Diaspora and Memory

Figures of Displacement in Contemporary Literature, Arts and Politics

Editors Marie-Aude Baronian
Stephan Besser
Yolande Jansen

THAMYRIS **INTERSECTING** PLACE, SEX AND RACE

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Thamyris

Intersecting: Place, Sex and "Race"

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Thamyris/Intersecting is a new series of edited volumes with a critical, interdisciplinary focus.

Thamyris/Intersecting's mission is to rigorously bring into encounter the crucial insights of black and ethnic studies, gender studies, and queer studies, and facilitate dialogue and confrontations between them. *Intersecting* shares this focus with *Thamyris*, the socially committed international journal which was established by Jan Best en Nanny de Vries, in 1994, out of which *Intersecting* has evolved. The sharpness and urgency of these issues is our point of departure, and our title reflects our decision to work on the cutting edge.

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Introduction: Diaspora and Memory

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I.

Issuing a book on "Diaspora and Memory" at the present moment is a timely and untimely project at once. Timely, because experiences of migration and dwelling-in-displacement impinge upon the lives of an ever-increasing number of people world-wide, with business class comfort or, more often, unrelenting violence. Since the early 1990s, the political and cultural realities of global migration have lead to a growing interest in the different forms of "diasporic" existence and identity. Diaspora studies flourish, not only in Anglo-Saxon academia, and journals like the Canadian *Diaspora* and the French periodical of the same name provide forums for the discussion, analysis and comparison of different forms of diasporic experience.[1] Well on its way towards academic institutionalization, diaspora studies undoubtedly need to be credited for drawing attention to the precarious position of communities in displacement.

The current fashionability of diaspora studies, however, has led to serious political and theoretical objections. Analyzing the diaspora boom as a phenomenon of the Western intellectual market, Timothy Brennan has argued that the fascination with the "hybrid" cultures of diasporic communities tends to obscure the fact that very often these people themselves do not want to be diasporic (674). Shifting attention from political questions of citizenship and the nation-state as an agent of political power to vague concepts of "subject formation" and "cosmopolitanism," Brennan argues, can hardly be seen as a gain in analytical and critical clarity. Other critics, like Kim Butler, have expressed their concerns about the metaphorical devaluation of the term diaspora. Once reserved for "classical" diasporas (Jewish, Armenian, Greek), then applied to African and Palestinian communities in displacement, diaspora is now increasingly used to describe a "majority condition in global capitalism" (Mirzoeff 6) in general, which makes it more and more difficult to maintain it as a "distinct category" of cultural and historical analysis (Butler 189).[2] Rogers Brubaker has therefore used

the expression "'diaspora' diaspora" in order to point out that the term's explosive dispersion in semantic and *conceptual* space makes it more plausible in the future to regard diaspora as a "claim" and "category of practice" than as a descriptive definition of certain groups (Brubaker 13). Although Brubaker shows that certain core criteria continue to be understood as constitutive of diaspora – "dispersion," "homeland orientation" and "boundary-maintenance" – his survey also makes clear that any future use of the term might contribute to its loss of discriminating power and thus involves the risk of being obscuring rather than enlightening.

This book inevitably testifies and contributes to these ambiguities, we hope, however, that is does so in a specific way. Emerging from an international conference held at the University of Amsterdam in the Spring of 2003, our collection of articles reflects the stimulating and disorienting diversity of contemporary diaspora scholarship. Accordingly, the papers presented here are not committed to a common view or definition of "diaspora" or a joint research agenda. Nevertheless, they share certain conceptual and political interests and sensibilities that we would like to comment on in this introduction. Our reflections are not intended to sum up the articles or to provide conclusions, their purpose is rather to engage in an explanatory dialogue with the texts and to highlight important links between them.

The first of the sensibilities shared by the articles in this volume can be described as an interest in diaspora's *performative* dimension. Acknowledging the difficulties of defining diaspora and delimiting it from other movements of people does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that such attempts are vain or superfluous in any way. Making distinctions and describing differences are important elements of any analytical activity and can be seen as expressions of respect and responsibility towards the object. Therefore, theoretical approaches like Kim Butler's suggestions for a comparative methodology of diaspora studies are valuable contributions to the discussion that can help to understand the diversity of recent forms of transnationalism. At the same time, however, it seems important to acknowledge that diasporas are not static entities but constantly in flux and under reconstruction, as Carol Bardenstein points out in her essay on certain *figures* of (Palestinian) diasporic cultural production. Moreover, it seems crucial to take into account that the very usage of the term diaspora by certain groups and communities *itself* shapes the cultural and political constellations that diaspora studies attempt to analyze. By examining the cultural and political implications of *calling* and *perceiving* certain situations as "diasporic," some of the essays in this volume indeed suggest that these acts of adaptation inevitably undermine any abstract, normative notion of diaspora. Drawing on Brubaker's notion of the "'diaspora' diaspora," one could argue that diaspora has become a "second order" phenomenon in a performative sense as well: for better or worse, the term itself has become productive of political and cultural realities, in particular with regard to the self-image of people and communities that, often for very different reasons, invoke the discourse of diaspora.

Paradoxically, however, it might be exactly this awareness of the performative dimension of diaspora that can function as an antidote to the term's career as a free-floating "master trope" of otherness and hybridity in general (Clifford 319). Performatives do not work arbitrarily, their success depends on their plausibility as well as on the political and cultural context in which they are enacted, as Karolina Szmagalska demonstrates in her essay on the commemoration of the murder of the Jewish community of Jedwabne in Poland during the second world war. In her article on recent Herero discourses of self-identity, Anette Hoffmann shows that the Herero's claim for a diasporic identity, comparable to that of the Jews, gains plausibility through the fact that both communities suffered genocide from German hands. At the same time, these "diasporic articulations" draw attention to the precarious situation of the Herero in the nation state of Namibia that alienates them from their own country. In very different but yet comparable ways the expelled Greek population of the island of Imbros invokes the discourse of diaspora in order to reclaim political rights and properties in the nation-state of Turkey (Babul). Dismissing such adaptations of diaspora as mere tactical maneuvers would be to ignore the performative power of the term. Instead, they should be seen as a motivation to look closely at the political and cultural conditions under which these negotiations happen. Regarding diaspora from a performative perspective would thus acknowledge the term's elusiveness and simultaneously relocate it in *specific* contexts.

II.

In accordance with these considerations, the articles in this volume do not focus on the *external* boundaries of diaspora – what is diasporic and what is not? – but on one of its most important *internal* boundaries, which is indicated by the second term in the title of this book: memory. At first sight, the combination of the concepts of diaspora and memory may appear as all too natural and unproblematically self-evident. Granted that some kind of dispersal in time and space is constitutive of any form of diaspora, diasporic identities can be seen to be characterized by a triple sense of belonging: to the other members of a distinctive local diasporic community; to diasporic groups in other locations around the world; and, finally, to the point of origin, the actual or imagined homeland that binds these groups together. All of these dimensions of diasporic identity have been debated and drawn into question as possible criteria for the definition of diaspora (Brubaker 5-7). Whereas critics like William Safran have emphasized the importance of homeland orientation, James Clifford has focused on the "lateral" connections between different diasporic groups, while Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have highlighted the hybridity of diasporic communities and their interaction with other groups. Yet, however one balances these factors, it seems clear that memory – understood as the complex relation of personal experiences, the shared histories of communities and their modes of transmission – must be seen as a privileged

carrier of diasporic identity. Correspondingly, its passing on over several generations might even be regarded as ultimate "proof" of the diasporic status of a certain community (Butler 192). It is not by chance that the *right* to remember, the *responsibility* to recall and the "sense of the *dangers* involved in forgetting" (Gilroy 318) are central issues of debate within diasporic communities and in their relations to their cultural and political surroundings. No diaspora without memory: forgetting the trans-local diasporic connections means the ultimate disbandment of diasporic identity.

The relation of diaspora and memory, however, also contains an important critical and maybe even subversive potential. Significantly, diasporic memory is "place based" but not "place bound," as Anne-Marie Fortier succinctly puts it. This also means that it can undermine geographical definitions of diaspora and, in particular, the idea that the lost homeland is the defining moment of diasporic identity. Creating patterns of attachment across time and space, diasporic memory spins "threads of continuity", many of which have no connection with the homeland anymore. Memory can thus transcend the territorial logic of dispersal and return and emerge as a competing source of diasporic identity: "Memory, rather than territory, is the principle ground of identity formation in diaspora cultures, where 'territory' is decentered and exploded into multiple settings" (Fortier 184).

Fortier's formulation points to an important, even essential ambiguity in the relationship of diaspora and memory. While discussing the risks of defining diaspora by "original placement," the metaphor of memory as alternative "ground" of identity still echoes the territorial logic that Fortier is criticizing. Therefore, it seems all the more important to acknowledge that the "ground" of memory can be rather unstable and shaky itself, in particular if one conceives of memory not as a stable space of identity but as a process of displacement *itself*. Significantly, movement and mobility are not just characteristics of diaspora, they are also constitutive of memory as something that is always in flux and notoriously unreliable. Every form of memory – the individual memory of personal experiences, cultural memory or trans-generational "postmemory" (Hirsch) – depends on re-articulations and re-enactments. Its contents are necessarily modified and invented as they are remembered. Shaped by the responsibilities of bearing testimony as well as by the normalizing forces of amnesia and forgetting and all forms of political interests, memory is a performative process, a "process of linking" (Bal vii) rather than a secure space of identity. "*Recherche* rather than recuperation," its temporal status is always the present (Huyssen 3).

Seen from this perspective, the relation of diaspora and memory is not so much affirmative as problematic and ambivalent: memory is *at once* the condition *and* the necessary limit of diasporic identities. This ambiguity raises a number of divergent questions that are addressed in this volume: What, for example, are the political and ethical implications of the adaptation of memories of the Holocaust by people who have no personal or familial connection to it but employ it as a form of "diasporic

discourse" (Bos)? How are personal memory, cultural recall and "postmemory" related in the process of transmitting the Holocaust (Hirsch and Spitzer)? And, perhaps most urgently: what are the concrete political perspectives of a dialogue between radically different memories of diasporic experiences in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Loubani and Rosen)?

III.

Regarding both diaspora and memory as processes of "displacement" draws attention to a term that – by etymological felicity or congruity – in the English language refers both to actual displacement in space and a basic principle of the work of imagination, namely the substitution of one idea by another, related one. A number of articles in this book take this double meaning as an invitation to explore the relation of displacement in its physical and psychological sense in concrete works of art (Soko Phay-Vakalis, Sylvie Rollet and Silke Horstkotte in her essay on the poetics of remembering and forgetting in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*). Without attempting to synthesize these perspectives into a single theoretical form we would like to add a few reflections on "displacement" as a semantic intersection of diaspora and memory and its importance for diaspora studies in general.

To begin with, the term displacement combines within a single word the notions of de- and re-territorialization that are often regarded as related yet distinguishable processes of memory formation. In their book *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter. Der Holocaust*, one of the most interesting recent attempts to explore the relation of diaspora and memory, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue that we are currently witnessing the emergence of a post-national "cosmopolitan memory." Regarding the Jewish diaspora as a kind of avant-garde of contemporary processes of diasporization, they state that the remembrance of the Holocaust could only become an almost universal container for very different memories of violence and marginalization, because it was committed against a *diasporic* community. Since the diasporic feeling of being "out of place" is shared by more and more victimized and marginalized people worldwide (60), these groups tend to sense a particular affinity with the memory of the Holocaust. Sznaider and Levy suggest that these adaptations of the memory of the Holocaust correspond to an increasing de-localisation (*Entortung*) and de-nationalization of cultural memory in general.

Remarkably, Sznaider and Levy do not lament the putative inauthenticity and superficiality of global culture. Yet, while attaching positive value to the notion of *Entortung*, they paradoxically also stress the idea of an "original placement," a single source of cosmopolitan memory that feeds different memorial cultures. To be sure, Sznaider and Levy extensively discuss the re-location of the memory of the Holocaust in the USA, Germany and Israel. The rhetorics of their study, however, are clearly dominated by the notion of "de-localization."

Instead of seeing the connection between diaspora and memory in "de-localisation," we would like to emphasize that it is also plausible and maybe even more productive to regard *displacement* as the crucial link between the two. The distinction between these approaches can be seen to correspond to the different meanings of the German prefixes "Ent" and "Ver-": Whereas the former (*Ent*-ortung) stresses detachment and uprooting, possibly resulting in a multitude of free-floating elements, the latter (in *Ver*-schiebung) also points to the relocalization of those elements, suggesting a shift or transference from one context to another. Importantly, every "displacement *from*" is always also a "displacement *to*" a new context (Hall 362) and a displacement *in time*, as Esther Peeren stresses in her article on the "dischronotopicality" of diasporic existence. Understood in this way, the notion of displacement might be useful as a conceptual balance weight to the, sometimes lopsided, rhetorics of "deterritorialization" in contemporary diaspora and globalization studies.

These abstract reflections gain concrete relevance when applied to the study of diasporic memories in specific contexts. In his article in this volume, Andreas Huyssen explores the relation between nation and diaspora in Zafer Senocak's novel *Dangerous Affinity*, which interweaves and brings into conflict memories of the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide. Reminiscent of Brennan's argument about the continuing cultural and political power of nation-states, Huyssen shows that the self-occupied national memorial culture of Germany has more or less ignored the challenge posed by Zenocak's novel and might, at the same time, be transformed and decentered by the inclusion of other memories. These processes, it seems, are more adequately described as the result of the displacement of memories than as their deterritorialization. Just like diasporas can transcend local boundaries but not spatiality itself (Sökefeld 111), memories can travel, be adapted and integrated into new contexts without becoming *placeless*. The sustained importance of nation-states in the formation of cultural and "diasporic" identities is also emphasized in Melissa Bilal's article on the Armenian minority in Turkey, a community whose relation to the city space of Istanbul is shaped both by memories of belonging and displacement.

IV.

Originally conceived of by Freud as a principle of unconscious formation, the psychoanalytic notion of "displacement" has proven an important means for understanding the ways in which diasporic subjects and communities deal with traumatic experiences. Drawing upon the psychoanalytic definition of displacement according to which an idea's emphasis can be detached form its source and passed on to other, related ideas, Janine Altounian argues that acts of translation are crucial in coping with traumatic events. In her important study *La Survivance. Traduire le trauma collectif* Altounian argues that the impossibility of finding a place of articulation redoubles the loss caused by genocidal violence and expulsion. The transgenerational effects of this violence are excited by

the fact that it "has taken place but nevertheless lacks a place (*souffre d'un non-lieu*)" (Altounian 29). Hence, *displaced* articulations of traumatic experiences can be seen as necessary translations of an unlocatable or unreachable original.

Following similar lines of reasoning, the articles by Sylvie Rollet, Soko Phay-Vakalis and Saskia Lourens explore the poetics of substitution and indirection in works of Elia Kazan, Sarkis and André Brink. Importantly, these works testify to the moment of "pathos" that is linked to diaspora and has been discussed by Kim Butler, Robin Cohen, William Safran and others. At the same time, however, they also show that the element of "aesthetic *choice*" (Rollet) can transcend the compulsive logic of repression and denial. Having traveled through different disciplines and discourses, the notion of displacement has gradually lost its psychopathological connotations and come to signify metonymic association and semiotic slippage in general. Correspondingly, displacement as an element of diasporic experience might be seen as an impulse to (re)produce and (re)create the loss but, simultaneously, to reinvest *something else somewhere else* in the present and in the future. Diasporic cultures exist by producing and discovering new places to speak, new territories to remember and to forget. Therefore, the "thread of continuity" (Fortier) that diasporic memory spins should not be seen as an Ariadne's thread that provides a solid, retraceable connection with the past or a lost and retrievable origin. Its continuity is not essentialist but performative, implying that it consists of a chain of acts of memory that constantly rework and reinvent the content of what is being remembered and forgotten. At the same time, the poetics of diasporic memory do not function randomly, arbitrarily and totally "deterritorialized" but always and constitutively in relation to the impulses by which they are actuated and – *moved*.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* (University of Toronto, ed. Khachig Tololyan) and *Diasporas: Histoire et sociétés* (Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, ed. Patrick Cabanel).

2. With this phrasing Mirzoeff refers to R. B. Kitaj's *Diasporist Manifesto* (1989).

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Figures of Diasporic Cultural Production

Some Entries from the Palestinian Lexicon	Carol Bardenstein

ABSTRACT

Figures of Diasporic Cultural Production: Some Entries from the Palestinian Lexicon

The article takes as its starting point the idea that every diaspora has its own particular lexicon. Discussing recent attempts to define the concept, Bardenstein argues that diasporas are not reified static entities but always in flux and, therefore, defy rigid categorizations. This tension between the specific and the universal is reflected in the set of figures *of cultural production that Bardenstein describes as structuring the particular lexicon of the Palestian diaspora, while simultaneously suggesting that they are not unique to this context. These figures include the "diasporic fragment" (the fixation on particular metonymic fragments), "diasporic anachronisms" (certain kinds of disjunctures of diasporic time) and the "composite" or piecing together of new entities from bits and pieces of existing ones.*

It seems almost customary by now to start discussions of "diaspora" with a backward glance at philological starting points in the form of dictionary entries. While this runs the risk of being a classic de-historicizing move – reducing the fluid multivalent life of a word over time to privilege specific earlier usages – it can be informative to see where the word has been, *without* any such privileging. In these entries we find mention of the Greek root "s-p-r" with the meaning "to disperse" or dispersion, with biological connotations, associated with related words such as sperm and spores, then extended to pertain to human populations. The two most salient senses indicated are the processes of scattering or dispersion in the manner of spores from an intact "full-grown" specimen, on the one hand, as well as a generative or *re*-productive function of the scattered entities in their new locations, on the other. Traditional definitions also almost invariably invoke the "foundational" or "paradigmatic" examples of

the Jewish and Greek diasporas, those reflecting updated usage may also mention the Armenian and African diasporas.

To paraphrase Kim Butler: humans have been "on the move" since the beginning of their history, so what is distinctive about diaspora? What distinguishes it from other kinds of human movement, and social formations of people who have been displaced? (Butler). The need to make such distinctions has seemed urgent to some, at a time when "diaspora" has been used to refer to things ranging from more "classic" formulations – such as the traumatic uprooting of an identified and self-identifying group to multiple sites of dispersion, sustained over generations – to a far more broad use that would include any group or minority who can trace their origins to a country or region other than that in which they reside (Safran); and even – sounding a crisis among diaspora studies scholars in being stretched to the point of meaninglessness – to refer to, for example the "egg-cream diaspora" (the bottling of that beverage to serve markets beyond New York City), or "the Californian diaspora in Seattle," or the "corporate diaspora" of executives needing to find new kinds of positions at times of corporate upheaval (Tololyan 10).

In response to this "free-for-all" usage of the term diaspora, diaspora studies scholars have tried to articulate definitions and, in some instances, checklists, to ascertain if something should rightfully be called a diaspora, or if it is in fact some other kind of social formation. Some scholars have hailed the importance of studies focused on *particular* diasporas, others, like Butler, have called for the need to "transcend *specific* diasporic histories," in order to "reach consensus on a definition of diaspora," (Butler 191) and be able to identify those features that would apply to all diasporas. I do not concur with this as a goal of priority in diaspora studies for many reasons – not least of which is that, of course, diasporas, like definitions of them, are not reified static entities – they are in history, and in flux. Sometimes these taxonomies or typologies of what constitutes diaspora overlap. When they are comprised of something on the order of five items, they seem to embody a certain narrative "neatness" or economy, when the number extends to something like eleven items, they seem a bit more "ungainly."

Many employments of the word "diaspora" have highlighted the first aspect of the dictionary entries mentioned above: namely, the *experience of dispersion* from a former place, home, or homeland. There is largely a consensus that there must be some concomitant *conception of collectivity*, whether it is crystallized and explicit before dispersion, or takes shape in the process of dispersion, or retroactively sometime in the wake of dispersion. *Who is dispersed*, then, is one question, or axis along which diasporas are defined – what segment of a population? Focus on the process of dispersion also raises the questions of *from where* and *to where* people are dispersed. The axis of *from where* ranges from the more "classic" notion of a geographical homeland, natal or ancestral, to constructs or mythical versions of the same, and spiritual

centers. (For the sake of economy, henceforth when I use the word "homeland," I mean it to include this entire range of possibilities). Further distinctions of *from where?* are made: is there a homeland one might return to? Is it occupied or colonized? Has it become another group's homeland or country? The matter of *to where* people have been dispersed has generally come to be taken to refer to dispersion to two or more places. The *cause of dispersion* has generally been considered another constitutive axis with considerable variation along the following lines: to what degree is the dispersion forced, to what degree voluntary or a matter of relative choice? Is it a one-time traumatic event – a dispersion into exile aimed at a particular population in the wake of conquest, for example, or is it spread out over a longer period of time? To what degree is it directly human-induced or not, sometimes extending to include, for example, famine or difficult or untenable economic conditions as the cause of dispersion?

Alongside these issues focused on the process and circumstances of dispersion, diaspora has also been conceived and talked about in ways that emphasize the second aspect of the dictionary entries mentioned above, namely, the productive or reproductive formation of social entities in new locations. In this conceptual framework, the emphasis is on diaspora as a *social formation*, more pointedly focused on the shapes that the collective takes in its various locales in the wake of dispersion. In this framework, the *relationships to homeland, host-land, and to other diasporic outposts* have been identified as central components of diasporic configurations, with much variation. For some, (though not all) some degree of *active engagement* with the homeland is considered a "necessary" feature of a diaspora. This may take the form of, for example, political or military movements to reclaim the homeland, advocating or intending return to it, visits to it, donations to it, learning its language, lobbying on its behalf from within the host-land, etc. In many mobilizations of the term as a social formation, "diaspora" is explicitly or implicitly taken to be associated experientially or discursively with *trauma*, a sensibility of lamentation over the lost homeland and present lamentable conditions, with accompanying disenfranchisement and disempowerment.

Other conceptions of diaspora eschew trauma as an associated "given," variably using "diaspora" in the more matter-of-fact, non-lachrymose sense of "where certain groups or communities reside or exist today," while others foreground the substantial *empowerment* of certain long-established diasporic communities. Still others, particularly in the past couple of decades, have written in celebratory terms of the "dual orientation" or "double-consciousness" of the diasporic "transnational" subject as "challenging the hegemony and boundedness of the nation-state," as articulated in the work of Clifford, Gilroy and Hall, hailing the "creative work of intellectuals on the margins for transgressing hegemonic constructions of national homogeneity" (Werbner 6). Eva Hoffman is just one of numerous people who have reminded us, however, that dispersion and exile do not necessarily constitute "cool" or "cutting edge" subjectivities to

all who experience them. The heterogeneous subjectivity of the diasporic subject is not a liberating one to all, even if it may be regarded as such in some quarters of academic discourse, or productively experienced as such in certain – often elite – subgroups (Hoffman). (Clearly, for example, it is far from "given" that inhabitants of the Jenin refugee camp conceive of or experience their extended diasporic existence in such terms). Theorists like Jusdanis and Tololyan have critiqued the premature celebration of the ostensible death of the nation-state among diaspora studies (and other) intellectuals, while Werbner and others have pointed out how common it is to find diasporic transnational subjects actively cultivating parochial and exclusivist agendas, including nationalist ones, longing and calling for precisely the kind of homogeneous homeland and authenticity that theorists might like to think has been dispensed with and been transcended as passé. Modifying what Clifford has called the "discrepant cosmopolitanisms" of diasporic subjects, Werbner and Howell and others have suggested describing them as being both ethnic-parochial and cosmopolitan. Much of this more recent discussion has focused on the *subjectivities* and kinds of *cultural production* emerging from diasporic conditions and discourses, a different emphasis than some of the other conceptions of diaspora sketched above.

In what follows, I will analyze a set of figures of diasporic cultural production and practice that are drawn from what I will refer to as the Palestinian diasporic lexicon. They are: 1) *the diasporic fragment*, or fixation on particular metonymic fragments; 2) *swollen-ness*, or the phenomenon of proliferation, clustering around and elaboration of diasporic fragments; 3) *diasporic anachronisms*, or certain kinds of disjunctures of diasporic time; 4) *narrative conformity*, or expectations of what it means to "talk like" a diasporic subject; 5) *de-complexifying* of the relationship to the homeland, or the retroactive reconstruction of a relationship to the homeland as simple and straightforward; 6) *selective displacement or "not-seeing"* of present, immediate surroundings; 7) *the composite*, or piecing together new entities from bits and pieces of existing ones. While they are largely drawn from a very particular diasporic context, these figures rely selectively on many of the more "universal" features and axes I have just sketched. My thinking about diaspora takes as its starting point the idea that every diaspora has its own very particular lexicon. VéVé Clark uses the term "diaspora literacy" to refer to competence at reading the salient signs and symbols of a diaspora.[1] Clark's work reminds us, as Arlene Keizer has noted, that "while every diaspora has a geography, it also has a lexicon," and a lexicon that changes and is in flux. Diaspora studies scholar Pnina Werbner has noted that different diasporic sensibilities require "images, symbols, a shared language," and that long-terms diasporas "create collective literary genres, symbolic representations, historical narratives of loss and redemption that are uniquely theirs" (17). In the remainder of this essay, I will focus on the figures of diasporic cultural production that structure the particular lexicon of the Palestinian diaspora.

