tribute to the millions of Jews killed in the Holocaust who never had burials" (Kaplan Sommer). Alex Cocotas sarcastically describes visitors' behavior at the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin as follows:

> [V]isitors pull out their phones, unpack their cameras; students look bored; teenagers jump from stele to stele until a security guard ... tells them to get down; children play hide-and-seek, play tag, play games incomprehensible to adults; teenage boys chase teenage girls, eliciting shrieks; boyfriends disappear into the grid, reappear around a corner, eliciting shrieks; ... girls tan on the slabs with their shirts pulled up to expose more skin, a couple takes a sun nap; photos are staged, iterated, dissected, restaged: curl the hair over my ear, two steps to the left, readjust my bra strap: 87 likes.

Interestingly enough, Shapira was inspired to create the project by the behavior Cocotas has pointed to. Shapira explains the origin of his project as being due to the "'huge amount of inappropriate selfies at the Holocaust memorial [I] started seeing on a weekly basis on social media'" (Shapira qtd. in Kaplan Sommer). According to Shapira there are thousands of disrespectful photographs circulating the internet – most of them on such social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Shapira criticizes certain visitors for being voyeuristic sightseers, naïve and unconscious about their behavior. Carrying his public shaming to extremes, Shapira also included a tongue-in-cheek

FAQ on the project's homepage with questions and answers by the artist himself. To such questions like, 'Isn't it disrespectful toward the victims of the Holocaust?' Shapira mockingly elaborates, 'Yes, some people's behavior at the memorial site is indeed disrespectful. But the victims are dead, so they're probably busy doing dead people's stuff rather than caring about that' (Shapira qtd. in Kaplan Sommer).

In sum, while Shapira's work has been described as a form of public shaming, to a certain extent it has fulfilled its goal; the original photoshopped pictures he uploaded onto his website have been removed after the respective individuals have apologized for their selfies uploaded on various social media platforms. Following this, Shapira's project has started the debate about Holocaust selfies and the 'right' and 'wrong' way of remembering the Holocaust. Moreover, in a direct and unadulterated way YOLOCAUST presents an approach on how the use of social media in a rapidly changing environment of communication is influenced by the behavior of a certain self-centered tourism.

It is a common experience that often Holocaust memorials, not only the one in Berlin, do not reach their aims. When art turns out to be too elusive, a memorial can lose its purpose, its reason becomes uncertain, and its role ambiguous. Holocaust memorials are built in the rush of our cities, and people tend to see them as parks or playgrounds. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is an art installation which the individual visitor may interpret in their own way. In fact, its architect, Peter Eisenman, said in an interview for the German *Spiegel* after the finalization of the memorial that:

> Wenn man morgen die Steine umwerfen möchte, mal ehrlich, dann ist es in Ordnung. Menschen werden in dem Feld picknicken. Kinder werden in dem Feld Fangen spielen. Es wird Mannequins geben, die hier posieren, und es werden hier Filme gedreht werden. Ich kann mir gut vorstellen, wie eine Schießerei zwischen Spionen in dem Feld endet. Es ist kein heiliger Ort.
> [If you want to overturn the stones [of the memorial] tomorrow – let's face it, it's fine. People will picnic in the field. Children will play catching in the field. There will be mannequins posing here, and films

will be filmed here. I can well imagine a gunfight between spies
ending in the field. It is not a holy place.]

Due to its alleged simplicity, the Memorial to the Murdered
Jews of Europe in Berlin can easily been mistaken for an outdoor
artwork for public enjoyment, and sometimes people complain they
have flown all the way to Berlin but are not moved by this postmodern
memorial, which Cocotas describes as "cool, scientific, modern, [and]
detached." However, the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews
of Europe, which was established by the German Bundestag in 1999,
supervises the memorial as well as the joining visitor center, which is
positioned underground. According to the foundation's website, its
"mission is to play a part in ensuring that all victims of National
Socialism   are   remembered   and   honoured   appropriately"
(www.stiftung-denkmal.de). Here, the adverb 'appropriately' is crucial
to the argument about one's behavior at the memorial site; it is even
overruling Peter Eisenman's liberal opinion on etiquette at this place.
For this purpose the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of
Europe published a section completely devoted to the rules of conduct
for the field of stelae on its website (www.stiftung-denkmal.de). These
rules both remind and admonish the visitors that "loud noise of any
kind, jumping from one stele to the next, bringing dogs and other pets
onto the ground, bringing and parking bicycles or similar equipment
[and] smoking and consumption of alcoholic beverages" are strictly
forbidden (www.stiftung-denkmal.de). Furthermore, the Foundation
Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe provides both security
personnel around the clock, as well as advisors for visitors to make sure
they abide by the rules of conduct; simultaneously it raises awareness
for an ethical behavior at the memorial site (personal email
correspondence) through plaques with the mentioned rules embedded
in the ground.

Figure 2. Rules of Conduct by the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin. (Reproduced by permission of Ilias Ben Mna).

Figure 3. Entrance to the Information Center under the field of stelae, 2013. (Reproduced by permission of Andrea Schlosser).

And yet, despite all these efforts to raise awareness for an ethical behavior at the memorial site, few visitors associate the latter with the 200.000 large square feet field of stelae. Drawing on A.V. Seaton's work, travel to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe can be interpreted as a "symbolic representation of death" (242) and this kind of dark tourism is "directed towards synthetic sites at which evidence or simulacra of the dead have been assembled" *(ibid.)*. For this reason, amongst others, it is important to remark that the Holocaust poses new challenges for commemorative representations within selfie culture due to its absence of human bodies, or to paraphrase Seaton, its simulacra of the dead. And yet, while emerging technologies like (AR-enabled) smartphones could be used to learn more about a particular place, especially through downloadable applications like berlinHistory, this potentiality is rarely, or not at all, used.
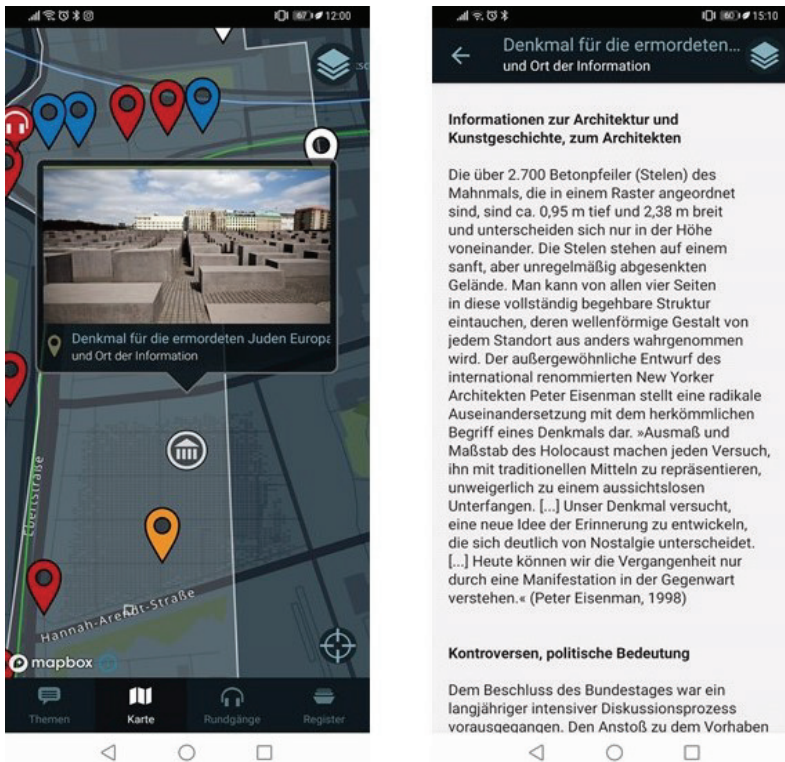
Figure 4. The application "berlinHistory," for example, offers multi-language information of crucial historical places in Berlin, which the user can explore online. Once the user clicks on the particular places on the virtual map, a window opens providing information on the location and its history. Depending on the language installed on the respective smartphone, the application automatically provides information in English and/or German. According to the App founders, Polish is to follow in the near future (personal email correspondence).

It might be the abstract nature, the simulacrum, of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe that has led many visitors to treat it as yet another place of sojourn and self-representation. Visitors instead use these technologies to take selfies and to focus on their appearance in the pictures taken, while not paying attention to the meaning of the memorial site itself. The challenge, therefore, is to encourage a different approach to the use of new technologies at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. With his controversial, yet thought-

provoking, art project YOLOCAUST Shapira has stimulated debate on this topic which has created an international stir and raised awareness of the 200.000 square feet memorial.

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Aleksandra Ubertowska

Trajectories of Memory: Art Interventions in Post-Genocidal Space (Anna Baumgart's and Rachel Whiteread's Acts of Holocaust Commemoration).

Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory paves the way for new ways to reflect upon commemorative rituals by alerting scholars to the complexity and diversity of such processes as well as by foregrounding the creative, subversive, and anti-systemic aspects of memory-related practices. In her work, the American scholar provides us with analytical instruments that help demystify "the politics of memory" introduced by contemporary authoritarian regimes. She is also hostile to the idea of homogenous and neutral memory along the lines of gender and culture. In one of her recent books, *The Ghosts of Home,* Hirsch writes about abandoning the sterile space of the academic auditorium in favor of "the spaces of family memories," in her case, especially, the former Romanian-Jewish Czernowitz. Importantly, she charts the territory accompanied by her mother, thus foregrounding her gender identity, one that is inextricable from the inherently feminist mother-daughter relationship. The study by Michael Rothberg seems to go down the same path in that he focuses on "the points of convergence" between trans-national forms of memory (that is, postcolonial and Holocaust memory) that conceptually complement each other. The concept of memory so conceived shifts the balance point in memory studies to the thus far marginalized and "invisible" phenomena that go beyond established institutions.

Contemporary postmemory scholars seek to expose the structures of power – which are inscribed in rituals, monuments, and spaces of memory – characteristic of the privileged social groups. Memory rituals, monuments, and commemorative places occupy the point of tensions in which the aspects of financial and personal success, aesthetic conformity and innovation, as well as egotism and disinterestedness matter. The reconstruction of this point of social and aesthetic tensions

of contemporary cultures of memory will serve as an essential context for the discussion of the topics discussed in this article.

This paper attempts to address spatial and architectural forms of commemoration of historical catastrophes, deportations, and acts of genocide, which merit a notable place in our collective memory and culture. The contemporary cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen in his essay on the role of memory and memorials in postmodern culture exposes the paradoxes of the social consciousness of recent decades ("Denkmal und Erinnerung"). He argues that postmodernity, on the one hand, is considered as a cultural formation, as defined by Jean François Lyotard's notion of amnesia, which is also the time of the "end of history" marked by the collapse of historicity and the devaluation of both private and collective genealogies. On the other hand, it exposes an obsession with its own past by sentimentalizing the retro style. This trend reaches its peak in the culture of museums and monuments broadly defined. The postmodern reinvention of the museum goes beyond (whilst absorbing) the modernist critique that presumes museums to be an instrument of "cognitive oppression" and power; a domain of high art which serves to legitimize the notions of art predicated on traditional cultural assumptions and narratives (such as Eurocentric, misogynistic, and canonical). This process is characterized by a blurring of boundaries between the museum, as a place of memory, and the monument. In Huyssen's view, the museum enters the public domain as a network of spaces which are interconnected with the dispersed politics of memory, rather than as an isolated, inaccessible building.[1] The high social status of the monument in contemporary culture, according to Huyssen, exposes our penchant for the materiality of an object, whose durability and solidity have the capacity to offset the ephemeral quality of the digital culture (2-13). In Huyssen's view, this cultural logic is best exemplified by monuments and museums, dispersed around the world in the past decades, commemorating the genocide of the Jews. By definition, monuments serve to reconstruct the past through representation and in

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[1] The much-discussed book by Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret. On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*, lends itself as an interesting point of reference for the present considerations.

doing so they reflect upon the existential condition of contemporary societies rather than on the form of the past. They address the most pressing issues, questions and discourses of modernity, such as postcolonialism, eurocentrism, feminist and gender philosophy, and metahistory.

I would like to follow this lead in my research on an interesting junction of Holocaust studies and gender-related memory, connected with the gender of the artists of works commemorating the Holocaust. In this article, I intend to analyze two artistic projects, strongly rooted in spaces connected with the lives and the extermination of European Jews. They are the "Holocaust-Mahnmal" ("Holocaust Monument") in Vienna, constructed by the British artist Rachel Whiteread, and the art installation "Wielokropek" ("Ellipsis") by Polish artists Anna Baumgart and Agnieszka Kurant, located in the former World War 2 Warsaw ghetto created during the German occupation.

These two projects are vastly different from each other. Whiteread's monument represents the official, institutionalized memory of the Holocaust. However, as we shall see later, the author distances herself from institutions and commemorative rituals. Baumgart's installation responds to the "dispersed" memory of the Holocaust (to use the term coined by Andreas Huyssen); a form of subjective memory which manifests itself in eccentric, often quite improper forms. The monument of the British artist is stable, permanently located in the city space. Baumgart's installation was ephemeral and it was dismantled after a few months. The two projects share a distinct aesthetic, based on the key categories of loss, emptiness, impression, and negative, which – as I shall argue - may be read through gender categories in the context of the postmemory of the Holocaust.

The archaeologies of (post)memory

The Vienna-based "Holocaust-Mahnmal" has survived a lot of dramatic events which have come to reflect the meaning and form of the monument. In 1994 Simon Wiesenthal proposed that a monument commemorating the death of 65,000 Vienna Jews should be erected at the center of Vienna, thus reflecting the feelings of many citizens who were unhappy with the existing "Monument against War and Fascism" (1983),

erected on Albertinaplatz by Alfred Hrdlicka (Feuerstein and Milchram 97). The adjudication panel of the competition which consisted of Ilya Kabakov, Peter Eisenman, and Zvi Heker, among others, gathered in 1996 to choose the winning project: the abstract-minimalist monument by Rachel Whiteread. Unfortunately, the unexpected difficulties[2] that took place at the early stage of the project slowed down the construction process considerably. The findings of archaeological artifacts, which overlapped with the competition proceedings, revealed the foundations of a medieval synagogue situated at the center of Judenplatz. This very place was to overlap with the area intended for Whiteread's construction (Schlieker). Some politicians and representatives of the Jewish community in Vienna demanded to either move the project elsewhere or else to annex the remainder of the synagogue to the monument (which was tantamount to resuming the competition). In the end, however, the committee decided against restarting the competition and the works on the project proposed by Whiteread, which was based on some technologically advanced construction elements, finally commenced. On October 25th, 2000, the monument "Holocaust-Mahnmal" was opened to the public, thereby becoming a part of the municipal complex of Judenplatz, which was restricted only to pedestrians. The Jewish Museum, known by the citizens of Vienna as Mizrachi-Haus, is a part of this complex containing the remains of archaeological excavations, including both relics of a medieval synagogue and various sacred objects obtained by the archaeologists.

The motif of excavations is connected to the "archaeological" past of the square. As shown in some historical sources, Judenplatz was a venue for tragic events related to the traumatic history of the Viennese diaspora. In 1421 an antisemitic pogrom, meted out to the local Jews who refused to convert to Christianity, took place. Inextricably linked to this Jewish history is the central monument of the German author, G. E. Lessing, who was an exponent of the Jewish Haskalah (assimilation movement) and associate of the founder of the movement, Moses

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[2] For further reference see Young, "Erinnerung, Gegenerinnerung und das Ende des Denkmals" 127-134.

Mendelssohn. During the Nazi rule this monument was publicly dismantled. It was not until 1968 that the monument was restored.

Such was the place on which Whiteread's "Holocaust-Mahnmal" was to be erected. The monument is a geometrical, ascetic building with the base measuring 10 by 7 meters and a height of 3.8 meters. This abstract cube-shaped building has a deep meaning to it. It shows cast shelves of a mysterious library turned inside out. The library appears to be abandoned, suspended, autistic, turned to itself and isolated from the outside world. The dominant element of the out-side surface is the raster image of books, or rather their remains, the rhythmic repetition of endless negatives of library shelves and double doors with the panels inside out. The bolted door is to symbolize impenetrability: a reminder that the visitor cannot hope to be let in, to penetrate the secret of the library. The most explicit reference to the history of the extermination of the Jews is the memorial inscription on one of the walls of the monument and the names of all the places, ghettos, and concentration camps to which the Viennese Jews were deported, engraved on the base.

The library, which is a metaphor of the Jews as People of the Book,[3] retains an ambivalent relationship with its surroundings (North 213-215). The "cube" is exceptionally site-specific. It has a "cozy" and delicate feel to it, which sits well with the Baroque facades and Neo-Baroque tenement buildings encircling the square (Malvern 394).

Andreas Schlieker contends that the monument is, metaphorically speaking, exhaled by the local palaces and tenement buildings; it emanates from them and embodies their intended architectural "message" in its own way (28). But the monument manifests its distinctiveness from the local architecture as well. Although it may seem that the monument has been placed parallel to the square's perimeter, on closer inspection it slightly slants towards the axes delineating the square shape of the Judenplatz, as well as towards the base of Lessing's monument. This irregularity is telling: it hints at a deep-seated conflict and

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[3] The tropes of the library and Jews as the People of The Book have been used in the monument of Micha Ullman "Bibliothek" in Berlin at the Bebelplatz (1994). See Young, "Erinnerung" 126.

traffic between the monument and its surroundings. The material construction of the monument can also be deceptive. Seen from a distance, its light-grey, whitish surface merges with the walls of sandstone tenement buildings.

In reality, however, the monument is ferroconcrete. The choice of this material is very fitting given its ordinariness. The raw porous walls of the monument, which on close inspection resemble unslaked lime, plaster, or congealed clay, do not yield to excessive aestheticization. Such associations link with the local archaeological excavations (Palffy 16). Seen in this light, the monument embodies the calcified remains of a lost civilization or dead culture – not unlike the Angkor Wat temple or the family tomb of the Poznanskis at the Jewish Cemetery in Łódź. The monument turns into a ghastly 'fossil' that disrupts the bourgeois order of the central quarter of Vienna. The monument fulfils many functions within the urban landscape. Firstly, it is functional. Because the monument's allusions to the Holocaust are implicit, people often treat it as a playground or a place of recreation. Others, who are aware of its hidden meaning, are also those that have gone the extra mile to see it. For the more attentive visitors, who are familiar with the historical context of the place, the monument connotes elegiac and mortuary meanings associated with other areas of experience. Whiteread's monument is massive and heavy, but also ephemeral, spectral, redolent of the genocide through a reversal of the ontological order of the world, which focuses on existing "beings" and material "things": in the monument the negative image or imprint are coded as absence, death, or lack. This dialectical linking of contradictions seems to be a crucial aspect of the project, one that serves to redefine the discourse of history. It appears that the concepts of "heavy" or "light" are typical of Whiteread's art. They serve to denote the world on the rudimentary precognitive level. "Heaviness" or "lightness" act as opposite forms of being. When the opposites meet, the work of mourning begins; one that subordinates (but fails to erase completely) historical narratives, characterized by rational categories and discourses, about the extermination of the Jews.

Post-Memory and Landscape after the Ghetto

The installation of two Polish artists, Anna Baumgart and Agnieszka Kurant, "Wielokropek na Chłodnej" ("Ellipsis on Chłodna Street," 2009), has similar aims. It is an attempt to visualize the traumatic memory of a dramatic event in the context of a historic space. However, the work of these Polish artists referred to greatly different circumstances. The Warsaw installation was located in a far more extreme space, marked with the want, absence, and void left by the dead and the whole culture of Yiddish publishing houses, little shops, and prayer houses. It is the topography of two competing memories – the Polish and the Jewish one.

"Ellipsis" is a type of sculpture consisting of silver-colored balloons: two of which were shaped like a giant parenthesis 9 meters high, the other three were balls shaped like ellipsis points 1.6 meters in radius. Made of glossy plastic, the balloons had a tacky, commercial-like look. The sculpture seemed to stand in stark contrast to the early modern buildings that surround it. The installation was placed 4.5 meters above the surface of Chłodna Street. According to both artists, "Ellipsis" is a conceptual sculpture. It combines ambiguous meanings referring to the historical events which took place in the ghetto as well as to palimpsest-like processes of memory and amnesia referring to the Holocaust.