Diasporic Fragments and Swollen-ness

The Palestinian poet Mu'in Bseisu, condensing decades and volumes of Palestinian poetic practice into one succinct formulation, wrote:

> *"Into the skull of Palestine, the inkwell"*
> *Let us dip the branches of the lemon-tree*
> *Let us write, fig-tree poets and olive-tree poets*
> *On the leaves of the banana-tree and on our window-panes*
> *Poems for Palestine* (Bseisu 9)

The poem highlights the figure I refer to as the *diasporic fragment,* and the phenomenon of fixating on metonymic fragments of the homeland from sites of Palestinian dispersion. The particular fragments Bseisu inscribes here are trees – lemon trees, fig trees, olive trees – which have emerged as prominent collective fragments in the Palestinian diasporic lexicon. By the time of Bseisu's writing of this poem, many poets had been narrating the diasporic relationship between Palestine and Palestinians in the form of tree fragments. Here, then, not only does Bseisu mobilize these fragments in yet another poem, he also calls explicit meta-textual attention to the fact that these have become collective Palestinian diasporic fragments. He inscribes and hails them, as if to say "*these* are *our* fragments," and simultaneously calls for their continued inscription in future poems to be written. In these senses, Bseisu's poem illustrates a second figure of diasporic cultural production, the "*swollen-ness"* or the proliferation and clustering around these particular fragments, which are returned to again and again in poems and many other forms of Palestinian cultural expression.

As intimated by Bseisu, trees have emerged as salient fragments that have become swollen and saturated repositories through which Palestinian collective experience has been represented – not uniformly of course, but with a considerable range of valences (Bardenstein). Trees have figured in many a Palestinian poem as metonymic fragments of an idealized version of homeland before displacement – conjuring up the sight, smell and other memories of lemon trees, fig trees and orange trees – often nostalgically longed for from sites of dispersion. Orange trees have figured centrally in paintings and posters as well, in creating a rural, pastoral Palestinian idyll. Sliman Mansour's painting entitled "Palastina" shows a young woman in traditional Palestinian peasant garb holding an armful of oranges, with a backdrop of a series of miniature orange harvest scenes. Numerous other Palestinian paintings portray orange harvest scenes, images devoid of any indication of trouble in paradise, or of Palestinian displacement from these pastoral scenes. Oranges and oranges trees have also gained the more particular association with the trauma of the *nakba* or catastrophe of dispersion from Palestine in 1948, an association that is passed

on – again, in both narrative and visual forms of Palestinian cultural expression – to generations who did not directly experience the *nakba* in their own lifetime. Ghassan Kanafani's classic short story, *Land of Sad Oranges* (1958), played a central role in the elaboration of the orange fragment in this particular direction.

In this story, the trauma of a family pushed into exile in Lebanon in 1948 is pointedly fixated on the orange fragment. While en route into exile, the child narrator sees the women burst into tears at the sight of a vendor's oranges, and sees his uncle weep "like a despairing child" as he holds and gazes at one of the oranges. The adults' association of oranges with the trauma of forced separation from the family's orange orchards back in Jaffa, (and of course, by extension, of Palestinians from Palestine) is passed on to the child, on to the next generation. While watching the men hand over their guns as truckloads of refugees cross over into Lebanon, he relates:

I too burst into a storm of weeping. Your mother was still looking silently at the orange. And all the orange trees which your father had abandoned to the Jews shone in his eyes, all the well-tended orange trees which he had bought one by one were printed on his face and reflected in the tears which he could not control in front of the officer.

At the end of the story, the boy's uncle has tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide in the refugee camp. Recalling that a peasant back home had told him that the orange trees would shrivel up and die if left to the care of strangers, the boy's eyes fall on the revolver on the table at his uncle's bedside, and next to it, an orange which has become "dried up and shriveled."

The cumulative effect of these and many other elaborations of the orange fragment has rendered the mere mention of "oranges" in conjunction with words like "sad," or "bitter" sufficient to immediately evoke associations with Palestine and the trauma of Palestinian dispersion in a wide range of literary and artistic contexts. Bethlehem-based artist Adnan Zbeidi paints a bitter portrayal of the "true" or authentic Palestinian orange, having been transformed into the Israeli Jaffa orange, having the juice or life squeezed out of it and poured into a six-pointed Star-of-David shaped vessel, in the process of the Jewish building of Tel Aviv, and, by extension, all of Israel (1987). This same painting has been re-used more recently as the cover of a book about Palestinian refugees called "Refugees and the Dream of Return to the Land of Sad Oranges," drawing here on what was, by this time (1995) a crowded and swelling repository of associations with the orange fragment.

Each diasporic lexicon is characterized by its own unique and particular array of such fragments – oranges and orange trees are just one of many such Palestinian diasporic fragments. These fragments acquire emblematic status in the process of their being repeatedly mobilized and circulated, resulting in the clustering or swollenness I have identified here as characteristic of diasporic cultural expression.

Diasporic anachronism

The third figure I identify is what could be called "diasporic anachronism" or the particularly inflected sensibilities of diasporic time. To turn for a moment to the paradigm or lexicon of the Jewish diaspora: an oft-repeated formulation about "the Jews in history" or "the Jews in time" – perhaps most pointedly, though not exclusively within Zionist discourse preceding the "post-Zionist" wave – has been the notion that, with dispersion from a geographical and spiritual homeland, the Jews "fell out of history," or out of "their own time." (The concomitant assumption in Zionist discourse is that Jewish "return" to this homeland in the form of modern political Zionism re-placed the Jews in time, allowed them to "re-enter" history as a collective entity). While this type of idealizing conception of being "in" or "out" of time and history (whether on geographical or other bases) is of course problematic, it points to the *perception* that a certain way of experiencing time is dependent on place, or emplacement, and that geographical dispersion and the condition of diaspora ruptures or constitutes a disjunction in the collective time-line. This perception, in turn, becomes a salient feature in shaping diasporic cultural expression.

One of the simplest forms of this type of diasporic anachronism or slippage is the phenomenon of a particular collective entity coming to be identified or "named" as such only in and through the process of being dispersed. One can find analogues to this in the revealing traces that names can be, such as when individuals and families get tagged with the name of a place only once they have left it – since where they came from, but are no more, comes to mark them as distinct, in their new, and then not-so-new, surroundings. The family name "al-Masri" means "the Egyptian" in Arabic; the fact that it is the name of a prominent Palestinian family based in Nablus is presumably a trace from the time this family's forebears *left* Egypt in some marked fashion, and settled in Palestine. We find a similar phenomenon in people such as writer André Aciman, or cookbook author Claudia Roden coming to be identified as "Egyptian Jewish émigrés." While in Egypt, they belonged to milieus which actively and energetically *dis*-affiliated with anything identified as Egyptian or Arab – linguistically, culturally, and otherwise – and might identify and refer to themselves as Europeans (e.g. Italian by citizenship, French by linguistic/cultural affiliation), or as Sephardic Jews, but not as Egyptians. It was only in and through the process of their displacement from Egypt into exile that they have come to be identified and to varying degrees to identify themselves as "Egyptian," (and then, from diasporic outposts, to articulate ambivalent nostalgia for Egypt and things Egyptian, including food).

Many of those dispersed from Palestine between 1947–1949 did not self-identify most conspicuously and explicitly as "Palestinians" *per se* or as part of a specifically "Palestinian collective" until the experience of their dispersion from Palestine, and in its wake. While still in Palestine, other less generalized, more particular or regional identificatory categories were foregrounded to a greater extent: clan, class, specific

village or town, etc. There is an anachronistic quality to this particular form of "becoming" through or in the process of dispersion.

Characteristic of this diasporic anachronism within the Palestinian lexicon is the sustaining of a version of the homeland that is not only partial and selective as described above, but one that may be frozen in time, and then reproduced in a wide range of literary and visual forms of cultural expression. This can tend to develop even when people actively seek and consume "new" information about or from the homeland from their present diasporic outposts – avidly keeping up with its news by means of public and private channels, maintaining contacts with people "back home," and the like. There are also *anachronistic objects* strewn along the diasporic timeline. Examples of "classic" Palestinian anachronistic objects are, of course, the "key to the house" back in Palestine, and the land ownership deed, objects which have been carefully kept by people for over fifty years, long after the house itself has often been destroyed, along with the rest of the village, or is inhabited by others, all within the rubric of the homeland having become the national homeland of another people. The keys and deeds are relics of sorts, tangible links to a version of house, village and homeland frozen in the time before dispersion.

Narratives of return (imagined or enacted) – so ubiquitous in Palestinian diasporic cultural production – often portray precisely the juxtaposition or violent encounter between the diasporic anachronistic time in which the diasporic subject has been living, and the time of the homeland in the "present." Ghassan Kanafani's novella *Return to Haifa* is a classic in this regard, portraying the return visit of a Palestinian couple – refugees in the West Bank – in 1967 to the home they left behind in Haifa in 1948. Much of what we hear in this work is the protagonist, in painstaking detail, narrating his "out of time" version of every aspect of this place upon his return visit. Every curve, rise on the road, street name, building, inhabitant – the world he has carried within him all these years – is brought into clashing juxtaposition and overlap with the place in the present, from Hebrew street names, to the city's different inhabitants, and finally to his own house, where he comes face to face with its current Jewish inhabitants, and with his own son Khaldun left behind in the chaos of '48, who is now a gun-toting Israeli soldier named Dov (Kanafani, *A'id ila Haifa*, 1969).

There are many variants of diasporic anachronism: in this last instance a disjuncture between past and present time of the homeland figures centrally. In others, this disjuncture intersects in still more complex ways with the present time of life in the host-land. What characterizes what I am calling diasporic time, or anachronism, is, then, not *actually* being "out of time" or "in time" or history, but rather the perception and sensibility of living in and being shaped by multiple time frames simultaneously.

Narrative conformity

The fourth figure of diasporic cultural production I identify is that of *narrative conformity*, or the pressure for diasporic narratives to fall into relatively predictable patterns, meeting with different degrees of non-recognition, resistance, or questioning of their legitimacy if they stray or deviate from these anticipated patterns. Part of what this means, in the Palestinian as in many other diasporic contexts, is that readers, listeners, and viewers often seem to expect, or be invested in hearing, "exemplary" accounts or versions of the experience of dispersion. These may be characterized by accounts of life as idyllic before dispersion, for example, before 1948 in the Palestinian case and of the experience of displacement as one of acute trauma and unrelenting misery; the sensibility of feeling profoundly out of place outside of the homeland; or the articulation of the desire to return. They may also be characterized by the *absence of narration* about other aspects of life experience, personhood or subjectivity that might seem to slow down, complicate, or "digress from" the delivery of a patterned expected narrative to which people can nod in easy recognition, and fold smoothly into a larger collective diasporic narrative. Rather than illustrate with the many narratives that *do* conform easily to these patterns, I will instead point out some that do not. Precisely because of their being less easily consumed in the usual ways, they actually call attention to the considerable degree of narrative conformity expected from diasporic subjects. The point here is that expectations are high, on the part of co-diasporists and others who may be interested in their experience, for diasporic subjects to "stay in role" and narrate a story that is readily assimilable to the collective narrative, or to stick to particular story-lines that can be empathized with, and that do not impede what is often an investment in the trauma of the diasporic subject.

Some of the kinds of impeding kernels that arise in the Palestinian context include, for example, accounts of life in Palestine before '48 as not idyllic, as internally conflicted or problematic along class or other lines; that is, narratives that portray "trouble in paradise" before the fall, in a way that is not wholly or exclusively attributable to the "outside" threat of Zionism. Or, for example, narratives of displacement by those in positions of considerable economic privilege, which enabled them in some instances to leave Palestine some time, even some years *before* the collective catastrophe of '48, with little disruption to the family fortune or comfortable standard of living. While of course these narratives of privileged loss are legitimate parts of the larger story, they have often been juxtaposed as not measuring "up" to the legitimized narratives of dispersion in the more classic form of those who were forced into exile in 1948 and dispersed into refugee camps, losing everything.

Another kind of "impediment" to the easy consumption of the diasporic narrative can come in the form of challenges to sacrosanct fragments, which takes us back

briefly to oranges and orange trees. In e-mail memoirs about Jaffa dispatched in a series of installments in the late 1990s, an anthropologist from Bir Zeit University tells of visits to her father's home-town of Jaffa, expressing anger at the present-day Israeli incarnation of Jaffa, but also expressing her resentment of "the oppressive reverence with which children of Jaffa-ites are supposed to react to the place." Recalling a visit to her uncle in Germany, she writes:

My mother (not from Jaffa) is in a temper with my father – later I learn the reason. In a discussion of what the family lost in Jaffa, my mother decries the loss of all those orange groves. My father's innocent brother unknowingly sets the record straight. "We didn't have any groves, grandfather was only an orange merchant, not a grower." For twenty years of marriage, my mother, fed on the past glories of Jaffa, had been told of the family's great estate and its loss. Somehow my father never had the courage to tell her the truth.

Exposing this in the public eye, over the internet, caused a family crisis; the author's father stopped speaking to her for some time, and she received a great deal of criticism from other quarters for having done so. She still stands by the story, but no longer allows her name or the family name to be mentioned in connection with it.

Raja Shehadeh's recent memoir, called *Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine*, contains a number of features that resist the presentation and smooth consumption of a conformist diasporic narrative in still other ways. While he does tell of his family's 1948 displacement from Jaffa in poignantly rendered terms, he also gives detailed accounts of his own complex personhood: his history of eating disorders and other illnesses; his tortured relationship with his father; his engagement with yoga, and more. While some have found this a refreshing and nuanced narrative that enriches the collective one, others have found these elaborations on aspects of his personhood or subjectivity that fall outside of the narrowly diasporic, to be "digressions," out of place, detracting from the anticipated narrative. Like the controversy surrounding the still unpublished diaries of Khalil Sakakini, and around questions of his sexual orientation – the question aimed at Shehadeh's narrative has sometimes seemed to be: why do we need to hear or know about *these* kinds of things from *you?* There is considerable expectation and desire for the diasporic subject to stick to relatively narrow diasporic story lines, and not to stray far from particular narrative patterns.[2]

Celebration of diasporism, as in work by Homi Bhabha, the Boyarin brothers and others, as a hybridity transcending the confines of more homogenous and territorial-nationalist based conceptions of collective identity, has met with criticism as well, as it has been accused of ostensibly undermining or detracting from the poignant and traumatic urgency of legitimized diasporic narratives. The pressures for narrative conformity sketched here do not strictly dictate, but certainly do affect, the shape and dissemination of Palestinian diasporic cultural expression.

Diasporic blurring

Because they tend to operate in conjunction with each other, I cluster the last three figures of diasporic cultural production together as different manifestations of the broader phenomenon of diasporic *blurring*. The first of these is *decomplexifying the relationship of the diasporic subject to the homeland.* Ted Swedenberg has called attention to the emergence of the "peasant as signifier" in the Palestinian context. In a large number of visual and literary representations, the peasant figures and is widely disseminated as a kind of generalized "authentic Palestinian everyman," in a Palestine that is generalized as rural and pastoral. This is the case even though Palestinian society was sharply stratified and differentiated along class lines at the time of dispersion circa 1948, and even though the creators of many of these representations have been from elite, non-peasant, and urban backgrounds. In looking at the cookbook-memoirs of Middle Eastern exiles, one also finds a parallel retroactive simplification of the relationship to the former homeland. What might at first appear to be the straightforward nostalgic recollection of food of the homeland from positions of exile, is sometimes far more complex upon closer examination; the complexity gets blurred in retrospect. Turning briefly to a different diasporic context, Claudia Roden and Colette Rossant, Egyptian Jewish émigrés and cookbook-authors, had complex and highly ambivalent relationships with "things Egyptian" while in Egypt – to varying degrees disaffiliating with anything smacking of Egyptian-ness, as alluded to above. They belonged to a class and milieu that did not generally actually enter the kitchen and engage in cooking, but rather had servants who did this for them, with the result that Rossant, for example, actually got the recipes for her cookbook-memoir *Memories of a Lost Egypt* from shop-owners on Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, cooking them for the first time while living in the US. These ambivalent or complex affiliations with the homeland are retroactively blurred into more simplified forms.

Selective displacement, or "not-seeing" of immediate present surroundings in favor of former surroundings is another figure common in diasporic cultural production, and one that is also enabled by a process of blurring. The Palestinian variations of this are many. A very literal one is evident on return visits to the sites of destroyed villages by former Palestinian inhabitants who are now refugees in other locations. In spite of the fact that, in some of these instances, pine and other trees and forests have been planted by the Jewish National Fund on the site of the destroyed village, and are the most immediately visible and conspicuous vegetation, the villagers move around the site as if not seeing these forests at all. They seem to literally see only the vegetation that was part of the village's landscape when they lived there upwards of fifty years ago; specific trees, rows of prickly-pear cactus, etc. It is this earlier layer of vegetation that they use as the primary means by which they reconstruct a mental map of the village, since virtually all homes and structures have been destroyed. To

someone without that earlier map, it is quite striking to witness the "*not-seeing*" of trees that currently dominate the landscape, and the selective seeing of trees that are far less readily visible or conspicuous.

Raja Shehadeh's portrayal of his grandmother Julia in *Strangers in the House* provides another illustration of this selective displacement or "not-seeing." Although she has been removed from the lap of aristocratic luxury in Jaffa to what she calls the desolate backwater of Ramallah, from Shehadeh's detailed descriptions of her, it is as if she had never left Jaffa. She struggles tenaciously to maintain her aristocratic mode of life as it was in Jaffa, down to the minutest detail of her daily routine of teas and visitations, in the face of its objectively having been stripped away. Everything seems to be narrated and experienced as if she were still in Jaffa, with Ramallah pushed out of view. Her displacement of her present surroundings in favor of Jaffa is passed on to the next generation, to Raja himself, who gives a nuanced portrayal – in uniquely Palestinian-inflected terms – of the kind of second-hand subjectivity Marianne Hirsch describes in her concept of post-memory, as the "experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events" that cannot be accessed or apprehended directly (Hirsch 23). Shehadeh tells how he grew up feeling that his and his family's real life was in Jaffa, how he was constantly reminded of their "cataclysmic fall from grace," of the details of life in Jaffa – its streets, smells, breezes, sea, opulence, worldliness, people – of its being the place where he and his family truly belonged. Even the description of the symptoms of his grandmother's hypertension are described by her in terms of Jaffa, the sensation of throbbing pain being likened to the rhythmic movement of the waves along Jaffa's coast. He describes his grandmother's eyes as always fixed on the string of lights along the shore in Jaffa, visible from Ramallah on the horizon, and how he, too, "learned to avoid seeing what was here and to fix (his) sight on the distant horizon" (4), a succinct illustration of this type of diasporic "blurring."

The *composite figure* is the last in this cluster of three under the rubric of blurring. By composite, I mean the kind of figure that is formed by means of efforts – in diasporic outposts – to cobble or piece together cultural elements or "bits" that previously belonged to separate, distinct cultural artifacts or practices. To illustrate with an anecdote: some years ago, in the mid-1990s, I attended a fundraising banquet of the Palestine Aid Society in the Detroit area in Michigan – a gathering attended mostly by Palestinians and Palestinian-Americans residing in Southeastern Michigan. Part of the evening's entertainment was the staging of a "traditional Palestinian wedding" – with traditional dress, songs, chants, and dances. The problem was, of course, that there *is* no such thing as a "traditional Palestinian wedding" in such generic terms. Each different region, sometimes town or village, had different traditional wedding dresses with different particular or distinctive needlepoint patterns, and distinctive

songs and chants for various parts of the wedding festivities. At this fund-raising banquet, the wedding was a composite construction, piecing together bits and parts from distinctive traditions: the wedding dress was from Nablus, the guest-welcoming chant was from Hebron, and so on. At this particular gathering the result was a "traditional wedding" that didn't seem to represent anyone's tradition as they might recognize or recall it. This led to a considerable amount of grumbling in the audience, and people even began calling out aloud, making remarks to the effect that a particular bit was "only" the Nablus tradition, for example, and not whatever their own was.

Such composite figures are often attempts to represent the shifting or shifted contours of the collective. "Back home" before dispersion, a wedding could be held in Nablus, or a specific locale, with its regionally coherent set of distinctive traditions. In diasporic outposts such as Southeastern Michigan, however, the new "collective" – one that was naturally in flux – brought together a jostling of different regional traditions under the general rubric of "Palestinian." To stick to one regional tradition would have more explicitly excluded others. To create a composite could meet with some resistance, as it did on this particular evening. But as particular cultural distinctions tied to specific regions in Palestine become more blurred, relatively less known and thus less significant over time and generations, in diasporic locations (not always the given scenario), such composite figures can gain acceptance, and take hold as the neo-authentic cultural constructions of a collective with redefined contours. Still more complex composite figures are formed in the dense interface between diasporic subjects and the surrounding host culture, but elaborating on those is beyond the scope of my remarks here.

In conclusion, I would venture to say that what I have identified as entries from the Palestinian lexicon of diasporic cultural production have emerged or percolated up from the particular "stuff" of Palestinian cultural artifacts, narratives and other forms of expression. At the same time, without making any claims of a totalizing or universalizing nature about these specifically Palestinian entries of figures applying to all or any other contexts of cultural production, I would venture to say that the figures of diasporic cultural production sketched here are not entirely unique or exclusive to the Palestinian diasporic context, or even to diasporic contexts in general. They might be found in a wide range of realms of human perception and apprehension, in ways that may ultimately chip away at the notion of diasporic cultural production as wholly distinct and distinctive.

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Notes

1. Her focus is on West Africa and the Caribbean.

2. Since the time that this article went to press, the bulk, though still not all, of his diaries have been published."

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Comparing to Make Explicit

Diasporic Articulations of the Herero Communities in Namibia	Anette Hoffmann

ABSTRACT

Comparing to Make Explicit: Diasporic Articulations of the Herero Communities in Namibia

This essay revolves around the implications of understanding certain conditions of life in the post-colony as diasporic. Herero communities who have been deprived of their land and who had to flee during and after the colonial war of 1904-1907 articulate their experience of being diasporic in terms of the loss and the alienation from the land, but also by means of allusions to Judaism and Jewish history. In this essay, Hoffmann seeks to distinguish the tactical value of these comparisons from their importance for an articulation of the predicaments of the post-colony.

The colonial war between Ovaherero and colonial Germany took place between 1904-1907. An estimated 60% of the Herero population was killed or died of starvation in the Omaheke desert during the flight to Botswana (at that time British Betchuanaland). In the aftermath of the war, Ovaherero men, women and children were incarcerated in camps, where forced labor and starvation caused further decimation of the communities. After the First World War, Germany lost its colonies and Namibia became a colony of South Africa. In 1990, succeeding years of struggle, Namibia became independent.

"Diasporic articulation"

In the following article I want to explore the implications of understanding certain conditions of life in one's *own* country as "diasporic." Drawing upon different forms of Herero orature and interviews that I conducted, my considerations are intended to specify and elaborate James Clifford's argument that being diasporic and being

indigenous need not be an oxymoron. It might not even be an opposition: if movement, the freedom to travel, is crucial to the notion of belonging to a certain area, then the restriction to particular, virtually fenced homelands under the apartheid regime can be thought of as a loss of home. Being located in so-called former homelands in the present, surrounded by vast areas of white-owned farms, means an immense restriction to practices of life that are defined by travel and movement. According to James Clifford, such conditions of life make it plausible for "dispersed tribal peoples," who have been dispossessed of their lands, to claim "diasporic identities": "Inasmuch as their distinctive sense of themselves is oriented towards a lost or alienated home defined as aboriginal (and thus 'outside' the surrounding nation-state), we can speak of a diasporic dimension of contemporary tribal life" (Clifford 309).

I will argue that using the notion of "diaspora" in this sense can be seen as a specific mode of "articulation" in an ongoing process of negotiating Herero identity. Stuart Hall has defined "articulation" as a (political) expression of identity through a specific "linkage" that is not "necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time," but "a form of connection that *can* make a unity of different elements, under certain conditions" (Grossberg 141). "Articulation" thus refers to a simultaneously expressive and constitutive connection of ideological elements and political subjects that creates social coalitions, identities and their agendas. Following these notions, I understand "diasporic articulation" as an important element of Herero collective identity after the experience of dislocation. As such, it contributes to a postcolonial re-appropriation of cultural identity that seeks to anchor, re-define and locate identity in the process of de-colonization. Because this process is not yet finished, the reclaiming of identity is part of an ongoing struggle for history, truth and the land.

Life-as-travel

The Herero, now living in the nation states of Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, do not claim indigenousness in the sense of firstness in the region. There is an official reading of Namibian history that clearly puts the "San" of Namibia in the position of the "first people." The Otjiherero name for the group of so-called San people is "Ovakuhura," which, loosely translated means "first people" or "people who have always been here." Herero discourses of today narrate their genesis as a story of traveling, dwelling in different places, war, interdependencies and tensions with other groups. Modern myths of origin say that the community came to central Namibia from another area (the locations vary in different stories) searching for new regions to graze their cattle. In all cases the story of origin begins with travel. This is not to say that Ovaherero are or consider themselves to be nomadic. As pastoralists, they remained at places for longer periods, holding cattle posts in other regions according to the local rainfall pattern in Namibia. Their life was thus more semi-nomadic or, one might say, semi-sedentary. This is suggested by a central trope in Herero orature: the notion

of life-as-travel, moving with the cattle and having the sovereignty to choose where one wishes to go or to stay. Traveling freely in the region is a central practice referred to in recent Herero social self-descriptions.