It was there that a wooden footbridge connected the two parts of the Warsaw Jewish quarter, the so-called big and small ghettos, during the war. The references to the location and map of the ghetto are extremely important here. The spatial element – the footbridge over Chłodna Street – connected two areas of the ghetto of different social and economic status: the so-called small ghetto was inhabited by the more privileged Warsaw Jews, and the big ghetto by those displaced from the provinces (Leociak).

The footbridge overlooked the "Aryan district" as well. Under the bridge, along Chłodna Street (which was separated from the ghetto), ran a tram intended for the Polish citizens of the occupied Warsaw (Leociak 89). It could, therefore, be argued that the figure of the bridge, which is directly referred to by the installation of the Polish artists, functions here as an allegory of memory that links the present and the past, as well as Polish and Jewish memory.

300,000 Jews from Poland and Europe were gathered in the Warsaw ghetto, which initially covered approximately one-third of the city but shrank gradually. The ghetto was a space of enslavement, separated from the rest of the city by a high wall. The Jewish elites tried to keep the appearances of social life by supporting illegal schools, academic activity, theatres and cabarets. Nevertheless, the conditions in the ghetto were deteriorating due to overpopulation, hunger disorders, and a typhus epidemic. July 22nd, 1942 was a critical date in the history of the Warsaw ghetto. This date marked the beginning of the process of deportation of the ghetto inhabitants to the Treblinka concentration camps. These deportations continued until the suppression of the Ghetto uprising in May 1943. During that time Nazi soldiers razed to the ground the ghetto's tenement buildings and street quarters. The rest of the city soon followed suit. In 1944 the central part of Warsaw was completely destroyed after the defeat of the Warsaw uprising.

The space "after the ghetto" was a place of emptiness and void. After the war, it turned into a spatial symbol of the genocide and extermination of nearly the whole Jewish community in Poland. After the war, communist authorities built on the ruins of the ghetto an exemplary socialist realist quarter called Muranów. It was there that a few officially organized forms of commemoration have been located – the realistic, martyrologic monument by Natan Rapaport, unveiled in 1947, and the postmodern Museum of the History of Polish Jews, opened to the public in 2015. They both were parts of the institutionalized, politically conditioned memory of the history of the Warsaw ghetto (Huyssen, "Monumental Seduction"). However, Baumgart and Kurant's installation operates in different registers of commemorative practices, formally less rigid, almost "politically incorrect." Notably, the installation reveals layers of oblivion rather than memory – it expresses the lack of knowledge of the pre-war and wartime history of the place, widespread among the inhabitants of Wola until recently.

Standing in stark contrast to the distinguished institutions and commemorative rituals, authorized by the state authorities, Baumgart and Kurant's installation was ostentatious. The artists employed an aesthetics taken from the sphere of fun, childish light-heartedness, but also

contemporary advertisements and commercial kitsch. These items resemble balloons, and toys, intended to spur the imagination of children, as well as arbitrary, perishable, and ephemeral items (Buschmann). These elements seem to mock the trivialization and commodification of the memory of the Holocaust. These risky formal decisions influence the viewer in a peculiar way, creating self-contradictory impressions: an air of melancholy and cognitive helplessness in the face of the destruction of the whole culture of Warsaw Jews. The installation seems to embody the desperate search for adequate forms and commemorative rituals which would match the importance of the historical event. It seems they also mark a cognitive failure of the Polish witnesses of the genocide; the sense of stupefaction and inexpressibility in the face of the unspeakable atrocity. The figure of the ellipsis connotes multiple attitudinal modes, which Holocaust historians link with the role of the "bystander:" one paralyzed by fear, indifference, and inactivity.

The textual value of the message forms an important counterpoint to the playful material of "Ellipsis." It uses an element of script writing, a very specific sign. Ellipsis is associated with what is silenced over, excluded from the text (history), and at the same time, however, with what does not allow indifference to the absence. The ellipsis expresses the inexpressibility of the Holocaust but also – on a meta-aesthetics level – seems to refer to the history of debates concerning the aesthetics of the representation of the Holocaust, from Theodor Adorno to Derrida and Agamben.[4] It is an equivalent of the specter, an apparition in the alphabet, expressing the persistent influence of the traumatic memories which shape the collective identities of Poles and Jews. It is a figure of the genocide of the People of the Book, but also of the "memoricide" which resulted from the Holocaust. These memorial rituals, as part of religious and cultural texts, which vanished along with the victims. The ellipsis figure from the installation of the Polish artists stands for what remains after the annihilation of the alphabet, the book, and the scrolls of the Torah. It is a silent remainder of the old writings depicting the ancient history of the exterminated nation.

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[4] Cf. Rosenberg and Myers; Milchman and Rosenberg.

Gender-Related Aspects of Commemorative Art

The two commemorative projects are to a greater or lesser degree placed in opposition to the official politics of memory and aesthetics traditionally connected with commemorative sculptures. It is a position characterized by certain gendered aspects. A sculpture in a public space enters in direct dialogue with the structures and institutions of power. This kind of art has become the sphere of competitive tendering often with propaganda undertones. It is, consequently, entangled in the networks of categories of social prestige, financial success, and, ultimately, artistic canon which ascribes durability and excellence to some works of art, while it ascribes elusiveness or contingency to others. It seems that the artists – toying in their projects with the categories of "light-heavy," "permanent-volatile" – state their critical approach to this tradition. Baumgart and Kurant's[5] installation was an ephemeral, impermanent artistic manifestation, difficult to be formally classified. Whiteread's monument, although massive and stout, paradoxically emanates volatility, negativity, and absence.

What the artists under discussion have in common is, needless to say, their gender, which makes itself apparent in both the poetics of their works and the socio-cultural conditions that influenced them. Although traditional interpretations of these pieces have overlooked the matter of psychosexual identity, gender plays a central role in the process of interpretation. Whiteread, Baumgart and Kurant are female artists dedicated to Holocaust commemorative art; a field that is dominated by men.[6] Identity thus becomes a burning issue, one that eludes straightforward answers, which the viewer is forced to confront. This begs another pressing question about the extent to which a work of art depends on gender for its effects. Does this process operate at the level of the work's structure (including the relationship between the work and its urban surroundings) or else implicitly, as a part of the history of genres, styles, and discursive forms? To what extent does gender iden-

[5] It has to be noted that while Anna Baumgart invented the basic concept of the work, Kurant was responsible for the technical aspects of the project.
[6] See Young, "Zeitgeschichte der Gedenkstaetten und Denkmaeler des Holocaust."

tity contribute to the singularity of the sculptures? Is it part of the artistic signature of these works? Finally, what role does gender identity play in the context of the issues of postmemory as represented by the second and third generation of artists after the war (Hirsch)?

The existing scholarship about Holocaust art does not address these questions fully. Al-though tremendously inspiring, Janet Jacobs' monograph on the gender aspects of commemorative art (such as museums and Holocaust memorials), which is the most important publication on these issues to date, is of little assistance when considering the non-figurative sculptures of Rachel White-read and Anna Baumgart. Jacobs has set her sights on the ambitious task of reconstructing the mechanisms of creating and retrieving memory in reference to the category of gender, from the perspective of a cultural anthropologist, on the basis of sculptures, monuments, and artefacts, which play the role of museum exhibits. During her research work conducted in Auschwitz, Ravensbrück, Hamburg, and Melbourne, she discovered that the maternal figure of mother-history looking after her offspring is the most persistent trope informing the empathetic imagination of collective memorial narratives. This narrative is further reinforced by the counter-narrative of either male defenselessness or the absence of men as guardians of family and community. The figure of the woman and her body becomes a universal allegory of suffering widely used in Holocaust art. By connoting weakness and defenselessness, the female body turns into a timeless figure of suffering, vulnerability, hunger, and humiliation. Although Jacobs' arguments are far removed from the artistic forms of Whiteread and Baumgart as well as from feminist issues, which I seek to address here, I find her insights important for the present purposes in that they attest to the importance of femininity in Holocaust art.

The matter of an affiliation with feminist thinking is less controversial in the art of the Polish artist Anna Baumgart, who openly refers to herself as a feminist (Baumgart and Czyńska). Baumgart's works often address the issues of gender as a form of socially constructed identity, the symbolic violence meted out to women, and the traumatic experience of mastectomy. In her series of works "All that She Does" and "Winter" the artist focuses on the culturally conditioned patterns of femininity, which become deeply ingrained in a woman's sense of herself in

the process of socialization. By using vernacular photographs, the artist shows the ways in which such patterns of femininity operate: a woman is perceived by her family members and peers through the lens of her sex which dictates the way she looks. This results in the formation of a model of femininity to which women feel pressed to aspire. In her works, Baumgart explores the issues of sexual and emotional harassment of women as well as the persistent attempts at marginalizing female historical experiences.

The Polish artist is an exponent of critical art, an approach that defines her style and artistic strategy (Kurz). The artist recurs to radical forms of expression. She explicitly supports minority groups (often in the form of evocative titles such as "I got it from my mum") by promoting the calls for the emancipation of women. She draws on the legacy of feminist art and iconography[7] by exploring the issues of corporeality (which counters intellectualism), mother-daughter relationship, eco-feminism, patriarchy, and female auto-aggression.

The issue of female self-expression is staged in a completely different manner in the art of Whiteread. The British artist tends to avoid direct political statements as regards the indebtedness of her art to feminism.[8] Her own life, however, attests to her engagement with gendered critique of art (Bedford-Turner). In 1993, she became the first woman laureate of the prestigious Turner Prize for the installation "House," as well as one of the very few female artists to represent Great Britain at the Biennale of Art in Venice. She is also the author of one of the best-known Holocaust monuments. Also, the fact that such renowned artists as the American Peter Eisenman and the Israeli Zvi Hecker came second to her in the competition process is very telling.

Undoubtedly, the conceptual legacy of feminism and of gender theory in the history of art has left traces of sexual identity in the artistic output of both artists, even if these traces are not always as direct as in the works of Louise Bourgeois and Alina Szapocznikow (Kowalczyk 87-103). I will therefore begin with the aspects that help ascribe these

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[7] For further information about the much-discussed performance, see "Sprawa kobieca w Polsce", and Baumgart and Bollin "Sztuka jest silna."

[8] See the transcript of the interview with the artist in Cooke.

two artists to a particular artistic tradition. Both artists use sculpture as their medium, which is a male-dominated artistic form.[9] As an art genre, sculpture bears strong masculinist marks, much in line with Rodin's notions of physical strength, which goes along with the strong personality of the artist who has the capacity to appropriate public space. It is also characterized by the demiurgic and creationistic agency of the artist, who claims the position of the creator of forms and shapes. It may be necessary to remember, at this point, that the history of the relationship between Rodin and the young and talented female sculptor Camille Claudel, who suffered mental illness as a result of this relationship, reinforces the myth about the inferiority of women in the history of art, which has been persistently explored by feminist critics (Kowalczyk, and Zierkiewicz, and Bartelik).

Rachel Whiteread confidently draws on the legacy of the history of sculpture, which is associated with masculinism, in order to subtly redefine its basic premises (subtly, that is to say, without attempting to openly articulate her own strategy). The artist is dedicated to practicing and improving the same technique. All of her works – with the notable exceptions of "Water Tower" in New York, "House" (1993), "Ghost" (1994), and "Untitled. Black Bath" (1996) – take the form of outer or inner casts of architectural elements or everyday objects: fragments of a Victorian mansion, a bath, a table, a wardrobe, a bed, or a library. This obsessive recourse to the basic concept of 'cast' is not without its significance for our present considerations. Firstly, this choice brings to mind the feminist strategy of ironic and subversive "quoting" of the male code

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[9] See Bedford-Turner; Kotula; and Krakowski. The authors refer to the socio-political conditions of sculpture in the European tradition, which are important in the context of Whiteread's monument, thus: "Sculpture was, on the other hand, more restrained, bowing low to the traditional and familiar canons and patterns. This was largely due to practical, technical as well as socio-economic reasons. Sculptors depended on official commissioners [more so than painters] such as the state, city, and various institutions whose representatives were perforce more conservative, more inclined towards academia than art. Sculpture was limited, more so than painting, in terms of its formal expression and themes. All of this strongly influenced the aesthetic views of sculptors, who were trained into thinking alongside well-traversed patterns, such as resistance to tradition or following classical patterns" (5).

by distorting, mocking, and undercutting its centrality (such is the relationship between sculpture and the casting matter). What she also brings to the table is the primacy of originality, which is central to modernist aesthetics, defined as the domain of a genius mind or outstanding work of art. Both of these categories – of the genius artist as an outstanding individual and the masterpiece as the egocentric expression of the artist's personality – call to mind the unambiguously male attributes of conquest, egocentrism, and individualism. These concepts were contested by late modernist and postmodernist art.

What transpires from these considerations is the analogy between the ontology of "casting," "matter," and "specter," and the social position of women, which is often defined by the metaphors (cultural, linguistic, and anatomical) of "invisibility," "transparency," and "lack." The choice of 'cast' or "negative" as the sole sculptural technique of the artist and the mastery of the medium is not accidental. One could be forgiven for thinking that Whiteread and Baumgart thrive on invisibility and existential negativity. What may appear striking is the paradox of making the invisible visible or the exposure of the tacitly agreed upon ontological basis for the exclusion of women.[10]

Although gender-specific aspects of social art history may not be very pronounced in the Viennese "Holocaust- Mahnmal" and the Warsaw-based "Ellipsis," they are relevant for the grasping of the works' significance. The female element of these works can be found in the endeavor to break with the traditional pathos associated with monuments in a way that departs markedly from the mobile and mechanical strategies of the anti-monuments of Jochen Gerz or Horst Hocheisel (Young, "Horst Hocheisels" 116-125; 142-177). Whiteread brings her philosophy of art into life by extending the aura of coziness around the massive brick, which is her way of reinforcing the sense of nostalgia for the past. A comparison between Whiteread's monument and the unfinished project of Peter Eisenman based in Vienna, whose strongest features were

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[10] See also Dziamski for further information on the feminist aspects of the art of Cindy Sherman.

sharp vertical surfaces towering over the street surface and the overlapping maps of the Jewish Vienna,[11] reveals that the London-based artist managed to construct a monument commemorating violence without resorting to formal violence, that is to say, to the instruments of aggressive interference into the local space. This comparison brings to light another substantial difference between the projects. Eisenman's piece is expansive. The excess of sharp figures that seem to elbow their way through the surrounding space is a way of reinforcing the creativity of the artist, who uses his art as a conduit to artistic immortality (this aspect of artistic self-representation is made even more pronounced in the installation based in Berlin, which is more global in scope than the monument in Vienna).[12] Whiteread, the creator of The Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial, on the other hand, attempts to conceal herself behind her own work and foregrounds the ideas that the monument seeks to represent.

The elegiac and mortuary elements of Whiteread's piece convincingly and skillfully reflect the quotidian and functional nature of life. This has far-reaching consequences for the interpretation of the monument's meaning, which is ironic in the context of the self-effacing style of the piece. The use of the category of the quotidian in the context of memorial space takes the act of mourning away from a sequestered space or isolated area of experience onto the ubiquitous aura we are immersed in and the air we inhale. Historicalness is present in these two works in an invisible, facultative way, through the negation of the traditional discursive categories of documents, written testimony, as well as of the formula of a solemn, heroic monument, operating through figurative, narrative modes, and poetics of mimetic representation. As a result, the act of remembering is purified of voyeurism and fetishization

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[11] The miniature model of this project can be seen in Rosenfel (175) in the chapter on the architectural work of Eisenman. It is unfortunate that Rachel Whiteread – the author of the winning project – is referred to in the book only once – as a "footnote" in the long article dedicated to the American artist.

[12] Cf. The reflections of A. Huyssen on the contradictions of contemporary culture based on the paradoxical coexistence of the condemnation of monumentalism and a penchant for commemorative monuments, especially in the united Germany, on the basis of the Berlin monument by Eisenman ("Monumental Seduction").

of the memory of the Holocaust. These sculptures make it impossible to "regard the pain of others" (as famously defined by Susan Sontag) or derive from these works any emotional profits which would be sponging off the memory of the Holocaust. It seems that this noble "purification" of emotions is, perhaps, the most important trace of the discreet feminist frame of reference which determines to various degrees the post-memorial spatial realizations in Vienna and Warsaw.

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Sandra Terracina

The *Progetto Memoria* Experience: Fifteen Years of Communication in Italian Schools through Witness Narration

Progetto Memoria is an organization founded in Rome, in October 2003, aimed at preserving and transmitting the history and memory of the anti-Jewish persecution and of the Shoah in Italy. It started as a cooperation between the Jewish Cultural Centre of Rome and the Jewish Contemporary Documentation Centre (Fondazione CDEC) and is now an independent cultural association, with its own Executive Board. Its main activities include the organization of meetings and lectures held by witnesses, historians or experts in various subjects, such as art or biology, in schools and other institutions and associations. The web site www.progettomemoria.info provides information about the association and suitable resources for teachers, and it also presents original works developed by students.

In this work within the schools, three main lines of action are pursued:

a. Listening to the testimony of witnesses, not only survivors, but also the so-called "saved."
b. Didactic projects and labs.
c. Training of teachers and cultural operators.

Progetto Memoria acts, mainly in the Centre and South of Italy, as a connection between the witnesses and the schools and can rely on the work of nearly thirty people. A great number of pupils and teachers are involved and benefit from this work every year (between 10,000 and 20,000; in recent times, more than 30.000).[1] One of the project's missions is also the training of teachers and cultural operators by means of specific seminars.

In this paper, I would like to focus on some key questions regarding the trends in the transmission of the memory of the Shoah to young generations, considering what has been done up to now and what is being set up for the future. After the experience acquired by *Progetto Memoria* in travelling all over Italy and meeting students and teachers, it is, in fact, possible to single out some crucial issues, linked to the commitment of transmitting this memory. This experience is a good starting point to stimulate a reflection.

I.   The institution of the Holocaust Remembrance Day (*Giorno della Memoria*) in Italy

How did information, knowledge and perception of the Shoah change in Italy after the introduction by law of the Holocaust Remembrance Day? In the last years, the memory of the Jewish Holocaust has become stronger and stronger. This attention was probably meant to be a sort of refund, complementary to the memory of Antifascism and Resistance, which had been prevalent in the previous years, at least until the Nineties of the last century. At that time, Italy was in a peculiar political moment. The until then marginalized post-fascist parties had become a Government force, a transformation that made the anti-fascist conscience, related to the memory of the Partisans and the Resistance, weaker and weaker and more and more vulnerable.

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[1] See http://www.progettomemoria.info/, Archivio - Relazioni annuali

The Law establishing the 27th of January as the Remembrance Day in Italy (n. 211/2000)[2] precedes the Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the Holocaust Remembrance (A/RES/60/7, 1 November 2005).[3] Its first article mentions the Shoah, the anti-Jewish persecutions and the Fascist Racial Laws as well as the political and military deportations. In its second article, schools are encouraged to organize specific debates and lectures. Its implementation gave immediately way to a great number of events and, on this basis, the interest and demand for historical knowledge about the anti-Jewish persecution and genocide intensely increased, along with the concept of the transmission of Memory, written with the capital M.

When *Progetto Memoria*'s work began, there were still many Lager survivors giving lectures in schools, with great courage, perseverance and determination. The most active among them were: Piero Terracina, Shlomo Venezia, Nedo Fiano, Elisa Springer, Goti Bauer, Liliana Segre,[4] Edith Bruck, Sami Modiano, Carla Cohn, Alberto Mieli, Josef Varon, Mario Limentani and Alberto Sed. Some of them, unfortunately, are no longer with us, while others do not have the strength and health to continue. They became well-known to the large audience, thanks to books, written by themselves or by others, but most of all, because they were interviewed for newspaper articles and invited to TV shows, thus having an enormous media exposure. At the same time, there was an outbreak of novels, films and TV movies related to the Shoah. This fact, time and again, led people to identify with the victims in an out-of-context empathy.

This emotional movement has engaged schools, at all levels, explicitly asked every year to celebrate the Remembrance Day.[5] In

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[2] Italian Parliament, http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/00211l.htm

[3] United Nations,
https://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/res607.shtml

[4] Liliana Segre is now sitting in the Italian Parliament, as Life Senator, a tribute assigned by Italy's President Sergio Mattarella, in January 2018

[5] Since 2002, a National Contest, addressing all school levels, "I giovani ricordano la Shoah", is held by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Italian Union

addition, state and local administrations increasingly promoted visits to Auschwitz-Birkenau and other death camps, often in cooperation with Jewish institutions and with the participation of the survivors themselves. We may think it is never enough, but the risk perceived, at a certain point, was rather that of an overload; a question widely discussed within the Italian Jewish Community.

Shortly before the beginning of the XXI century, an outstanding research, conducted by the historian Liliana Picciotto, director of the Jewish Contemporary Documentation Centre (CDEC) Archives, converged in a fundamental book, where the names of the Jews deported from Italy were listed along with their address, the name of their parents and siblings, the date of their arrest, place of detention, the date of their transportation, the camp of destination and, if known, the date and place of death or even survival (Picciotto). This study made available and visible what had frequently remained hidden within the walls of Jewish family homes. Furthermore, it contributed to make Italian people aware of the incomparable tragedy, which had struck Italy as well as the rest of Europe, as opposed to the myth of "*Italiani brava gente*", i.e. the widely spread suggestion that Mussolini and Fascism had no responsibility in the Nazi atrocities, which had been a way to avoid measuring the extent of Italians' complicity with it. This research has recently converged in an Internet data-base[6] and in the CDEC Digital library.[7] In the same period, the definitions referring to the timeline of the anti-Jewish persecutions, "Persecution of rights/Persecution of lives," produced by the historian Michele Sarfatti,[8] were universally adopted.

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of Jewish Communities (UCEI). In addition, a specific notice is forwarded every year to the schools by the Regional Boards.

[6] http://www.nomidellashoah.it/

[7] CDEC Foundation Digital Library, http://digital-library.cdec.it/cdec-web/

[8] See also Sarfatti, Michele, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzione*, Einaudi, Torino 2000, updated edition Einaudi, Torino 2018; and Galimi, Valeria; Minerbi, Alessandra; Picciotto, Liliana; Sarfatti, Michele (ed.) *Dalle leggi antiebraiche alla Shoah. Sette anni di storia italiana 1938–1945*,

The creation of the web portal of the Italian State Central Archives,[9] including the collection of the Italian audio-visual interviews of the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute[10] marks another important step in the preservation of memory in Italy. Finally, in the current Italian language the term "Holocaust" is being gradually replaced by the Hebrew word "Shoah."

In my personal experience, owing to my long-lasting work as *Progetto Memoria* coordinator and to my visits to the schools, a greater consciousness and a sensible improvement of basic knowledge can be noticed among the younger generations, thanks to the huge educational effort carried out with the contribution of the Italian Jewish Institutions. Yet, more needs to be done, if we consider the amount of intolerance, anti-Semitisms and racism, which has recently been emerging.[11]

2. The testimony

How, through the narration of survivors, can we build a civil memory to be shared with and forwarded to new generations and how can we maximize the value of this narration? The testimony of the survivors and, more generally, of the witnesses of the anti-Jewish persecutions has been a cypher of our times. "The Era of the Witness" was defined by Annette Wieviorka as early as 1998 (*L'Ère du témoin*). Along with many other scholars, she reflected on the intertwining of history and memory. Namely, the historian Anna Rossi-Doria extensively

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Skira, Milano 2004. Michele Sarfatti was the Director of CDEC Foundation from 2002 to 2017.

[9] http://www.shoah.acs.beniculturali.it/

[10] The original "Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation of Los Angeles" was founded by Steven Spielberg, who, after the deep impact of his movie *Schindler's List*, in 1993, promoted the collection of interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Shoah and other genocides.

[11] Cf: Osservatorio Antisemitismo Fondazione CDEC, https://www.osservatorioantisemitismo.it/approfondimenti/nuova-indagine-sociologica-a-cura-di-osservatorio-antisemitismo-cdec-ed-ipsos-sulle-opinioni-ed-i-sentimenti-degli-italiani-nei-confronti-degli-ebrei/

analyzed this subject in her works in 2006, 2010 and 2012[12] and pointed out three main issues, not yet resolved:

a.   The risk of transmitting the history of the Shoah, separated from the history of Nazism and WWII, giving way to an unhistorical idea of "Absolute Evil."

b.   The risk of reducing the Shoah to a "private affair" between Nazis and Jews, despite the effort of the witnesses not to speak only in an emotional way, but to set their own story within the correct historical context.

c.   The idea that, for the commemorations of the 27th of January, the survivor's testimony has an automatic value is definitely a mistake and is likely to arouse an emotional impact that spirals on itself, without setting off knowledge and consciousness. The same goes for the visual records, (both photographs and films), especially if repeatedly shown. In fact, the images of horror scenes have mostly the effect of producing habituation, if not annoyance.

Listening to a survivor is still an imperative and the demand to listen to survivors is increasing each year. However, the number of survivors is declining. Our generation has had the great privilege of being the last one to have the chance to listen to them.

The witness is special and unique: he/she was *there* at *that time* and in *those places,* which we can visit today, but we can never imagine, no matter how hard we try, how they used to be. And, indeed, every description is filtered through emotion and carefully chosen words. Throughout the years, the survivors greatly improved their expertise and ability to communicate, but none of them has or will tell "everything" they had to withstand. I had the chance to take

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[12] See also Rossi-Doria, Anna; "Nodi difficili e problemi aperti", speech at the Conference "La Shoah in classe: 27 gennaio e non solo", Roma, December, 8, 2006; published in *A settant'anni dalle leggi razziali – Storia e Memoria per costruire una coscienza civile,* ed. Liliana Di Ruscio, Rita Gravina, Bice Migliau, Roma, Provincia di Roma e FNISM di Roma e Lazio, 2007; Rossi-Doria, Anna, "Memoria e racconto della Shoah", *Genesis,* XI / 1-2, Roma, Viella, 2012, pp 231-251; Rossi-Doria, Anna, *Sul ricordo della Shoah,* Torino, Zamorani, 2010.

care of Piero Terracina's agenda and I used to accompany him in schools. His storytelling was well calibrated through the years, often rearranged as the political scenario changed and aimed at making people reflect.

When a witness speaks, there is always commotion and absolute silence. The wider dimension of Terracina's speeches lay in the inclusion of dates and historical facts within his personal story. Therefore, his narration avoided abstraction and easy generalization and, above all, contributed to warn his audience against mythologizing the Shoah, detaching it from the historical context. In addition, he was always able to surprise who was listening, by enriching his narration with different episodes and adapting it to his audience. Hence, it was never the same. Let us hope that his words made their mark!

As for the construction of a civil memory, the present Italian situation forces us to reflect carefully. Nonetheless, some positive effects can be noticed if we take into account the great number of remarkable essays and performances produced in schools for the annual contest held by the Ministry of Education and by the Italian Union of Jewish Communities (UCEI). This is obviously due to the brilliant work done by skilled teachers with their students. *Progetto Memoria* plays an important role in this, drawing up original educational projects, addressed to all levels of schools and specifically planned with teachers.

3. Second and third generation: legacy and transmission

How can we keep and preserve the legacy of the survivors and witnesses? This task is now urgent and in particular need of attention. It is up to us, daughters and sons of the ones who lived through the persecutions, to find a way to convey this memory. The original definition, "Witnesses of what was not experienced", was formulated some years ago by Raffaella Di Castro in her homonymous book. She analyzed the question of how we identify ourselves in our parents and deal with their weight of remembrance, anguish and pain. She set up

her work also by means of interviews to the so-called second and third generation, i.e. children and grandchildren of the survivors.

Zachòr, (in Hebrew: Remember!), is for us Jews an imperative matter. From generation to generation, everyone must consider him/herself as if he/she had escaped from Egypt. We have to tell our children, as our parents told us, and so on…We are doing so in our own words, but, apart from the family legacy, how can we be effective in conveying the memory of the last century anti-Jewish persecutions to the new generations?

Ours is a two-front involvement: we must be efficient in both telling the story, even if we were not *there* at *that time,* and relate it with the appropriate historical information. Therefore, we must have knowledge and skills and find a way to establish a dialogue with the audience, stimulating their curiosity and sensitivity. Obviously there is not a single way to do this and we cannot possibly communicate emotion as the survivors do.

Moreover, a lot of work is needed with teachers in order to find suitable educational approaches, taking into account the faster and faster spread of information and communication via social media. It is, in fact, important to connect with youngsters through their own language and resources. Another aspect of this problem concerns the type of memory the younger generations can put in place. After listening to a survivor's testimony, they are sometimes asked to become themselves "new witnesses" as if it were possible to perpetuate events they have not experienced. In my opinion, this is unreasonable, even dangerous; they should not be overloaded with a responsibility too hard to bear. On the contrary, we should stimulate their minds in order to improve their critical abilities.

4. In Conclusion

We are inevitably approaching the end of the "Era of the Witness" and we must cope with this, finding ways to perpetuate and reiterate memories. The key problem of the intertwining of history and memory can be resolved with the use of oral sources, which must be placed right in the middle of this interaction. The important role of oral

sources should be supported by archival and visual documents, without forgetting the large amount of written testimonies.

Literature of course plays its part. In Italy (but not only), Primo Levi is the most important figure, as he is "the prime mediator of Holocaust awareness and the embodiment of the dignified figure of the survivor" (Gordon 20). A powerful instrument is provided also by artistic projects, such as Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine,[13] introduced in Italy by Adachiara Zevi and her Arte in Memoria organization, which gave way to the installation of stumbling stones in Rome, starting in 2010.[14] This has proved to be a useful way for students and teachers to counteract and prevent the denial of the Shoah, by restoring names, homes and history to the victims. *Progetto Memoria* participates in the didactic project connected with this initiative, mobilizing a large number of schools every year.

Working with the schools is an ongoing challenge and requires extensive efforts and original ideas. Thus, the members of *Progetto Memoria,* in synergy with witnesses and teachers, frequently meet to exchange opinions, compare experiences, discuss and develop educational strategies, and set up projects.

Knowledge, skills, and awareness must be improved both by teachers and cultural operators. In addition, as mentioned before, the imperative of fighting, not only anti-Semitism, but also intolerance and racism, which are now threatening other peoples and groups, has become more and more pressing. Our association aims at acting also in this direction.

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[13] The German artist, Gunter Demnig, remembers the victims of National Socialism by installing commemorative brass plaques in the pavement in front of their last address of choice. At present, there are more than 70,000 Stolpersteine in almost 2,000 places in Europe. http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/home/

[14] Arte in memoria, http://www.arteinmemoria.it/
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Laura Quercioli Mincer

ARTEINMEMORIA: Presenza e oblio della Shoah fra le rovine della sinagoga di Ostia Antica

L'arte vive nelle rovine: così si intitola un articolo sull'artista Anselm Kiefer apparso in *La Repubblica* il 1° giugno 2018. Nelle rovine – ma rovine certo diverse da quelle pensate, e create, da Kiefer – si colloca la biennale di arte contemporanea *Arteinmemoria*, curata e ideata da Adachiara Zevi, inaugurata nel 2002 e giunta nel 2017, alla sua decima edizione. Nata per ispirazione del progetto di arte contemporanea collocato nell'ottocentesca – e ricostruita – sinagoga di Stommeln, dove, dal 1991, ogni anno vene ospitata un'installazione *site-specific* di un artista diverso, la manifestazione romana ha finora ospitato 45 artisti, da Sol LeWitt e Jannis Kounellis (2002) a Luca Vitone e Ariel Schlesinger (2017).

    Arteinmemoria – è scritto nella presentazione dell'iniziativa – "non chiede agli artisti un'opera 'a tema' o 'in memoria di', ma di creare un cortocircuito tra il loro linguaggio e la sinagoga, concentrato di storia, memoria, arte e cultura" (Chiodi). Alcuni artisti hanno poi regalato le loro opere alla Sovrintendenza alle Belle Arti di Ostia Antica: nel 2002 Sol LeWitt (*Senza Titolo*), e Gal Weinstein (*Blaster*), nel 2005 Pedro Cabrita Reis (*Untitled*), nel 2011 Liliana Moro (*Stella polare*), nel 2013 Michael Rakowitz (*Genizah per Ostia*) e infine, nel 2015, Stih&Schnock (*Sinergia*), preannuncio, secondo Zevi, di un possibile (benché improbabile) museo di arte contemporanea nell'area archeologica.

    La collocazione di *Arteinmemoria* nella cornice e nell'interazione con il mondo classico fornisce alcune riflessioni, articolate su una serie di contrasti. Non solo quella più ovvia fra memoria e oblio: qui si confrontano anche Roma e Gerusalemme, manufatto e natura, erezione e disfacimento, centro e periferia (la "periferia" della sinagoga rispetto alle rovine del centro di Ostia) e quindi universale e particolare (l'universalismo dell'Impero e il

particolarismo della collettività ebraica), per arrivare, nello specifico delle opere degli artisti tedeschi qui rappresentati, alla contrapposizione, anche questa ovvia, monumento- anti-monumento[1].

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Trattandosi appunto di opere *site-specific*, realizzate dagli artisti dopo un'attenta ricognizione del luogo, sarà utile una breve descrizione dello stesso. "Generalmente considerata un microcosmo di Roma" (White 52), Ostia, situata alla foce del Tevere, nacque come postazione di difesa nel IV secolo a.e.v. e diventò, ai tempi di Claudio e di Traiano, il maggior porto della capitale, ed era da qui che transitava gran parte delle ricchezze dell'Impero. Il graduale insabbiamento dei porti ne causò il lento declino, iniziato già nel III secolo e.v.; la città venne quindi completamente abbandonata nel IX secolo. Subito coperta dalla vegetazione e mai toccata per secoli è, dopo Pompei, la più importante area archeologica italiana. La sinagoga, forse la seconda più antica della Diaspora e "per molti aspetti la più importante sinagoga antica rinvenuta finora" (Runesson 171), venne scoperta casualmente solo nel 1961, a seguito di lavori che dovevano condurre a una delimitazione del perimetro archeologico, e che ne causarono invece un imponente allargamento. Essa data dalla

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[1] Un'operazione simile, nell'intento di costruire un dialogo fra mondo classico e contemporaneità, è stata la mostra *Par tibi, Roma, nihil*, allestita nell'estate del 2016 in un settore dell'area archeologica del Palatino. Ne scrive, a proposito dell'installazione di Jannis Jounellis, Stefano Chiodi: "trasformare e, *après coup*, essere trasformati con un'operazione che tende a liberare il pensiero storico dalla linearità temporale, concependo, ha scritto Jacques Rancière, "eventi, nozioni, significati che prendono il tempo a rovescio, che fanno sì che il significato circoli in un modo che sfugge a ogni contemporaneità, a ogni identità del tempo con 'sé stesso'" (56). Si forma cioè in questo modo un'anacronia, vale dire, sempre secondo Rancière, un evento, una sequenza significante usciti dal loro tempo, dotati della capacità di definire scambi temporali inediti, di garantire il salto da una linea temporale all'altra"; Stefano Chiodi, *Esercitare il classico: «Par tibi, Roma, nihil»*, estratto dal catalogo della mostra, *Doppiozero*, 8 luglio 2016. La mostra *Par tibi, Roma, nihil*, a cura di Raffaella Frascarelli si è svolta a Roma, Via di San Gregorio, 30 (Portale del Vignola), dal 23 Giugno al 18 Settembre 2016.

fine del primo secolo e.v., venne in parte rifatta durante il secondo e terzo secolo e.v., e completamente ricostruita nel quarto secolo e.v. Fioriva anche ai tempi di Traiano, ovvero di quell'imperatore che, a seguito dell'insurrezione in gran parte della Diaspora del 115, come afferma lo storico Appiano, "era determinato soprattutto a distruggere completamente, se possibile, la nazione [ebraica] e, se non fosse stato possibile, almeno a disperderla e a fermare la sua presuntuosa malvagità" (Goodman 546).

Cosa ci racconta la sinagoga di Ostia? La sua posizione marginale rispetto alla città (sebbene collocata nelle vicinanze del porto, ossia il luogo più attivo dell'insediamento) potrebbe suggerire immagini di isolamento, emarginazione. Eppure le iscrizioni – una lunga iscrizione in greco, lingua franca degli ebrei della Roma antica, introdotta però dalla formula latina *Pro salute Augusti* (White 42) – e i testimoniati lavori di allargamento e rinnovamento dell'edificio nel corso dei secoli ci parlano di una comunità in crescita e che "godeva di un alto livello di accettazione sociale da parte della società romana" (38), parlano di fertili legami di interazione, un'interazione certo messa a dura prova dalle rivolte giudaiche e dalla distruzione del Tempio, ma in realtà mai venuta meno in tutto il periodo dell'Impero. La postazione della sinagoga ci rammenta anche, forse, la necessità da parte ebraica di mantenere una separazione tale, pur nel contesto di molteplici rapporti, di preservare quel nucleo di tradizioni e valori ebraici obiettivamente antitetici con quelli di Roma. Fra questi, la centralità dello studio rispetto al censo e alla gloria militare, o "il quadro morale [ebraico] di colpa, pentimento e perdono, alieno al discorso morale romano di onore e vergogna" (Goodman 417), la visione di un mondo "priv[o] di qualsiasi struttura od obiettivo generale" dei romani (320), rispetto al *telos* onnicomprensivo degli ebrei (296).

Oltre a configurare, come scrive Adachiara Zevi nella presentazione del progetto, "l'abbrivio dell'esilio", nello spazio ebraico di Ostia antica possiamo riconoscere la concreta rappresentazione spaziale della permanenza, fisica e culturale, di gruppi minoritari all'interno di contesti più ampi, le loro complesse strategie di sopravvivenza.

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È noto che la risposta probabilmente più radicale e, secondo alcuni, più efficace, alla questione della memoria, è quella proposta da artisti tedeschi che, con i contro-monumenti o anti-monumenti hanno elaborato una soluzione eminentemente politica, nel senso ampio del termine, alla domanda su cosa e come ricordare, hanno proposto un diverso rapporto fra fruitore ed artista, fra opera d'arte e trascorrere del tempo. "Il più importante 'spazio della memoria'", scrive James E. Young, "per questi artisti non è lo spazio sul terreno o al di sopra di esso, ma quello fra il memoriale e lo spettatore, fra lo spettatore e la sua propria memoria" (118). Si tratta – in particolare nella produzione di Jochen Gerz e della moglie, l'israeliana Esther Shalev, di un monumento che scompare, che si inabissa, che si cancella, "trasformando", nelle parole di Adachiara Zevi "gli spettatori del monumento alla memoria in memoria del monumento" (99).

Ben quattro fra i maggiori rappresentanti di questa opzione artistica ed etica hanno partecipato ad *Arteinmemoria*, e mi limiterò a una breve descrizione delle loro opere qui esposte.

Nel 2002, per la prima edizione della Biennale, Rudoph Herz propone   *Title   Under   Construction (http://www.arteinmemoria.it/opere/Herz_t.htm),* una colonna di dieci anelli di cemento all'interno dei quali è inserita una scala. Più che un anti-monumento abbiamo qui di fronte una rappresentazione, anche abbastanza descrittiva, del tempo e della storia ebraica. Se nella società romana era ampiamente diffusa l'idea che Roma e il suo impero sarebbero durati per sempre, in una sorta di tempo congelato, come rammenta anche il già citato Goodman, gli ebrei considerano "la progressione in avanti della storia non tanto come un cammino rettilineo verso una destinazione finale nota quanto piuttosto come una spirale ascendente verso un punto finale sempre (finora) invisibile" (217). Qui gli anelli della spirale però non conducono verso nulla, restano schiacciati su se stessi. Unica indicazione di percorso è la scala che, in questo contesto non può non portare alla mente la scala del sogno di Giacobbe, lungo la quale gli angeli "salivano e scendevano" (Genesi, 28, 12). Gli angeli che scendessero per questa scala per

portare sollievo agli uomini si troverebbero intrappolati nello spazio buio di una storia ripetitiva, anch'essa schiacciata su se stessa.