The diasporic articulation of the Herero nowadays is thus not predicated on a notion of home as a fixed place since "time immemorial".[1] "Ehi rOvaherero," literally translated meaning: "the land of the Ovaherero," is a concept that does not easily fit into conceptual frameworks that consider indigenousness and diaspora as two opposed terms. Nation states as well as land possession (in the Western sense) did not exist in large parts of Africa before colonialism. Ovaherero were "dwelling-in-travelling" in the area that later became a German colony, then a South African colony, and then the independent state of Namibia. *Ehi rOvaherero* is thus an area defined by social practices and (pastoral) land use. Both created a pattern of social meaning that is intrinsically connected to praise poetry, a form of orature that not only reflects but actually produces these connections. Local social networks and patterns of travel that can be traced in Herero songs created a rootedness in the area that is conceptually beyond and geographically partially outside of the nation state. Hereroland thus was and is seen as a whole region in the area, a social space with a pattern of "places of meaning" such as graves, waterholes, and places where historical events are located. The sense of place therefore does not so much refer to residence *in* a certain locale but to belonging *to* a certain area. *Ehi rOvaherero*, inscribed with meaning through social acts, poetry and memory, is itself a mnemonic for past generations, personal histories and cultural identity. These memories are inscribed on the land, as the following quote from the life history of Mbaha, a very prominent figure (*omuhona*) within the Herero community, indicates:

Mbaha is buried at the place Otjikune. He is still there now. The Herero say "Truly, truly by the men's river" when they praise the east of Okahandja. They praise the men's river, all of them and say: "It is, it is where Mbaha of Kapuku is, it is where Tjijorokisa of Muharua is …: they <u>are</u> the men's river." [2]

The passage shows that places are often synonymous with their inhabitants and are remembered together with them. The term *Ehi rOvaherero* thus refers to more than a region of physically used grazing land: seen as a whole, it is a region of socially defined places, textualized in praise poems; it is a social and political landscape of identification (Henrichsen 19).

During colonial times and thereafter, important places have been lost in the sense of physical expropriation, but also in the sense of expropriation by colonial inscription: named in a different way or invested with different meanings that compete with those that the Herero attribute to them. As yet another form of the expropriation of places, cultural practices of moving, traveling and inscribing places with social meaning were restricted under the circumstances of colonial rule and, today, due to foreign ownership of certain regions. Hence, a double loss affected Herero communities

after the war: the loss of certain meaningful places and the loss of a spatial practice of movement that was constitutive of their practices of life.

This double loss shines through in many casual self-expressions I encountered in my research. When, in one of my first interviews, I asked an elderly woman in Ovitoto, a former reserve, about their conditions of life, she complained about the drought: "Since the Germans came, there is less rain," she said. What she seemed to be saying was, that since the Germans came, people cannot move freely anymore, they cannot follow the rain. "Since the Germans came" refers to the colonial war that changed the life of the Herero community completely. Thus, the rupture in the history and narrative of the Herero is clearly the war with the Germans in 1904-1906, the killing of some 60 000 people, incarceration into camps, and the flight to Botswana of those who managed to escape. Another elderly woman answered my questions about life in Ovitoto simply by saying: "It's a nice place, my parents are buried here."

Both utterances give accounts of the conditions of life in the former reserve. While in the first quote the reserve appears to be where one was formerly "fenced in" by the land politics of the colony, the latter refers to being anchored to the former reserves by means of social meaning. The utterances of the two women suggest that the former reserves (which are still the area where the rural population of the Herero lives today) were a place were one felt both at home *and* circum-fenced, which means detached from other places that belong to the area of "home." The former reserves were where one wanted to stay *and* to leave.

Herero constructions of home and belonging were not and still are not grounded on being sedentary. Travel was and is part of the practice of social life, of being rooted in an area. However, I suggest that taking the possibility of a diasporic condition for non-sedentary societies into consideration makes it necessary to change the question of what it means to live under diasporic conditions.

Omuserekarere and Jewish Diaspora

Recent Herero self-representations do not explicitly speak of diaspora. There are, however, frequent references to Judaism and Jewish history in the official discourse of elder men and leaders of the community. These modern self-representations, which compare the fate of the Herero to that of the Jews, claim a diasporic identity by means of narrating a history of genocide, expropriation and suffering, but also of resistance and the capability of re-establishing identity after the war.

The modern articulation of Herero identity is a narration of a "thereafter." Continuously re-narrating the myths of Herero heroes and their experience, which is always strongly linked to places or routes of traveling, means telling the story of a loss. Creating a public history that re-enunciates these stories, is part of a passionate research in the sense of Fanon: seeking to re-establish a located identity that is linked to the past and tries to make Hereroness intelligible in a way that clearly differs from colonial

discourses.[3] As Stuart Hall argues, the crucial point in articulation is the search for identity, the reconstruction of identity as a *bricolage* after the rupture (Hall 51). Such a search does not aim to find a true self that has been lost, nor can it mean the free invention of something new. Instead, telling the stories from before and after the war performs a statement about what Herero identity can mean today.

A vital factor in the production of cultural identity through diasporic articulation is nostalgia: speaking about something that was, of the circumstances of life before the rupture, is to constitute cultural identity after the fact. If only in this case, I suggest to understand nostalgia as a productive sadness. The nostalgic discourse performed in praise songs for people and places, creates a collective feeling of anger and grief about the loss and also a feeling of pride that re-unifies Herero people in the present moment of remembering the past. Mieke Bal describes nostalgia as having a strategic value: "No mood, no sentiment is more apt to rally a larger cultural community around a shared cause" (73). Thus, nostalgic thinking and remembering is a prolific endeavor, attempting to transform the traumatic experiences of loss and displacement into a performance that produces postcolonial identity and has the power to create utopias. This production occurs by means of the diasporic articulation through the comparison with the Jewish diasporic condition.

A profound example that associates Jewish with Herero mythic history was given to me by Naftali Windisch, one of the elders of the Herero communities who support the court case that was held in 2001 against German companies who benefited from the colonial war. He told us the story after an interview (about completely different contents):

The ancestor's sticks were given to Moses when he brought his people out of Egypt. Moses got the Old Testament too. When Moses went to heaven – he did not die, he just went – he left the sticks near the sea. The Germans came there and they took the Bible. The Ovaherero took the sticks. When the Germans later saw that the sticks brought luck to the Herero, they came here to search for them. They came to Okahandja to search for them. But the bible is for the Germans and the okuruuo is for the Ovaherero. The Ovaherero kept the sticks, because they are their luck. Then the missionaries came; that was when the Germans took Samuel Maherero to Germany and gave him clothes.

The story gives an explanation for the outbreak of the war with the Germans that differs fundamentally from official versions (from both sides).[4] Since Naftali Windisch is informed about the present demand for reparations it can be assumed that he is well aware of the official reading of history concerning the war. Yet, he deploys what I understand as a kind of *omuserekarere*, a story to make people think.

The term *omuserekarere* refers to a particular genre in Herero orature, the so-called "truth stories." These semi-fantastic stories encapsulate real events in metaphoric narrations, like in an envelope, to be opened by the listener. *Omuserekarere* are part of a body of "opaque" genres that play with the art of "secreting" meaning in words

(Barber 40). The recipients – in this case Renathe, Rudolph Windisch's granddaughter, and I – are invited to decipher the relation between the spoken words and what Barber calls the "vast hinterland of memory, experience and cultural knowledge to which the story gestures" (40).

The ancestor's sticks in the story are the representatives of the ancestors at the Holy Fire (*okuruuo*). As such they have a crucial position and meaning in the religious practice of the Herero. They are material objects deployed within a mnemonic practice, where they are considered to be manifestations of ancestors and the past. Transferred from one generation to the next, they constitute genealogical continuity and the endurance of traditional values. Representing the ancestors, these sticks mediate between the living people and God, who cannot be spoken to directly. Saying that Moses was the one who gave the sticks to the Ovaherero places him within the sphere of the ancestors and implies that the Herero inherited his lineage. If only metaphorically, this would mean that the Herero are closely related to the Jews. Conversely, not giving the sticks to the Germans can be read as rejecting any relation to them, both in a cultural way and concerning the relation of origins.

In the cultural context of the Ovaherero, both the sticks and the Bible are materialized elements of the cultural archive. Moses appears to be often present in Herero orature, especially in the context of leading his people through the desert. In another narration it is said that he received the correct words from God, but that the Germans brought a bible to the Herero in which the words were written falsely:

… and yet it is they (the Germans) who wrote that. So the Holy Fire and the word of God belong to God. The Holy Fire, which was burning from the bush and spoke to Moses. And the word is the one God gave to Moses concerning to the Ten Commandments to be given to the children of Israel. Now that all these things no longer exist, people fall sick and are unhappy, they don't get enough rain and sins are plentiful. But God made the Herero with their own religion. A man could speak to God. (…) Today, because the Herero have been deprived from their land, things have changed. The whole Herero nation is in despair. (Heywood et al. 146-47)

Significantly, the reference is to Okahandja, one of the prominent *lieux de memoire* in Herero cultural memory, where the Germans come to search for the sticks in this story. In many stories and songs, Okahandja is remembered as the place where the war with the Germans started. "We will always think of the war, when we think of Okahandja," I was told during an interview in 1999.[5] Thus, although the war is not brought up explicitly in this story, it is never entirely absent when Okahandja is mentioned.

As the story continues, the Herero keep their sticks and the Holy Fire and, with them, the ability to produce and retain their cultural identity. In the following sentence of the quoted passage, a group of predominantly German missionaries and Samuel Maherero are mentioned. Chief Samuel Maherero's position within Herero history is quite controversial. On the one hand he was a chief (*omuhona*) and a hero of the war.

On the other hand, he achieved his position as a paramount chief through alliances with the missionaries and the German colonists, a co-operation that pressured him to sell off the land that he, according to the Herero understanding of the situation, actually did not own. Mentioning him in the context of a story that underscores the values of maintaining a specific tradition may be understood as a hesitant critique of his ambiguous position. Thus, although Samuel Maherero is not directly depicted as a political leader who was corrupted through his alliance with the Germans, his function in the story might be to indicate the perils of compliance.

References to the Jewish diaspora are also recurrent in modern forms of orature, for example in a 2000 radio broadcast by Alexander Kaputu, a well-known local historian. Kaputu regularly works for the Herero service of the NBC and is a prominent figure within the Herero community. Very aware of his position, he often offers alternative versions of history that compete with colonial as well as with academic historical writings, and thus challenge the epistemological pre-eminence of written history. In the broadcast I refer to, Kaputu explicitly compares the Jewish diaspora to the current situation of the Herero in Namibia:

There are people with Jewish believes, they stay in Israel and in other countries. They have rules and beliefs which are as ours, but theirs are written down. This is not to say that they don't like others, but they stay together with their communities and behave according to the message of their forefathers. (Recorded in January 2001, translated by Renathe Tjikundi)

Stating that the Jewish diaspora communities kept their values and therefore survived as a community, he further warns his Herero listeners that the loss of traditional values will lead to the complete disintegration and decline of their own community. What sounds like an essentialist plea for non-assimilation in this brief account was actually moderated by Kaputu's advice to respect the values of other communities. However, he clearly discards what Kobena Mercer has called the "multicultural normalisation" (Mercer 234) as a complete relinquishment of the collective values of the Herero community in favor of the nation state. Instead, he promotes the maintenance of a distinguishable specificity via a broadcasted form of orature, making his opinion intelligible to a wider public through the comparison with the survival strategies of the Jewish community.

"We are equal to the Jews who were destroyed"

These texts provide just a few examples of the numerous references to Jewish diaspora I found, as a matter of fact, there seems to be a whole body of Herero orature that refers both to Jewish history and to biblical texts so as to compare Jewish experience with the experiences of the Herero. Obviously, there are very different reasons and motivations for such references and comparisons. But what makes them possible and plausible in the first place? A first answer is to be found in the fact that both

Jews and Herero suffered extreme violence and genocide at the hands of the Germans. Secondly, the experience of being driven into the Omaheke desert after the fight at the Waterberg (1904) and the subsequent flight to Botswana, still remembered in Herero songs today (Alnaes 272), evokes comparisons with the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. Significantly, in some Herero sages there is a "prophet" who teaches the desperate survivors that they should "stick to the Holy Fire together with the word of God" and warns that "the person who brought you the word of God did not mean to teach you the ways of God, but his aim was to confiscate your land" (Heywood et al. 146-47).

Recently, the similarities between Jewish and Herero history have been deployed as a tactical means in the quest for recognition as victims of the genocidal war under German colonial rule. This political agenda is clearly present in a statement which Paramount Chief Riruako, known for his tactical utterances, gave to a journalist: "We are equal to the Jews who were destroyed. The Germans paid for the spilled Jewish blood. We say: compensate us, too. It is time to heal the wound." [6]

With other references, as with most orature, however, it is more difficult to date their time of origin and understand their cultural and political implications. Some statements, though narrated recently, might originate from the time of the direct aftermath of the war when a wave of conversions to Christianity took place. This happened directly after the experience of displacement and loss for those who survived the genocidal war. The stories of the Old Testament that were so close and understandable to the Herero in the direct aftermath of their own experience of exodus might have been interwoven with memories of the war by Herero storytellers, so as to make sense of them and make them intelligible for the Herero who sought refuge at the missions. The "burning bush" that speaks to Moses and is at the same time the Holy Fire of the Herero might be an example of the amalgamation of the written text of the Bible with Herero orature. One important characteristic of Herero praise poems is the mixture of allusions: narrative elements can be taken from other genres or stories when they are felt to be powerful and match with the aim of the praise. These features are used to give a stronger meaning to the utterances of praise and description. Although the origins of some of the references to Jewish history are unclear, the poems and stories are told and re-told and thus seem to make sense in the recent articulation of identity and the lament of the predicament of Herero culture today.

The comparisons of Herero and Jewish history are thus more than a mere tactic in the struggle for recognition, they represent a wider discourse that seeks to define and re-inscribe a collective self after a rupture. The emphasis on a "before" and "after" in Herero history locates modern Herero identity in the experience of displacement. If being diasporic means to share a history of displacement and dispossession, Herero discourses of who they are today are articulated in terms, albeit mostly obliquely,

of a diasporic condition. They distinguish Herero culture from that of the nation state of Namibia, without necessarily entailing separatist agitation. Hence, an adequate account of Herero self-articulation requires the acknowledgement of a diasporic condition that originated from colonial war and genocide and now provides an identificatory space under the constraints of the (post-)colony.

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Notes

1. Dag Henrichsen suggests that the formation of *ehi rOvaherero* as an ideal pastoral landscape came into being as a result of historical processes in the middle of the 19th century ("Herrschaft und Identifikation im vorkolonialen Namibia. Das Herero- und Damaraland im 19. Jahrhundert." Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hamburg, 1997).

2. Mbaha's life history is part of the body of Herero orature. It was re-told by Alexander Kaputu and published in Heywood et al. (95).

3. Frantz Fanon speaks of the "passionate research … directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid area whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others" (Fanon 170).

4. In different versions of Western academic historical writing as well as in the versions that the Herero recount during their festivities, the war broke out as a result of the conflicts over land and power relations in the German colony Deutsch-Südwestafrika in 1904.

5. The man I interviewed was in his nineties in 1999, his name is Petrus H., he lived in Otjongombe at that time. He asked me: "Do you Ovaduitsi not have places that remind you of wars?" "Yes," I said, "Verdun is such a place." But he had never heard of Verdun.

6. This statement was originally published in the *Dallas Morning News* and is now to be found on a webpage called "Forgotten Victims": <http://www. journalismfellowships.org/stories/namibia/pf_namibia_apology.htm>.

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Home or Away?

On the Connotations of Homeland Imaginaries in Imbros[1]	Elif Babul

ABSTRACT

Home or Away?: On the Connotations of Homeland Imaginaries in Imbros
This article deals with issues of belonging and citizenship in the Turkish republic. It focuses on the island of Imbros as a state of exception both to the national homogeneity and the republican form of belonging to a place through citizenship. Rather than using the concepts such as "migration," "homeland" and "return" intrinsic to diaspora studies as fixed and pre-given analytical categories, it sets out to explore the political implications of naming an immigrant condition as diaspora, and the sorts of imaginaries it renders possible as a discourse, in terms of "return" and "politics of the homeland."

The establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 marks the official construction of a new community and new forms of belonging that were expected to replace the communities and forms of belonging characteristic of the Ottoman Empire. The new political community was defined as an "exclusionist self-defined republican public space" that was meant to be based on the idea of the citizen as an all-inclusive "public persona," indifferent to the multiplicities of "self identity" whether in terms of gender, religion or ethnicity (regarded as remnants of the Ottoman past) (Birtek). The convention signed at the end of the First World War on January 30, 1923, concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations, can be seen as the hallmark of this republican attempt to create a new homogenized republican community called the nation (Hirschon " 'Unmixing' Peoples in the Aegean Region," and Birtek). In that sense, exchanging populations meant the mutual exclusion of the largest ethnic and religious minority groups from the post-World War I nationalized lands of Greece and Turkey. However, what were nationalized were not only the lands but also the people who had been subject

to the population exchange (Karakasidou). The exchange meant the repatriation of the Rums of *Mikrasia* and the Muslims of *Rumeli* respectively to Modern Greece, and the Turkish Republic, and re-definition of their identities as Greek or Turkish, in terms of the emerging national configurations.[2]

This article is about a place that signifies an exception to this nationalist project of repatriation. Its focus is the issue of belonging in Imbros, an Aegean island under Turkish rule with a native Rum population, which is one of the few places that was excluded from the population exchange by the Treaty of Lausanne signed after the Convention in July 23, 1923.[3] Belonging in/to Imbros displays a contested character for the project of nationalization, because it emerges as a state of exception both to the national homogeneity and the republican form of belonging to a place by means of citizenship.

The republican ideal of national homogeneity builds on the idea of "cultural Turkism" by Ziya Gökalp, who is one of the most influential social and political thinkers of republican Turkey (Parla). Cultural Turkism represents an idea of national unity based on a common language (Turkish) and a common culture (Turkish) as opposed to race, yet to which the Rum existence with its Greek language and local culture poses a threat of rupture. In that sense, the native Rums' sense of belonging to the island of Imbros that stems from an autochthonous relationship between the self and the place does not fit in with the concept of citizenship that defines the said relationship in terms of a sense of belonging to the national land through partaking of a homogeneous national community.

Today, the issue of belonging in/to Imbros appears as a matter of contestation between the Turkish state and the native Rums who left the island mainly because of the hostile state policies they faced, especially in the 60s and the 70s, during the peak of the Cyprus conflict between Turkey and Greece.[4] The 90s, on the other hand, signify the initial years of return for the Rums of Imbros in line with the pro-European, multiculturalist shifts in Turkish foreign policy. What I intend to do throughout this article is to show the strategic deployment of the discourse of citizenship on the part of the Turkish state in its present negotiations over belonging with the returning Rums of Imbros, and the way in which the Rums themselves try to make their claims visible and reconstruct their rights of belonging (thus their right to property) as legitimate through discourses that are available to them within the international arena. I argue that the discourse of diaspora currently emerges as a possibility for Rum claims to Imbros. However, these claims are not regarded as legitimate by the Turkish state, since they are based on pre-national forms of belonging by means of memory, spatiality and locality, in a word nativity, rather than citizenship.

The condition of the Anatolian origin Rums (*Mikrasiathes*) living in Greece displays a complicated appearance if thought within the terms of diaspora studies. Thinking about the *Mikrasiathes* in Greece in terms of "the condition of living altogether as

strangers in strange lands" (Safran) could be quite challenging for some of the key concepts in diaspora studies such as homeland, hostland, ethnicity and nation. In this article, the aim is to investigate the ways in which these interrelated concepts become an object of everyday practice in the context of Imbros. Thus, rather than using the concepts such as "migration," "homeland" and "return" intrinsic to diaspora studies as fixed and pre-given analytical categories, I will try to understand the political implications of naming an immigrant condition as diaspora, and the sorts of imaginaries it renders possible in terms of "return" and "politics of the homeland."[5] I will try to see how Imbrians use "diasporic articulations" such as memories of displacement, dispossession and suffering (Hoffmann) as part of their bid to claim land. In that sense, rather than trying to define the Imbrian case in terms of diaspora, I will try to understand what diaspora, as a discourse, can make possible.

Imbros: An Island on the Margins

Both the Greek and the Turkish stories about Imbros imply an imagination of the island as "marginal." The condition of "marginality" (hooks) prevails both in the geographical and the imaginary configurations of the island. Imbros, while actually representing the geographical border between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean, at the same time symbolizes a terrain, which both the Greek and the Turkish nation-state imaginaries fail (or at the same time desperately try, yet fail) to embrace. The meaning of Imbros for the Greek national imaginary, grasped through the significance for modern Greece of Asia Minor and Asia Minor refugees, is closely tied to the negotiation about the meaning of "Greekness." Asia Minor, which represents a challenge for the imaginary of being Greek, both as a national identity and a spatial configuration, remains at the margins of the Greek national imaginary (Papataxiarchis). The significance of the island for the Turkish nation-state imaginary, on the other hand, derives its meaning from the states' concerns related to its national security and sovereignty. The Turkish national imaginary that makes sense of Imbros in line with its problem of minorities and territorial sovereignty also renders the island "marginal."

The political significance of the island for Turkey makes sense if it is seen from the wider perspective of the problem of non-Muslim minorities who have been an international relations issue for the Turkish state and the Ottomans before them for the last two hundred years. Following the Ottoman heritage, the Turkish Republic has always feared that its territorial sovereignty is challenged through interventions by other states in the name of the protection of its non-Moslem minorities. Similarly, the Rum of Imbros, constituting the reason for the island's endowment with a semi-autonomous status by the Lausanne Treaty (which corresponds to a zone where the state would be unable to exercise its full rights of sovereignty and be constantly vulnerable to outside intervention), can be seen to represent a weakness for the newborn republic. In that sense, the Rum presence on the island (which is a piece of

national territory) signifies the threat of intrusion by "foreign elements" in its "national affairs" to the Turkish state.

State policy on Imbros has always carried an obvious intention of Turkifying the island. Resettlement, as a long favored governmental policy of the Turkish state, following Ottoman heritage, was one of the means of this project of Turkification (Tekeli). Starting from the year 1946, the island has become the site of a state-initiated periodical transfer of population from the Anatolian mainland. After 1964 came the expropriation of agricultural lands, and the construction of a military regiment base on the island. In 1966, a state-owned farm for agricultural production (TIGEM) was established, followed by the formation of an open agricultural prison on the southwest coast of the island. With a governmental decree released on July 29, 1970 *Imroz* was renamed *Gökçeada*, and Greek names of the districts and villages were replaced with Turkish ones.

Locality and neighborhoods where the homogenizing techniques of the nation are likely to be either weak or contested, represent a source of entropy and slippage for the project of the modern nation-state (Appadurai). The locality of Imbros can appear as a threat to the Turkish nation-state, both because it points to "difference" with reference to minorities, and because it stresses pre-national forms of belonging that can have the capacity to rupture the nation-state's national form of belonging codified in its laws of citizenship. Hence, Turkish nation-state policies related to the island appear as attempts at taming the place to eliminate the threat signified by the island's marginality, stemming from its locality. Turkification, in that sense, points to an attempt at pushing Imbros from the margins to the center. The irony here comes out when the policies of Turkification result in an even further appearance of Imbros as marginal.

On the other hand, for the Greek national imaginary, Imbros represents a process of "de-Hellenization" rather than that of "Turkification." Additionally, as told by the Imbrians living in diaspora, the de-Hellenization of Imbros is coupled with a story of a betrayal on the part of "mother Greece," mainly as an outcome of Greek reluctance to stand by Imbros at the international political level, at crucial moments of international negotiations. In a text entitled "Imbros the betrayed island…" that appears on a web page related to the Imbrian Diaspora, the feeling of the motherland's betrayal stands out quite strongly:[6]

Eight months after the Lausanne Treaty, the Greek government sent a telegraph to the local government of the island: "The Government is determined by any means to protect the inhabitants when they are suppressed or persecuted by the Turks and to see that the terms of the 14th article of the Treaty are carried out." Seventy-three years after this telegraph passed, and with all the events that followed, it has been proved that mother Greece not only has not honoured her signature and did not protect the people of the island, but also on the contrary, abandoned them to their tragic fate.

The feeling of betrayal also draws from the way the Greek government treated Imbrian refugees during the intense period of exodus from the island: the "blatant indifference" demonstrated by Greek authorities to the refugees' cause "both when they were persecuted from the homeland and when they were settled in Greece" and troubles they have faced related to issues such as obtaining Greek citizenship, "in order to force them to return to the island and prevent its de-Hellenization" (Tsimouris 3). Hence, it is possible to argue that the Greek state's perception of Imbrians who stayed in their native land appears radically different from its perception of those who migrated to Greece. The few elderly Imbrians who refused to move from the island are regarded as the last remnants of the Hellenic culture on the lost homeland (Tsimouris 10). Thus, while being *Prosphygas* represents an identity that is impure, "not Greek enough," thus something unfavorable within Greek society, the same cultural entity on the island is regarded as a sign of Greek presence in Imbros in line with *I kath'imas Anatoli* ("Our East" or "The East according to us").

This is why, within the Greek nation-state imaginary, Imbros points to the margins of the imagination of "Greekness" that forms the basis of Greek national identity. The Rum as a being or the Rum condition in general, signifies both an inclusion, and an exclusion depending on time and place. This in-betweenness outlines Imbros as a context in which the Greeks, and the Rums who are in an inevitable relation to this "Greekness," negotiate their own belonging over and over again (yet making them once more "suspect" in the eyes of the Turkish state.) The Rum condition also signifies a margin for the Greek Diaspora. The Greek Diaspora, which is one of the most cited cases throughout the discipline, leaves out the case of the Greek-speaking Christians of Asia-minor who had to leave their lands in the Turkish State's nation building process (Clogg). In doing so, it ignores the question of what happens when the homeland that a diaspora group remembers is not within the group's constructed nation state.