Nel 2011 è ospite di *Arteinmemoria* Jochen Gerz, colui che possiamo definire l'ideatore dell'anti-monumento (con la *mostra EXIT – Materialen zum Dachau Projekt* a Bochum nell'ormai lontano 1972),[2] colui che è riuscito a trasformare "l'inquieta relazione della Germania con il proprio passato in un doloroso evento pubblico" (Young 120). La sua opera, intitolata *Noi e loro (un legame, un vuoto, una perdita, una traccia, una metafora, una memoria)*, consiste in 82 targhe, sul modello di quelle utilizzate negli orti botanici, con i nomi di altrettanti cittadini della Ostia attuale, scelti a caso dall'elenco del telefono. Le targhe sono disposte irregolarmente nel campo che separa la sinagoga dal resto degli scavi. "L'invisibilità o la scomparsa del memoriale, il luogo vuoto, ci indica il nostro posto. Prima che dalla Germania scomparissero gli ebrei erano scomparsi i tedeschi"[3] (citato in Zevi, pos. 1403), ha detto Gerz in un'intervista. Qui, al contrario, appaiono i nomi di esseri viventi che riprendono possesso della loro storia remota e che, come questa, verranno comunque fagocitati dal tempo, dalla vegetazione, dal ciclo della natura.

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[2] "In fact, perhaps the first truly countermemorial installation in Germany was mounted by Jochen Gerz for Sammlung Kunstmuseum in Bochum in 1972" (Young 122).

[3] Intervista a Jochen Gerz di Alexander Pühringer, "Das Mahmal bist du selbst", *Untitled. The State of the Art*, 2012, 3.

Ostia Antica, dintorni della sinagoga (foto dell'autrice).

Stih&Schnock nel 2015 presentano dei cartelli con un codice a barre, leggibile tramite smartphone e collegato con il sito web di *Arteinmemoria*, che unisce luoghi della memoria ebraica e tedesca nella città di Roma. Lo sfondo si richiama inoltre a quello del mosaico pavimentale della sinagoga di Ostia. Così come in altre loro opere, Stih&Schnock inseriscono elementi di memoria storica rimossi all'interno di percorsi urbani quotidiani e in teoria accessibili a tutti: cartelli stradali, mappe, fermate di autobus che, partendo dal centro di Berlino, conducono ai siti dei campi di sterminio, e via dicendo.

Forse l'opera più stupefacente è quella performativa di Horst Hoheisel, ovvero colui che, nel 1995, progettava di far saltare in aria la Porta di Brandeburgo, e che, a Ostia, ripristina con pietas, sotto la guida di restauratori, un piccolo frammento dell'ingresso in pietra alla sinagoga. Stupefacente per il carattere minimalista dell'intervento e per la dedizione con cui l'artista, sempre straordinariamente attento

alla "stratificazione memoriale"[4] dei luoghi, si dedica non a una critica, a una cancellazione, alla dimostrazione di un'assenza, ma alla ricostruzione attenta di un minimo dettaglio. Nel muro inserisce poi anche delle parole, suggeritegli da amici e ispirate a questo luogo. Parole che nessuno potrà mai leggere, come nel *Memoriale invisibile* di Jochen Gerz a Saarbrücken, dove i nomi degli oltre 2000 cimiteri ebraici tedeschi abbandonati o distrutti sono incisi sulla parte nascosta di altrettanti sampietrini della piazza del Castello, ora intitolata Piazza del Monumento Invisibile (Young 140).

<p align="center">***</p>

Ostia e la sua sinagoga non sono state distrutte e abbandonate a seguito di cataclismi, guerre, stragi. Le sue rovine non sono, come tanti e troppi luoghi, illustrazioni della ferocia dell'uomo, ma del volgere implacabile del tempo, e si collegano alla mitologia preromantica e romantica delle rovine. Sono immagini di distruzione a cui qualcosa però, comunque, sopravvive: "Le idee che le rovine destano in me sono grandi" scrive Diderot in *Salon de 1767*: "tutto si annienta, tutto finisce, tutto passa. Il mondo soltanto resta. Il tempo soltanto dura". Le rovine del mondo classico ci indicano dunque una struttura di pensiero nella quale il mondo e il tempo *durano*. Ma le rovine del XX secolo, le "macerie del moderno" provocate dall'uomo, ci parlano invece di un mondo e di un tempo che irreparabilmente finiscono, senza lasciare nulla alle proprie spalle, "non già con uno schianto, ma con un lamento". Nell'interazione con le installazioni contemporanee e *site-specific* di *Arteinmemoria* si crea qui dunque una preziosa dialettica: le rovine del mondo classico, anzitutto agli occhi italiani, tanto abituati a convivere con esse, si trasformano anche in simulacri delle rovine moderne. O, al contrario: le rovine moderne – qui rappresentate dagli anti-monumenti di Gerz, di Hoheisel, o dalla bandiera bianca di Fabio Mauri, visualizzazione di "una resa" e di uno

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[4] Cfr. ad es. Hernandez, Juan Felipe, *The Praxis of Horst Hoheisel: the Countermonument in an Expanded Field*, tesi di Master, Amherst University, 2014, https://scholarworks.umass.edu/theses/832/.

"smarrimento disarmato", unico risultato dall'aver "molto vissuto, praticato cose, gente, idee" (Mauri 81), si integrano e trovano una loro collocazione all'interno di un fluire del tempo certo malinconico, ma mai completamente disperato.

     Arteinmemoria si potrebbe configurare quindi come una sorta di emblema barocco: ciò che trascorre, che è inevitabilmente finito – è finito l'ebraismo dell'Europa Centro-Orientale, è finita l'illusione che il progresso tecnico porti con sé il miglioramento etico – è iscritto all'interno di ciò che dura e rende possibile la percezione della continuità: ovvero il "mondo" e il "tempo", per usare la terminologia di Diderot, ovvero le rovine del mondo antico.

<div align="center">***</div>

     Per concludere posso solo aggiungere che la sinagoga è locata in una posizione molto marginale e, priva di denominazione sulle numerose mappe poste lungo cardi e decumani, non è facilmente raggiungibile dai percorsi turistici degli scavi. Durante una recente visita i primi di giugno 2018, persino le pur molto solerti impiegate della Sovrintendenza locale non sapevano ove si trovasse, né come arrivarvi, e ci avevano anzi avvertito che, a causa della vegetazione ormai estiva, il percorso poteva essere inagibile. Giunti in loco, la percezione di una sfasatura, di un corto circuito.

Ostia Antica, dintorni della sinagoga (foto dell'autrice).

Giulio Turcato, Rovine di Varsavia, *olio su tela, cm. 20x30, 1950 (collezione privata). Si ringrazia per l'autorizzazione alla riproduzione di quest'opera il titolare dell'Archivio Giulio Turcato e dei diritti di riproduzione, l'ing. Ettore Caruso.*

Il ghetto di Varsavia dopo la seconda guerra mondiale, 1945 o 1946, fonte: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Warsaw_Ghetto_after_WWII_04.jpg

Le rovine della vicina Porta Marina assomigliano a quelle del ghetto di Varsavia[5], ma certamente il muro circolare in opera laterizia di Sol LeWitt, che ricrea, al di fuori della sinagoga, la nicchia in cui venivano conservati i rotoli della Legge, si confonde con le vestigia imperiali (http://www.arteinmemoria.it/opere/Lewitt_t.htm).

Nel fragore e nell'abbandono del tempo la provocazione di Stih&Schnock si mescola ad altri cartelli sbiaditi. Non riusciamo a trovare le pietre colorate della *Genizah per Ostia* di Michael Rakowitz. Le 21 colonne di Pedro Cabrita Reis sono rovine o fantasmi di una vegetazione pietrificata (http://www.arteinmemoria.it/english/opere/cabrita_t.htm).

E, così mi sembra, tutto – le istallazioni moderne, i resti dell'impero – viene quasi a trasformarsi in qualcosa di indistintamente "antico": quell'antico che, come scriveva Alois Riegl agli inizi del secolo scorso costituisce un *valore* intrinseco e "riesce a parlare ... con

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[5] Le rovine reali e quelle dipinte da Giulio Turcato a partire dal 1948.

immediatezza al sentimento" e che, nelle parole di Elena Pirazzoli, è dato da "quella patina che si deposita su un monumento con il passare del tempo, con i ritmi naturali del deperimento" in grado di innescare profonde "implicazioni emotive" (50-51), a tutti accessibili. Non abbiamo qui forse di fronte altro che, ancora una volta, rovine, macerie. Ma, come scrive Anselm Kiefer, l'autore con cui avevo aperto queste brevi considerazioni (che, paradossalmente, è forse il più monumentale fra gli artisti viventi): "A volte le macerie di ciò che è stato si condensano per creare parole nuove, nuovi spazi e nuovi rapporti" (49).

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Beyond the Holocaust
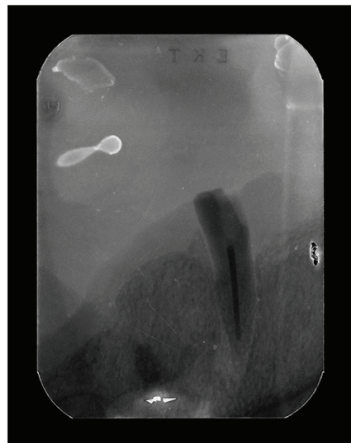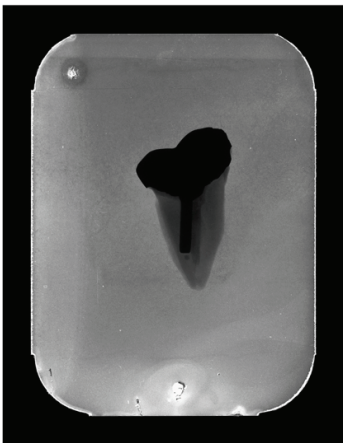
Muriel Hasbun, *X post facto (6.7)*, *X post facto (11.3)*, *X post facto (5.6)*, *X post facto (3.3)*, archival pigment prints, 2009/2013.
From the series *X post facto (équis anónimo)*.

X post facto came literally after the fact, thirty years after I had left El Salvador at seventeen, and seventeen years after the Salvadoran peace accords. It was also after my father's death, while I packed away and made sense of the objects that remained.

Janet's photograph had come into my consciousness like a lighting bolt. It was then, as I stared at it, dumbfounded, at the Museo de la Revolución, that I remembered what my father had told me. That he had been asked to identify Janet's body after she was captured, (tortured) and killed in 1984. But his dental archive could not produce casts or X-rays of her smile. She had not been his patient. I only remembered Janet through the eyes of a ten year old. She had been a beauty queen, with long black hair... But the way she held the M-16 in the photograph was an utterly different reality, unspoken, untold. Janet had become Comandante Filomena.

The memory of Janet and her portrait haunted me as I looked at my father's archive. Like a medical examiner or a forensic anthropologist, I examined X ray after X ray. At first, they all seemed as anonymous as a document signed with an X. But I began to see landscapes, graven by our lives. *X post facto* would become an emotional register for my experience during and after the Salvadoran civil war: This is how the body remembers. It creates crevices and strange fossils. Encrustations and indentations. A sea of sediment upon sediment. A place revealed.

The 32 photographs of X post facto, selected and derived from an archive of over 1,000 X-rays, link me to the faces of those who perished or to the phantom limbs of those who suffered violence in my country of origin. Documents turned into metaphor, the images become relics, traces, signposts. They mediate a site where we might explore the territory of our shared history. Recorded *in the flesh.*

About the artist.

Muriel Hasbun's expertise as an artist and as an educator focuses on issues of cultural identity, migration and memory. Through an intergenerational, transnational and transcultural lens, Hasbun constructs contemporary narratives and establishes a space for dialogue where individual and collective memory spark new questions about identity and place. She is the recipient of numerous distinctions, including: a FY21 AHCMC Artist & Scholar Grant, 2020 Sondheim and 2019 Trawick Prize Finalist, a 2019 Archive Transformed CU Boulder Artist/Scholar Collaborative Residency, Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Awards in Media (2019 and 2008) and in Photography (2015, 2012). Hasbun's photo-based work has been internationally exhibited, venues include: George Mason University, Brentwood Arts Exchange (2019), Turchin Center for Visual Arts, the Athenaeum (2018); Betty Mae Kramer Gallery, MICA Meyerhoff Galleries (2017); PINTA Miami and Civilian Art Projects (2016); American University Museum (2016, 2008); Centro Cultural de España in San Salvador (2016, 2015, 2006); Smithsonian American Art Museum (2013, 2011); the Maier Museum of Art (2012); Light Work, Mexican Cultural Institute (2011); the MAC-Dallas and Michael Mazzeo Gallery (2010); NYU's Hemispheric Institute at the Centro Cultural Recoleta in Buenos Aires (2007); Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego (2007); Houston's FotoFest (2006), Corcoran Gallery of Art (2004); 50th Venice Biennale (2003). Muriel Hasbun is the founder and director of *laberinto projects*, a transnational, cultural memory and education initiative that fosters contemporary art practices, social inclusion and dialogue in El Salvador and its U.S. diaspora, through exhibitions, art education, artist residencies and community engagement. She is professor emerita at the GWU Corcoran School of Arts & Design and visiting artist/distinguished practitioner with the Nomad MFA program at the Hartford Art School.

Guido Bartolini

The Memory of the Axis War in Italian Literature: Ethical Counterforce or Uncritical Denial of Responsibility?

In Italy, the construction of the collective memory of the Second World War has been a complex and highly divisive process, which reflected the intricate history of the country in the years 1940-1945. Italy entered the war as a Fascist state and Hitler's main ally; it finished it as a divided nation, shaken by a Civil War, after having been occupied by both Allied and German armies. As members of the Axis powers, between the 10th of June 1940 and the 8th of September 1943, the Italians fought in North Africa, declared war on Greece and occupied it, were deployed all over the Balkans, and took part in the invasion of the Soviet Union. After the defeat of their country, Italian citizens ended up in different factions: some joined Antifascist guerrilla formations – both in Italy and abroad – some enlisted in the Italian cobelligerent army, fighting together with the Allies, others supported the Fascist Social Republic in Northern Italy, finishing the war at the side of Germany. The diversity of the Italian experiences was well reflected by the fate of the prisoners of war: Italian soldiers were imprisoned by all the main powers acting on the European fronts and, at the end of the Second World War, were dispersed in prison camps all over the world: in Russia, Germany, America, as well as in India (Rainero 8-12).

Scholars who have reconstructed the formation of the Italian memory discourse of the Second World War and its evolution throughout the twentieth century have shown that the Italian public memory has been centred on the Antifascist War of Resistance, and, more in general, on the 1943-1945 Civil War that followed the fall of the Fascist regime (Focardi, *La guerra della memoria* 4; Fogu 149). In the postwar years, the war of Resistance against Nazi-fascism was seen as the founding moment of the Italian Republic, becoming the

key source of legitimisation of the parties that dominated Italian politics for the following four decades (Chiarini 13). Because of its political implications, however, the memory of the Resistance constituted a form of "divided memory," which engendered heated debates that divided the Italians along political, cultural, and geographical lines (Isnenghi 253; Rusconi 7; Foot 10).

While it is crucial to stress that the memory of the Italian Civil War remained in the postwar decades a controversial topic, it is equally important to underline that the debates that this memory generated continuously renewed and renegotiated its importance for Italian culture and society. Through the decades, the Civil War continued to receive a constant attention, remaining at the centre of the Italian collective memory, while memories of other segments of the Second World War tended to be marginalised in the public discourse, constituting what Luisa Passerini has called "areas of resistance to remembering" (Passerini 290).

Among the neglected events of the Italian history of the Second World War, the military campaigns and occupations carried out by the Fascist dictatorship have been particularly overlooked. This is not surprising since the Axis War was not easy to remember for the Italians, as it had been a war of aggression fought and lost in faraway locations by a political system that was overturned and from which democratic Italy wanted to be distanced (Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco* xiv). As a result, few "carrier groups" and "agents of memory" remained interested in the preservation of its memory and since the postwar years the Axis War has obtained only a marginal position within the Italian memory discourse.[1]

This marginality does not imply, obviously, that this war was completely removed from the public discourse. For instance, during the 1950s, conservative politicians tried to confer relevance on the sacrifice of the Italian soldiers in the Axis War, in order to lessen the memory of the Resistance and damage the Left (Schwarz 189-197).

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[1] On the use of Max Weber's concept of "carrier group" in relation to the transmission of memories see Alexander, "Toward a theory" 11; on the idea of "agents of memory" see Barcellini and Wieviorka 12.

Moreover, military institutions remained always interested in the Axis War and, through the years, transmitted a series of memory narratives that were self-indulgent, uncritical, centred on a nationalist celebration of the resilience of the Italian soldiers, and deprived of any political references to Fascism (Schwarz 178; Rochat, *Le guerre italiane* xiv).

As a result of the actions of these and other carrier groups, segments of the Axis War, such as the retreat from the river Don in Russia, the second battle of El Alamein, and the Nazi massacre of Italian soldiers in the Greek island of Cephalonia, managed to acquire some relevance within the broader national discourse on the Second World War. Given the attention that, at times, was given to these events, Giorgio Rochat has defined the memory of the Axis War as a "discontinuous memory," which, while remaining overall "weak" within the broader Italian memory discourse, presented a few events that received selective attention (*Le guerre italiane* xiv; "La guerra di Grecia" 347). Yet other episodes of the Axis War, such as the occupations of foreign territories, the repression of the occupied populations, and the Italian war crimes, remained largely marginalised and shrouded by silence, constituting, as Luigi Borgomaneri has argued, the unmentionable part of the Italian history of the Second World War (11).

This state of marginality was long reflected in the historiographical scholarship, in which the Axis War was largely neglected and mainly confined to studies of military history. This situation has drastically changed in the last two decades, which saw the beginning of what can be considered a new historiographical season for the study of Italy in the Second World War. Historians such as Davide Rodogno, Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, Lidia Santarelli, Eric Gobetti, Davide Conti, Thomas Schlemmer, Elena Aga Rossi, and Teresa Giusti have devoted important works to the Italian military occupations of foreign countries in the years 1940-1943. These studies conferred particular attention on the repression of occupied populations, the creation of concentration camps, and the history of the Italian war crimes, shedding light on the events that had been removed from the Italian public discourse created in the postwar years.

Before this renewed interest in the forgotten pages of the Italian past – at least within the narrow perimeter of historiographical scholarship – the transmission of information concerning the Axis War was mainly the result of cultural products, which mediated the personal memories of the veterans allowing their stories to circulate across society and reach an audience that did not have a direct experience of the war. The vicarious remembering engendered by these cultural products cannot be conceptualised as a form of postmemory per se, as it partially lacks the emotional investment and deep interpersonal connection that characterise the latter (*Family Frames* 22; "Generation of postmemory" 107). These cultural products, instead, can be analysed as "vectors of memory," as material entities that stored and transmitted information about the Italian participation in the Fascist war of aggression, contributing to shaping the Italian cultural memory of the Second World War.[2]

At first, Italian cinema appeared to be particularly involved in this process. During the 1950s films concerning the North African front and – in continuity with Fascist war cinema – naval battles in the Mediterranean were released in large numbers.[3] These combat movies participated to the same memory discourse that, around that time, was developed by military institutions and conservative carrier groups: they represented the Italian war effort in nationalist terms by focusing on the hardship faced by the soldiers, conceptualising it through ideas traditionally used for the explanation of death on the battlefield, such as heroism, sacrifice, and glory (Brunetta 565-566; Ellena 196-201; Fantoni).

While these films are useful to reflect on the un-progressive cultural atmosphere of the 1950s and the survival of traditional conceptualisations of warfare after the watershed of the Second World War (Mondini, "Narrated Wars" 24-25; Mondini, "Manly Heroes" 102), their contribution to the articulation of a memory of the Axis War

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[2] The term "vectors of memory" was coined by Henry Rousso (219) and then theorized by Nancy Wood (5-6).
[3] For a list of the Italian war films of the Axis War, including a synopsis and a short critical comment, see Casadio 7-95.

appears limited. All these films, in fact, narrated war episodes that are divested of references to the broader context of the Second World War, taking place in a timeless dimension where the courage of the soldiers can be revealed and celebrated. By focusing on the themes of sacrifice and heroism, presented as everlasting positive values that are necessary for the commemoration of the fallen, these films did not address any of the specificities of the Axis War, which had been a Fascist and imperialistic war of aggression aiming at the occupation of foreign territories. Significantly, after the 1950s, this type of war films stopped being produced and, with the only exception of films on the defeat of El Alamein that at times continued to be released (Ellena 199), left no trace in the Italian culture of the following decades.