It should be noted that the Rums of Imbros are making a great effort to distinguish themselves from other Greek Diaspora people by putting stress on being from Imbros and not from Greece, claiming an identity based on a specific locality. The Imbrian Association, an NGO that is active both in Athens and in Salonica, is an institutional indication of that effort. The association, which was first established as an initiative to help those emigrated from the island, emerges as a means of maintaining Imbrian identity. Today, besides providing a gathering place for the members of the community and publishing a bulletin and distributing it to other diaspora locations in order to help keep people in touch, the association also tries to make the voice of the community heard both in the national and in the international arena. The Association also tries to coordinate its members' efforts to come back to the island and claim their family property. The emergence of "return" to the island as a possibility, is, of course, a very contemporary phenomenon.

How to Return: The National vs. the Autochthonous

The 90's have witnessed a remarkable shift in Turkish state policy related to Imbros. The status of the island as a military/security zone was abolished and it was recast as a site of tourist attraction. In 1993, special visa requirements for traveling to Imbros were abrogated. Offering certificate programs on tourism management and government-backed cheap credit for tourism-related enterprises followed that. This was the time when the native Rums found both the chance and the courage to come back to the island. The returnees were mostly second-generation Imbrians who were educated and had built a life for themselves in the places to which they had formerly fled. Since then, each year in increasing numbers, those second-generation Imbrians come back to Imbros to spend their summer holidays and to be in their native lands during their Greek-Orthodox religious festival dedicated to Virgin Mary (*Panayia*) that takes place in August.

The meaning of these former residents' occasional presence on the island, which is now regarded as habitual, emerges as a contested issue on the everyday level. Current residents of the island, who are mostly small-scale trades people or house pension owners, appear to be quite pleased about the presence of those rich tourists. Returning Rums are also aware of this situation, which is one of the reasons they now feel safe about coming back to Imbros. They are aware that being able to spend money enables them to show presence on Imbros, that they are welcomed as people with money who are also now "the regulars" but no longer "the owners" of the island.

On the other hand, things do not run equally smooth for them in the land registry office. The returning Imbrians, wanting to take the advantage of the existing air of liberty on the island, apply for the return of legal titles to their old family properties. Citizenship appears as the criterion of pursuing this claim. Turkish property law prohibits non-citizens to own property in rural places and villages. This rule emerges as an obstacle for the returning, especially male, Rums who have lost their Turkish citizenship due to their failure to complete their military service or who have just taken up the Greek (or other) citizenship.

The significant moment of presence on the island for the returning Rums appears as the celebration of the *Panayia*, which plays quite a central role in their return to the island. The Rum see themselves as being in their native land at the time of festival and see their obligation to keep the tradition going as their main reason for coming back. The local government, on the other hand, names the occasion as an anonymous "Orthodox Christian Religious Festival," which happens to take place at the same time as the municipality-organized annual *Gökçeada* film festival, for which "Rums from all over the world" come to "visit" the island and liven up the place.[7] This government attitude appears as an act of tolerance, as the sovereign's grant to tolerate the existence of other cultures on its land of sovereignty, which in turn helps to reconstruct the sovereign's authority in the said land.

However, from another point of view, it is possible to say that authorization works in two ways. The Turkish state, shifting its policy from a total denial to a conditional allowance of Rum existence in Imbros, although unintentionally, provides the Rums with a space of possibility to confront these state-set terms of presence on the island. Festival celebrations, to which the local governors are particularly invited, become sites for the performance of "hospitality," where both sides race with each other to act like the host and welcome the other to the island. While the local government's attribution of a guest status to the Rums constructs the government as multicultural and democratic, it is also a way of deploying the Turkish state's view of belonging that is citizenship. The Rums' invitation of the governors to the celebrations they are hosting, on the other hand, provides them with the space where they can perform their claims about genuine ownership of the island.

The festival, along with the attempts to have their houses back, emerge as one of the main moments of Rum construction of Imbros as the ancestral homeland of an eventual return (Safran) through which the returnees form their self-imaginaries by means of an autochthonous claim of belonging to the island. Stories of attachment to a place, built upon the childhood memories of the island, and the narratives of elders about how their presence on the island goes back long generations, at some point turns from the claims of belonging to the island, to claims of the island belonging to people who remember it. The local government, on the other hand, tolerating the celebration of the festival but opposing the house claims made by the non-citizen Rums, defines the island as a part of the sovereign's land. The land and its people thus form part of a homogeneous entity called the nation.

The political implications of talking about diaspora can only be understood through an interrogation of what it refers to in the international global arena. Diaspora, as a global discourse, carries connotations related to a number of delicate issues such as human rights, civilization, and international law. These also represent the points, which Turkey has to take into account in view of its current Western/European inclined foreign policy. Drawing from significant international concerns such as "homeland," "exile" and "injustice," speaking from within the discourse of diaspora can become a tool for claiming rights that cannot be claimed in another context or in another way. Imbrians in diaspora, in search for the rationalization of their claims of belonging to the island, draw from the international diaspora discourse available to them.

In that sense, the Imbrian Association tries to show presence on the international level such as sending representatives to the annual OSCE meetings, and looking for ways to get into dialogue with Turkey in the international arena. The international political arena, while granting the Imbrians the chance to be taken as an interlocutor by the Turkish state, also appears as the most available platform where the Imbrian claims drawing from internationally accepted discourses such as minority rights, exile and diaspora, and their terms of belonging referring to a primordial relationship with place,

based on more private sensations of "feeling" or "remembering" or "knowing by heart," can be heard and rendered effective.

Turkey, on the other hand, having the possibility to disregard the claims arising from belonging in ways other than its definition of "citizenship," becomes more exposed to those based on primordial ties when these are articulated in a more global and on a more international scale. At the local level, however, discourses of multiculturalism and localism become translated into a cultural imaginary of generous hosts welcoming guests, thus de-politicizing the conflictual relationship with the Rums and reframing the issue of exile and homeland within the legal terms of citizenship and state sovereignty.

Conclusion and Facing the Limits: Imbros as a Silenced Story

Along with the recognition by Turkey of internationally hegemonic discourses such as democratization and multiculturalism, a space opens up (mainly on the international level) where it is possible to talk about issues which were formerly unspeakable. Yet it would be an illusion to think of the discourse of diaspora as all liberating. It would certainly disguise differences among the Rums in Imbros that limit the availability of this discursive strategy mainly to the elite returnees who are endowed with the required cultural, economic and political capital to show presence in the international realm and to use diasporic articulations strategically.

On the other hand, as for their recognition within the national realm, those diasporic articulations are rendered meaningless and "irrelevant" or "not valid" in pursuing claims of ownership and belonging on the island. The introduction of the republican idea of citizenship as "an all-inclusive public persona" indifferent to the former Ottoman administrative categorizations based on religious and ethnic differences (Birtek) leads to a denial of the lived/performed differences/discriminations at the legal/institutional level. At the same time, it silences those memories that are related to these denied differences.

The Turkish state, equipped with the rights of the sovereign on Imbros, allows the Rums to commemorate the island, but not to own it. Within the nation-state imaginary, Imbros is defined as a place to remember, but not to return. This authoritarian act of redefinition locks away the Rum past of the island to an irreversible history, and a matter of "imperialist nostalgia" (Rosaldo) that one can only mourn over. Nostalgic Turkish commemorations of the island's Rum past, like the narratives of wealth and prosperity in the good-old Rum days (how green the trees were, how fertile the soil was, how happily the people were living), at the end, become part of a wider nationalist discourse of mourning over "the fading colors of the nation." They do not open the way for institutional/legal recognition of the dangerous stories about how these colors faded away.

The Turkish nation-state imaginary, reframing the current situation in Imbros in terms of the rights of citizenship and sovereignty, leaves the story of Rum exodus

from the island unregistered. The story of the illegal forced migration of the Rums of Imbros, who were excluded from the population exchange, and who were given minority status by the Lausanne Treaty (which entitles them to an equal status of citizenship, along with additional positive rights) is well equipped to register this exodus and thus lead to administrative compensation on the island, even within the terms of the official nation-state imaginary. This is why the official discourse, as opposed to the narratives related to the nostalgic Rum past of Imbros, does not allow for the emergence of the narratives of exodus, but redefines them at once as matters of citizenship and sovereignty.

Finally, this mourning adds up to a form of governmentality that presents the "alternative" cultures within the national borders as the "cultural wealth" of the nation along with its "natural beauties," which works as a marketing strategy to appeal to tourists. Thus, the Rum Imbros becomes a fairy tale, de-politicized and imprisoned to an irreversible past that is commemorated in a museumized cultural fair, the *Panayia*.

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Notes

1. This article draws from my master's thesis, entitled, *Belonging to Imbros: Citizenship and Sovereignty in the Turkish Republic* presented to Bogazici University Sociology Department in November 2003. I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Nükhet Sirman and Nazan Üstündag for their tremendous help and efforts during the formation of my thoughts and the actual construction of this text. My thanks also go to all of my informants without whose words and contribution this work would not be possible.

2. The term "Rum" in Turkish originally refers to the members of the Greek speaking Christian Orthodox community living in Asia Minor, under Ottoman rule. The term particularly indicates the difference of the community both in cultural and political terms from the "Greeks" (Hellenes) who are Greek citizens (see Oran). However, there is not a standardized use of terminology within academic works related to this community (see Hirschon " 'Unmixing' Peoples in the Aegean Region"). While in most of the articles and books written in English, the term "Greek" is used (see Alexandris, Clogg, Tsimouris), the words "Romios/Romoi" (which is the correspondent of the Turkish "Rum" in Greek language) or "Mikrasiates" and "Prosphygas" (a distinctive term for the Rums who went to Greece during the population exchange) are rarely used (see Hirschon *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe*). My preference for the term "Rum" instead of "Greek" draws first of all from the reason that "Rum" is an Ottoman term to refer to Greek Orthodox subjects and is included as such in the Empire's administrative apparatus. The use of this term indicates that the Rum issue is a product of the dissolution of the older Ottoman political order. But more important than that, I prefer the term "Rum" because it also points to the way my informants talk about themselves.

3. The English word for the name of the island Imbros comes from its original name in Greek, Ιμβροζ. In Turkish, however the name is written as Imroz, which is how the island was called until it was renamed Gökçeada in 1970.

4. In 1923 there were 8500 Rums living on the island (Alexandris). However, during the Republican period, the mass departure of the Rums from the island, and the arrival of Muslim immigrants have changed the population ratio from around 200 Rums to 8000 Muslims, by the 2000 Population Census (Bozbeyoglu).

5. Here, and throughout the article, my use of the term "imaginary" draws from the work of Cornelius Castoriadis. Social imaginary differs radically from an "image of" or "reflection" that pre-supposes an existence/reality prior to it. On the contrary, the "imaginary is the unceasing and essentially *undetermined* (social-historical and psychical) creation of figures/forms/images, on the basis of which alone there can ever be a question of 'something' " (Castoriadis 3). Social imaginary points to a realm of thought that is always a mode and a form of social-historical doing that belongs to society and to history. I use the term "imaginary," precisely to emphasize this historical and social embeddedness. Additionally, the term imaginary does not, by any means, correspond to a realm of imagination that indicates something other than reality. Just the opposite, reality and rationality are the works of the imaginary, which means that the imaginary with its immediate material effects belongs to the domain of reality.

6. See <http://www.diaspora-net.org/imvros/indeximvr-en.htm>.

7. Press bulletin for the Annual Gökçeada Film Festival, 11th-18th of August 2001.

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Longing for Home at Home

Armenians in Istanbul | Melissa Bilal

"… when you are at home, isn't it strange that people ask you where you are from?"[1]

ABSTRACT

Longing for home at home: Armenians in Istanbul

By focusing on the narratives of the Armenians in Istanbul in relation to the place they call "home," this article talks about the lived experience of Armenianness in Turkey. Although many Armenians in Istanbul think that they have never left their homelands, not only the memory of the violent annihilation of the Armenian presence in Anatolia and the displacement of Armenians from their homelands, but also the current nationalist identity politics in Turkey which disrupts Armenians' ties with their cultural heritage and silences their memories, make them feel displaced in their home today. Thus, this article attempts to go beyond the mutually exclusive definitions of belonging and displacement by discussing the limits of the concept of diaspora in relation to the experience of being a "minority" at home.

This paper is an attempt to understand the Armenian minority experience in Turkey by focusing on the narratives of the Armenians in Istanbul in relation to the place they call "home." I will try to show how their relationship to the land is shaped by the imaginaries of both "belonging" and "displacement" and will argue that these seemingly conflicting imaginaries regarding the same space define the minority experience in Turkey.[2]

Armenians living in Turkey consider Anatolia, which remains within the territory of Republic of Turkey, as their homeland. Even today, while the great majority of the Armenian population lives in Istanbul, far away from their Anatolian hometowns, they still think they have never left this homeland. Yet the forced migration, violence and the discrimination they faced during the latter part of the 19th and throughout the 20th century not only separated them from their lands, but also disrupted their ties with

their history, memories and cultural heritage, and today their position within the configuration of power relations that shape the identity politics in Turkey makes them feel displaced in their "home".

We can go beyond the mutually exclusive definitions of "being at home" and "being displaced" by looking at the discontinuities, ruptures, gaps and conflicts within Armenian personal narratives, memories, and their performances of belonging with regard to the place that they imagine being "home." Therefore, my aim in this paper is both to render visible the experience of being an Armenian in Turkey and to discuss the limits of the concept of "diaspora" in relation to the experience of being a minority at "home."

"Here is my home, I cannot live anywhere else": Imagining Istanbul as home

For many Armenians in Istanbul, "the lived experience of locality" (Brah 192) is a defining aspect of what is imagined as "home": "home is the place where you were born, where your culture is, where your friends are, where you have a lived experience." Therefore, I believe that tracing the narratives of "lived experience" is crucial for understanding the way Armenians practice and perceive their senses of belonging and displacement in their "homes." As Joan W. Scott states, this enables us to see the instances where difference is translated into oppression and the way power relations operate (Scott 25).

The majority of the young Armenians to whom I spoke was either born or had spent their childhood in Istanbul. They defined Istanbul as their "home" because they literally had their homes here. They stressed their attachment mostly by mentioning their habits of living in the city, the way they were used to its "manners," and how much they loved the place: "I am from here, here is my place, what I am used to, what I love to live, to walk around, to breathe."

The perception of Istanbul as "home" however does not only stem from being born or having lived in Istanbul. Family, relatives, Armenian friends and the community also operate as very important ties to the place.

Aside from these everyday life experiences, Armenian historical presence in Istanbul also contributes to the feeling of belonging to the city. Armenian institutions such as the Patriarchate, churches, schools, hospitals, cultural associations, choirs, folk dance groups, as well as Ottoman palaces and various buildings that were constructed by Armenian architects are regarded as the signs of the centuries-long Armenian presence in Istanbul. Istanbul is considered one of the major cultural centers for Armenians worldwide, as pointed out by Boghos Levon Zekiyan:

Bolis, today's Istanbul, is a city which is the richest in the world in Armenian heritage of the 19th century, the Golden Age of modern Armenian culture, and especially literature. (…) A city with more than fifty Armenian churches, some of which architectural master-pieces of the Balians' or of others, with more than six cemeteries decorated with

monuments some of which can bear the comparison even with Italian cemeteries, and above all a city that keep the tombs and memories of such absolute genius as Turian and Medzarents, Demirjibashian and Ormanian, Beshigtashlian and the Balians to mention only few of dozens of similar genius. (Zekiyan 1)

Many Armenians consider it their responsibility not to leave Istanbul and Anatolia in order to protect the Armenian cultural heritage within this territory. Many people told me that, since their grandparents' graveyards were here, they would never think of leaving the city. Similarly, when I asked people whether one day they would leave Istanbul, they replied: "we have to stay here in Istanbul, to keep our churches, our schools open; we have that responsibility."

The responsibility felt by Armenians living in Istanbul today is not only derived from a need for the protection of their institutions in the city. Armenians also consider themselves as the last remaining people in this country who can protect the cultural heritage of Anatolia, the "homeland of all Armenians." Istanbul has thus gained a new meaning for Armenians today.

When the Armenians were expelled from Anatolia, Istanbul, the former diasporic and cultural center for Anatolian Armenians, was "considered as the only place to escape, to find a refuge." The deportations and violence that began during the late 19th century and increased during *Medz Yeghern* (Great Catastrophe) of 1915, refer not only to the violent displacement of the Armenians from their homes but also to the extermination of a whole population and a cultural heritage. The migration from Anatolia to Istanbul continued throughout the century, until only a few families were left behind in each town, and no Armenian schools, churches or other institutions could function any longer. During the first half of the 20th century, Istanbul became a new "home" for Armenians from different Anatolian villages, who had "come here with *kara tren* (black train) and gathered in *gayaran*s (station)" from where they would disperse throughout the city. [3] Migrant families of the past few decades, who were last to leave their homes, did so mostly because they felt insecure in their hometowns, where they were the last Armenian households and were not always welcomed by the new settlers in their villages or towns.

In Istanbul one can listen to numerous stories about how migrants from Anatolia, namely, the *kavaratsi*s (villagers) had faced difficulties in adapting to the city as well as being subjected to discrimination by the Armenians of Istanbul. Today, however, the distinction between "Istanbulite" and "Anatolian" among Armenians, which was quite clear-cut until a generation ago, has started to disappear, leaving in its place other distinctions based on gender, class, generation, etc. And so, Istanbul and Anatolia has started to be used interchangeably to signify "homeland."[4]

Istanbul started to be perceived as "home" both for those who were born in Istanbul and for those who were not. It is considered to be the last piece of land connected to Anatolia as its extension, by retaining its memories, stories, traditions, local

dialects, songs and dances. An Armenian woman whose family has been living in Istanbul for centuries explained it as follows:

My tie to Anatolia is related to the fact that I belong to Anatolia. Because where we are now [Istanbul] is a part of Anatolia, we still say that our homeland is Anatolia. I don't want to be called spiurkahayutyun (diaspora Armenians) because I am in my place.

Similarly, the Armenian journalist and writer Rober Haddeciyan states that although geographically "the Armenians of Istanbul, the *Bolsahayutyun*, do not actually live in their 'real homeland,' " they think that they are in their "homeland" because "they have never left the country within which the greater part of that homeland is contained" (Björklund 345).

In order to understand the way Armenians perceive themselves in relation to their "homeland" and their identities in Turkey, we have to go beyond the conceptualization of "diaspora" as a term referring to people "living outside their homeland." In this way I believe we can also go beyond the clear-cut distinctions between "being at home" and "being displaced" as only defined by its detachment from the physical space. Not only physical space, but also the power relations that shape that space define the condition of being "displaced." Thus, we give content to the terms "minority" and "diaspora" through the analysis of the experience of disempowerment.

In the following part, I will try to show how the Armenians in Istanbul, whether having migrated from Anatolia or living in Istanbul for centuries, feel "displaced" in their "homes" today, because of the discontinuities in their history, memory, and cultural belonging as well as because they have become the historical "other" of the Turkish national identity.

"Turkey belongs to Turks": The Armenian experience of displacement in Istanbul[5]

Today Armenians in Istanbul do not have any "myth of return" to their homes in Anatolia, which are mostly populated by other people. Furthermore, because of their minority position, they feel a loss not only in terms of homeland, but also of history, memory and culture. They try to recover this loss by means of language, music, stories, dances, traditions for the celebration of the religious feasts and other cultural practices. For many Armenians, this sense of belonging nowhere but to a language, to a song, to a lullaby creates a strong feeling of attachment to culture:

As long as you cultivate the land, you cultivate culture. When you plant the soil, you cultivate… You don't have a land; therefore, you cannot produce things that are connected to the land. That's why your language becomes your land.

Cultural practices are regarded as indispensable to the protection and reproduction of Armenian identity, especially under the conditions that render the expression of Armenianness within the political realm impossible. Because the Armenian Genocide still continues to be a "specter" (Zizek 21) of the national history in Turkey today, anything that may lead to the politicization of Armenian identity is severely forbidden. [6]

On the other hand, while Armenians regard the cultural field as their only space of resistance against assimilation, for many decades they could not embrace their cultural heritage because of restrictions on the reproduction and expression of cultural material about different ethnic groups in Turkey. Since "Turkishness," "Turkish national culture" and official Turkish history were constructed and shaped through the social and economic expropriation of the local heritage and wealth, and the cultural denial of the Armenian as well as other ethnic identities and cultures in the nationalized territory, the experiences of Armenians and other ethnic groups have been encapsulated into identities that serve as the "constitutive outside" (Butler 3) of the unified Turkish national identity.[7]

Today, the "abjection" becomes most obvious in the exclusion of Armenians from the history, the memory and the culture of the land that they call "home." Avtar Brah explains how "the question of home is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances" (Brah, 192). Armenians feel obliged to constantly rearticulate their belonging through an emphasis on their history, for all the things reminiscent of their presence in Anatolia do not suffice to make them visible in this home.

The expression "we have always been here" becomes a response to the widespread perception that regards Armenians and other non-Muslim groups living in this country as "foreigners." "I didn't know that there were Armenians in Turkey"; "Which country did you come from?"; "Is Armenian a dead language?"; "It's interesting that you speak Turkish quite fluently"; "Did you enter our university through a foreign students' exam?"; "Do you support the Turkish football team in the world-wide championships?" are among the questions asked by cohabitants of the city that Armenians come across in their daily lives. These questions reveal an "innocent" ignorance combined with an "honest" interest and curiosity, while simultaneously questioning one's loyalty to the country of one's citizenship. This burden of the need to confirm belonging again and again, ironically makes Armenians feel that they may, in fact, not "belong enough."

Young Armenians say that they feel displaced mostly when they are treated as strangers: "He asks my name. When he hears it, he asks it ten times more. 'Who are you?'; 'What is your business?' Can you believe it, I had just gone for my internship, and the door keeper asked me where I am from, arguing that I didn't look like an Armenian because I am blond!"

It is important to note that the stress Armenians put on their roots within this country is a kind of everyday resistance against invisibility:

I am in a weird situation here… You are on your land but you are a Turkish citizen. And moreover, you are a second class citizen. This leads you to a search and you try to say "I am here." You try to attach yourself to something in order to make yourself visible and that turns out to be "I was here."

Not only the invisibility and exclusion from the representations of culture and history within the country and the restrictions on producing cultural material about Armenians, but the exclusion from citizenship rights robs them of the true comfort of being at "home" in Turkey.

Throughout the Republican Era, Armenians and other ethnic groups faced various forms of discrimination and violence mainly due to their ethnic, religious and cultural identities. In providing examples on the current situation, one can count the violations against the individual civil rights of expressing one's identity and opinions about identity politics, the freedom of choosing a profession, conducting research on Armenians and publishing, as well as the violations against communal rights such as difficulties in training clergymen, attacks on churches and community schools, growing reductions on native language instruction, the prohibition of the instruction of Armenian history and culture, the confiscation of communal property, the production of news and programs in the media which are full of insults, attacks and misrepresentations that contribute to anti-Armenian prejudices, etc.[8]

Within the last decades, as a result of political struggles by various oppositional groups, as well as through the deployment of "multiculturalist" discourses by the Turkish mainstream media and intellectuals of various strands, identity politics in Turkey has been changing. Minority rights have become more visible and artistic and scholarly works on cultural difference have led to the questioning of the homogeneity of "Turkish national culture."

On the other hand, the "revival of ethnic cultures" occurs in a way that fetishizes "the cultural heritage of Turkey." As an expression of an "imperialist nostalgia" Turkey has started to "mourn over the cultures which it had destroyed" (Rosaldo 68). Today, as the majority of the non-Muslim population in Turkey has disappeared, people start to search for the "stories of difference."

In the current context, the hegemonic cultural politics in Turkey delineates cultures by separating them from the relations that they have with each other and from the contexts within which they are produced. Cultures are objectified as museum pieces and only the spectacular, "desirable" elements are represented. On the other hand, what is not desirable, what is considered to be "dangerous" and "detrimental" within the articulation of memories still remains unrepresented and is severely silenced. The silencing, which does not occur through overt oppression but by making the stories forgotten and internalizing the fear and the sense of danger, becomes very significant in the formation of Armenian and other "suspect" identities in Turkey.

What is transmitted from one generation to the next, in terms of memory today, is not a whole story but mere fragments. These discontinuities and disruptions in memory, these walls of silence and the ensuing feeling of loss, create a new form of subjectivity, the subjectivity of belonging not to a place but, rather, to a memory that is in itself "displaced." This "displaced memory" itself becomes "home" for the young generation of

Armenians living in Istanbul today, who, in considering themselves as a part of "Anatolia," redefine it within this new context and try to make themselves visible by re-writing their histories, re-telling their stories, and re-singing their songs of "home."

Contemporary Armenia

For Armenians scattered around the world, living in countries in North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, Turkey and Armenia, there are various conceptualizations of "homeland." Susan Pattie explains how Armenians in diaspora have three different conceptualizations of "homeland": *Hayasdan* (Armenia), today's Republic of Armenia; the historical *Hayasdan,* which includes Eastern Turkey and the Caucasus; and the town or village of origin in Anatolia (Pattie 4-5).

Armenians living in countries other than Armenia and Turkey consider themselves to be living in diaspora, as they feel they are far away from their "homeland." As for the Armenians in Turkey, they do not consider themselves to be living in diaspora since they believe they have never left their "homeland." However, whether they are a part of the Armenian diaspora or not has always been a debated issue.

Today, most of the Armenians living in Turkey wish for the well-being of Armenia, yet, there is no clear consensus on how they relate to it. Some people say that they consider Anatolia as their *mayrenik* (motherland), and Armenia as *hayrenik* (fatherland). Some people feel no attachment to Armenia at all, some feel a cultural attachment. Some of them state that that they can go there for a visit to fulfill their longing to hear Armenian language and music in the streets, while others mention that they do think of settling there someday. In any case, in terms of "homeland," the general perception among the Armenians in Turkey is that they all belong to Anatolia.

Within the last decade, following the independence of Armenia in the post-USSR era, there have been attempts to develop relations between Armenians in Turkey and Armenia in the form of tourist and scholarly visits. There have also been attempts to improve political and economic relations between Turkey and Armenia. Armenian newspapers in Istanbul have started to publish news from Armenia and the widespread diaspora, along with the news about Turkey and the Armenian community in Turkey. Moreover, through artists, scholars and especially with the flow of cultural materials over the Internet, Armenians in Istanbul have entered the sphere of transnational connections with a wider Armenian community in the world. These are very important developments that have started to shape the way Armenian identity is reproduced in Turkey today.

Beyond the discussion of home versus displacement; inscribing in the diaspora discourse

What I wanted to demonstrate through this paper was how Armenians, as a minority group in Turkey, experience the "displacement" within their "home," despite the fact that they hesitate to call themselves "diasporic." In order to understand how these

seemingly conflicting experiences and perceptions occur at the same time, I find the tools provided by the literature on diaspora very helpful.

Today, there are discussions taking place around the usage of the term "diaspora." As Khachig Tölölyan notes, now the term refers various groups such as immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest workers, exile communities, overseas communities, or ethnic communities (Tölölyan, "The Nation-State and Its Others" 4). Many scholars such as Tölölyan and Vered Amit criticize that "diaspora" as a term is used for every kind of physical displacement and for every kind of identity issues, such as the ones concerning ethnic and minority groups.

Although I agree with the idea that this situation makes the boundaries of the term blurred, and I find defining Armenians in Turkey as in "diaspora" problematic, I still prefer to use the terms provided by diasporic literature, because the notions of "home," "displacement" and the way in which these are experienced and perceived as crucial for grasping what I want to capture in this paper, namely minority experiences of concepts such as alienation, marginalization and invisibility within nation-states. I believe that the existing scholarship on ethnic minorities falls short of providing satisfactory answers to those questions, as it restricts the issue to a "problem of rights," without questioning the way nation-states territorialize the lands under their domains, and regard it as a conflict between states and groups. Besides, as Avtar Brah argues, it cannot offer "a multi-axial understanding of power" and does not problematize the minority/majority dichotomy (Brah 189).

In order to be able to work within the literature on diaspora, however, it is necessary to open up a space for questioning how minorities experience "displacement" in their "homeland." Although scholars such as James Clifford mention that "diasporic forms of longing, memory and (dis)identification are shared by a broad spectrum of minority and migrant populations" (Clifford 304), the minority experience still remains on the margins of diasporic literature since the distinction between "homeland" and "host-land" is very clear in scholarly works on diaspora. According to theorists of diaspora, the conception and the memory of a far away or imaginary "home" is still the constitutive element for the construction of the diasporic identity (Safran 83).

Similarly, the growing literature on the Armenian diaspora also considers forced dispersion from the historical homeland to various host countries as a crucial element in the formation of the Armenian diaspora. Scholars who have been working on the Armenian diaspora, while successfully describing the experiences of Armenians living away from their "homeland," tend to overlook the different experiences of Armenians living in Turkey who consider themselves as being in their "homeland."[9]

Considering "diaspora" as a "condition," in the way Avtar Brah, Stuart Hall, James Clifford, and Paul Gilroy have done (Anthias 565) allows us to question the framework of diaspora literature, within which it may seem contradictory that the narratives of "belonging" and narratives of "displacement" can define the same space for the

same group. I believe that approaching the experiences of Armenians in Turkey through this perspective brings in new and challenging questions, such as "How can one approach multiple temporalities and multiple localities within a 'nationalized' territory?"; "How can we understand 'culture', 'history' and 'memory' as contested terrains?"; "How can power and violence de-territorialize a group within its 'home'?" etc.

I contend that in order to come closer to understanding the experiences of minorities within nation-states we should improve our theoretical and political tools. I believe that we can achieve this by giving a voice to the people and by listening to their narratives in order to see how they relate to the place they define as "home" and how they perceive and practice their identities within this "home."

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Notes

1. The ethnographic material I use in this paper is gathered as a part of my MA thesis research on the perception and practice of Armenian identity in Turkey. During the preparation of this paper, I discussed with many friends about the meaning of "home" and "diaspora," as well as the experience of being an Armenian in Turkey. All the quotations that exist within the text without any references are taken from the people that I spoke to, whose names I keep confidential.

2. I use the concept "imaginary" here, as "the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings" (Taylor 106). As Charles Taylor explains, the social imaginary is not a set of "ideas." Rather, it is what enables, by means of making sense of, the practices of a society; it is carried in images, stories and legends (see also Castoriadis *The Imaginary Institution of Society*).

3. *Gayaran*s were large halls divided into rooms, designated by the Armenian Church to migrant families, where they lived until their situation allowed the affording of a new residence. While I was collecting the life stories of old Armenian women, I found out that many people, including my grandmother from Yozgat, knew each other from these collective houses.

4. I want to note that although there are a few Armenian families that live in Anatolia today, one can only speak of an Armenian community with regard to Istanbul. Today, the estimated number of Armenians in Istanbul is 60,000 (see Buchwalter "Portrait de la Communauté Arménienne d'Istanbul").

5. "*Türkiye Türklerindir* (Turkey belongs to Turks)" is the motto of *Hürriyet*, one of the most widely read daily newspapers in Turkey.

6. Slavoj Zizek defines the "specter" as that which is primordially repressed, foreclosed from "reality." It is the irrepresentable X of that "reality" on whose repression "reality" itself is founded. When we think about the Turkish national history as the presented "reality," the Armenian Genocide becomes the "irrepresentable X" and it is the fear of this "specter" that makes the issue unspeakable.

7. Judith Butler explains that the matrix by which subjects are formed requires a domain of abject beings. The abject is the unlivable, in this case, the unspeakable and invisible and its exclusion produces a constitutive outside, which makes the matrix possible.

8. For detailed information about the situation of Armenians in Turkey today, see: Hofmann *Armenians In Turkey Today*.

9. For further information about the Armenian diaspora, see: Panossian, "Between Ambivalence and Intrusion"; Aprahamian, "Armenian Identity"; Tölölyan "Elites and Institutions".

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Through the Lens of the Chronotope

Suggestions for a Spatio-Temporal Perspective on Diaspora

Esther Peeren

ABSTRACT

Through the Lens of the Chronotope: Suggestions for a Spatio-Temporal Perspective on Diaspora

Within diaspora studies, the temporal dimension of diaspora for the most part remains subordinated to the element of spatial dispersal. This paper aims to theorize the inextricable linkage of space and time in the production and reproduction of diaspora consciousness through Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. The chronotope prompts a view of diaspora identities as predicated on a removal not only from a particular location in space and moment in time, but also from the particular social practice of time-space through which a community conceptualizes its surroundings and its own place in them. Diaspora then emerges as a particular form of doubled chronotopical interpellation, as a dwelling-in-dischronotopicality.

Within diaspora studies, the temporal dimension of diaspora for the most part continues to be regarded as the consequence of – and therefore subordinated to – an originary displacement in space. That space remains the primary measure of diaspora is particularly clear in attempts to define diaspora, where physical removal from a homeland remains the first criterion and issues of temporality are glossed over.[1] Anne-Marie Fortier appropriately considers diaspora theory as part of a wider movement "where the spatial takes precedence over the temporal in understanding social change" (Fortier 2005: 182). Fortier's own coagulation of time and space into "time-space" displaces their usual reduction to cause and effect (spatial displacement resulting in temporal disorientation) and signals their inextricable linkage in the production and reproduction of diaspora consciousness. Her usage of timespace links

with concrete places and times, but also bears on the constructions of time-space so intrinsic to diasporic living and diasporic memory.

I want to develop this line of thought by employing Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope in order to propose a view of communal diaspora identity as predicated on an enforced separation not only from a particular location or place in space and in time, but also from the particular construction of time-space through which a community conceptualizes its surroundings and its own place in them. My chronotopical reading of diaspora will delineate Bakthin's chronotope as a social practice, situate it in relation to current diaspora scholarship, explore diaspora as a particular form of doubled chronotopical interpellation, and, finally, provide some suggestions as to the possible methodological advantages of viewing diaspora as a dwelling-in-dischronotopicality.

Bakhtin's chronotope as social practice

Defined by Bakhtin as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84), the chronotope's main implication is that time and space are intimately connected: time becomes a dimension of space – its fourth dimension – and space a dimension of time. Time is spatial in the sense that the passage of time can only be perceived and given meaning in space, and space is temporal in the sense that movement in space is always also movement in time. Because all actions, thoughts, and experiences take place in time-space and are first and foremost apprehended in spatio-temporal terms, Bakhtin elevates the chronotope to the central ordering principle of all human life. Meaning itself becomes chronotopic, since all signs, in order to acquire meaning, need to be – audibly, visibly, or haptically – inscribed into space and time. For Bakhtin, accordingly, "every entry into the sphere of meanings is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope" (258).

Bakhtin primarily develops the chronotope as a literary concept. To make it applicable to diaspora scholarship, I propose extending the chronotope from a literary into a cultural concept. Its constitutive function will then apply not merely to plot and characters in literary texts, but to life and collective subjectivity in all worlds, whether intra- or extra-literary. Thus, instead of conceptualizing the chronotope as a "formally constitutive category of literature" (Bakhtin 84), I will conceive of it as a formally constitutive category of all social and cultural realities. We all exist within time-space constructions that make us who we are and that govern our lives.

Although Bakhtin repeatedly points to the existence of extra-literary chronotopes, his opposition of "textual" to "actual" chronotopes and his characterization of the former as "reflected and created" versions of the latter are based on a now superceded reflection theory of representation (84). I want to suggest that what is important is not how literary and extra-literary chronotopes relate to each other in terms of form or content, but rather their fundamental equivalence in terms of function. Both in literature and in the extra-literary realm do we perceive the constitutive

function of time-space constellations in relation to subjects, their communities, and their memories.

While time and space are always intrinsically connected, *how* they are connected and how this connection governs meaning varies, making the chronotope a social, cultural, and ideological construction. Bakhtin grounds this construction in the world of events and intersubjectivity: Time and space are "forms of the most immediate reality" (85), which acquire meaning first of all in relation to human life and interaction. There is no one universal chronotope, but a multitude of chronotopes, each distinguished by its own way of constructing, interpreting, and living time-space. A chronotope may be specific to a historical period, culture, nation, social class, or any other group of individuals – however small and insignificant – as long as they are united within a particular perception and practice of time-space organization. Chronotopes may therefore comprise widely different-sized communities, with the smaller ones influenced by the larger ones (and vice versa), but at the same time separate from them in terms of their internal logic.

Subjects do not stand above a chronotope as its masters, but are *within* it or, indeed, *of* it. For Bakhtin, all traditions, including those of time-space construction, originate and develop not on the level of individual or collective consciousness, but on the level of practice: Cultural and literary traditions (including the most ancient) are preserved and continue to live not in the individual subjective memory of a single individual and not in some kind of collective "psyche," but rather in the objective forms that culture itself assumes (including the forms of language and spoken speech), and in this sense they are inter-subjective and inter-individual (and consequently social). (248, n17)

The way in which the chronotope is continually reproduced between people signals its association with a form of memory that is not individual, but intersubjective or cultural. It evokes Mieke Bal's definition of cultural memory as an act of citationality that "establishes memorial links beyond personal contiguity" and is no longer linked to intentionality (218, n17). On the whole, both in art and in life, Bakhtin's chronotope emerges as a socio-cultural practice of time-space construction, constituted and maintained through intersubjective interaction and cultural memory.

The chronotope and diaspora scholarship

Bakhtin links the chronotope to genre by positing that each literary genre is characterized by a particular chronotope, which is never completely under the author's control but is at the same time not immune to gradual development or change. Analogously, diaspora could be considered a particular genre of living characterized by the chronotope of the "changing same" (Gilroy 49), a continual cultural reprocessing that oscillates between identity and difference, stability and mutability, in the manner of the chronotope itself.

Bakhtin's view of the chronotope as a cultural tradition, moreover, speaks to James Clifford's argument that diaspora is centrally concerned with preserving traditions: "Diaspora cultures work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions, 'customizing' and 'versioning' them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations" (317). A chronotopical reading of this statement would circumscribe the community's control over tradition: the chronotope may be mutable, but does not offer free selection. Diasporic subjects do not just work with traditions as though standing above them. Rather, they are themselves constituted in and through tradition. Because the diaspora community is itself subject(ed) to a particular tradition of time-space organization, there is a limit to the amount of customizing and versioning it can achieve.

Hamid Naficy explicitly considers the chronotope in his book *Accented Cinema: Exile and Diaspora Filmmaking*. Since he is mainly interested in analyzing filmic representations of diaspora, he uses the chronotope as a "unit of textual analysis" to bring out the specific ways in which diasporic space and time are configured in films. The chronotope becomes a means of telling the story of diaspora. However, Naficy also refers to the chronotope's second function as an "optic" or a lens to analyze "the forces in the culture" that produce the time-space configurations represented in artistic texts (152). While Naficy's focus on film analysis does not allow him to operationalize this function, I want to employ it to facilitate an analysis of diaspora as a socio-cultural phenomenon as well as a representational practice. Diaspora is not only something *represented* in films and other artistic texts. As a lived condition it is itself constructed within representation, not outside or before it. Both in art and in life it expresses itself as a particular chronotope, characterized by conflict, hybridity and doubleness. In other words, it is not just diaspora narratives that take the form of a specific "construction of timespace in terms of dichotomous notions," as Fortier has argued, but also diaspora as a lived condition and form of collective subjectivity (2005: 183).

In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy employs the chronotope in relation to the Black diaspora, denoting the image of the slave ship as a "chronotope of passage" which functions as a "central organizing symbol" of the diasporic condition (4). This may appear as another example where the chronotope is seen to *stand for* diaspora rather than being constitutive of its lived condition. However, Gilroy specifically links the chronotope of passage as well as the chronotope of the crossroads, which signifies the two-way cultural traffic between homeland and host country, to the social practices of lived diaspora. As such, Gilroy provides a stepping-stone for my suggestion to conceptualize diaspora as chronotopical in a way that goes beyond creating spatio-temporal images, symbols or metaphors for its artistic representation. What it means, in other words, to think diaspora as a chronotope, as a specific ideological construction of space and time that governs the lives of diasporic subjects in a performative manner.

Diasporic interpellations: the chronotope and performativity

The chronotope's primary function, as explicated by Bakhtin, is that of combining particular types of space and time into a world where only certain subjects, narratives, practices, and, I would add, identities and memories, can legitimately take their place. Restated in terms of Louis Althusser's model of ideology, the chronotope may be said to function as an ideology of time-space that interpellates individuals as subjects in(to) collective space and in(to) collective time through specific spatial and temporal norms. In relation to diaspora, this interpellation is doubled; diasporic subjects are interpellated by more than one chronotope simultaneously. Subjected – in the sense Judith Butler uses this term in *The Psychic Life of Power* – by home chronotope, host chronotope, and the thirdspace chronotope of the journey between these two, it is this double or triple interpellation that produces the hybrid communal identity we call diasporic.

The chronotope's secondary function is that of "axiological category," productive of what Bakhtin calls "chronotopic values": time and space are "colored by emotions and values" (243). These values become "part and parcel of every perception, every awareness of a series of events" (Scholz 155) and as such "mediate observation, measurement and their results" (Aronowitz 126). Chronotopic values constitute the "It is so!" component of Althusser's theory of ideology; the community's recognition and acceptance of the way things are (meant to be). The affective dimension of the chronotope is relevant to lived diaspora, where the affective associations or memories attributed to the lost time-space of the home mingle with the often contrastive affective associations and memories of the time-space of displacement. Diaspora's double interpellation occasions the production of multiple systems of norms and values, which may be kept rigidly apart – segregated in terms of the different spheres of everyday life – or more or less integrated, but will always bleed into one another in some way, requiring efforts of negotiation. And it is precisely this need for negotiation between different types of time and space, different chronotopic values, different constructions of identity, and different mnemonic structures, that characterizes the diasporic chronotope as a whole.

As an ideological system to which one is always already subjected, the chronotope can be productively related to Butler's theory of gender performativity. First of all, it opens our eyes to the twofold relationship between performativity and time-space: not only is all performativity necessarily embedded in time-space, but time-space is itself a performative structure in the sense that it is not simply there, but established and maintained by means of repeated social practices. Much like gender, time and space are not something we find before us, but something we do by enacting its cultural laws (chronology, linearity, distance, and so on) time and time again. Moreover, as Bakhtin makes clear, the manner in which we do and re-do time, space and their interconnection is subject to cultural, historical, social, and local differentiation. This

is particularly pertinent to the construction of diasporic identities or identifications, where the re-doing of the home chronotope is complicated by spatio-temporal displacement and an inevitable imbrication with the host chronotope.

Secondly, I want to suggest that the chronotope is able to "ground" performativity. It can serve as an instrument of discrimination between the divergent forms of performativity corresponding to particular organizations of time-space and their accompanying systems of norms and values. Instead of proposing one self-identical generative system of diaspora identity, I conceive the diaspora experience as chronotopically inflected. Different diasporas are lived differently and even the same diaspora (originating in the time-space of a shared homeland) is lived differently by its various communities in their dispersed locations. The existence of such chronotopical variants indicates that each time-space warrants a separate analysis of how communal identities and memories are performatively produced and potentially subverted within it. What works in one time-space may not work in another and diasporic subjects will devise different adaptive or resistive strategies in different chronotopical environments.

Diaspora as dischronotopicality

Whereas diaspora is mostly thought in terms of displacement – it presupposes distance from a specific space and a bar on return – the chronotope adds the dimension of temporal distance and makes the two dimensions integral to each other. The chronotope emphasizes that spatial displacement is always also temporal displacement. In diaspora, the homeland is not only *distant*; it is also *past* or *passed*, left behind in space and in time.

The temporal dimension of diaspora has, of course, been examined in diaspora scholarship. Paul Gilroy has argued that black counter-cultures inserted a "syncopated temporality – a different rhythm of living and being" into modernity (281). Similarly, James Clifford describes diasporic consciousness as "a sense of attachment elsewhere, to a different temporality and vision" and as "a sense of rupture, of living a radically different temporality" (312, 318). Homi Bhabha, too, has pointed to the different temporalities diasporic communities bring into (or against) the linear historical time of the host nation, resulting in the "ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space" (Bhabha 294).

More often than not, however, considerations of diaspora temporality tend to remain separate from discussions of diaspora's spatial dimension. A fully chronotopical consideration of diaspora would conceive time and space as fundamentally interlinked in the production of diaspora subjectivity and would transform diaspora from a "dwelling-in-displacement" (Clifford 310) into a dwelling-in-dischronotopicality. This way, community and subjectivity would be constructed not only (or not primarily) on the basis of concrete spatial and temporal situation (*where* and *when* a community is located in objective space and historical time), but based on its shared particular

practice of conceptualizing time-space and subjectivity within it through performative enactment.

In this regard, I need to emphasize that chronotopes are not necessarily limited to one place. As a social construction rather than an area one can choose to move in and out of at will, the chronotope may comprise multiple locations in space. With respect to diaspora, the notion that multiple places can share the same organizing chronotope indicates that leaving the homeland need not imply a complete loss of its particular way of life and subjectivity. Diasporic communities show how a homeland chronotope or tradition of time-space can be re-enacted or "re-membered" in the various time-spaces of dispersal through the creation of "habitual spaces," where habit and memory indicate the vital temporal dimension (Fortier 1999: 47).[2]

Although many diaspora cultures are closely bound up with a particular spatio-temporal environment both practically and representationally, and have a vested political interest in presenting their homeland and its way of life as non-transposable, there is a necessary element of portability and sustainability that can be approached through the chronotope. Chronotopes may be attached to particular coordinates in time-space, but they are primarily bound to communities, their practices, and their memories. Understanding diaspora chronotopically means thinking of the homeland not as left behind in a static, pure, untouched state and recoverable by a simple return to a location on the map, but as a construct symbolically kept in place by out of place subjects. Their particular organization of time-space travels with them, albeit in an inevitably changed or, when the spatio-temporal environment of the homeland is radically different from that in the host country, hollowed-out form.

Nevertheless, against the prevalent rhetoric of the lost homeland, some form of continuance is inherent in the diaspora culture. While what is considered the "natural" environment for the community's chronotope may have been left behind, to retain a claim to this environment – a claim to return – it is imperative that (some of) the practices concomitant with this chronotope are perpetuated elsewhere. The chronotope travels with the diasporic community to the various locations of dispersal and evolves there in interplay with these new locations' own chronotopical organizations. Diaspora, then, is characterized by the way in which dispersed communities connect themselves to each other and to the homeland by forging relationships across space and time through a shared performative (habitual and mnemonic) construction of time-space: a shared chronotope.

With the chronotope not necessarily linked to one spatial setting only, a chronotopical conception of diaspora would be able to accommodate dispersed communities originating from more than one homeland as well as those lacking a clearly defined or clearly circumscribed homeland altogether, such as nomadic or other non-sedentary communities (the Roma, Native Americans, the Herero of Namibia).[3] The way in which some of these communities have been forced into sedentary lives (in reservations or places paradoxically termed "homelands") could then be conceived of as an inverted

form of diaspora that moves from scattering to concentration, from the home of being able to move around at will to the homelessness of a definitively designated home. What is lost in these cases is precisely the specific organization of time-space, the chronotopical construction that accorded value to movement and travel rather than to fixed locations. [4]

Diaspora viewed chronotopically would therefore be characterized by the (forcible) removal or separation of a people from their specific way of living in and through constructions of time-space, which may take either the form of a decentralizing scattering from the homeland or of a centralizing confinement to one place. Such a reformulation of diaspora would accord both with Gilroy's attempt to undermine the dominant Eurocentric idea of the nation-state as an undivided unity (85, 98) and with recent efforts to detach diaspora from the notion of a singular homeland or origin and the myth of return.[5] Whereas a predominantly spatial definition of diaspora tends to support the notion that the homeland will always be there to return to, a chronotopical view that links diaspora with people and practices (with the performative construction of time-space) rather than with concrete spatial or temporal coordinates, makes it immediately clear that there is no going back, only a taking forward, of a performative perpetuation of the practices themselves, which inevitably introduces change.

A chronotopical rethinking of diaspora would also have consequences for our understanding of diasporic life in the host society. If we define diaspora as an enduring condition of dischronotopicality – of conflict between the way time-space constructions governed subjectivity, community and memory in the homeland and the way they govern subjectivity, community and memory in the place of dispersal – the resulting "hybridity" (Hall 58) or, as both Clifford and Gilroy refer to it after W.E.B. DuBois, "double consciousness," will take different forms depending on the degree of discrepancy between the two modes of constructing and living time-space. If this difference is small, daily participation in the host chronotope will be facilitated, but at the same time it may become more crucial and difficult to maintain the distinction between the two that is required to preserve the diasporic identity. On the other hand, if the difference is great, daily participation in the host chronotope will require more effort, but reproducing the distinctive home chronotope will be easier as its practices will be more conspicuous. This may or may not be desirable depending on the attitude of the host nation towards the diasporic community.

I want to stress that double consciousness and double vision do not refer to two ways of seeing and being that can be neatly separated, but to a duality that is specific to the singular way of living that is diaspora. Diasporic subjects are never wholly part of either the home or the host chronotope; they do not move from one to the other without the inference of memory, but are always in negotiation with both. Their lives and identities are governed by a diasporic chronotope that is inherently split into two (or more) parts that are inflected through each other.

Viewing diaspora as dischronotopicality prompts a view of identity not as involving some "true self" that can be recovered by returning to a homeland presumed to have stayed frozen in time-space, but of identity as a continuous becoming that is predicated on the various constructions of time-space encountered and performatively enacted by the subject. Identity then becomes plural and refers itself not exclusively to the past but to a yet-to-be futurity. This corresponds to Stuart Hall's view of identity as transformation, rupture, difference, discontinuity, and as becoming rather than being (all, incidentally, familiar terms in Bakhtin's work): "Identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (51). It also accords with Gilroy's positing of "the instability and mobility of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade" (xi). Seen through the lens of the chronotope, diaspora communities, despite their own, sometimes rigid, determinations of who they are, end up embodying these views of identity as a process of constant movement in time, space, and timespace.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Safran ("Diasporas in Modern Societies"; "Comparing Diasporas").

2. A place of re-membering, for Fortier, is "a place of collective memory in which elements of the past are cobbled together to mould a communal body of belonging. It is a place where individual lives, present and past, are called upon to inhabit the present space, to 'member' it" ("Re-membering Places and the Performance of Belonging(s)" 59). A habitual space is "a space where I need not try to make

sense of what was going on: all was familiar, intelligible" (47).