By contrast, the cultural field that was the most involved in a polyphonic narrativisation of the Axis War and prolonged transmission of its memory was that of Italian literature. In the postwar years, innumerable books on the Axis War, spanning the various genres that usually inform war literature, such as novels, memoirs, reportages, short stories, and mixed forms, were published. The importance that these cultural products had in the transmission of memory narratives of the Axis War is proven not only by the fact that books of this kind continued to be issued throughout the decades, but also by the great editorial success that some of them had.

The two most obvious examples are Mario Rigoni Stern's *Il sergente nella neve* and Giulio Bedeschi's *Centomila gavette di ghiaccio*, two texts narrating the retreat of the Italian army from the Soviet Union which, in terms of copies sold, constituted two of the most successful Italian narrative books of the twentieth century (Corni 24; Mondini, *Alpini* 197). Beyond them, other books on the Axis War sold well with the public: for instance, both *El Alamein* by Paolo Caccia Dominioni and *Giovinezza Giovinezza* by Luigi Preti won the Bancarella award – a prize that is given by booksellers to one of the most successful books of the year – while Biasion's *Sagapò* was the third most successful publication of its series, the prestigious Einaudi's "I gettoni" edited by Elio Vittorini (Cavalli 253).

In spite of the editorial success that several of these texts obtained, the literature of the Axis War was largely marginalised in the

critical reception and it remains today a much-unexplored field of enquiry.[4] By limiting the survey to the period 1945-1975 and to the fictional production related to the Greek, Yugoslavian, and Russian fronts – which means excluding from this study the numerous autobiographical memoirs published in the given period and the narrative production concerning the African front – we can identify at least nineteen authors who have written on the Italian participation in the Axis War, for a total of thirty narrative texts.[5] Given the marginalisation of the Axis War in the Italian public memory and the numerous limits that affected its short-lasted cinematic representation, these fictional accounts could have played a significant role in transmitting to the Italian public richer and more thorough memory narratives about this part of their national history.

Several scholars, indeed, have highlighted the important role that literature can play in the memory process. Astrid Erll notes that literary texts are not only memory-reflective objects that conserve and mirror memory narratives circulating within a given community of memory but – when actualised by the act of reading – can have a memory productive function, transmitting a view on the past to their public (151-152). Ann Rigney points out that thanks to their "narrativizing and aesthetic power" the representations of the past passed on by fictional accounts tend to be particularly effective and memorable (350). Finally, Jeffrey Hartman insists on the idea that literature often constitutes a critical counterforce that is able to preserve conceptualisations of the past that are alternative to the dominant trends characterising the public memory of a given community (Hartmann 107).

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[4]Early studies on the literature of the Axis War can be found only in volumes of history of Italian literature: see, for instance, Manacorda 295-308; Briganti 53-94; La Cauza 1274-1307. In recent years Marco Mondini has written important contributions that have started to develop a more thorough assessment of this literary production: see Mondini, "Manly Heroes" 109-119; Mondini, "Il racconto della sconfitta" 67-88. Other scholars limited their analysis to the memoirs of the Russian campaign: see Corni and Isnenghi 254-256.

[5]The list of Italian literary accounts on the Axis War that are examined here is reported at the end of this contribution among the primary sources.

Another significant function that literature – as well as other cultural products – can play in relation to the memory of the past has been underlined by Tzvetan Todorov, who has shown that literary texts can help readers to reflect on the wrongdoings committed by members of their communities constituting, therefore, a privileged platform for the transmission of historical awareness (142-147). Similarly, Jeffrey Alexander has stressed that cultural depictions, by allowing the identification with the perpetrators of wrongdoings, can put in place processes of "internalization rather than projection, acceptance rather than displacement", which may help the audience to form a sense of "moral responsibility" ("On the social construction" 227).

The literature of the Axis War, by dealing with a phase of the national history in which the Italians invaded other countries, perpetrated acts of violence, and committed war crimes, could have helped the Italian interpretative community to gain awareness of the wrongdoings carried out by their fellow citizens and foster the formation of a sense of responsibility for the past. However, among the thirty fictional narratives on the Axis War that I have examined here, only three are useful to develop this perspective: Raul Lunardi's *Diario di un soldato semplice*, Ugo Pirro's *Le soldatesse*, and Mario Terrosi's *La casa di Novach*.

Lunardi's book is composed of two short stories, "Mizzi" and "Il prete Momcilo." The former tells the story of an Italian Lieutenant who, during his service in occupied Slovenia, develops a strong attraction towards a young woman, Mizzi, who works as a waitress in an inn. The attention that the girl receives does not go unnoticed to the members of the local community who, one day, accuse her of collaboration with the enemy and kill her. What begins as the light story of an affair becomes a tragic narrative revolving all around the sense of guilt that the protagonist feels after the death of the innocent Slovenian. The man becomes obsessed with Mizzi's death and initiates a moral quest aiming to assess the various shades of responsibility of the people involved in this murder. In the conclusion, the protagonist understands that the only position that is ethically tenable is the one that highlights his own contribution to the death of

the young girl, arguing in this way for the necessity of claiming responsibility for one's own actions.

Pirro's *Le soldatesse* tells the story of a young Lieutenant in occupied Greece to whom is assigned a peculiar task: accompanying a convoy of young Greek prostitutes to various Italian camps where they would begin their profession in the military brothels. During this journey, the man sees the dire conditions in which the Greeks live under the Italian occupation, the numerous sexist acts that the Italians commit against local women thanks to their position of power, and the violent actions of repression carried out against both the guerrilla forces and the locals. This experience drastically changes the protagonist who, at the end of the story, reaches an Antifascist conscience fuelled by the awareness of the wrongdoings committed by the members of his national community.

Finally, Terrosi's *La casa di Novach*, too, tells the story of a conversion that is engendered by the experience of the occupation. At the beginning of the book the protagonist is an enthusiastic supporter of the war; however, after his service in Slovenia, during which he took part in anti-partisan operations that led to the destruction of many villages and the murders of civilians, he develops an anti-war stance that is directly due to the sense of guilt generated by the actions he committed.

In spite of their simplicity, Lunardi's *Diario di un soldato semplice*, Terrosi's *La casa di Novach*, and Pirro's *Le soldatesse* are extremely interesting novels that let the violence of the Italian occupation emerge and put the sense of guilt of the perpetrators at the centre of their stories. If more vectors of memory had developed a similar representation – or if the texts by Lunardi, Pirro, and Terrosi had been remediated and more widely discussed – this could have contributed to raising awareness about the crimes that the Italians had committed as an occupying army during the Second World War, helping the formation of a public debate on these events.

However, among the literary vectors of memory of the Axis War, representations highlighting the Italian culpability constitute an exception. By contrast, the vast majority of these war narratives rely on a series of topoi and recurrent themes that enhance an extremely

stereotyped depiction of the Italian participation in the Second World War. One of the most common of these typified representations is related to that widespread postwar stereotype that has become common to label "Italiani brava gente" (Fogu 147; Forlenza 83; *Il cattivo tedesco* x). In the literature of the Axis War Italian soldiers have been consistently represented as men who were not interested in fighting the war, always maintained a decent behaviour, did not commit brutalities, and established positive relationships with the occupied populations. Moreover, the greatest part of these war narratives tends to focus on the many moments in which the Italians occupied the position of the victim, representing the war as a continuous experience of suffering and horror that the Italians faced with courage, doing the best they could given the weakness and dysfunction of the Fascist army. This depiction is paired with consistent marginalisation of the acts of violence that the Italians inflicted on others, which, across the literature of the Axis War, are barely represented.

It is important to stress that in these war narratives violence is not simply concealed, but rather displaced. Many texts, in fact, while ignoring episodes in which the Italians were the perpetrators of violence, chose to foreground the cases in which the Germans – and at times the Fascist components of the Italian army – committed atrocities. By insisting on the idea of the good nature of the Italians and by displacing violence outside the national community through its attribution to the German allies, the literature of the Axis War put forward a self-absolving representation of Italy's participation in the Second World War, centred on the idea of Italian innocence.

The study of the literature of the Axis War shows that literary texts, rather than inevitably constituting an oppositional force or place of counter-discourse – a function that, at times, they can exercise as the novels by Lunardi, Pirro, and Terrosi prove – tend to contribute to the formation and transmission of the dominant trends of a memory discourse. In fact, as Filippo Focardi has largely proven, an overall sense of innocence, the development of self-exculpatory strategies, the focus on the moments of victimisation, and the reliance on stereotypes such as the good Italian and the violent and wicked German, have

been the dominant traits of the Italian memory discourse of the Second World War (*Il cattivo tedesco* xiii).

Italian literature conceptualised the Fascist war of aggression through categories and ideas that have dominated the public discourse of the Second World War since the postwar years. By transmitting memory narratives that were not only partial but also centred on a series of self-absolving beliefs, the literature of the Axis War ruled out any serious discussions on the responsibility that the Italians had for the aggression and invasion of foreign countries. By doing so, this literary production hindered the formation of a responsible memory of the Axis War, contributing to evading responsibility for the Fascist past.

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Rick Wallach

Vietnam on the Border: The Shadow of a Misbegotten War in Cormac McCarthy's Southwestern Works

Along the southwestern American borderlands of Cormac McCarthy's, *No Country for Old Men* memories of past wars live on thinly disguised as other wars. The erupting "war on drugs" along the Rio Grande in this dystopic 1980s scenario is inhabited by not one but *three* wars, which inflect each other like a set of laminar overlays. Moreover, in McCarthy's prior novels, those other wars – some as old as the Mexican War of 1846-1848, which features prominently in *Blood Meridian* – transmit themselves forward, compositing themselves with subsequent conflicts in each novel's new historical frame.

In McCarthy's interlocking temporal frames each war vectors the memories of the one which preceded it. At first these are memories of eventual victory, meant to instill succeeding conflicts with a sense of purposeful confidence. However, as William Mahan has noted in his study of the works of Wiesel and Sebald, "History as collective memory posits the dangers of forgetting, denial and erasure" (53). To this insight Marianne Hirsch responds, "As a form of counter-history, 'memory' offered a means to account for the power structures animating forgetting, oblivion and erasure and thus to engage in acts of repair and redress" (*The Generation of Postmemory* 16). This dialectic necessarily sets up a difficult collision between "history" and "memory," a collision which itself may invite another, more pervasive form of erasure. We shall see how McCarthy foregrounds the blunders occasioned by such erasures below.

McCarthy personifies each war in one or more of the novel's characters. Sheriff Ed Tom Bell is a veteran of World War II, the "good war," with its resonance of victory and newfound hegemony. Small town welder and mechanic Llewellyn Moss and mercenary assassin

Carson Wells are two of possibly three representatives of Vietnam, the "bad war" of imperialist aggression, loss and the shame of defeat. Anton Chigurh, a psychotic cartel enforcer now beyond the control of his previous employers, personifies the drug war and its roots in the wars, especially Vietnam, which preceded it. McCarthy's twin narrators, Bell and the third person voice of the novel's unitalicized passages, represent this new, ugly regional conflict as devoid of moral or ideological content. The unspoken ideology behind it, however, is capitalism.

Even so, all four characters expose ideological residues of the Vietnam debacle in their acts and comments. The lingering bitterness Americans felt about Vietnam is also discernible in the comments of Sheriff Bell's kindred spirit, the World War II veteran father of the murdered Llewelyn Moss, when he says Vietnam veterans "done things over there they'd just as soon left over there. We didn't have nothin like that in [our] war. Or very little of it" (*No Country for Old Men* 294). Mariani observes the idea of the good or "just" war "in no way moralize[s] killing, but it does subordinate to the morality, the 'just cause' (*jus ad bellum*) of a specific war. As long as the cause is just and 'just rules' (*jus in bello*) are respected in the way a war is waged, the latter is morally acceptable" (13). In his discussion of Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Mariani further notes the loss of this ostensibly chivalric model of conflict to the monster of total war: "The 'loss' of this 'classical' form of warfare…generated a parallel loss of the cultural forms which traditionally narrated and 'contained' war" (18-19).

Or as John Beck notes in his study of the militarization of the American west following WWII, *Dirty Wars*, "Any remnant of the warrior's sacred function left in the aftermath of the externalization of war by the demarcation of the limits of the nation-state serves only as a legitimation effect for continued bloodshed" (70). Even as the senior Moss bemoans the abdication of a more civilized style of doing battle, Anton Chigurh's prates about "forms" and "rules" in the conduct of life and drug dealing shows how this nostalgia for, shall we call it elegance, persists even at the level of the drug war and its practitioners' psychoses. When Chigurh returns the money Moss has stolen from the cartel to its boss, he is, in his own mad way, re-establishing the formalities of war he himself has violated by killing his former associates (60-61) and

assassinating his former employer (198-99). Chigurh's return of the money he has worked so hard to acquire renders him a much more complex figure than a man motivated by mere greed. Yet, on the other hand, the reader is left wondering whether this act was just another excrescence of his madness, or, in his offer to counsel the cartel against repeating such mistakes as cost them their money, part of a clever plan to take over a comparatively inept cartel and stamp his own "rules" and "forms" upon it.[1]

Of course, the US didn't embark on its Vietnam misadventure intending it to be recalled as a "bad war." Our initial involvement was rife with self-assurance that, as we entered the war in Europe to prevent the spread of totalitarianism, we entered southeast Asia to prevent the spread of communism. One recalls the jingoistic punditry of the mid nineteen sixties expressed by maps of the western Pacific overspread with widening concentric rings dated at roughly ten-year intervals, illustrating the communist master plan for dominating the entire hemisphere. Moreover, the US government's defense of its deepening Asian involvement was larded with allegories of World War II, equating the moral imperatives of both conflicts. Consider the US reclamation from mothballs of the World War II battleship New Jersey and, a bit later, announcements that its sister Iowa class battleship the Missouri would be outfitted for combat. In practical terms these fearsome ships could pound coastal targets with their enormous 16-inch main batteries without endangering planes and pilots, but the Missouri – which, though its recommission was announced, never saw service in Vietnam[2] – was an icon redolent of American victory over Japan, whose representatives signed their surrender documents on its deck. The discussion about recommissioning the battleship came very late in the war, probably too late to benefit from its postmemorial bonhomie. Public support for the conflict was approaching its nadir already, and the ship never saw service in theater. Most egregiously, the Johnson

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[1] Chigurh's return of the money to the cartel occurs only in the novel; the Coen Brothers elected not to include what this author believes was a critical episode in their film version.

[2] https://travelandculture.expertscolumn.com/use-battleship-missouri-vietnam-war

administration's response to criticism we were interfering in someone else's civil war was the so-called Tonkin Gulf incident, a parody of Pearl Harbor staged to justify our escalation in the name of self-defense (Morris).[3] These forms of "collective memory" were clearly meant, as both Hirsch and Mahan argue such structures effectuate, to place under erasure the uglier facts of war in general – its subsistence in the most horrible forms of trauma – and of the particular brutalities of the Vietnam war itself. Vietnam and its stepchild, the so-called "drug war," become, in macabre fashion, mnemonic vaults in which World War II is both incarcerated and exploited.

We find an introductory allegory of the American disaster in Vietnam near the beginning of *No Country for Old Men* as Llewellyn Moss hunts antelope. Full of technical details about Moss's equipment as well as a paean to his exacting knowledge of how a bullet in flight behaves, it projects an impression of a skilled professional hunter in complete command of his deadly art:

> The rifle strapped over his shoulder with a harness leather sling was a heavyweight .270 on a '98 Mauser action with a laminated stock of maple and walnut. It carried an Unertl telescopic sight of the same power as the binoculars...He knew the exact drop of the bullet in hundred yard increments. (8-10)

Trained in Vietnam as an army sniper, Moss shoots at, and only wounds, his quarry. For all his state-of-the-art equipment and training, he underestimates the difficulty of his shot. This episode prefigures Moss' next misfire, the decision he will make to steal millions of dollars of cartel money from a fatally wounded courier, thereby dooming himself and his wife. He conducts himself with the same cocksureness with which the United States stumbled into its military quagmire in southeast Asia. "I got a bad feeling about this," Carla Jean Moss tells her husband. "Well I got a good one," Llewellyn tells his wife as he puts her on the bus to the illusory safety of her mother's house, confident, like

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[3] In his memoirs Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense under Lyndon Johnson, admitted the Tonkin episode had been largely fabricated to drum up support for deeper involvement by the US in the war (McNamara 128).

the US administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, he can handle the implacable forces he has loosed against himself (65).

As Wallis Sanborn argues, cartel enforcer Chigurh, despite his shadowy origins (much like Judge Holden in *Blood Meridian*), demonstrates behavior and tactical expertise implying he, too, has received military training. We don't know precisely whose training he has received. However, he and Carson Wells, another Vietnam veteran working as a contract killer, have apparently known each other for years, as Wells hints in conversation with his oil company employer (140-41). This suggests they were perhaps together in southeast Asia. Sanborn believes Chigurh is a product of our own military, too:

> Llewelyn Moss—identified early on by his "boar's tooth" as a school-trained sniper, Carson Wells, former Special Forces officer, and Anton Chigurh return to the United States from Southeast Asia to participate in *more* war driven by the narco-economy.... McCarthy identifies military-taught skills specific to each character. Moss, a sniper, misses on an easy shot at an antelope, a harbinger of his failures to come. Wells, as a member of the officer class, carries a fatal arrogance born of the hierarchy and fracture between the officer and the enlisted. And Chigurh performs field surgery on his [bullet] wounds using techniques taught, most likely, in 1960's-era military survival school. (1)

They make for a fascinating contrast. Moss is the good ole boy American soldier who went and did his patriotic duty, doubtless as a draftee, and returned home more or less unscarred by the experience to rejoin society, marry and become a productive citizen. By contrast Carson Wells, a former Special Forces colonel, has returned so dehumanized he now capitalizes on his military training to work as a highly paid freelance hitman. Of the trio Anton Chigurh is most enigmatic. Described as a "psychopathic killer" by Wells (141), we question whether he was always one or whether, if we accept Sanborn's convincing argument, he is ex-military, it might have been Vietnam which twisted and reshaped him into this soulless monster who now stalks the borderlands. When challenged by Wells to justify himself Chigurh reminds the ex-colonel they're doing the same work, implying

their careers share a common origin. Indeed, many practices of the domestic "drug war" which followed Vietnam had their origins in the southeast Asian conflict. As vividly illustrated in Fred Rivera's award winning biographical novel *Raw Man*, GIs and even some officers immured in the war combined their combat training with drug trafficking to establish a foothold in the business before they return home (203-08). New York drug lord Frank Lucas built a billion-dollar empire on his "Blue Magic" heroin shipped to him in body bags from the Vietnam and Cambodian theaters.[4]

Moreover Chigurh comments to Carla Jean Moss just before he murders her it can sometimes be useful even for nonbelievers to model themselves after God (256). His philosophy eerily anticipates Bell's conversation with Moss's father who insists "You can't go to war without God. I don't know what is goin to happen when the next one comes" (*No Country* 295). Chigurh, it seems, has answered his question in a manner the old man never could have anticipated.

Blood Meridian's Judge Holden had gone them one better when he flatly declared "War is God," further describing it as a forcing or collapsing of all moral imperatives, of "notions of fate or chance" (*Blood Meridian* 260-61). Similarly, the drug war has collapsed ethical boundaries or limitations. In *The Counselor*, McCarthy's subsequent border drug war screenplay, cartel go-between Westray instructs the film's eponymous lawyer not to bother asking if there are any things of which his customers are incapable because "there aren't" (*The Counselor* 114). He thereby emphasizes the same abdication of moral perimeters performed by the drug wars. Like Vietnam, the drug war has no front lines. Death visits from every direction as the jungle undergrowth serves the same function as the Rio Grande behind which the cartels hide. In *No Country*, Chigurh, hidden within the mythic status Bell constructs for him as a ghostly "prophet of destruction" (4), might as well be a Vietcong sapper hiding in the jungle and assuming form only by striking at will out of his state of near-invisibility. *The Counselor*'s cartels hide and transport their product in cesspool

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[4] Lucas, Frank, and Aliya S King. 2010. *Original Gangster: The Real Life Story of one of America's Most Notorious Drug Lords*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press.

pumping trucks in a *reductio ad absurdum* of the mire of the tropical jungles. The decomposing body of an executed cartel member which nobody wants, sealed in an oil drum, rides back and forth in the tank of the truck, from the borderlands to the northern cities and back again, keeping the cocaine packages company, as it were (*The Counselor* 153-157). He is the social equivalent of excrement, the occasion for a joke or two. Sealed in his oil drum, he illustrates Mahan's warning, above, that as well as a conduit of memory history is also a mechanism for "forgetting, denial and erasure" (1). Unsealed, he is also a fleeting memorial gesture towards the shipment of Frank Lucas' Blue Magic heroin from Vietnam in the coffins of slain American troops. In both situations the human body is reduced to a convenience in the transaction of capital. Nor would it be too far off base to read this as a parody of the pariah status of American soldiers returning from their lost war in southeast Asia.