3. See Anette Hoffmann's article in this volume.

4. See John Durham Peters for an etymological discussion of the term diaspora and its association with sowing, scattering and distraction.

5. Examples of such attempts can be found in Gilroy, Clifford, and Boyarin and Boyarin.

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Diaspora and Nation

Migration into Other Pasts*	Andreas Huyssen

ABSTRACT

Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Pasts

This essay reflects on diasporic and national memory and offers a case study of a little-known, but important novel by Zafer Senocak, a Turkish-German writer in whose work this constellation of diaspora and nation has become central after and because of German national unification. Diaspora and nation are analyzed as interdependent rather than opposing concepts. Senocak's novel poses a key question facing today's Turkish diaspora in Germany: is it possible or even desirable for a diasporic community to migrate into the catastrophic history of the host nation?

This essay has two parts – a reflection on diasporic and national memory and a case study of a remarkable, but little-known novel by Zafer Senocak, a Turkish-German writer in whose work this constellation of diaspora and nation has become central after and because of German unification.[1] Both topics – diaspora and Turkish-German writing – are new terrain for me. My past work on memory has dealt with national memory in Germany and with the travels of Holocaust memory across borders. I tried to understand the transformations over time of German memory culture after the Holocaust by reading its artistic, literary, philosophical, and architectural manifestations both before and after 1989 (Huyssen, *Twilight Memories* and *Present Pasts*). Being invited to speak about memory topics in Latin America, South Africa, Australia, and India in the 1990s, I came to be increasingly puzzled by what appeared to be something like a globalization of traumatic memory discourses in which the tropes and rhetoric of the Holocaust played an increasingly prominent role in very different national and political contexts.

Indeed, roughly since the epochal change of 1989/90, we have observed the emergence of a transnational or global memory culture of astonishing proportions,

and we have come to ask ourselves what this intense focus on the past and on traumatic memory might mean for the history of the present. I do not mean to suggest here that there is something like "one global memory," nor do I have a cosmopolitan memory in mind as Natan Sznaider and Daniel Levy have recently postulated it in their book *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter*. International human rights discourses and their legal practices based on universal claims can be characterized as cosmopolitan, but memory discourses remain substantively tied to the specific memories of social groups in time and place. If I speak of a global memory discourse, I'm referring to the emergence world-wide of concerns with the past and its codification in contemporary political, social, legal, and cultural discourses. Such developments are symptomatic of the changing parameters of time and space under the impact of globalization. We are facing a structural change in the ways we live and perceive temporality, ways that contrast quite clearly with the 20th century's dominant imaginary of utopian futures, liberation, and emancipation (Huyssen, *Twilight Memories* 13-36, 85-104).

Of course one can always cite immediate political reasons for the emergence of a powerful memory discourse in specific countries and contexts. It usually comes about after histories of mass exterminations, massacres, apartheid, military dictatorships, and with the struggles to secure the legitimacy and future of an emergent polity by finding ways to commemorate and adjudicate past wrongs. In my recent book *Present Pasts*, I have therefore argued that, although memory discourses appear to be global in one register (for example: the travels of Holocaust discourse, its tropes, images, and rhetoric into different contexts in South Africa or Argentina), they remain tied to the histories of specific nations and states and need to be rigorously read within those contexts. While there is no such thing as a postnational or a global memory, we must acknowledge that all such local and national memory discourses were energized by a political climate in which international human rights had become a powerful force. But transnational human rights activism and the always national or local memory discourses stand in an uneasy relationship with each other. They may reinforce each other in some instances, but they are not identical. Especially during the 1990s, there seemed to be a happy collusion and mutual reinforcement between cultural and juridical, national and transnational memory debates, with the compensations for Nazi slave laborers or the cases brought against Pinochet and other figures from the days of the Latin American dictatorships being the most visible examples. Unfortunately, this phase seems to be coming to an end now as the International Criminal Court has experienced a shaky start and a new kind of geopolitical crisis is threatening to engulf both the present and the future.

There is the imminent danger that the current international conflict between the West and the Muslim world and a new unilateral US foreign policy will make universal ideals such as human rights, civil society, and gender equality appear to be mere ideological props supporting the superiority claims of one civilization over all others.

When Samuel Huntington first spoke of a clash of civilizations, it appeared as no more than a retrograde revival of a Spenglerian kind of cultural anthropology. A few years later and after 9/11, the clash of civilizations begins to look ever more like an adequate description of a new geopolitics. When civilizations clash, the space for diasporic thinking, transnational exchange, and cultural hybridity shrinks. Orientalist and occidentalist tropes have a field day, banal anti-American and anti-European stereotypes abound on both sides of the Atlantic, and the metaphysics of civilizations, cultures, and nations takes over yet again.

This tendency to hold the past hostage to a national and cultural power politics makes a conference on diaspora and memory even more salutary. As opposed to national memory, diasporic memory remains seriously understudied, perhaps because it often falls prey to nostalgia and nostalgia by and large remains a negative category, something to be shunned. Whether diaspora refers to the classic case of the Jewish diaspora or to a whole spectrum of expats, exiles, and expellees, immigrants or political refugees, diaspora always seems the opposite of nation.[2] More often than not it refers to a minority culture within a larger majority culture organized around nation and state. Its claims to public memory will address another audience, another community, the community of the diasporic, its tenuous and often threatened status within the majority culture whose stereotyping of otherness combined with its exclusionary mechanisms may make a given diaspora appear more homogeneous than it is in reality. Precisely because of such pressures, the diasporic cannot offer redemption from the national, as is so often suggested in current discussions. Imaginaries of belonging, with their constructed deep histories, deliberate forgettings, and false memories, do not only characterize nations. The attempt to create a unified or even mythic memory of the lost homeland, of the history of displacement, and the desire to return, may be as much a temptation for the diaspora as the creation of a unitary national memory is for the nation. Often enough it is precisely the national mechanism of exclusion by a majority culture that generates and strengthens this diasporic counter-nationalism. Bertolt Brecht's *Jewish Wife* is a Lehrstück on this relationship between majority and minority identity. My point here is not to erase the difference between national and diasporic memory with a reductive ideology critique. In both cases, that of nation and of diaspora, such imaginaries of belonging may be as unavoidable and necessary as they are deeply problematic. Nevertheless, in terms of their memory formation, diaspora and nation, rather than being in opposition to each other, may have more troubling affinities than visible at first sight.

Some scholars have therefore suggested that this dependence of the notion of diaspora on the privileging of nation and nation state, makes diaspora a questionable analytic category in explaining the fast-changing conditions of migration and belonging today. Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal has recently argued that diaspora is "an extension of the nation-state model" in that it "constitutes foreignness within other nations and

ethnicities" and "implies a congruence between territory, culture, and identity" (Soysal 138). Against such a notion of boundedness and closure, she emphasizes new practices of belonging and enacting citizenship by migrants, an argument that also finds support in the work by James Holston and Teresa Caldeira on new forms of citizenship in Latin America outside or on the margin of national frameworks (Caldeira, *City of Walls*; Holston). While this emphasis on transformations in the present is justified, Soysal goes overboard when she dismisses diaspora as a critical category "destined to be a trope for nostalgia" (Soysal 149). For just as a reified notion of diaspora may block out the real present, the exclusive focus on issues of citizenship and everyday life in the present may prematurely block out issues of memory, history, and, yes, nostalgia which should be seen both in its affirmative delusional and its critical dimension rather than simply being dismissed. At a time when memory discourses are so prevalent in our culture, they pose new questions regarding diasporic memory, questions that are too easily dismissed if we were to follow Soysal's approach. It is particularly the relationship between diasporic memory and the memory formations of the national culture within which a given diaspora may be embedded, that remains seriously understudied. And here the notion of diaspora itself may assume new meanings in line with the changes of nationhood that Soysal and others have so cogently analyzed.

A further point needs to be made pertaining to the changing nature of nationhood and of diaspora under global conditions. One may even suggest that whole nations are becoming diasporic in relation to their past under the pressures of global media and the maelstrom of the postnational. After all, one of the most frequently heard laments in many nations today is about deterritorialization and the loss of cultural grounding, both central tropes in any discussion on diaspora. Home, Heimat, is no longer what it once used to be, either for the nation or for the diaspora. Clearly, national memory today, in an age of ever more transnational institutions, migrations, and networks, is being colored ever more by nostalgia and imagined memory. But so is diasporic memory at a time when pasts and presents of migrant populations lose the traditional coherence of diasporic community as a result of multiple travels and relocations back and forth. Traditional diaspora separated a diasporic present existentially from a past which thus could become ever more imaginary and mythic. Today's hyphenated and migratory cultures develop different structures of experience that may make the traditional understanding of diaspora as linked to roots, soil, and kinship highly questionable indeed. If diaspora means loss of a homeland combined with the unfulfilled desire to return, then the shuttling of whole migrant populations between host nation and homeland today may require some new conceptual language. In the absence of such a language, however, I would rather opt for a changed and changing understanding of diaspora itself – one that denaturalizes its notions of memory and culture and takes account of its changing relationship to the equally changing world of the national.

Diasporas may relate to a distant nation as a lost homeland, they may claim and create new nationhood, they may even speak of a diasporic nation. But however strong a case one may want to make for the structural and empirical affinities between nation and diaspora, we must remember certain basic differences that have not simply vanished. Diaspora, as opposed to nation in the traditional sense, is based on geographic displacement, on migration, and on an absence that may be lamented or celebrated. National memory presents itself as natural, authentic, coherent and homogeneous. Diasporic memory in its traditional sense is by definition cut off, hybrid, displaced, split. This fact grounds the affinity of diasporic memory in the structure of memory itself, which is always based on temporal displacement between the act of remembrance and the content of that which is remembered, an act of *recherche* rather than recuperation. Of course, this will not prevent diasporic memories from mimicking the identity fictions that energize nationhood. But structurally, diasporic consciousness comes closer to the structures of memory than national memory does. National memory usually veils its *Nachträglichkeit*. Diasporic memory in the vital as opposed to its reified sense remains critically aware of it. This could and should be an advantage. One might formulate it as a question: can national memory formations, which after all still exist and remain powerful, learn from diasporic memory?

This question is not asked all that often, since the dominant model of scholarly memory discourse in historiography remains tied to notions of national memory. Pierre Nora's multivolume *Lieux de mémoire* in France is as representative of this limitation as is the work of Hagen Schultze and Etienne François in Germany (Nora, *Realms of Memory*; Schultze and François, *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*). Despite the fundamental differences between French and German national history, the realms of memory in both mnemohistory projects are strictly national and do not make room for diasporic phenomena. Millions of migrants now live in dozens of diasporas within European nation states, but they remain structurally excluded from such national historiography of memory. National memory discourse is alive and well in Europe, though clearly involved in an uneasy relationship with an emergent European memory discourse. If it is true, as has recently been claimed by Dan Diner at a Leipzig conference about Central Europe's experience of catastrophe, that "Europe is being built from the jointly claimed pasts of its history, not least from the set of events comprising WorldWar II" and if World War II and the Holocaust indeed "appear to have something like the significance of a founding event for Europe as it unites," then the question arises where this assumed European identity leaves the millions of migrants and their children now participating in this building of the new Europe (Leggewie).

Sure, the European Union's commitment to fundamental human rights and the high-minded rejection of any and all genocidal racisms may (despite the European failure in Bosnia) be somewhat comforting to legal immigrants, but what about the foundational claims for this memory of the Holocaust as an identity-shaping

Zivilisationsbruch? How can non-European or peripheric diasporic people, including former colonial subjects living in Europe, relate to such a claim and how can or should they negotiate the invariably deep national memories of their host nations? And what is the effect of such an overriding foundational claim on the memories of European colonialism? My reading of Zafer Senocak's novel *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* will try to give some answers to such questions in relation to the German context of Senocak's work.

II

Looking at diasporas in Germany today, it seems to me that the relationship of diasporic memory with the traditional memorial culture of the "host nation" is an important but understudied question. It arises particularly in relation to the big Turkish-German minority, which is already four times the size of the Jewish-German population before Hitler, and growing. Much work on diasporas such as the Turks in Germany, legitimately deals with labor issues, citizenship issues, sociological questions of schooling, language, gender, religion, and the like. The emphasis is almost exclusively on the present. When it comes to the cultural dimensions of diaspora, however, the past takes over. We focus too much on loss rather than on renewal: loss of the real home, loss of a culture. Home is thought of not just as territory, but as a homogenous culture from which the diasporic community has been displaced, but which it must maintain at all cost in order to safeguard its identity. This reproduces a traditional but problematic understanding of culture rooted in anthropology. Thus diasporic culture is by definition tied to that which has been lost rather than to its negotiation with the majority culture within which it operates. This may explain why the question of how a diasporic community will share in the past of the national majority culture in which it lives can easily remain blocked by the insistence on diasporic cultural identity which perceives itself as threatened and victimized. Not to speak of the new culturalist racism, as analyzed by Etienne Balibar, that reifies cultural rather than racial biological difference for purposes of exclusion (Balibar 37, 48). Ironically, however, this specific condition of diasporic loss also resonates within national cultures today, at a time, our time, when culture itself seems to function, as Zafer Senocak put it, like a "magic formula for that which has vanished, is hidden, or has been buried" in a rationalized and secularized world that is desperately looking for meaning (Senocak, *Zungenentfernung* 37). Such a reductive notion of culture functions like blinders for any analysis of the relationship between national and diasporic culture. The more diaspora and nation share the perception of loss, the more they will both insist on safeguarding identity and fortifying their borders, thus ossifying the past and closing themselves off to alternative futures.

This then leads to the question of how the diasporic immigrant can relate to the memory of the host nation. I will focus on the specific case of Turkish memory in Germany, one of the most recalcitrant and difficult cases for this kind of question, not

the least because Germans and Turks are not historically bound by a colonial relationship which would give them something like a shared history. Speaking about the years before German unification, Zafer Senocak once put it this way: "We shared Germany's present with the Germans, but not their history" (Senocak, *Atlas des tropischen Deutschland* 20). The question raised here for the memory debate is simply this: is it possible or even desirable for a diasporic community to migrate into the history of the host nation? How does such a temporal migration, as it were, affect diasporic memory itself? And how can diasporic memory have an impact on the national memory into which it migrates? Clearly terms like assimilation, integration, and especially symbiosis provide premature closure to such questions. Concepts like these focus on potentially desired or dreaded results, not on negotiation, compromises, and conflicts.

Germany and its Turks then. Germany with its tradition of citizenship based on *ius sanguinis,* its rather homogeneous culture, and its continuing claim not to be a country of immigration, an *Einwanderungsland*, clearly has become just that for its two million immigrants from Turkey, a country still likely to trigger an orientalist Feindbild with deep historical roots almost anywhere in Europe today. But as an *Einwanderungsland*, Germany is, of course, different, say, from the US, since its identity as a nation is not based on immigration. And it is different from the former European colonial powers because it lacks mechanisms such as the commonwealth or a unifying notion such as *civilisation française* that binds colonizers and colonized. There was never a colonial relationship between Germany and Turkey, which would make a straightforward postcolonial approach to Turkish-German literature problematic. Turkey was an ally of Germany in World War I, neutral in World War II, and a host during the Third Reich of significant German and Austrian exile colonies in Istanbul and Ankara, welcomed and nurtured by the Turkish Republic, a fact mostly forgotten in contemporary Germany. In the meantime, an ever-growing percentage of Turks in Germany are – with or without citizenship – hyphenated Germans. They go to German schools, speak German as their native language, however much Turkish is still spoken in the family, vote in local elections, and they travel to Turkey as tourists, not unlike German-Americans or German green-card holders from the US do when they visit the old country. So the question inevitably emerges for such Turkish-Germans how they should relate to German history, especially in the decade since unification when German memory discourse has undergone several noteworthy transformations and conflicts that clearly inform the present-day political culture of Germany. One key question here is: how will second and third generation Germans of Turkish descent deal with the burden of Auschwitz and the Third Reich? Will they or should they even assume responsibility for this past or will it lead them to explore the past of their country of descent and its darker sides? The history of Turkey as their "own history," as some Germans would call it, except that of course it is not "their own" history in a strict sense. At best it is the history

of their parents and grandparents. However one may think about this issue of responsibility for the past, it is clear that we are dealing with an interesting constellation of histories and memories within the Turkish diaspora in Germany, a constellation that would take quite different forms in the Turkish diaspora in London, where issues of British colonialism would resonate more strongly in relation to the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic.

If one asks the question of how German Turks relate to German memory today, one must first guard against the misconception of seeing German memory culture as a homogeneous thing. Ever since unification, the memory issue in Germany has become enormously complicated. While Holocaust memorial culture has become ever more prevalent in the 1990s (best symbolized perhaps by the Berlin Mahnmal debate, but also by the numerous 50th anniversaries, such as those of the Wannsee conference; the liberation of Auschwitz, the end of the war), it has become overlaid by other sets of memories triggered by unification (memories of the Stasi as well as the increasingly nostalgic memories of the GDR – what has come to be called *Ostalgie*). The gap between East German and West German memory discourses regarding fascism and the Third Reich has absorbed a lot of attention, and it still prevents us from speaking of one national memory culture. In the early 1990s there was the debate about the right and desirability of access to Stasi files and what came to be called a second *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Even more consequential were the drawn-out negotiations about property restitution, the legal questions about who was responsible for the shootings at the wall, and the increasingly popular view in the East that unification meant colonization. Only recently did Eastern and Western memory approach each other in the new public debates about the expulsion from the Eastern territories after World War II and about the air war against German cities. The focus of German memory culture is in flux, but it remains rigorously focused on things German. Neither scholars nor critics in Germany ever bother to ask what these debates actually might mean for the Turkish-German community.[3] In 1989/90 Turks in Berlin were double outsiders, both in the present and in relation to the past. And things have not changed significantly since then.

III

But let me backtrack at this point to 1998, to a moment when there was a chance to open up the discourse of German and Jewish memory, the discourse of perpetrators and victims, to a new dimension, a dimension that might have allowed a Turkish-German voice to triangulate the debate about German and Jewish memory in new ways, thus reflecting on the realities of migration into contemporary Germany. In the same week that novelist Martin Walser, in his speech given in Frankfurt's Paulskirche when he was given the *Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels*, polemicized against the overbearing presence of Holocaust memory in the media, capturing all media attention and

causing a controversy that still reverberates today, a slim novel by Zafer Senocak was published by a small publisher in Munich. The novel was entitled *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (Dangerous Kinship or Dangerous Affinities), conjuring up literary memories of titles such as Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses* or Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*.[4] It is a novel about Turkish, Jewish, and German kin over three generations, told by the German-born descendant of this family from a post-1990 Berlin perspective. But it is also a novel, at the metaphoric historical level, about a web of affinities over time between Turks and Germans, between Jews and Turks, Germans and Jews, affinities and kinships that are called dangerous – but dangerous to whom and why?

Senocak was already known in Germany as a writer of several short prose works, poetry, and essay collections that focused on issues of the Turkish diaspora in Germany, on issues of cultural nationalism, bilinguality, and the political relations between Christian Europe and Islam. But the chance to break through the repetitive compulsions of the German-Jewish dialogue within Germany and to open them up to a significant new dimension grounded in the existence in Germany of a new minority population, its culture, and its memories, was entirely missed. There was not much of a public reception of Senocak's novel. It never sold very well, is out of print by now and not even present in the university library of the FU-Berlin. The oblivious attitude of the West-German feuilleton and of academic scholarship toward Jewish and/or exiled writers in the 1950s and 1960s seems to repeat itself now vis-à-vis emergent Turkish-German writers such as Zafer Senocak – a basic unwillingness to engage, combined with forms of studied ignorance.[5] In addition, the strength of the national memory discourse and its focus on Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust was so overwhelming that Senocak's intervention did not get the chance to be noticed, even though the theme of his novel focused on the popular topic of memory and the archives of experience in contemporary Berlin after the fall of the wall.

My reason for focusing on this little-known gem of fiction is this. With great literary subtlety and narrative skill, Senocak raises the question of how Turkish-Germans or second-generation Turks can migrate into German history (Senocak, *Atlas des tropischen Deutschland* 16), while at the same time having a rather uprooted relationship with the history of their own parents and grandparents which is often shrouded in mystery. Leslie Adelson has pointedly stated that Zafer Senocak "write[s] a new subject of German remembrance into being," one that is still persistently ignored by German academic criticism, but that can only become stronger and more manifest in years to come (Adelson, "The Turkish Turn" 333).

This issue of Turkish diasporic memory in relation to German national memory surfaced in Senocak's *Atlas des tropischen Deutschland* (1992) in two essays first published in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in January 1990 and in Berlin's *TAZ* in January 1992 respectively. Clearly the emergence of a Turkish memory problematic in his work was

triggered by German unification. Unification posed new kinds of identity problems for second-generation Turks who witnessed a series of violent right-wing attacks on foreigners and especially on Turks in the early 1990s. Before 1989, the issue of German national history and identity, apart from the intense discussions of so-called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the FRG, was rather marginal, allowing both Germans and immigrants, Senocak argues, to avoid confronting German national history. There was no emphatic nationalism. Theories of constitutional patriotism, even postnationalism as in the work of Jürgen Habermas, marked an intellectual left-liberal consensus. At the same time, however, citizenship continued to be ruled by the nationalist *ius sanguinis* and one must remember how intensely national the German understanding of culture remained all along, particularly vis-à-vis its Turkish immigrants and in relation to their cultural and citizenship rights. Integration into German culture was demanded, and in the late 1990s, after citizenship regulations had been somewhat relaxed, the CDU even advocated something like a *Leitkultur*, a dominant national culture, as guideline for all immigrants. The concept was roundly criticized in the media and in intellectual circles, but by and large it remains German practice.

As Senocak's essays pose the question whether Germany can become a "Heimat für die Türken," a homeland for the Turks, he acknowledges that issues of national identity became much more prominent during and after unification. This, in turn, leads him to ask new questions about his own intellectual and political position. In 1989, West Berlin had ceased to be a space of happy limbo and of time damned up by the frozen structures of the Cold War, "gestaute Zeit," as Dan Diner once called it. As the wall was torn down, Berlin's urban, political, and mental pasts began to haunt the present in powerful ways. Memory began to take material form in the debates and practices of urban reconstruction and national self-understanding (Huyssen, *Present Pasts* 49-71). Inevitably, Senocak's work was shaped by this context, and he turned to his own genealogical past, and did so with a strong emphasis on his patriarchal lineage.

Thus in a later essay on the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, entitled "Thoughts on May 8, 1995," Senocak describes how his father experienced the war on the radio in his Turkish village, relishing, like other Turks, in the German attack on the godless Soviet Union which was foiled by Hitler in its plans to invade Turkey in the Caucasus.[6] This and other memories of Germans and Turks being brothers in arms in World War I then lead Senocak to pose the 1995 memory problem in generational terms: "In 1945 my father experienced neither a liberation nor a collapse. He was neither victim nor perpetrator. This vantage point allows me to raise a few questions" (Senocak *Zungenentfernung* 26, my translation).

Neither victim, nor perpetrator – this was the formula for the creation of the part autobiographic, part fictional protagonist and narrator of *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*, Sascha Muteschem. "I am a grandchild of victims and perpetrators," (40)[7] writes the

narrator who is the son of a German-Jewish mother and a Turkish father, and grandson of a Turkish hero of the East who, as the novel slowly lets on, was involved as an organizer in the Armenian deportations of 1915 and worked as a secret agent for Mustapha Kemal, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, and fought the Greeks at the Western front in Anatolia in 1921, a campaign that led to the forced expulsion of 1.5 million people. The question of the novel then is not just how the German son of a Turkish father who experienced World War II from afar can relate to German memories of the Third Reich. The question becomes one of entirely different kinships and the dangerous memories they trigger for the Turkish-Jewish-German grandson. A prehistory (pre-history from the Holocaust perspective) of expulsions, deportations, and genocide appears on the periphery of German memory culture, and it is no less German for that. It is this triangulation of Jewish, Turkish, and German memories that Senocak writes into being via a fictional family history and the vicissitudes of its discovery by the novel's protagonist.

The point of the narrative is not simply the proposition that Germany and Turkey share a history involving genocides that have left a burden of guilt to successive generations. It is not the elective affinity of genocidal guilt that is at stake. The question is rather how such histories are remembered and how they can be imagined and written at a time when the changing memory culture of Germany poses new problems of memory for the Turkish immigrants and their descendants.[8]

At first reading, Senocak's novel appears deceptively simple. Only slowly does it reveal its layers of historical, ethical, and literary complexity. The deeper genealogical past is triggered for Sascha, who works as a journalist and writer in Berlin, by the sudden death of his parents. Having spent the years 1989 to 1992 teaching in a Midwestern college in the United States, he entirely missed out on the key period of Berlin's transformation. Since his return to Berlin, he lives with Marie, a German documentary filmmaker who is in the midst of producing a documentary about Talat Pascha, a leader of the Young Turks responsible for the Armenian genocide of 1915 and refugee to Germany, where he was murdered by an Armenian in Berlin's Hardenbergstrasse in 1921. After the death of his parents in a car accident, Sascha is called to Munich, where he grew up and where his mother's family lived. A public notary hands him a silver box as part of his inheritance. It is a box filled to the brim with notebooks – a diary his Turkish grandfather had kept from 1916 until his mysterious suicide at age 40 in 1936. Of course Sascha, born in 1954, knows certain essentials of family history that subtly bind Germany and Turkey: he knows that this grandfather committed suicide just shortly before he was to accompany the Turkish Olympic team as a sports official to the Berlin Olympics of 1936. He also knows that during the Third Reich, his mother's family immigrated to Istanbul, where they found shelter and she met her future Turkish husband, while many of her Jewish relatives became victims of the Holocaust. The memory of this Turkish grandfather had been treated as a family secret in Sascha's

childhood. As he now remembers, he once found some photos in the attic of a man with a big moustache, which were then immediately thrown in the fire by his parents. But Sascha's hope to learn more about this mysterious man is quickly disappointed. The only remaining witness, his father, is dead. And the notebooks are written in Arabic and in Cyrillic script, neither of which Sascha, who barely knows any Turkish, can decipher. Being denied access to this archive of family history, he decides not to reconstruct, but to invent the story of his grandfather (Senocak, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* 38). In an as yet unpublished essay on Berlin, entitled "Die Hauptstadt des Fragments," Senocak writes about this novel: "History as document and invention becomes the book's real protagonist, and it becomes ever clearer that the search for truth can be documented only poorly" (Senocak, "Capital of the Fragment").