In *The American Novel of War* (2012) Sanborn proposes dyadic or dialectical structures common to war fiction. These are especially useful for comparing and then parsing the dynamics of McCarthy's border novels and screenplay. War is, after all, the ultimate dialectic. Combat is its most fundamental expression. Oppositional hierarchies exposed by conflict ramify throughout martial narratives. From this fundamental set of oppositions, Sanborn explores further oppositions like occupier/occupied (which in turn breaks down into cultural dyads including racial, religious and economic systems and cannot help inflecting the "occupied" status of the southwestern United States in McCarthy's border fiction). Within the conflictual hierarchies themselves we discover such colliding designations as officers/enlisted men. The My Lai massacre, for which a single scapegoat serviceman, Lt. William Calley, was held responsible in place of both his superior officers who directed the war and the grunts in his platoon, was a famous but hardly isolated example of such dichotomies. For our purposes Sanborn's oppositional dyad is between officers and enlisted men, those who fight and those who send them to fight (16-17) is key here. This particular dyad comes to macabre fruition in the Vietnam war "tradition" of "fragging," wherein infantry grunts assassinated their own officers to keep from being led into combat situations where they

knew their opponents couldn't even be seen. When Chigurh shoots down two fellow members of his employer's gang, he re-enacts this deadly form of internecine rebellion. Moreover, one may view his execution of Wells, who informs Moss he was a special forces colonel, as yet another instance of this sanguinary practice. Among the members of *Blood Meridian*'s Glanton gang, the threat of violence within their tenuous comradeship hangs over every member not named Judge Holden. The scalphunters kill or regularly threaten to kill each other. In effect, Judge Holden's patient manipulation of the gang from one scene of attrition to another, culminating in his instigation of the Lincoln Ferry massacre, is every grunt's nightmare of reckless behavior by his superiors.

Deleuze and Guattari (1986) invoke the idea of "the war machine" to describe how hierarchies guiding slaughter assume a life and momentum of their own, separating themselves from the authority of the state apparatus they started out to serve. In the case of Vietnam, the state substructure Dwight Eisenhower had referred to as "the military-industrial complex" exerted its authority through the current civil administration. As Deleuze and Guattari wrote,

> A collective body of captain asserts its authority through the organization of the officers and the organism of the superior officers. There are always periods when the State as organism has problems with its own collective bodies, when these bodies, claiming certain privileges, are forced in spite of themselves to open onto something which surpasses them, a short revolutionary instant, an experimental surge. (27)

At that juncture in history, the Johnson administration needed the success of the military to justify its continued presence in southeast Asia while, at the same time, the military needed the administration to be vested in its success in order to continue warmaking. This codependence led directly to the aforementioned Tonkin Gulf Incident, when a fresh infusion of popular outrage was required to wag the dog, as it were, and reinvest the military and administration in each other.

The phrase "war machine" posits not quite so obvious a dialectic within itself. Invoking both the pejorative sense of nineteen sixties and early seventies discourse of an amoral if not brutal Nietzschean will to power, the term refers to oppositional forces arisen from discontent and exhaustion within a state apparatus, turned against the state itself either purposefully or, in extreme circumstances, careening out of control. We can see both manifestations of the war machine at work in the two novels. In *No County*, Sheriff Bell repeatedly bemoans the erosion of social norms like courtesy, manners and respect for authority he thinks undercuts American society, clearing space for the advent of the new type of criminal he faces. However, taking into consideration the napalming of civilian villages and revelations about Vietcong suspects who refused to talk being thrown out of American helicopters, we can see this "new type" of criminal brutality was *prefigured* by the conduct of 'official' representatives of American civilization in Vietnam. It is difficult to justify William Calley's My Lai massacre trial and imprisonment as the sole scapegoat for such conduct, which was both widespread throughout the southeast Asian theater and news of which was suppressed by the American military and government until exposed by independent press sources. In a very real sense, Army versus Calley represented the state at war within itself after the model proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in Nomadology. In *Blood Meridian*, too, the Glanton Gang sets out as an extension of state authority but then, like the Calleys of Vietnam, the gang jumps the rails and turns against Mexican citizens as well as the feral natives it had contracted to exterminate.

Similarly, the war in Vietnam generated a social system beyond the boundaries of its parent society. The war spawned its own demotic language, semiotic codes and rules of behavior brutal and illicit compared to the legal norms of the state in whose service the war was supposedly being conducted. This war machine ultimately brought down the political regime which engendered it, roiling domestic culture while eroding the Lyndon Johnson administration until Johnson abdicated rather than face defeat in the forthcoming presidential election.

Laying bare oppositions within American culture itself, the Vietnam War fragmented America's tottering post-WWII imperial society into inimical social camps like jingoists versus peace activists, the state versus the people, and even the military versus the social strata out of which it attempted to populate itself. The state certainly tried to prevent the media-fueled stripping away of the romance of victorious combat, a moral revenant of World War II. The eventual inability of the state to continue to represent a distant, contained conflict as a threat to American sovereignty or security led to a vigorous interrogation of the ethics of warfare in general of which McCarthy's border novels are important examples. Surely, we can also discern how such challenges to valorized behavior underlie *Blood Meridian* and the voice of Sheriff Bell in the monologues of *No Country for Old Men*. In the ten years between the fall of the South in 1975, effectively ending American military involvement, to the publication of *Blood Meridian* in 1985, the trauma of Vietnam continued to permeate American society. Its veterans were ostracized, accusations of barbarism serving as convenient smokescreens for feelings of defeat and humiliation as William Calley by himself proved an inefficacious scapegoat for the sins of his superiors. Sheriff Bell's conversation with Llewellyn Moss' father illustrates both the treatment those veterans received and the incubated hostility of the defeated troops for the civilians who ostracized them:

> He smacked the tar out of one or two of them hippies. Spittin on him. Callin him babykiller. A lot of them boys that come back, they're still havin problems. (294)

Barcley Owens (2000) was the earliest critic to detail the pervasive influence of the Vietnam disaster on *Blood Meridian*.[5] In *Cormac McCarthy's Western Novels*, he discusses at length how

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[5] Owens' work was published five years before McCarthy released *No Country for Old Men*. The novel certainly justified Owens' contention that the media ambience of the Vietnam War strongly shaped McCarthy's comprehension of mimetic violence.

Blood Meridian was a product of the bitterness and violence-saturated reportage of the Vietnam and post-Vietnam war ethos:

> For [McCarthy's] American generation was to witness, on TV every night, a plummet over the precipice into the abyss of the Vietnam War and the resulting war in the streets at home. The shocking horror of this spectacle – the firefights, body counts, riots, fires, tear gas, high-pressure hoses – proved to be America's bloody meridian, the "darkening and the evening of our day." (20)

It was during this period that McCarthy conceived and composed his masterpiece, writing most of his drafts during the late 1970s and early 1980s. We know too little about McCarthy's stint in the US Air Force between 1953-1957. It was a peacetime interregnum behind which the cold war festered. DJ'ing a country music show on Armed Forces Radio out of Fairbanks, Alaska is a bit of a remove from close combat in a tropical jungle. The author was during those years famously reticent about his personal life, so we can only speculate about how he was affected by his own military experience. However, sometime during this period McCarthy read *Life* magazine's 1956 serialization of Samuel Chamberlain's Mexican War memoirs, *My Confession: The Recollections of a Rogue*[6] upon whose final chapters *Blood Meridian* is largely based. Ironies abound: an author with a military background writes a novel about a century-and-a-half-old colonialist war along the Texas-Mexico border during a period of cultural unrest occasioned by another colonialist war in which he didn't fight but by whose violence he had been, like the rest of us, media-saturated.

Moreover, as the infamous Tonkin Gulf incident reframed Pearl Harbor for the American audiences of the first television war in real time, it also reached back to one of William Mahan's aforenoted "erasures." The Mexican war, which provides the political, cultural and ideological background for *Blood Meridian* as the sanguinary adventures of John Joel Glanton's contract scalphunters provides the

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[6] Luce, Dianne. "When McC Read Chamberlain." Email, 2020.

foreground, was like Vietnam initiated by a staged military skirmish provoked by the United States, the so-called Thornton Affair, wherein a detachment of US troops patrolling land claimed by Mexico was attacked and routed by a larger native force. As Ulysses S. Grant wrote in his 1885 memoirs:

> We were sent to provoke a fight, but it was essential that Mexico should commence it. It was very doubtful whether Congress would declare war; but if Mexico should attack our troops, the Executive could announce, "Whereas, war exists by the acts of, etc.," and prosecute the contest with vigor....Mexico showing no willingness to come to the Nueces to drive the invaders from her soil, it became necessary for the "invaders" to approach to within a convenient distance to be struck. Accordingly, preparations were begun for moving the army to the Rio Grande, to a point near Matamoras [sic]. It was desirable to occupy a position near the largest centre of population possible to reach, without absolutely invading territory to which we set up no claim whatever.[7]

Blood Meridian, then, became an informal memory palace within which McCarthy allegorized through Chamberlain's memoir about the Mexican War and its aftermath media representations of combat in southeast Asia. He could do so successfully because the conflict in southeast Asia was the first war whose violence was brought home to us in real time. As Owens observed, it spilled over into our living rooms complete with its maiming, slaughter of innocents, lines of body bags waiting for their coffins. American society was media-saturated with images of brutality, violence and death. Pictures of mass carnage as B-52s unloaded windrows of bombs crowded our television and relict newsreel screens in daily competition with scenes of close-up personal anguish like Hyung Cong Ut's 1972 Pulitzer-prize-winning photo of a napalm-burned child running naked down a dirt road outside Trang Bang, South Vietnam. It prefigures scenes of panicked flights of women and children from the native camp into which the Glantons

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[7] Grant, Ulysses S. "General U S Grant Personal Memoirs Complete." https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4367/4367-h/4367-h.htm

ride, slaughtering everyone they can while torching their tents. John Joel Glanton's pointless execution of an aged native woman (102-103) vividly recalls Eddie Adams' February 1968 photograph of South Vietnamese General Nguyen Ngoc Loan publicly executing a Vietcong prisoner by pistol shot to the head. The photo captures the instant the victim's face and posture record the impact, an image which "created an immediate revulsion at a seemingly gratuitous act of savagery that was widely seen as emblematic of a seemingly gratuitous war" (Thomas).

Indicative of how saturated American culture had been by these repeated images of war mayhem this same photograph occupies Woody Allen's kitchen wallpaper in his 1980 film *Stardust Memories*, which was released in the same year during which the action of *No Country for Old Men* occurs (see *No Country for Old Men* 56, for an accounting of the coin toss wherein Chigurh marks the current date by citing the minting year of the coin). That photograph also anticipates the iconic scene wherein Glanton puts his pistol to an aged woman's head and asks her to look away when he shoots her (*Blood Meridian* 102-03; also see Owens 22-24). It is no coincidence that, in the aftermath of such relentless, vividly depicted brutality that witnessed the emergence of splatter cinema, cannibal zombie films and the forthright violence of *Blood Meridian* itself, twenty years later McCarthy would haunt *No Country for Old Men* with revenants of both World War II and Vietnam. For generations the Western genre, first anticipating and later conditioning the American mindset to assimilate the triumphant memories of World War II, was a redoubt of heroic violence. Just as Vietnam-era film and photojournalism finally deglamorized war, *Blood Meridian* deglamorized the western.

Five years after the end of American involvement in Vietnam and the media saturation which accompanied it, Sheriff Bell bemoans what he claims is some new kind of criminal violence in his borderland community. Indicative of how deeply the iconography of Vietnam has penetrated society, even down to the formerly bucolic small towns of the borderlands, when Bell and Wendell, his deputy, first witness the carnage of an aborted drug deal, Wendell comments "It must have sounded like Vietnam out here," to which Bell merely replies "Vietnam" (*No Country for Old Men* 75). However, it is difficult to take his

assertions without a grain of salt. McCarthy only partially validates Bell's naivete by allowing the sheriff to agree with those who insulate themselves from the news of the war. Bell agrees with a truck stop waitress who won't read newspapers (264) and won't call their contents "news." His wife Loretta refuses to read newspapers, and Bell remarks "She's probably right. She generally is" (40). He, on the other hand, reads them carefully. Like the drug business and its "prospect of outsized profits," as Chigurh puts it (253), *Blood Meridian*'s war is a sanguinary business venture far more than it represent any clash of ideologies. The Indians, as well as the ethnic Mexicans, slaughtered by the gang are not enemies in the dyadic sense but "receipts," as Glanton calls their scalps. They are organic chasses inconveniently parked underneath a medium of exchange.

The polyglot racial and social composition of the Glanton Gang is another example of Deleuze and Guattari's war machine, the "nomads" or non-indigenes who fuel the violent impulses of the state itself. Including as it does a Black member, several Delaware Indians, and an immigrant from Tasmania, the gang is an independent projection of the nation-state outside of whose official ambit they conduct their business. Ironically, like the Allied expeditionary forces in Vietnam working first for the Diem and then for the Ky regimes, they achieve legitimacy by signing contracts with state entities in Mexico. No longer an invading force in the legal sense, they become, if only temporarily, representatives of the provincial state itself before spinning out of control and attacking the populations they were hired to protect. This excursus also implicitly references the dynamics of the Vietnam war. As Owens notes, "The official search-and-destroy tactics of our troops in Vietnam, especially in the free fire zones, regressed into primal violence as bands of loosely disciplined men took the war into their own hands....American soldiers routinely tortured, killed and maimed not only Vietcong but also innocent villagers" (20).

Another of Sanborn's dyads, therefore, collapses within *Blood Meridian* and out of this fusion arises a new opposition between the state and its own population. From a set of clear-cut dialectics we are left with a chiasmatic relation instead: there is not much difference between the way the Chihuahuan or Sonoran state apparatuses treat

their indigenous populations, and the way the American state apparatus exploits its lower social classes by reducing them to cannon fodder for the Vietnam war. Moreover, within the contexts of each war machine, new sets of dialectics arise from these convoluted relations. The judge, whose very name implies statutory authority, is so contemptuous of those who serve under him he malevolently leads the gang into one disastrous misadventure after another, culminating in its destruction by indigenes at Lincoln's Ferry.

It is finally ironic the ideological crusade against communism used to defend our imperial misadventure in southeast Asia had no mechanism through which to comprehend how the capitalist marketplace could also draw cartels, their products and their hitmen across the border and into our midst. Instead, we insist on miscomprehending it as an invasion, partially out of blindness but partially because the postmemorial state of war with the Soviets which ended in 1989 resulted in what John Beck calls an "enemy deficit" (11). Sheriff Bell's frequent comments in the italicized passages of *No Country*, set in 1980,[8] about the surprising viciousness and persistence of the cartels along the border evidence a new enemy had already provided itself before the collapse of Ronald Reagan's so-called Evil Empire. The italicized passages are memorial commentaries on the events of the novel, as Bell looks back on the experiences which drove him to retire from law enforcement. This dimension of personal memory, wherein the sheriff evaluates the *moral* deficits of the drug war, is missing from the otherwise very powerful film version of two years later. It recalls Hirsch's argument, that personal memories are powerful counterweights to the manipulative and repressive functions of "collective history."

As Susan Hawkins has written, "Built on the central notion of containment, America's foreign policy necessitates the erection of

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[8] The time in which the story is set is established by cartel hitman Anton Chigurh's comment during the novel's infamous 'coin toss scene.' Referencing the twenty-five-cent piece whose flip he has asked an elderly gas station attendant to "call," Chigurh observes the coin is dated 1958, and "It's been travelling twenty two years to get here. And now it's here" (*No Country for Old Men* 56).

Borders, in its global mission to halt Communist, e.g. Soviet and Chinese, aggression" (95).

        After the Vietnam War concluded the official war had migrated, in the persons of thousands of traumatized troops who returned drug-addicted from southeast Asia, to constitute a newly expanded marketplace for the cartels. Thereupon, as Beck infers, it became "the war on drugs." Vietnam, like Trump's southwestern border wall, was supposed to be a war of containment. Trump's paranoid fantasies about the ineluctable spread of drugs, as euphemisms for brown skinned violence and miscegenation, are merely the continuation of the Vietnam-era boogeyman of world-consuming communist conspiracies. Those expanding rings of Pacific domination radiating from Beijing and Hanoi are now depicted as waves of alter humanity breaking against the southwestern borderland. In Ed Tom Bell's mind, though, there is no longer any such possibility as a return to what he considered "normal" life. Hawkins notes, in what might as well be a critique of *No Country*'s central narrative of demoralization, "intimately interrelated with, and mirroring on the individual level the containment story, is the paternal narrative: fathers are dying or dead or simply incapable of dealing with the present" (96).

        Angus Fletcher has written "allegories are the natural mirrors of ideology" (368). The allegorical overlays of *Blood Meridian, No Country for Old Men* and *The Counselor*, taken together, memorialize the war in Vietnam as an unhealed wound whose ideological and cultural sepsis progressively infected American civilization and continues to do so.

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Anna Di Giusto

Women in Black. Postmemory in the Balkans

1. The Bosnian War

In the former Yugoslavia, ethnic groups had a different religion but not a different language, except for Slovenians and the Albanian minority in Kosovo (Kaplan). During the 35 years of Tito's dictatorship, the ideology of Yugoslavism was widespread and worked to negotiate a new identity in which everybody could recognize herself or himself. Its aim was that the "South Slavs" (Yugoslavia means the land of the South Slavs) should identify themselves with their country in that they had in common a shared heritage of values, starting with the victory over Nazi-fascism (Glenny). The fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of communism in Eastern Europe placed Yugoslavia in severe economic difficulty and in a short time its Western investment partners withdrew (Magas). The economic crisis that followed, with very high peaks of inflation, pushed the political elite to make a critical decision. Aware that Tito's prestige had lapsed, the only path the elite had to survive was through the reinvigoration of the ethnic identity of the individual republics (Doder). Starting in the summer of 1990, Slovenian and Croatian televisions broadcasted the exhumation of victims of massacres carried out by communist partisans (Ali and Lifschultz). In April 1991, Serbian television countered this by airing a documentary about the victims of the Ustaše - Croatian fascists. It was an overtly manipulative revision of the figures of the war victims. The nationalist revanchism of each state played out the de-legitimation of communist power. The collective recovery of the war victims was induced violently, making it even more painful (Petrungaro).

Tuđman and Milošević were among the first leaders to ride a now artificial feeling of national belonging to their small republics, manipulating public opinion with the improper use of false information to harm the enemy republics (Dragnich). Fake news, such as rapes committed by Kosovo Albanians and the murder of Serbian children by

the Croatian minority, was released. That information fuelled a sense of belonging to Serbia and hatred towards others, never seen in those areas since the end of the Second World War (Thompson). Under the guise of ethnic hatred, which Tito had unsuccessfully tried to combat, paramilitary groups carried out a phenomenon which some historians call an "urbicide" (see Coward). The war was fought against the city, in particular, Sarajevo, an emblem of inter-religious dialogue and peaceful coexistence. The paramilitaries of all fronts (Serb-Bosnian, Croat, and Muslim Bosnian) agreed among themselves to divide up spoils and victims, making alliances even among enemies (Cacace, Menafra and Miozzo).

Regarding what was happening, the most widespread interpretation in the West was Balkanization, a historical concept active since the first Balkan wars (1912-13). A clear example is offered by *Underground* (1995) by Emir Kusturica. Today the movie is considered a significant contribution to the construction of the Balkan stereotype: a place of madness in which no one is responsible for anything. The war is presented as a fatality because it is a common belief that Balkan inhabitants are only able to avenge the evil received. According to this key of reading, the film presents Milosevic's policy as a determinist effect and not one of the causes of the problem (Iveković). Another example of this new memory comes with the division of the Jasenovać camp after the Dayton Agreement (1995). In the most significant concentration camp of the former Yugoslavia, called "the Auschwitz of the Balkans," the last war brought about a re-signification of posterity's memory (Dedijer). Here manipulation of victims' numbers led to disagreement among Croatian and Serbian historians about the mortality rate of the concentration camp that today is on the border between Serbian Bosnia and Croatia (Dorich).

Another key aspect of this war is the woman's body. The Bosnian War emphasized it as the most crucial element of the enemy's identity, and for this reason, it had to be conquered through violence (Foucault 242). In Bosnia, rape planning and the subsequent rape camps preceded the organization of the war apparatus itself. During the war, rape too underwent a re-signification process: it gradually developed its biopolitical use, to the point of being considered a

fundamental element of psychological destruction. Reproductive capacity was considered another opportunity to spot the losers far beyond the end of the war (cf. Helsinki Watch). Birth of "bastard" children became proof of the enemy's weakness, and at the same time, of the territorial and biopolitical conquest of the winners (Cohen, Philip).

2. Women in Black

During the war, some Serbian activists felt the need to found a network of associations to fight against government policy. Their goal was to collect and intensify the work of the already numerous feminist and pacifist associations of the country (Filippis). Before them, in 1987, some Israeli, Palestinian, and Lebanese feminist associations decided to create a new format for an organization to fight against the conflicts of the First Intifada. Those women had joined the *Dhaila Khibbush* ("End the occupation") movement, committed since 1967 to defending the rights of Palestinians refugees. They chose to found a network as a practical need for visibility (Calciati).

In 1991, the Italian government decided to participate alongside the Atlantic alliance against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Various Italian associations, already working on the issues of the Middle East, coined the slogan *Fuori la guerra dalla storia* ("Kick war out of history") and founded the Italian Women in Black network (Spender and Kramarae). The ethical principle that linked the Italian Women in Black to the ones from Israel and all over the world was the motto: "Do not speak in our name, we speak for ourselves" (see Berry). In the same year, many signals of a future war in Yugoslavia drew the attention of the International Community (Buttino and Rutto). A delegation of Italian Women in Black went to those lands shortly before the outbreak of the war to meet some Serbian pacifist associations. Women of these associations decided to build Serbian Women in Black, committed against their government and the war, led by the intellectual Staša Zajović, author of *Women for Peace* (1997). Even during the war years, their denunciation of the nationalistic government of Milošević did not

stop, thus risking their personal safety (Bianchini). As I will discuss in what follows, their desire to establish a stronger condition of inter-religious and multi-ethnic coexistence led them to go beyond international justice itself.

3. A different International Court (Sarajevo, 7th-10th May 2015)

After more than a decade of search for the perpetrators, the International Court of The Hague managed to put on trial the main criminals of the war, starting with Milošević (28/06/2001) and then Karadžić (2008), the psychiatrist who was put in charge of the Serbian-Bosnian state, and ending with Mladić (2011), who was in charge of the genocide of Srebrenica (Iveković). Despite the several admissions on the part of various senior officials, Women in Black considered this work not enough to appease the women deeply wounded by a war fought in pure patriarchal style, in whose context the perpetrators - rapists - reduced women to mere bodies (Kaldor). The need to call by name the suffering of these women pushed them from the beginning of the new century to seek an alternative form of justice: women's justice. Against this background, the idea of a Women's Court was born.

Similar experiments had already been attempted in Lahore (Pakistan) in 1992, and then spread to many other countries, as the one accomplished by the Women in Black of Colombia (Cockburn). In the late '90s, some Balkan activist women met Corinne Kumar, a Tunisian woman militant for the human rights organization *El Taller*, during a Women's Court debate in South Africa. The idea of starting a similar process in Europe was mainly taken up by the Women in Black of Belgrade (Hunt). A few years later, these activists started working with women who had resisted nationalism, opposed military recruitment, suffered crimes that no one had judged, and given voice to those who did not have a voice (Simm).

The gestation of the first International Tribunal in Europe was long and complicated, mainly because NGO funding was refused, being considered too close to the organs of power. At the end of the preparatory work from 2011 to 2015, many Serb, Bosnian, Croat, Montenegrin, and Kosovar women were able to rely on a particular

kind of group therapy (Abrahams). Thanks to this tribunal, they had the opportunity to recognize their experience and pain in the lives of other women, and were able to name torturers – very often their neighbors – that The Hague Tribunal would never have arrested because beyond its duties and, above all, its strength. As shown by many depositions, this special Court allowed women who had been violated in the body to find the strength to go on with their lives (Richter and Bacchi).

As a final act, between May 7th and 10th 2015, the Women's Court took place at the Bosanski Kulturni Centar, an auditorium in the center of Sarajevo. According to the rules of the Court, journalists could neither record nor take photographs, in order to ensure safety and respect for the words of the women. There were only a few men. All the attention was focused on the witnesses, coming from all the new republics of the former Yugoslavia, from Slovenia to Macedonia (Deiana). The most debated themes were the continuity of violence; its long-term consequences in personal, familial and social life (Okin); the impunity of torturers ("The killers walk down the street"); the misogyny of institutions; the importance of women's networks – "This is the only court in which I have never appeared" (Liere and Spronk). Zajović explained that this event ended a long process, involving about 5,000 people. The auditions had required approximately four and a half years with women of all social backgrounds, including academics and artists' collectives (Zajović). Indian activist women offered significant help, but the Court in Sarajevo also studied different models of transitional justice to develop new methods. The driving awareness has always been that traditional and institutional justice, both on the international and the local level, often cannot meet the needs of the victims (Stojsavljevic 36-41).

At the end of the testimonies, there was the judging panel of the Women's Court, composed of feminists, writers, and activists (Vesna Rakić, Gorana Mlinarević, Chris Campbell, Latinka Perović, Charlotte Bunch and Vesna Teršelič). Women read the recommendations and preliminary verdicts (*Women's Court: Preliminary Decisions and Recommendations*). It was recognized that the criminal system described by the women who had testified was

much broader than the one examined by traditional justice. They discussed the responsibilities of states, religious institutions, and the media; they found space not only for traditional war victims but also for those of new crimes such as forced militarization during the war and after the war or the criminal processes of war and post-war privatization and "forced" introduction of neoliberal capitalism (Mlinarević and Porović Isaković).

4. The Women's Court: A Feminist Approach to Justice

According to the philosopher Rada Iveković, it was essential to know what had happened but also to share the emotional situation of women, so that they did not feel alone. The exchange between the stage and the audience was of the utmost importance; the applauses meant: "Yes, you survived. Yes, we know the pain you had to endure. Yes, we are in solidarity with you as women; we share your need for justice." Those meetings served to heal on an emotional level, without forgetting the justice level. Nora Morales de Cortiñas, one of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo who came to Sarajevo to participate in the work of the Court, emphasizes this concept: "Genocide, torturers, rapists must remain in prison until death, there is no possible amnesty. This request is not about revenge, but justice" (Bonacker and Safferling).

This feminist approach paid particular attention to aspects that are not usually taken into consideration by traditional justice, such as the victim's experience itself and the consequences of the matters discussed and not only their legal consequences (Franke). Every witness had limited time for their testimony, and the work of the jury was divided equitably. However, the Court definitely endeavored to organize the process according to a gender perspective. For this reason, the organization pointed out the importance of relationships, especially the ones concerning the victims. The great respect paid to every witness's statement encouraged the women to feel understood and welcomed by the jury and the audience. The support to fellow witnesses was not only material but also psychological; for this reason, the participation in the trial was permanently supported by volunteer psychologists.

During the process, great attention was dedicated to the balance between the emotional and the moral aspect. As a matter of fact, the organization wanted the verdict to be recognized as objective by all the parties involved. The Court worked horizontality because it preferred decentralizing the sessions. In that way, a more significant number of women had the possibility to participate in the process. In more than one hundred former Yugoslavian cities, 4,000 participants were heard and they collaborated with 250 activists. During the hearings, the women involved shared knowledge and resources, in mutual respect for every story. The Court acted carefully, bypassing the risk of creating a hierarchy among women in their roles of witnesses, attorneys, or judges (*Women's Court – Feminist Approach to Justice*).

Conclusions: The Generational Cascade Process

What Women in Black organized in Bosnia is astonishing, especially considering the numerous meetings established by the International Community during and after the Balkan wars that did not lead to any results. The pacifist feminists who animate this network were not able to stem or block the war's breakout, fueled by geopolitical and economic interests. Nevertheless, their action is an essential signal in these days when postmemories are again undervalued in many different parts of Europe. The proposal to establish another justice, interested above all in the reconstruction of the drama of each woman, overturns the role of the Court itself and demonstrates the capacity to have a broader role in discussing the memory of the war. The final goal is to prevent and avoid the exploitation of the memories of the Second World War, which helped to fuel the civil war and to exacerbate the violence used by all the fronts involved to fulfill the Balkanization prophecy (Emmert).

In contrast with this use of postmemory, the Women in Black set themselves the task of giving voice to the memory of the witnesses of the new wars. They are not interested in the older generation's memories, but in those of the recent ones. They start from the story of the victims to work for justice. For this reason, the Women's Court

completes the work of the Hague Tribunal, which responds to the needs of macro politics, delegating the capture and the trial of the perpetrators to the local courts (O'Reilly). The Women's Court does not have the power nor the authority to send the murderers and rapists of the war to jail, but it represents a first and significant step towards justice that works for the construction of a different collective memory.

According to the feminist viewpoint advocated by the Serb Women in Black, justice cannot be limited to establishing punishments to those who are responsible for the war, but must listen to as many victims as possible, so that an authentic culture of empathizing with pain can spread everywhere (Meštrović). This intent was the basis of the birth of the Israeli Women in Black, when a dozen women decided to deconstruct the image of the enemy and used memories, to engender a genuine dialogue, beyond ideologies or hatred. They discovered a breach between relational memory, transmitted in an intra-generational way by the witnesses themselves, and cultural memory, institutionalized by public rituals (Fridman). The Women's Court thus stands halfway between the two types of memory, in an attempt to turn what happened in the 1990s in the Balkans into a common heritage for the peoples of former Yugoslavia.

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Marianne Hirsch

Stateless Figures[*]

Stateless

"Stateless." This word brings back a cluster of bodily reactions and emotions I have trouble untangling, especially when I say it in German, "staatenlos." As I utter or write it, my palms sweat, I feel a lump in my throat, my breath is short, my heart beats faster. My head bends down, my shoulders slump, I feel shame and fear. I feel things I don't know how to name.

I was "staatenlos" as a child. At age 11, I left communist Romania with my parents. Upon our emigration, our citizenship was revoked, the state I.D. card replaced by a little booklet with our pictures, a travel permit. On the paper, our nationality was marked as "stateless." We had train tickets to Austria, but our transit visas were valid for just one day. Our entry visas were to Israel.

The train trip through Romania and Hungary and across the Iron Curtain was punctuated by officials in different uniforms checking the travel permits, interrogating my parents, examining our luggage. You could not take any valuables out of the country, so my thin gold chain with a small red heart was removed from my neck at the Romanian border. The border guards cut open the stomach of my teddy bear to see if anything was hidden inside. Straw came out, and the hole kept growing wider through the trip. My own stomach churned with fear.

I had imagined the iron curtain to be a physical barrier, but it was only guards with different uniforms, appearing in the middle of the night, ominously recalling the Second World War I had heard so much about. They made sure to remind us that we had to leave Austria the next day. As they left, we knew we were on the other side

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– free. At the *Westbahnhof*, Vienna's main train station, we were met by a representative of the agency in charge of us. He insisted on taking us, along with a larger group of emigrants, to a transit camp for the night, so that we could board the plane to Israel the next morning. During the Cold War and Israel's effort to attract Jewish immigrants, such agencies worked hard to make the transition as smooth as possible. But my parents had decided to stay in Austria while exploring where in the world they might eventually be able to obtain visas and citizenship. For them, Israel was not an option.

That's how the lies began. My father promised we'd be at the airport the next morning – we were going to spend the night with cousins, recent immigrants themselves. We never went to the airport. We now had neither money, nor valuables, nor papers. Nor was anybody responsible for our survival. We were free, but…. The term "stateless" came to encompass this sense of dispossession and negation, this loss of identity. It connotes the hiding and lying, the fear of discovery, the feeling, when we finally obtained a temporary residence permit in Austria, of being tolerated but unwanted. Of being other. And it brings back the appeals for asylum and a yearning for belonging, for the legitimation of citizenship and a passport, and a less contingent sense of home. And yet, at the very same time, "stateless" also evokes in me a sense of release, a giddy liberation that the sheer ability to cross an iron-clad border brought with it. It connotes a sense of possibility engendered by a suspended moment of transience and unbelonging.

And it has these contradictory associations for me to this day, over a half-century later. Well into their nineties, my parents prized every document they possessed, and showed great fear of officials asking for them – clearly the legacy of their survival of racialized persecution, of autocracy, fascism and communism, of refugeehood. But I fall into this behavior as well – every time I open my U.S. passport at an immigration counter, my body relaxes and I am so grateful to have a valid one. Being able to cross a border without fear is not something I will ever take for granted and, for me, this is surely an effect not just of my own memory of statelessness, but of my postmemory of *their* Second World War and its aftermath. Of their

repeated loss of citizenship as Jews, their ghettoization and vulnerability, their illegal nighttime crossings, their repeated scramble for papers, visas, legitimation.

And yet, once I do cross, something else happens. I imagine not knowing where I will go next. I can be here and I can be somewhere else. I can be *from* somewhere else. I can *be* someone else. Statelessness is both memory and postmemory, both terrifying and strangely, unexpectedly, full of possibility.

At the moment I write this, the number of stateless people across the world are multiplying, their fates uncertain, their homes destroyed. This is true across Europe and the Mediterranean; between Myanmar and Bangladesh; between Central America, Mexico and the U.S.; across Africa; and between Israel and the African countries to which migrants are threatened to be returned. In the United States, border authorities are incarcerating asylum seekers and separating children from their parents without a clear record that might facilitate their reunification. Several thousand young children were at one point held hostage until the courts ordered their return, pawns in the U.S. president's negotiations to build a wall to keep immigrants and refugees out. It is estimated that 11 million people currently living in the US are, in today's mostly erroneous terms, *undocumented, unauthorized, illegal, alien.*[1] I would venture, that if they cannot safely return to their countries of origin, they are "stateless" even if they are still legally citizens of those countries.

The small DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program that protected about 800,000 of them – people who came to the United States illegally as young children under the age of 16 and who have lived there continuously since— from deportation, has become another pawn for legislative deals between the two US parties. Despite its attractive associations with the American dream of

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[1] The US Homeland Security agency 2015 report estimates 12 million "illegal aliens," but since then various news agencies have reported significant and steady drops in the population of undocumented residents. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/18_1214_PLCY_pops-est-report.pdf (Accessed 5/12/2019).

hospitality for the vulnerable from across the globe, the controversial DREAM Act (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) signed into law by President Obama in 2012 has an unfortunate name. In order to spell that resonant term "dream," it required an A, and the A is for Alien. To be alien is to be other, strange, unwanted. The stateless are alien.

My statelessness was temporary. I was fortunate eventually to immigrate to the U.S. legally with my parents who had managed, with effort and after a long wait, to obtain visas and the generous support of the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) and the Jewish Family Service of Providence, R.I. who helped us relocate. Volunteers welcomed us and brought us to the apartment they had prepared for us in Providence. I was twelve. All was utterly unfamiliar, in English, a language I did not speak, but it was our new "home." Though now legal, we continued to be "stateless" until we got our green cards and became permanent residents. With green cards, you still don't get a passport but you can travel internationally. Five years later, my parents and I could apply for citizenship. With my "naturalization" certificate, which is what citizenship papers are called, I became American. But just now, even that status is being called into question as the present administration begins to review naturalization certificates with an eye to revoking some of them. Once stateless and thus "unnatural," it seems, one remains vulnerable to unpredictable political shifts.

And yet, some attributes of statelessness stick to me yet.

Stateless Memory and Postmemory

Despite these negative associations with loss and negation, I want to suggest that statelessness could be claimed as a space of openness and potentiality, rather than merely a blockage to be overcome. I realize that this line of argument emerges precisely from the very particular fact that I was, and that I no longer am, stateless. It is from this particular vantage point that I would like to conceptualize a "stateless" form of memory and transmission – one that exceeds the boundaries of nations and states.

Scholars of memory have fruitfully challenged the idea that cultural memory is delimited by a culture or nation-state, either serving or contesting hegemonic national or ethnic identities. The important work on transnational and diasporic memory, theorized in numerous recent volumes and conferences, contests current public memory practices and institutions that reanimate and support nationalist imaginaries in many places across the globe.[2] Memory studies is thus a promising platform of debate about growing nationalism and the possibilities of countering it. At the same time, refugees, exiles, migrants, immigrants and emigrés, all carrying trauma and memory with them on their sometimes endless journeys through spaces of unbelonging, are left out of national, and even of transnational, memory practices. And so are those who have either lost their citizenship, or who have never been fully recognized as citizens by the states in which they live, and who are thus stateless "at home." Conceiving of memory as stateless sheds light on the intimate qualities and textures of memorial and postmemorial acts of transfer outside of and beyond the bounds of citizenship and the nation-state. It highlights the effects of unbelonging and non-citizenship on subjects who hold or who carry loss, trauma and memory of painful pasts in the present, as burden and, also perhaps, as possibility. This essay, then, is not so much a reflection on how memory, loss and trauma travel across national borders, or how they shape those who are stateless at home. It is an effort to articulate *stateless memory* itself as a pause or suspension in both the aspiration to citizenship and in the performance of mobility and migration, whether chosen or imposed.

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[2] See the special issue of *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011), ed. Richard Crownshaw, esp. the essays by Astrid Erll, Anna Reading, Susannah Radstone, Dirk Moses, and Andrew Hoskins; Astrid Erll, "Traumatic Pasts, Literary Afterlives: New Directions of Literary and Media Memory Studies," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 3, no. 1 (2011); Ann Rigney and Chiara de Chesari, eds. *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Amsterdam: De Gryuter, 2014); and the special issue of *Memory Studies* 11, 3 (2018) on "Cultural Memory After the Transnational Turn," edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney.

As I see it, the hiatus that is stateless memory contains multiple temporalities, spaces, and conceptions of identity and community, as well as multiple possibilities of encounter and transformation. It is not static but dynamic, not passive but active, not linear but repetitive, recursive, circular, rhizomatic. Its activity is not uni- but multi-directional. A stateless suspension in time and space, however protracted by circumstance, can suggest ways of mobilizing the memory and postmemory of painful pasts in a different time frame than the progression toward pre-ordained futures that often seem inevitable in the space-time of the nation-state and the catastrophes it causes and suffers. It can open up the possibility of imagining alternative potential relationships between contemporary subjects and citizenship, national belonging, and home, as well as alternate temporalities of becoming. It can gesture toward a future that need not be a repetition of the same.

Admittedly, this aspirational counter-national sense of stateless memory as a hiatus of potentiality seems radically removed from the dire conditions of the everyday and endless conditions of statelessness we are currently witnessing across the globe. How can we tout stateless memory, when stateless people are so totally subject to the often arbitrarily applied laws of the nation-states that they are either fleeing, being expelled from, appealing to, or unwanted by?[3]

There are days when I feel those realities as so overpowering that they evacuate the possibility of being and thinking outside or beyond the unforgiving strictures of nation-states and the citizenship they can grant and remove. But then I remember how Hannah Arendt wrote about statelessness in her very own moments of deportation and refugeehood. As Lindsey Stonebridge has recently explained, Arendt "responded to her own statelessness: not by conceding to wretchedness, but by thinking experimentally and

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[3] The UNHCR estimates that there are currently 10 million stateless people across the globe, people "who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement." To set this in context, they estimate that 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, and 3.1 million are currently seeking asylum. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html (Accessed 5/12/2019)

radically, turning historical and political pariahdom into a restless and creative virtue" (Stonebridge 8). Like Stonebridge, I would not want, of course, to reproduce some of the blindnesses that emerge from the mid-century conceptions of the creativity of exile, conceptions Arendt herself criticized in the cosmopolitan writings of Stefan Zweig, for example. The negation of belonging, personhood and rights that is statelessness is nothing to be celebrated. In political theorist Ayten Gündogdu's words, stateless non-citizens "were deprived of legal personhood as well as the right to action and speech" (Gündogdu 2). Nor, in the face of present geopolitical reality can we find, or even conceive of, any concrete space of citizenship and rights outside or beyond the nation-state and its potential ethno-nationalism, any more than Arendt could in the mid-century. And yet, along with Arendt, I would also not want to concede the possibility of at least imagining by what means such a space might be created.