Given Sascha's fear of what he may find out, it is only toward the end of the novel that he hires a translator, but apart from one single entry, in which the grandfather claims that Muslim culture lacks a notion of guilt, the reader never gets to hear the grandfather's authentic voice, not even in translation. The secret of the silver box remains a secret for the reader, and, one surmises, a limited source for the writer who has to find his own literary and memorial language for what he finds out from the translations. Rather than revealing a documentary dimension by revealing the grandfather's voice, the novel maintains this absence, and it ends with the grandson's version of the rationale for the grandfather's suicide. This last chapter of the book, wholly italicized to set it off from the foreground narration, is introduced with the following words that provide access to the past and open out to a future of the family's secret becoming part of memory: "At last I feel in a position to tell the story as it happened. It might end something like this" (Senocak, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* 134). This is the "might," the "ungefähr" that haunts all memory enterprises and their transformation into literature.

IV

The story of Sascha Muteschem raises all the theoretical problems I have discussed regarding contemporary diasporas. The traditional understanding of diaspora as loss of homeland and desire to return itself becomes largely irrelevant for the second and third generations who, contrary to Senocak himself, are no longer conversant in the language and culture of the country of their ancestors. Whether or not they were to describe themselves as diasporic subjects (which Senocak, I sense, would not do), the key problems lie in their relationship to the national culture they live in, rather than to the imaginary of roots in the culture of ancestors.[9] It is primarily a problem of life in the present and the negotiation with the host culture. If, however, this national host culture is intensely oriented toward memory and traumatic history, difficulties may arise for the immigrant of how to relate to those national memories. The more national the surrounding culture becomes, the more will the migrant also be pushed towards issues of identity, ethnicity, and belonging. Berlin clearly has become much

more national since 1990, and Senocak's political essays testify to that from the perspective of the immigrant who experiences new difficulties with his identity. But his prose fiction questions the very notion of identity, and it avoids any hint of cultural nostalgia. As the novel focuses on an individual rather than on collective memory, Şenocak emphasizes the lack of full accessibility to the truth of a genealogy that reaches more than a generation back. He shows how the very search for the Turkish grandfather (imposed on him, as it were, by the German notary who handed him the silver box with the notebooks) encountered that other genocide as part of his own diasporic genealogy – a perilous kinship and a dangerous affinity for the Turkish German that forces him to engage that other past. But in the fictional text Şenocak represents the Armenian genocide as a gap, as an absence, though an explosive one, in a double way: there are only scattered hints of what happened in 1915, "the year of the corpses," and the historical truth of the grandfather's life remains buried for the reader in the inherited silver box, a metaphor perhaps for how in the political world of today the Armenian genocide itself remains officially unacknowledged by Turkey.

But in the "invented" passage about the death of the grandfather, which is also the end of the novel itself, the grandfather's role as perpetrator is mitigated in a most surprising way by the narrator. The grandfather's past catches up with him in 1936 when, at age 40, he receives a letter without return address from the Armenian woman he loved as a young man and helped escape the deportations. She tells him about their daughter, whom he never knew, and reminds him that he had sworn to kill himself if they were ever parted – another perilous kinship that is the cause of his suicide in 1936. But even here, the reader is left to wonder: is it the acknowledgment of guilt for his involvement in the genocide or is it the broken promise that is the ultimate cause of the suicide? The "ungefähr" of the invented ending is not dissolved into some delusion of transparency.

Perpetrators and victims: in individual family histories, the stark binary may not always hold. But what does this mean for Germany and its diasporic communities today? This question returns us to the narrator's present, which he characterizes as follows in chapter 25:

In today's Germany, Jews and Germans no longer face one another alone. Instead, a situation has emerged which corresponds to my personal origin and situation. In Germany now, a trialogue is developing among Germans, Jews, and Turks, among Christians, Jews and Moslems. The undoing of the German-Jewish dichotomy might release both parties, Germans and Jews, from the burden of their traumatic experiences. But for this to succeed they would have to admit the Turks into their domain. And for their part, the Turks in Germany would have to discover the Jews, not just as part of the German past in which they cannot share, but as part of the present in which they live. Without the Jews the Turks stand in a dichotomous relation to the Germans. They tread in the footprints of the Jews of the past. (Gefährliche Verwandtschaft 89 f.)

But then he immediately casts doubt on such an optimistic scenario:

I only have these fantasies when I'm in a good mood. Reality lends no support to such concrete optimistic ideas. My reality is a dark hole, the breadth or narrowness of which I cannot gauge, in which I can hear people breathing but cannot see them. Language serves us only as a means to overlook ourselves. I live in a void which offers me nothing to which to attach the fraying threads which are meant to connect me to the three parts of my self. Three bucking, blocking parts. Two of them are at each other's throats the moment they think they can ignore the third. Ménages à trois are of course the most complicated kind of relationship. (90)[10]

My argument about nation and diaspora in Germany has been that such a *ménage à trois* doesn't stand a chance as long as the public memory discourse in Germany remains fundamentally and persistently national, focused on German perpetrators and Jewish victims. Of course, there have been multiple openings toward Jewish and German-Jewish memory since the 1980s in literature, oral history, historiography, and in the reemergence in public of Germany's Jewish communities, but the Turkish immigrants and their German descendants remain largely absent from Germany's memorial culture, except perhaps in the way that Şenocak suggests with a deeply ambiguous metaphor: "But when the question, who is a German and who is not, is asked today, one looks to the Turks. They provide the test cases for the limits of Germanness. Jews trying to come terms with their Germanness discover the Turks in the mirror" (*Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* 90). In the novel, this refers of course to a protagonist of Jewish-Turkish descent. As a metaphor capturing the reality of Turks and Jews in Germany today, however, it suggests deep pessimism about any possibility of cracking open the German understanding of nationhood and national culture. Despite recent reforms in the laws governing citizenship, the German understanding of culture will remain national to the core until Germans, trying to come to terms with their Germanness or, for that matter, their Europeanness, discover the Turk in the mirror.

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Notes

* I would like to acknowledge here the critical comments I received on the draft of this essay from Leslie Adelson, Meltem Ahiska, and Müge Sökmen.

1. The claim that unification marks a break can be traced easily in Şenocak's essays, but it may not apply to Turkish-German literature in general. Thus Leslie Adelson, a leading scholar of

Turkish-German literature, writes: "Unification did not inaugurate a literary commingling of Turkish and German remembrances, but it did coincide with its intensification" (Adelson, "The Turkish Turn" 327).

2. Others such as Arjun Appadurai have noted the emergence of postnational diasporas in the context of mass migrations and electronic communications (Appadurai 1996). Clearly, diasporic realities are in flux. My study of memory cultures, however, has persuaded me that it may be premature to argue that national configurations are no longer pertinent for the study of diasporic memories (Huyssen, *Present Pasts*).

3. While such questions do not seem to be asked in Germany at all, US scholar Leslie Adelson has discussed recent Turkish-German literature as an important component of *Wende-Literatur* in Germany ("The Turkish Turn"). Her forthcoming book will be entitled *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Towards a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (anticipated for 2004 or 2005).

4. I first encountered references to Şenocak's *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* in another brilliant and wide-ranging article by Leslie Adelson, published in *New German* Critique and entitled "Touching Tales of Turks, Germans, and Jews" (2000), the first major scholarly treatment of the novel anywhere.

5. The German non-reception of Şenocak's fictional texts contrasts sharply with the extremely positive reception *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* has received in France. The novel has also just been translated into Italian, and in the US academic world, Şenocak is one of the more sought after Turkish-German writers who has held visiting engagements numerous times since the 1990s. Of course, not all Turkish-German writers have been similarly ignored in Germany. Exceptions are Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Feridun Zaimoğlu, to mention just two.

6. I rely here on the analysis of this essay Leslie Adelson has offered in her essay on "The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature and Memory Work" (330 f.).

7. All page references to the novel are to the German original, but the translations are taken from Tom Cheesman's copyrighted English translation, available on the web.

8. It is interesting to note that such memory issues, regarding the Armenian genocide, the Greek expulsion or the war against the Kurds, are now also surfacing with increasing intensity in Turkey itself, something that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. Thus, in March 2003, there was a richly textured and wide-ranging conference on "The Politics of Memory" at Istanbul's Boğaziçi University, organized by Meltem Ahiska of the Department of Sociology.

9. Clearly neither Şenocak nor his works are to be considered diasporic in the simple traditional sense. He is a German writer. The question to what extent his work still participates in a changing diasporic condition or is something entirely different will no doubt be raised by others more conversant with the field of Turkish-German studies than I am.

10. Leslie Adelson discusses the contrast between these two quotes as casting doubt on any straightforward representational narrative of traumatic memories or, in the terms of this essay, of the linear interweaving of diasporic and national memory cultures ("Touching Tales" 124). This reading perfectly captures Şenocak's major concern regarding documentation and referentiality when it comes to issues of memory.

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Adopted Memory

The Holocaust, Postmemory, and Jewish Identity in America	Pascale R. Bos

ABSTRACT

Adopted Memory: The Holocaust, Postmemory, and Jewish Identity in America
The Holocaust is an important motif in the art and literature by American-Jewish authors of Eastern European background who are also descendants of Holocaust survivors. Their imagining of the Holocaust is at times infused with a strong nostalgic "postmemorial" longing. While these works may present this longing in a self-conscious fashion, the ways in which they are received by an American audience without a familial connection to the Holocaust can nevertheless be problematic. For highly assimilated American Jews, these works may not facilitate any kind of a genuine encounter with the horror of the Holocaust, but instead function merely to foster a stronger fascination with the imagined more "authentic" Jewish life of the sthetl. *As such, it strengthens Jewish identity on the basis of nostalgia.*

The biblical discourse of "diaspora," of exile from the promised land, has been one of defining importance for the dispersed Jews of the post-Temple era. For several millennia it allowed for the formation of (and sustenance of) a sense of identity, which, while initially primarily based on a sense of shared (religious) destiny, came to form the basis for a sense of cultural and national identity. After the Holocaust, however, for some Jewish communities the notion of "diaspora" has come to function in a very different, albeit no less important, way. It has done so not because the return to the biblical "homeland" has now, indeed, become possible by means of the creation of the state of Israel, but because a new sense of exile emerged among the newly dispersed Jewish survivors of Eastern Europe.

For some of these survivors, their forced expulsion (during the Nazi years through ghettoization, deportation, and murder, and after the war due to lingering anti-Semitism and animosity from the new Communist regime) came to be experienced as a new form

of exile, one that would take a peculiar form, due to the complex set of political, cultural, and social contexts framing this sense of loss. This new form of exile, this new *diaspora*, was characterized not only by the loss of a certain space, but also by the demise of a certain life and culture, which now remained frozen in time. After all, after the onslaught of the Nazis little was left of the Jewish communities in their former hometowns in Eastern Europe. While homes of deported or murdered Jews were sometimes left intact, the traces of the religion, the culture, the language, that is: of their existence, were erased so successfully that the towns no longer represented a Jewish home. Only in the space of memory there was still a place of identity, of "homecoming."

For these survivors who settled in large numbers in the United States, the loss of the former Eastern European homeland and mother tongue strongly informed their sense of self and belonging. Their memories and losses in turn carried over to their children, the so-called "second generation" (children of Holocaust survivors born after the war). They grew up in the US, where their present-day lives were infused with their parents' memories of the Holocaust, and of lives and communities lost. As such, their children became the recipients of what Marianne Hirsch has called *post-memory,* a second-hand, delayed, and indirect form of memory that "is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection" (*Family Frames* 8).[1] As these children were exposed to the remnants of this lost life and the trauma of persecution and survival through their parents' stories and perhaps a few photographs, their sense of identity, of "home," became tied to this sense of exile from Eastern Europe as well. Hirsch indeed characterizes this experience of the second generation precisely as a *diasporic experience*, an "exile from the space of identity" (243).

This space from which the children of Eastern European survivors found themselves exiled is not just the incomprehensible trauma of the Holocaust from which the parents have suffered and which can never be fully understood, but it also denotes a very specific form of *geographic* loss. The homes, culture, and language, in short: the world of the parents in as far as it refers to the Eastern European *shtetl* cannot be visited as a tourist in the present either: "Our past is literally a foreign country we can never hope to visit" (Hirsch, *Family Frames* 244). Among children of Eastern European survivors, then, living in North America in the twentieth or twenty-first century is living in a diaspora whereby Vilna and Czernowitz, rather than *Yerushalayim* represent the locus of Jewish loss and exile.

Over the past two decades, some of these children (and now grandchildren) have articulated this particular experience of cultural and historical displacement, the "exile from the space of identity" in literary works and in visual art. One finds such expression in the works of such divergent authors and artists as Helen Epstein, Henri Raczymow, Art Spiegelman, and Jonathan Safran Foer, for instance. Some of these artists and their works are now well known and their works among the most celebrated of post-Holocaust

art and literature. One of the most complex and interesting characteristics of many of these artistic second-generation works is that they are often infused with a complex elegiac quality. Nostalgic longing or mourning for what was lost and never really known, people, places, and a time never visited but nevertheless familiar are evoked as a way to imagine oneself connected to this history that took place before one was born.

While many of these authors and artists make explicit the self-conscious playing with, or off of, the nostalgia for what is lost and explore critically in their work what may or may not be authentic about their personal connection to Eastern Europe and to their parents' losses incurred during or because of the Holocaust, the question of how and by whom this work is received in North America is an intriguing and important one. In the US after all, such works are read or seen by an audience which is either not Jewish, or, if it is Jewish, does not have a personal, familial connection to the Holocaust. What does it mean when this imaginative "memory work" is no longer performed by the author or artist, but shared by means of the finished work with an audience? How are these works "read?" In particular in the case of a Jewish audience, one may wonder what kind of community of knowing or remembering is forged by such works. What kind of expression of "exile" or "diaspora" does this audience find to relate to? Does a Jewish-American audience internalize the mourning and losses such works represent? Can the postmemories articulated here be shared, be passed on? If so, what would such a sharing look like?

I discuss here briefly two "postmemory projects" by American Jews of Eastern European descent with familial ties to the Holocaust, a memorial project with photography, *Eyes from the Ashes* by Ann Weiss; and a novel, *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer, and suggest how certain artistic work created by second (or third) generation artists and authors can both articulate profound personal and cultural losses caused by the Holocaust that cannot be assimilated, while it can simultaneously be read by its audience (which on the whole does not have such familial connection) in a way that is nostalgic and sentimental rather than that it reflects a genuine confrontation with this incredible loss. Indeed, as I will argue, specifically for an American-Jewish audience without a familial postmemory of the Holocaust, certain kinds of encounters with the Holocaust in the form of works by second generation artists, can bring forth a pronounced nostalgic tenor for the lost Eastern European world of their (imagined) forefathers, which, rather than leading to mourning, leads to a reaffirming of one's sense of Jewish identity and belonging.

How is it possible that a history so profoundly disturbing and incomparable can become internalized and appropriated in a nearly sentimental fashion? The answer lies both in the distinctive nature of the process of identification which some of this postmemory work invites, a process which can lead to a too facile appropriation, and in the peculiar way in which the Holocaust has been used within the American-Jewish

community since the 1970s as a "unifying theme" intended to promote Jewish identity and "stem the tide" of "a too-successful assimilation" (Apel 15).[2]

Adopting Memories

Hirsch has suggested that while *postmemory* is a term that works well to describe the experience of children of survivors because "familial inheritance offers the clearest model for it," (as the Holocaust figures for them as a personal history, as a *family narrative)*, postmemory need not be defined by this "familial inheritance and transmission of cultural trauma" ("Surviving Images" 10). For even though "familial inheritance offers the clearest model for it," it "need not be strictly an identity position" ("Surviving Images" 10). After all, as Leslie Morris argues, "…as the memory of the Holocaust circulates beyond the actual bounds of lived, remembered experience…it seeps into the imaginary of other cultures (and other geographical spaces) as postmemory…" (291). Thus, "outsiders," too, have access to a form of "second-hand" postmemory (Hirsch, *Family Frames* 249). This kind of non-familial postmemory may be understood as an *act*, as a "*retrospective witnessing by adoption* (Hirsch, "Surviving Images" 10).[3] Besides "adoption," Hirsch mentions "identification" and "projection" as processes through which those who were not there may gain access to experiences of others ("Surviving Images" 9-10). "It is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences – and thus also the memories – of others as one's own, or, more precisely, as experiences on might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one's own life story" (Hirsch "Projected Memory" 9).[4]

Postmemory of the Holocaust in the US context thus can be interpreted as a form of adopting of experiences, or of identifying with certain experiences, that facilitates the bridging of the gap between the experience of survivors and those who were not *there*. In its most positive rendering, this suggests the possibility of a kind of ethical relation between outsider and insider, and the outsider's willingness to truly conceive of and empathize with the suffering of the insider. The risks of such adopting or inscribing are easy to see, however, as the appropriation and incorporation of the other's experiences and memories as one's own needs to be resisted. One cannot forget the very real distance between self and other, lest it result in what Dominick LaCapra calls an "acting out" that leads to an identification whereby one constitutes one's self as "a surrogate victim" (198). A too-facile identification erases very real differences, Hirsch suggests, whereby "context, specificity, responsibility, history" risk becoming blurred ("Projected Memory" 17).

Interestingly enough, while Hirsch rightfully warns against "narcissistic, idiopathic looking" whereby viewers identify with the images they see and project themselves into them ("Projected Memory" 9), in much of her writing she remains optimistic that the audience will indeed retain this kind of critical distance towards the work they see or read.[5] She believes that using "specific distancing devices" in the work can help,

("Projected Memory" 16) and that the challenge for the "postmemorial artist" is to "find the balance that allows the spectator to enter the image, to imagine the disaster, but that *disallows an overappropriative identification that makes distances disappear*" ("Projected Memory" 10).[6]

In her discussion of the reception of "postmemorial" work, Hirsch never suggests who the (general) audience of this kind of work may be, however. I would argue that by not specifying this audience further, Hirsch avoids having to confront the complex interplay that may be taking place between this particular artistic and literary discourse and a Jewish-American audience specifically. This encounter, I suggest, is likely fraught with a host of additional problems, as the Holocaust is so over-determined as an event of great significance to the American-Jewish community that it takes on an entirely new set of meanings. The way the Holocaust is presented within Jewish communal life in America as an event that took place in Eastern Europe and of which the majority of Jewish victims were Eastern European Jews, that is, the Jewish community from which most American Jews descend, invites a kind of over-identification that leaves few options for appropriate distance. This identification has been actively encouraged within the Jewish community for he past three decades, as critical studies by Alan Mintz and Peter Novick on the influence of the Holocaust on American life have suggested.[7] From about 1970 on, the rise of identity politics in America led to a change in the previous push for Jewish integration. American Jews came to see themselves as "an endangered species," which led to an "inward regrouping that would promote Jewish identity and stem the tide of intermarriage and a too successful assimilation" (Apel 5). This "regrouping" took place in part through "a more open confrontation with Auschwitz and a heightened identification with Israel" (Apel 4). In particular the Holocaust came to serve as a unifying theme, as, by this time, the Vietnam War created a new kind of sympathetic attention to the experience of victimization. America changed from a culture in which adaptation had been the main cultural norm to one in which "survival" became the primary virtue, making it particularly receptive to the events of the Holocaust.

What this means is that had it not been for the Holocaust which put a spotlight on Eastern Europe and its very large Jewish community before the war, it is safe to assume (based on their very successful integration) that American Jews would know as little about the place they are from as all other American immigrant groups. Instead, Mintz suggests, it is, ironically, because of the attention that the events of the Holocaust have garnered, that American Jews are aware of this history at all and feel connected to this legacy: "For American Jews, the indelible images of the Holocaust have filled in that blurred vacancy with a sharply etched picture of the place they came from" (163). The "place they came from," however, is now entirely determined by the Holocaust, and can only be imagined as this locus of tragedy: "If the knowledge of that place and its culture remains vague, at least the sense of loss and sadness

elicited by the Holocaust has an address to which to attach itself" (163). It is at the same time the Holocaust that overshadows any true knowledge or connection that could be made to that world: "Yet even for those who have been touched by 'Holocaust consciousness,' familiarity with the world of Eastern European Jewry rarely extends beyond a fascination with the liquidation of that world during the…Third Reich" (163).

It is indeed because of the Holocaust that *all* American Jews, both those whose families came from Eastern Europe in the 19th and 20th century as immigrants, and those survivors who fled Nazism and their children, define their sense of individual and communal identity as tied to the lost Eastern European "homeland." It is through the Holocaust that American Jews trace back their heritage to villages and families they have never personally known.

How such strong identifications then make over-appropriative readings of post-Holocaust, post-memorial work more likely, can be seen in the following two examples. Ann Weiss's *Eyes from the Ashes* is a "memory project" which consists of a video, a photo exhibit, and a photo book.[8] At the center of all three is a collection of reprints of snapshots brought along by Jews who were deported to Auschwitz after the liquidation of a Polish ghetto in 1943. Weiss came across the photos by chance during a tour of Auschwitz and created an exhibit with the reproductions of these photos with which she has traveled around the United States for the past decade. She also shows a video that contains a selection of the photos as well as the story of their discovery.[9] In the book, *The Last Album: Eyes from the Ashes of Auschwitz-Birkenau*, several hundreds of the photos that Weiss found at Auschwitz have been beautifully reproduced. The first (and by far largest) part of the book contains the photos, organized by theme: photos from the different schools and orphanages, the Chasidic community, Zionist organizations, and different families. The photos depict ordinary pre-war Jewish community life and activities: we see photos of families, children, friends, weddings, and so forth. In fact, little is remarkable about any of these photos, apart from the fact that the spectator knows that the people portrayed in these photographs were likely killed by the Nazis. This knowledge of their tragic deaths creates a moving disjunction: the contrast between these vibrant, healthy, happy Jewish faces which give us a glimpse of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before the Nazi invasion, and their inevitable, senseless deaths in the Nazi camps. For many American readers, the pictures in this book may indeed provide an important reminder and a first photographic image of a thriving, very normal pre-war Polish Jewish community. The photos form a stark contrast with the now widely circulated images of camp inmates, emaciated faces staring through barbed wire fences, and piles of corpses. In fact, this contrast forms the strongest rationale for the reproduction of these photographs, Weiss suggests: "these photos do not depict the familiar nightmare images of violence and death commonly associated with Hitler's Europe. Instead they resonate with life. In these intimate photos, we witness life as it was

supposed to be, life before the horror began" (20). What matters to Weiss is that the reproduction of these photos is supposed to return humanity to the victims.

Weiss presents her work as a personal mission: the act of painstakingly reproducing and archiving these photos served a function for her, the daughter of Eastern-European survivors who grew up with little or no family pictures. As such, it constitutes important "postmemory work" and possibly allowed for a process of mourning and "working through." By presenting the photos and the exhibit in this book to a wider audience of American Jews and non-Jews who (on the whole) do not have a familial connection to the Holocaust, however, the photos come to facilitate a different kind of identification, and in fact seem packaged to do precisely that. The book's graphic design is beautiful, many of the men, women and children in the photos are attractive, and the images are presented without much context. It is a pleasure to look at these pictures, just as it would be if they had been in a regular family album, and this pleasure is possible precisely through a process of identification.

While Weiss seeks this identification, seeks to undo the abstraction of the Holocaust, and elicit a different form of mourning from her audience, it remains questionable what kind of mourning this project truly brings forth. These are compelling photos, but we know nearly nothing about these people as individuals and, instead, we are left to project our own image onto them. Instead of using such family snap-shots and returning humanity to the victims, the sheer size of the project and the way the photos are grouped (by themes that depict all different aspects of the personal and communal life), risks a different kind of reading. The anonymity of most photos invites the projection of an idyllic pre-Hitler Polish Jewish community that American Jews may use, as it were, to imagine their own ancestors' "genuinely Jewish lives" before they assimilated so successfully into American life. It is nostalgia for a romanticized pre-war Jewishness that this book invites: "*this is where we come from, this is the culture of our (great-) grandparents"* as much as a genuine mourning over the losses of the Holocaust, I suspect.

For the (much shorter) second part of the book, Weiss managed to track down and interview a number of survivors depicted in these photographs, as well as surviving family members. It is those in-depth interviews where the photographs come to life and do justice to the victims, and the appropriate distance between them, the specificity of these lives and of the Holocaust experience, and the viewer/reader is reinforced. Because of these interviews, we can no longer project ourselves onto the images in these photos as before, as they are no longer anonymous, but presented within the context of the story of the survivor themselves.