I am not alone in turning back to Hannah Arendt at this moment, nor in considering the present politics of statelessness as a complex legacy of Cold War histories and their reconfiguration of nations, political communities and citizenship. In fact, Arendt's writings about statelessness have in themselves become part of our cultural postmemory of post- World War Two thought.[4] As the co-authors of one of the numerous recent reconsiderations of Arendt, *The Right to Have Rights*, argue, Arendt's claim on behalf of stateless people to "the right to have rights" "offers a key resource for thinking and acting politically in our own moment" (DeGooyer et. al. 2).[5]

Yet her famous phrase and its meanings are hotly debated among contemporary thinkers. For Arendt, rights can only be acquired through national belonging and citizenship, but national belonging certainly does not guarantee them: both stateless people and persecuted national minorities suffer from the lack of rights.

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[4] For just a few recent examples, see Stonebridge; Stephanie DeGooyer, et.al., *The Right to Have Rights* (London: Verso, 2018); Seyla Benhabib, *Exile, Statelessness, Migration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[5] See Hannah Arendt's discussion of "the right to have rights" in *the Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 290-302.

Much of the debate surrounding this phrase revolves around the foundational *right* that grants the possibility of having rights. Is it basic humanity that is meant to guarantee this right in Arendt's view, or is it, as De Gooyer and her co-authors argue, the membership in a political community that must first be acquired before that right can be claimed (6-15)?[6]

In my reading it is the latter, but what does it mean to *have* rights, given the fragility of political community? This is the question that Lida Maxwell's chapter in *The Right to Have Rights* asks. It is here, in the verb *to have*, as well as in the repetition and pluralization of the noun *right* and *rights*, that we could see Arendt as seizing an opening in the otherwise unbearable condition of statelessness. In this reading, Arendt critiques the idea that rights are "naturally possessed" simply by virtue of one's humanity (Maxwell 48-9). Lida Maxwell understands *having* "not as possessions, but as part of political projects of certain kinds of political worlds," projects that are "ambivalent," "collective," "fragile," and "limited achievements" (57).

Although Arendt is pessimistic about the possibilities of international law or humanitarian protection outside the nation-state, she does see the "having" of rights as a practice of creativity and imagination that, by necessity, emerge from the loss of rights that are the result of statelessness and the unwillingness of nations to granting asylum to refugees. Thus, in Lida Maxwell's interpretation of Arendt, to *have* rights "means to participate in staging, creating, and sustaining a common political world where the ability to legitimately claim and demand rights becomes a possibility for everyone" (52). Rather than an assertion of that which already exists but must be better distributed, this is an aspirational, future-oriented and open-ended set of practices –practices such as protest, legislation, collective action, or institution building— that can enable us to think further about what it means to "have" citizenship or rights. If rights claims are based on membership in a political community, then the work to

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[6] See also Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996), and *The Rights of Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

create that community in itself becomes the basis for claiming rights, and opening up that possibility for everyone who participates. Thus, in her essay "We Refugees," Arendt sees the stateless as "the vanguard of their people" –in the sense that the negation of Jewish personhood preceded and announced that of other Europeans under the Nazis, and, I believe, also in the sense of the continual reinvention that refugeehood and statelessness imposed on them ("We Refugees" 274).

In what follows, I explore whether we could find that creation of community in another form of collective endeavor: the aesthetic encounter. Lyndsey Stonebridge traces how Arendt's arguments emerge through readings of literary works from Kafka to Varnhagen, showing how "exercises of the imagination, for Arendt, create the kind of thinking necessary to judge the world" (*Stateless People* 21). Stonebridge looks at fiction and poetry as sources for images through which to think about statelessness. I propose to bring this approach to works that perform stateless memory, in particular. A participatory aesthetics staging stateless memory provides a way not just to *live with* statelessness as a condition, whether transient or protracted, but to use this condition to imagine and practice political community for the future. Such an act of imagination can occur precisely in a temporality that Arendt, in the title of one of her essays, so beautifully calls "active patience" ("Active Patience" 141). It is, I believe, the temporality of artistic creation and encounter.

The visual works I discuss below can help us to understand Arendt's idea of "having" as a process rather than a state or condition. They do more than to represent or to depict statelessness. They create *figures* through which viewers can experience, even participate in, the affects and textures of stateless memory. They acknowledge the vulnerabilities of unbelonging, the violence of forced migration, and the difficulties of statelessness, even as they mobilize the creative power of a stateless memory, shuttling between past and future, as an alternative to nationalist and ethnocentric imaginaries. And yet, to transcend the limits of historical time and geopolitical space, they also invoke a mythic imagination, one that risks taking us too far afield from the realities and the urgencies of stateless lives in the present. Or, could it be that this is precisely the power of figuration: that figure and

myth can better communicate the urgency that something needs to be done?[7]

En Camino[8]

Figure 1. Mirta Kupferminc, "En Camino'[On the Way], 2001. Courtesy of the artist.

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[7] Avery Gordon makes a similar argument in her reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, when she writes: "*When the living take the dead or the past back to a symbolic place, it is connected to the labor aimed at creating in the present a something that must be done.*" Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 175.

[8] An earlier and briefer discussion of Kupferminc's and Wangechi Mutu's works appeared in Deborah Willis, Ellyn Toscano and Kalia Brooks, eds., *Women and Migration: Responses in Art and History* (Cambridge: Open Book Publisheres, 2019).

Mirta Kupferminc's 2001 black and white etching "En Camino" [On the Way] offers one such performance of stateless memory with which to think further about these possibilities. "En Camino" illustrates the difficult conditions of mobility in the aftermath of persecution and expulsion, exhibiting both the dangers and the potentialities inherent in memory acts that embody statelessness. Seven figures attempt to move from left to right, but they are immobilized, pulled backward, hunched over under the weight of the objects they carry – not just uprooted trees, but houses, household objects, windmills, entire villages. In a vertical triptych version of *En Camino* trees cover the top two panels, dwarfing the human figures under their looming shadows. What is more, these figures seem to float on different planes: there is no solid ground under their feet. Though the momentum points forward, they are slowed by the weight of a past whose burden they cannot seem to shed. Judith Butler has recently argued that our mobility as social subjects depends on support and material conditions, on architecture and infrastructure. Kupferminc's figures lack the material support that might safely enable a freely chosen mobility. They are victims of expulsion, refugees who are stalled, immobilized, by the heavy load they carry with such difficulty.

The cultural geographer Karen Till has observed that "places become part of us" (290). When humans emigrate, interact, and engage with others through complex temporal and spatial pathways, material and symbolic aspects of the past are also transported to new destinations and cultural environments. If Kupferminc's figures are on a journey it is not one that progresses from origin to destination: no destination, no contact zone into which the trees and objects these figures carry might be transplanted, is either visible or conceivable. Their state of suspension suggests the suspension describing statelessness.

Mirta Kupferminc is the daughter of Holocaust survivors from Hungary and Czechoslovakia; she was born and raised in their refuge in Argentina in a period when descendants of Jewish refugees were prone to re-emigrating due to authoritarian repression and economic crises. Her work as a printmaker, photographer, video and installation

artist is devoted to, though not entirely weighted down by, this history of multiple displacements. In Kupferminc's iconography of exile, uprooted trees signify removal from home and a violent break in continuity, genealogy and generation. Absorbing nourishment from the soil, trees contain the knowledge of the past and carry it into the future but, if uprooted for too long, they will die, obliterating generations of history and memory. In the etching, and even more clearly, in her 2005 11-minute animation of "En Camino," realized with Mariana Sosnowski, humans blend into the trees. Themselves replacing the roots, these people become embodied archives of past knowledge that they attempt, with difficulty, to carry forward and to transmit.

Figure 2. Still from Mirta Kupferminc and Mariana Sosnowski, 'En Camino' [On the Way], 2005. Courtesy of the artist. All rights reserved.

But the animation entails a very different performance of stateless memory than the etching. It enables the motion of these characters without diminishing the weighty burden of memory that

they continue to shoulder. Carrying suitcases, bags, trees, and other objects these figures walk, run and climb, and they float and are blown around on multiple non-intersecting planes: forward, backward, and sideways. They morph into hybrid mythic creatures, metamorphose into Hebrew letters, they float into and out of books and pages, they walk up and down a ruler, emerge from a coat pocket. Hebrew letters multiply, torahs walk forwards and back. A king sits in a boat hovering precariously on top of the tower of Babel. Female figures, especially, carry heavy suitcases, moving slowly, laboriously, across the screen without looking up. Others, liberated, twirl and pirouette in different directions.

Figure 3. Still from Mirta Kupferminc and Mariana Sosnowski, 'En Camino'[On the Way], 2005. Courtesy of the artist. All rights reserved.

    The cyclical movement and ending of the video implies a perpetual repetition that would place it within the realm of legend or myth. Despite their seemingly unrooted freedom from gravity, these

characters remain trapped in the pages and the repeated gestures of an ancient Jewish scenario of expulsion, exile and homelessness, a story that is written about, for and against them.

And yet, while the etching evokes memory as an overwhelming and paralyzing burden, the video is animated by surreal humor and incongruity – a playfulness that lightens without diminishing the yoke of the past and its mythic dimensions. As letters float around on the screen looking like the playful doodles of a child, we are also invited to imagine alternate scenarios with different beginnings and endings. The artist grants her characters the shapes of letters that can be arranged and rearranged, thus mobilizing multiple potential stories on the threshold of more open-ended futures.   These recursive trajectories complicate a genealogical temporality of loss and attempted recovery. This is an evocative aesthetics of small gestures, in miniature.

Figure 4. Mirta Kupferminc. El Viaje. Courtesy of the artist. All rights reserved.

Kupferminc returns frequently to the stateless figures inhabiting the landscape of "En Camino," thus further enlarging and potentializing the temporality of statelessness to re-envision a sense of future in relation to an ever-present violent past. Her figures tend to float in space, the chairs she creates have wings, roots are in the air. "These people are me," Kupferminc has said in a 2018 personal communication, emphasizing the fragility and contingency of the very notion of home that she wants to convey in her work.

Recently, in 2018, Kupferminc embedded the figures from "En Camino" in a stage-set she designed for a children's play *The Golem of Buenos Aires* by Marina Toker. In this version, entitled "El Viaje," the figures are in a boat, floating on a bright blue sea between the old world (Prague) to the new (the Buenos Aires harbor). The boat gestures to a new refugee imaginary, specific to our own moment. While the resolute woman in front faces toward the new world, however, the tip of the boat itself points ever so slightly toward the viewer, and thus the journey on this brightly colored ocean remains suspended, motionless, in between. What is more, the last figure from "En Camino," the one facing backwards, is missing, as is the one immediately in front. The boat is small, some figures had to be left behind in a limbo that is even more tenuous than the sea voyage without end on a garishly colored sea with a pink sky. We move here from myth to legend and fairy tale.

In yet another version, produced at the same time and entitled "Construyendo una nueva existencia" (Constructing a new existence), the image of "El Viaje" is itself cut up, the fissures are highlighted in gold. Based on the Japanese technique of Kintsugi which incorporates damage, breakage and repair into the object, this image highlights fragments that break off to float in the air, held together by thin gold sutures. Here the frame can no longer contain the fragments of suspended stateless lives.

  In Kupferminc's iconography, the same figures, mostly women, return in different configurations, always wandering, always holding memory. They enact and re-enact archetypal scenes of escape, migration, and statelessness in different contexts, carrying the weight of the past which, at the same time, is made weightless as it floats on water and air. The fragments constituting these stories are but

building blocks of a postmemory that is transmitted bypassing homogeneous national traditions, and heteronormative genealogies in favor of diasporic networks that can be reassembled, reimagined, reconfigured, according to new presents.   Although her work performs the unforgiving visceral transfer of a painful past to future generations, in her playful animation, it also allows us to imagine the potentiality of different futures.

Vulnerable Encounters

The aesthetic practices defining not only Kuperminc's work, but also work emerging from other diasporic communities mobilize personal and cultural loss in the service of alternative, non-linear, historical trajectories that embrace the suspension of statelessness, bypassing recuperation and return. Placing "En Camino" in conversation with "The End of Carrying All" by Kenyan/U.S. artist Wangechi Mutu, we see how artistic performance can explore stateless lives, and its different valences in different geo-political contexts. The contingent and vulnerable memory practices Kuperminc and Mutu create help us recognize how women carry the burden of a painful past, and how they transmit it to future generations. Performing forced migration, as well as its memory and postmemory, they help us think about statelessness as a form of refusal and potentiality, dispossession and potential opening, all at the same time. Connecting them allows us to trace a critical and resistant counter-national aesthetic. Yet, making this connection is a wager, dependent on a willingness to perceive common histories and strategies beyond and outside of national borders, and on attention to the particular cultural contexts – the political, cultural and economic differences –that produce these works.

The End of Carrying All

Wangechi Mutu's three-channel video "The End of Carrying All," first exhibited at the 2015 Venice Biennale, performs, even while re-envisioning, the past as a burden to be carried by women, especially. It shares the mythic, yet anti-monumental, quality of "En Camino," as well as its attention to small household details that constitute personal and communal lives. While the title "En Camino" signals the perpetual present of diasporic movement, however, "The End of Carrying All" expresses either a personal desire for closure or an apocalyptic ending to inexorable Sisyphean repetition. Both these works could be seen as feminist re-visions of the Sisyphus myth, read not as an abstract human condition, but as a historically and politically marked and gendered one. Mutu doesn't refer only to Sisyphus, however: the earth mother in the work is a kind of Cassandra who cyclically predicts, even as she enacts, impending human and environmental catastrophe.

Born in Kenya and working in both Nairobi and New York, Wangechi Mutu is well-known for work in multiple media that explore the structures of gender and power, and the effects of colonialism and globalization. "The End of Carrying All" shows a woman (Mutu herself) slowly swaying forward while balancing a large basket on her head. The landscape evokes a savannah, rich in color though progressively getting darker and more threatening. On the soundtrack, we hear the strong wind of the plains, and the swarms of birds that ominously fill the unnatural red skies that border on clichéd images of generic African landscapes. She approaches and then passes a tree that becomes more barren as its appearance recurs. As the woman progresses, with ever greater difficulty, her basket gets filled with an increasing number of objects: bicycle wheels, houses, a satellite dish and other electronic and household goods she collects along the way, bending more and more under their weight, occasionally stopping to clear her path.

Figure 7. Still from Wangechi Mutu, "The End of Carrying All," 2015. Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, Victoria Miro, London, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects. All rights reserved.

Her migration across the three large screens recalls the myriad migrations across and beyond a continent shaped by globalized economies, poverty, war, and political upheaval. She is ever more encumbered by the objects of globalization and consumption, whether produced, acquired, recycled or discarded as waste – objects promising a future even as they destroy it. The whole world is in that basket, which lights up when it gets dark, but, as the video progresses, it also becomes more and more impossible to bear. This journey has no visible national borders to cross, and yet it also does not fully remain in the timeless realm of myth and legend that it evokes. These objects are specific to the entanglements of postcolonial global political and economic realities.

When the weight of the basket becomes excessive for the woman to carry, the earth lights up in an eerie green, erupts and swallows her and her disproportionate belongings, gurgling, glowing and heaving, as it ingests this unwelcome substance. At this point in the video we reach "the end of carrying all." The huge lump of lava-like matter rolls down hill and is slowly absorbed.

And then, of course, the journey begins again in an endless loop linking the violence of the past to new disasters to come in a recursive sequence. What erupts here, we wonder? What is being refused, ejected, cleaned-up? Mutu compares this planetary apocalypse to a bodily wound: "the wound on the skin behaves similarly; eventually it bursts open and all that festering stuff comes out, and then it's back to normal. But, you know, when things go, when the earth decides to clean up, it's not going to go, oh you're the good ones, you're alright, you stay and they go" (Barber and Naimou 352). The female body parallels the space of the earth: both are injured, both need healing and renewal – a process stalled by the impossible burden of carrying all.

Here, as in "En Camino," mobility is slowed by the weight of the past and its afterlives in the present, and also by a repetition and cyclicality that seems to leave little room for hope or for change. But could we not also say that, drawing on the knowledge of the past, this work uses the hiatus of stateless wandering to re-envision the idea of future – to imagine the potentiality of truly "start[ing] again," or anew?

The video performs the refusal and renewal with which Mutu credits the earth. The work suggests that things will not, cannot, continue in the same way, that they must be ended, re-imagined – building, as in Kupferminc, a new existence out of the shards and fragments of the old.

Responding to the theme of the 2015 Venice Biennale, "All the World's Futures," the work was received as a critique of capitalism and environmental disaster, of the violence done to indigenous landscapes by the consumption and waste resulting from colonization and globalization. These are recognizable themes in all of Mutu's videos, sculptures and collages and in the feminist mythologies she invokes and (re)creates. In her sculpture and collage work, she recycles the materials of global capitalism, such as junk mail and magazine pictures, refashioning these fragments into works of sustainability. The work that was exhibited in the same room as "The End of Carrying All," "She's Got the Whole World in Her," is fashioned from recycled metal. Mutu's thus becomes a work of critique that all the while also practices salvage and attempted repair, pausing to delay, may be even to avert, or to redirect, a catastrophe to come. But these two works together, in the same space, are doing even more. As a ravaged ruin, "She's Got the Whole World in Her" is open and open-ended. The angled screens of "The End of Carrying All" do not quite fit together, suggesting that something could emerge in between. The woman's path is neither linear nor circular, and the apocalyptic ending allows us to glimpse a potential space beyond the vast horizon that cannot fully encase our view.

The female figures in Kupferminc and Mutu's work collect the fragments of migrant lives and weave them into stories that leave open the potentiality of rebirth and new beginnings, even as they powerfully recall the violence of the past and resist amnesia. The small gestures of intervention performed by these artists enable us to envision a suspended space of stateless encounter – beyond national borders and imaginaries. Despite their differences, there's a great deal that they share, if we bring them together in a gesture of what we might think of as stateless reading – a counter-national reading practice that focuses on reinvention, imagination and creation, without minimizing the

vicissitudes of stateless lives. Together they suggest some ways in which we can contest the monumentality of nationalist imaginaries and, albeit in different registers, they communicate the urgency that we do so. They share a bold strategy of appropriating the colonizing and commodifying stereotypes that disempower them. They share the use of animation and of performance; they embrace incongruity and contradiction. They invoke myth, legend and fairy tale, yet engage geo-political time and space. Through these strategies and others, they confront and re-imagine painful pasts and ominous futures. As participants in the artistic encounter, they thus urge us to envision statelessness as an invitation, or an openness, to generating forms of community that might not yet have been conceived. It is through this participation that we can claim one of the rights Hannah Arendt saw as essential to survival: the right to belong to political community. In the hiatus that is statelessness, political community does not pre-exist: it must be created.

If we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to the provocation of these works, and to the provocation brought about by putting them next to each other, they can enjoin us to practice alternative forms of community and to imagine other potential temporalities – beyond present political reality and beyond our own horizons of possibility.

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*P*ast (Im)perfect Continuous. Trans-Cultural Articulations of the Postmemory of WWII presents an international and interdisciplinary approach to the comprehension of the postmemory of WWII, accounting for a number of different intellectual trajectories that investigate WWII and the Holocaust as paradigms for other traumas within a global and multidirectional context. Indeed, by exceeding the geographical boundaries of nations and states and overcoming contextual specificities, postmemory foregrounds continuous, active, connective, transcultural, and always imperfect representations of violence that engage with the alterity of other histories and other subjects. 75 years after the end of WWII, this volume is primarily concerned with the convergence between postmemory and underexamined aspects of the history and aftermath of WWII, as well as with several sociopolitical anxieties and representational preoccupations.

Drawing from different disciplines, the critical and visual works gathered in this volume interrogate the referential power of postmemory, considering its transcultural interplay with various forms, media, frames of reference, conceptual registers, and narrative structures.

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