Another, very different kind of project that illustrates perhaps even more clearly the way in which the losses of the Holocaust and nostalgia over the Eastern European Jewish *shtetl* can become linked in the American-Jewish imagination, is Jonathan Safran Foer's phenomenal bestseller *Everything is Illuminated* (2002). The novel consists of

three layers. There is the chronicle of a young American Jew (named Jonathan Safran Foer) who visits the Ukraine armed with a few maps and an old photo in the hope of finding a woman who may have saved his grandfather's life during the Holocaust. His comedy of errors, traveling through a country where he does not understand the language, the culture, or the history, is recounted first by means of letters in broken English by a young Ukranian guide, Alexander, written to Jonathan after Jonathan has already returned to the US and second, within the story which Alexander writes, in installments on which Jonathan comments in his letters. Finally, these two kinds of narrative are interlaced with the magical story Jonathan invents about the Jewish *shtetl* Trachimbrod from which supposedly the ancestors of the narrator Jonathan stem. This particular narrative moves from the past (1791) to the present, until the moment of its Nazi destruction in 1942, at which point the other narrative strands of the novel (Jonathan seeking the story of his grandfather's rescue during the Holocaust, Alexander finding out what his Ukranian father witnessed during the Nazi liquidation of the Jewish towns) arrive at the horror of the Holocaust at the center of the narrative, as they find by chance the one living survivor of what was once the village of Trachimbrod.

On the one hand then, *Illuminated* is a relatively conventional coming of age story in the most extraordinary of guises: a young American Jew retraces his family heritage in Eastern Europe and through the Holocaust. On the other hand, Foer's narrative is anything but naïve, as this story is not recounted through the eyes of its supposedly autobiographical narrator, but through the eyes of the unreliable Ukranian (non-Jewish) guide, whose stake in the story is a very different one than Jonathan's. What it does do, however, in surprisingly conventional ways, is allow precisely for this American-Jewish conflation of the romance of the *shtetl* (which *Illuminated* exploits to its absolute extreme) with the (imagined) horror of the Holocaust, and precisely in order to allow a new and more authentic Jewishness to emerge. If there is anything that has changed at the end of the novel, despite everything that has gone wrong, (Jonathan never finds the woman who he came to find, never discovers the story of his grandfather's rescue) is that the main character Jonathan is indeed more Jewish, and more strongly connected to his Eastern European Jewish heritage than before.

It is ironically the blank canvas that Jonathan finds when he goes to the Ukraine that allows him to imagine the Jewish world of Trachimbrod. There was nothing that linked him authentically to his Jewishness in America growing up as the secular Jewish grandchild of Holocaust survivors, but it is the physical return to Eastern Europe and finding nothing there that allows him to imagine the Jewish world and its story that he wants to tell.[10]

In Foer's novel, then, the "exile from the space of identity," the destroyed Eastern European homeland of the grandparents, turns out to be not so much a loss but the potential start of a creative journey. The Holocaust forms the center of the story through which the connection with the "lost homeland" is made. In this sense, Foer's

text plays in a highly self-conscious manner with the postmemory of the Holocaust, and illustrates precisely what kind of conflation can be made between the two, the loss of the imagined Jewish past (of a culture, a geographical space, a language), and the enormous trauma of the Holocaust, if only as an ironic gesture. The question remains whether the text merely plays with this ironically, or whether it ultimately does not also represent an example of a slippage between the two.

Projects' such as Weiss's and Foer's thus suggest to me how potentially difficult it is to create "access" to the Holocaust in postmemory projects, without this journey becoming potentially sentimental, nostalgic and inappropriate. Whereas in Weiss's case, her project may have filled in some of the blanks left for her personally in her own familial postmemory, and while, in general, projects that elicit postmemory may be bridging an important gap between survivors and those who were not there, I stress that some of this identification is nevertheless potentially problematic, because, in particular for an American-Jewish audience that is so trained to see this history as (potentially) their own, this work may invite nostalgia, more so than an actual confrontation with the losses of the Holocaust. My concern is that a form of identification that leads to "adoption," appropriation, and the erasure of the difference between self and other may indeed have become so common in American-Jewish culture that postmemory will no longer represent a cultural memory tied to a very specific history (that of the Holocaust), but will function merely as a "diasporic discourse" which allows American Jews to anchor their Jewish identity more firmly to Eastern Europe in nostalgic ways.

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Notes

1. Andrea Liss and Marianne Hirsch seem to have developed this concept of "postmemory" simultaneously, independent of each other. (Liss "History, Mourning and Photography" 30-39 and "Memory, Photography & the Holocaust"). For Hirsch's use, see among others: *Family Frames*, "Projected Memory" 2-23, "Surviving Images" 5-37.

2. Dora Apel argues that "The evocation of the Holocaust serves as a kind of unifying historical of the inescapability of Jewishness" (17). As an example of its power, she cites the 1998 "Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion," in which "remembrance of the Holocaust" was mentioned as the activity with the greatest importance to respondents' Jewish identity (17).

3. Emphasis already present.

4. As will become clear throughout this essay, I find this assertion problematic, as there are significant differences between familial postmemory and the "cultural postmemory" (as I call it) of postwar generations without a connection of personal or familial loss. See also Bos 50-74.

5. Hirsch borrows the term from Kaja Silverman (185). "Heteropathic identification," in contrast to "idiopathic identification" is a form of "identification-at-a-distance," an attempt to empathically take on the suffering of the other while not blurring the lines between other and self, while "idiopathic identification" precisely crosses that line: one now imagines oneself to be the other, to suffer like the other.

6. My emphasis.

7. Both works trace how the Holocaust remained a relatively "repressed" historical event within American culture and American-Jewish culture specifically, and how it "came to salience" from the mid-1960s onwards because of a number of divergent political and cultural events. In the first five decades of the twentieth century, Jews in America were able to integrate in ways that they had not been able to do so earlier, and this general adaptive acculturation was strongly encouraged and followed through. Judaism, in fact, became an American religion, (America's third religion after Protestantism and Catholicism), as opposed to a racial or ethnic marker (Mintz 6). Awareness of the Holocaust as a Jewish event (or Jews as its primary victims) did not fit in with this move into the mainstream during this period. Thus the knowledge of the Holocaust during this period was silenced not because this knowledge was "repressed" as too traumatic (for those who lost family members it was indeed traumatic), but because it was politically inconvenient. Jews sought to avoid distinctiveness in the public sphere, and the memory of the Holocaust as uniquely Jewish impeded integration. It was, in fact, only when the project of assimilation was more complete and Jews felt more at ease in America that they would encounter the Holocaust more fully. By then, in the mid-1960s, the Holocaust had taken on another meaning, and the cultural context had changed drastically. First, the Six-Day War woke up American Jews to the possibility that Jews were indeed still threatened in the world, while, at the same time, the swift and unexpected Israeli victory against the annihilationist threats uttered by Syria and Egypt led to a new sense of Jewish pride. With this sense of pride came a new sense of Jewish self-reliance, political awareness, and militant self-expression, and room for the acknowledgment of the Holocaust. The Holocaust was now "read" within a different context, however, not as a memory of catastrophe and victimization (thus as catalyst of guilt and embarrassment), but as an object of newfound confidence and transcendence. As Michael Morgan has argued, the Israeli victory of 1967 made it possible to "locate Auschwitz before the liberation of Jerusalem" and thus to accept this history and even transcend it. "…Auschwitz could be honestly encountered only when it did not threaten to obliterate all of Jewish tradition and the Jewish past along with it" (158).

8. For a more thorough discussion of Weiss' project see Bos 61-66.

9. Weiss' story of her own journey with these photographs as a child of Eastern European survivors is in the background, but still figures centrally in these lectures and in the discussions afterwards, suggesting the audience picks up on it as significant. Weiss first points out that it is exceptional that the photographs had not been destroyed after the Nazis confiscated them upon the deportees' arrival (as was always the case). As such, she argues, this is possibly the only collection of its kind. Moreover, the fact that they were preserved not only during the war, but were kept and organized by the Auschwitz museum staff, which nevertheless chose not to display them publicly, and where they were thus not "discovered" until she, the child of survivors who grew up without any photographs of her own murdered relatives, found and "rescued" them, becomes an important part of Weiss' story, which is almost a story of a "miracle." The audience is invited to share in Weiss' story of redemption in the light of irreparable loss, is moved by it, and leaves the exhibit or her lectures feeling sad but somehow redeemed.

10. It would take me too far here, but it is not coincidental that both Weiss's project and Foer's fiction have as it starting point a photograph. It is photography as a medium per excellence that allows for a canvas on which to project our own stories. In the case of Holocaust photography in particular, Hirsch has argued that photography plays a central role in postmemory as it both facilitates and complicates the process of identification. Andrea Liss indeed goes so far as

to argue that postmemories in general are centrally informed by photographs: "Postmemories…constitute the imprints that photographic imagery of the Shoah have created within the post-Auschwitz generation" ("Memory, Photography & the Holocaust" 86). Hirsch suggests that, on the one hand, photographs seem to evoke the physical reality of the event, the "trace," or "evidence" we so desperately seek, the further removed we are from the events in time. That is, photographs have the ability to connect us to the "real." On the other hand, photographs take a central place because certain Holocaust photographic images (in particular those from the concentration camps and ghettos) have circulated with such repetitiveness that they have gained a certain sense of familiarity to those of us who were never there. (Hirsch "Surviving Images" 13). In some respects, then, these photographs have become iconic in our cultural postmemory.

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Memory's Exiles

Hanadi Loubani and
Joseph Rosen

ABSTRACT

Memory's Exiles

In their dialogue "Memory's Exiles," Joseph Rosen and Hanadi Loubani investigate the personal and political stakes of remembering violence and catastrophe in the context of Palestinian and Jewish Diasporas. The point of their dialogue is to contest the "normalizing processes of forgetting," which they conceive of as a nostalgic memory. In opposition to this culturally and nationalistically narrated nostalgia, they try to present an instance of an enabling "forgetting" as a diasporic mode of memory that opens to the memory of the other's *memory of violence.*

Rosen and Loubani link Palestinian narratives of the *Nakba* (catastrophe) with Jewish narratives of the *Shoah* in order to show how certain narratives of exile remain caught in a trajectory whereby the experience of pain is redeemed through a return to a "promised land." Rosen and Loubani's perspectives on nationalism and diaspora diverge. These divergences are intimately connected to the specificity of the historical and political asymmetries of power in which they are inscribed. Rather than conceptually overcome these tensions, Rosen and Loubani *perform* them, through the dialogue form, as a site of meaning production.

At the conference that gave rise to this volume, the performative aspect of the dialogue was enhanced through the fact that the dialogue was read by the authors themselves.

Preface: "Between Private Friends and Public Enemies"

Joseph Rosen & Hanadi Loubani (together): Well, this has been hard – and beautiful! – We've been friends a long time – eight years – and have talked about these matters,

laughing – and late into the night! – What seemed so easy, in the context of friendship – the "private" realm – turned out to be quite difficult – when we decided to discuss this in public – in the political forum. – Yes, we found ourselves inserted into a field of forces – asymmetrical power relations – that seized us, located us – forced us into contradiction, argument – I can't believe we yelled – I thought, for a while that we might lose our friendship – when we sat down to write, it wasn't just "us" there anymore – no longer just "friends" – but we were placed into an antagonistic dialogue – it was fierce – dialogue is by no means peaceful – it seems that dialogue is only real – not just a Liberal fantasy – when it tackles political conflict. – You have to get your hands dirty – dialogue cannot avoid the violence of politics – you find yourself frustrated – silent – yelling – angry – and then, after it's all out on the table, – after, and then also making up – tears! – Laughing! – I can hardly believe we made it. – Maybe love and friendship aren't enough – not unless they risk themselves – not unless you enter the realm of antagonism – the political – where kind words are not enough – not nearly. – It may be necessary to yell – and accept that screaming – to become enemies, – yes, perhaps even to become enemies, – before – before friendship can have a political meaning. – After the Catastrophe – after the Exodus – after the violence of memory – then, maybe, love? – Or solidarity? – Maybe, – but only after becoming public enemies – yes – yes.

Joseph Rosen: Both of us, in different ways, belong to "diasporic" situations. Family stories and cultural narratives mediated our relation to Israel and Palestine as a "homeland" that we had not been born in. So "memory" is a significant site for the politics of diaspora. What are your first memories of Palestine?

Hanadi Loubani: I remember my father's shaky voice as he instructed my older sister and I to pronounce "tomato" as "bandorra" and not as "banadoorah." This was my first lesson in language and identity. "Why?" I kept asking. Before I could even understand the urgency in his voice, the teacher hurriedly escorted us to the bus taking us on what she said was a school trip to Farayah. My sister was holding onto my hand tightly throughout the bus ride. From the window I saw military tanks crowding the side streets. Every now and then the bus stopped and men with rifles on their backs boarded, strangely comforting us not to be scared of them for they were here, they said, to protect us from the Palestinians. This was no usual school trip: Beirut was divided into two parts and Palestinians were no longer welcomed in its Eastern half. It was on the slopes of Farayah that I learned to call myself a Palestinian, albeit in silence. From that day on, silence and Palestine joined in a nexus. Other words were soon to enter, chaotically: Sa'sa', Haifa, Palestine, Zionism, Israel, Nakbeh, 1948, 1967, refugees, Black September, Phalangists, Tal el-Zatar. Around these same words, a web of stories was woven. My favorite was that of my father walking on foot from Sa'sa' to el-Jish. Haunted by the loneliness of the road, he tied a tin can to his right shoes and kicked it all the way back and forth. I used to go to bed laughing, the sound of that tin can bouncing off of stones ringing in my ears.

Joseph Rosen: My introduction to "Judaism" was through a highly mediated story: the American documentary "Holocaust." I wasn't born in exile: my grandparents fled Russia because of pogroms, but Russia certainly wasn't "home" – Russia was where people came and destroyed your town without reason, for pleasure. A long series of persecutions in country after country displaced any "original" homeland. So I was raised "diasporic": not in the sense that I had a geographic home elsewhere – but in the sense that I did not have any geographic home. Instead, I "belonged" to a history – and a narrative – of persecution. Learning that I was Jewish began, for me, by staying up late in my father's bedroom, watching Holocaust documentaries. There was always a somber, almost ceremonial mood when it came to learning about the Shoah – it didn't matter if it was past my bedtime. By the time I was seven or eight years old, I would sneak out to the grocery store to buy licorice – I remember looking up over the counter at the sales clerk. In this really innocent way, I thought about how, if it was another place, another time – then this very normal person would hold a machine gun against me and my sisters; he would be on the other side of the barbed wire fence: this regular grocery clerk would be the same person who would be gassing me and my family. I remember thinking that it would be someone just like him – if, or actually when, another Holocaust happened in North America. I wasn't scared or even melodramatic – it just seemed like a normal everyday fact. It was only a coincidence of time and geography that this person wasn't sending me to a concentration camp. I guess I was nine or ten at the time, innocently thinking about how the grocery clerk might put me in a gas chamber. This is a strange legacy to pass on to a child. I was very young, certainly unable to comprehend the magnitude of the historical atrocity. What I did understand was that, ultimately, I didn't belong in Canada: this wasn't my home, because there was always the chance that the grocery clerk would put on a uniform, and decide to exterminate us. Was there a point at which you realized that your home wasn't your home, that you were in exile?

Hanadi Loubani: At first, Burj el-Barajneh seemed to have always been there. It was soon after that school trip that I started relating to it as a refugee camp. Its connotations changed: it was no longer home but exile. My family's relationship to it became historicized around October 29th, 1948, the day when all of the surviving inhabitants of my father's family were forcefully expelled from their native village Sa'sa' to a life of refugeedom in Lebanon following the massacre by the Palmach Third Battalion and the Sheva Seventh Brigade. The daily hardships of, and atrocities committed against the refugees in the camp turned the camp into a signifier for the Palestinian histories of dispossession and estrangement … for not belonging. It was there that I heard the names of the family members that were massacred, the stories of those survivors forced to cross the armistice line into Lebanon and to settle in ready erected camps of white cotton tents …

Joseph Rosen: Images of exodus and tents, the retelling of stories – they prompt a memory, for me, of the Biblical Exodus from Egypt. My father was not at all religious.

But every year he would insist on having a Passover Seder in which he would recite the story of the Exodus. He would stop, dramatically, and look each of us in the eye intensely when he would read: "When we were slaves in Egypt." This had a real impact on me. It is essential to the ritual retelling of this story to emphasize that we, too, were slaves: "when we were in bondage"; "when we were afflicted"… etc. My father wasn't interested in any of the religious or metaphysical implications of the ritual. The main point, for him, was this transmission, to the next generation, that being Jewish meant that we, too, our very selves, had been enslaved in Egypt. And my father always told us that there would be another Holocaust – it was just a matter of when and where. So these two things – the memory of bondage in Egypt and the memory of the Shoah – were really my introduction to Jewish identity. These narratives powerfully structured my childhood identification with Judaism. Memories of violence were ritually recounted, to remind me that I didn't – and never would – belong to the land in which I was born. I grew up in a very sheltered suburb of Vancouver: materially, I was no different from all the other kids at school. In a sense, my relation to Diaspora was very abstract, mostly discursive, perhaps "existential." Yet there were these stories that repeatedly reminded me that I didn't belong. And at Pesach, my father would repeat: "Next year, in Jerusalem."

Hanadi Loubani: I saw Jerusalem for the first time in August of 2001 when I joined a Palestinian and Jewish Canadian women's fact-finding mission. In the arrival hall of Ben-Gurion Airport, I saw a bronze plaque inscribed "The Law of Return." I was taken by a sudden innocent desire to approach the custom official and say: "I am back, I want to claim my right to return." Instead, I stood quietly in the line for international visitors looking with envy at all those who were welcomed wholeheartedly by an officer directing them to the office designated for Jews only. We left the airport and by virtue of a three-quarter of an hour ride I was in the heart of the old city of Jerusalem. A symphony of Arabic language and music, a potpourri of Arabic spices and Jasmine: my senses were all activated. The smell of Jasmine reminded me of my grandmother's small balcony where a fragrant Jasmine tree adorns a door that she insisted on installing, though it leads to nowhere. That day in August, the door finally seemed to have opened. "I am home," I whispered to myself. The porter carrying my luggage loudly answered: "Welcome back home." Jamal was the first Palestinian I saw and I wished he would be the last one I would see when I would leave again. "May you depart and return in peace" was the last of Arabic I heard as I hopped into the taxi taking me to Ben-Gurion Airport.

My father was 14 years old when he last saw Palestine. His family tried to cross the armistice line back to Sa'sa' only to be re-dispossessed. The decision to bar the return and repatriation of Palestinian refugees, you see, was already passed by the Knesset in June of 1948, four months prior to my family's dispossession from Sa'sa'. Up until

that first visit, I had no corporeal sense of Palestine's physical self. And yet, I knew it and carried it within me… on me. For many years I carried it on my breast in the shape of a golden map on a golden chain. The stories, memories, improvised verses of folk poetry and songs that I fell asleep to endowed me with a sense of belonging and brought Palestine as close as any homeland can be to an exile. When you are made homeless, all you belong to are the stories and the memories. I carried them within me and they carried me from one transitory home to another. Many were the times that I recounted to you my father's story of bouncing that tin can off of stones…

Joseph Rosen: I'm always struck – quite bodily – by the story of your father kicking tin cans. I remember when you first told me that his village – your village – Sa'sa', was just outside Tsvat. I lived in Tsvat for a few months, over ten years ago. I had been walking around in the "mystical" city of Tsvat, learning about the Zohar and esoteric Judaism. I was this naïve kid, wandering around in a fairy tale, fascinated by the mythic history, meditating at the graves of Kabbalistic Rabbis. It never entered my mind that somewhere, someone else – who wasn't allowed to return – was remembering those roads… I was completely oblivious of the fact that somewhere, your father was living in exile, telling stories, and painfully remembering his home. And when you recall this memory, the sound of that tin can bouncing off stones – I'm always struck by the materiality of the image, the ring of tin against dry stones – it sort of shocks me: it jolts me into reconfiguring my own quite constructed memory of that time. And it's brutal, devastating. I'm supposedly "returning" to this place where my family never lived, while your dad can't return to the streets where he kicked cans as a child.

It always saddens me when Israel refuses to address the right of return. Centuries of diasporic existence, centuries of persecution and violence: this history testifies to the plight of a dispossessed people. Politically, I am interested in the Jewish memory of Diaspora precisely because it indicates the possibility of a solidarity with the "dispossessed" – in the words of the Torah, the "wretched of the earth." So the difficult question, for me, is this: what are the intersections between Jewish memories of persecution, violence, and exile and the Israeli displacement of Palestinians? Now, one discursive factor in this complex relation is the Biblical narrative of Exodus. This narrative has been deployed, for both religious and political purposes, in a variety of historical circumstances. But the most simplistic version of the narrative would be: the memory of servitude in Egypt is repaid or rewarded with "Israel." In other words, past violence is economically redeemed by the creation of a nation: a collective identity formed in relation to the foundation of a territory.

Hanadi Loubani: As we begin to explore the intersections between the Jewish and Palestinian memories of dispossession, I find it imperative to engage with how Zionism

deploys the Exodus narrative and to what effects. Within Zionism, the narrative is deployed to claim Jews are the sole descendants of Abraham and of the "biblical children of Israel," to turn the bible into the Jews' sacrosanct title deed to Palestine, testifying to their "exclusive" right to, their "ownership" of, the land, to posit Herzl's program for the establishment of *Der Judenstaat*, The State of the Jews, as a virtual re-enactment of the exodus from slavery to liberation. This deployment simultaneously affects a negation of the centuries-old presence of the Palestinians in the land (the myth of the empty land), and an articulation of the dispossession of the Palestinians as belonging within the domain of "divine right." The question of deployment is important in tracing how this Zionist violence is institutionalized in the apparatuses of State. The Exodus narrative is the subtext on which the text of the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel of 1948 cites the Mandate of the League of Nations and the Balfour Declaration, as not only "sanctioning" the "historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel," but also as "sanctioning" "the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National home." These are two colonial documents par excellence. Article 22 of the Mandate benevolently "entrust[s]" the "civilized" West with the "responsibility" of a "tutelage" over the territories "formerly belonging to the Turkish empire," which are inhabited by peoples who are deemed "not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world." Though, in theory, the Mandate system had the benevolent intention of preparing the "natives" of the various regions for self-government, Palestine was its exception (hence, the inclusion of "The Mandate for Palestine" as a separate sub-document). With respect to Palestine, the British were mandated by the League to "putting into effect" the commitment of His Britannic Majesty to the Zionist Federation "to facilitate" its "favour[ing] the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" (the Balfour Declaration of 1917), a commitment pronounced without consulting the wishes of the indigenous peoples of Palestine, reduced in the body of both texts to the "non-Jewish inhabitants." The British were mandated not only to favoring, but, and more importantly, to facilitating the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, to "placing [Palestine] under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home … and the development of [Jewish] self-governing institutions." The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel is a testimony to how the state justifies its existence via a religiously fundamentalist reading of the Exodus narrative and via colonialism. Israel further consolidated itself in and through colonial practices of dispossession and governance, dispossessing more than 750 000 Palestinians in 1948; subjecting those Palestinians that remained inside its state borders to a quarantine existence under martial laws and military government which lasted until 1966; and relegating them to the status of a always-must-be minority in its always-must-be Jewish majority state; and occupying the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights ever since 1967.

Joseph Rosen: Of course it is absolutely imperative to investigate the link between Zionism and European colonialism. But at the same time I would like to insist that Zionism cannot be reduced to colonialism. It is important to recognize that Zionism existed long before the Balfour Declaration: it, too, is the result of centuries of diasporic existence and debate within the Jewish community. So, for example, in 1897 – the year of Herzl's Zionist Congress – the "Central Conference of American Rabbis" publicly declared itself in opposition to the creation of a "Zionist" Israel. By 1937, circumstances had changed: with the rise of Hitler, they reversed their position and decided to support nationalistic Zionism. So the emergence of the Third Reich clearly had an effect on the relation between Zionism and Israel. Long before Balfour and Hitler, "Zionism" was a field of debate: while some argued for the necessity of political autonomy in a "Jewish" state (Herzl), others argued against this exclusively political solution (Ahad Haam). Other zionisms defended the cultural and national possibilities of a diasporic Judaism. One of the few common threads among these positions is that they all defined themselves in response to Europe's "Jewish Problem." So, at one point, radical possibilities existed within this debate: Brit Shalom, for example, founded in 1925 and including Martin Buber, adamantly opposed the creation of a "Jewish" nation-state, and argued that the very principles of Zionism necessitated a "Bi-National" solution. The question is this: given these alternative possibilities, what historical forces enabled the terrible ideology of "a land without people" to become the dominant form of Zionism? How did Zionism come to embody the idea of an exclusively Jewish state founded on the fixed boundaries of a territory? Clearly, there were multiple influences, including 19th-century discourses of European nationalism, colonization, and of course, the unforgettable and traumatic impact of the Holocaust.

But I don't want to give the Holocaust the status of an exclusive origin. For one thing, European anti-Semitism extends back at least until 70 CE – the year that Rome destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Jews were subsequently banned from living in, or even visiting the city. I think that Europe's so-called "Jewish Problem" extends back at least this far. This imperially imposed exile lasted until 638 CE, when Arabs overthrew the Romans and the Caliph Omar revoked the laws banning Jews from Jerusalem. Now in the intervening years, between 70 CE and 638 CE – a full 500 years of exile – the Rabbis argued. And the result of this argument was the creation of the Talmud. This text, produced under historical conditions of "imperial" diaspora, produces a wide array of arguments about the relation between Jews, Israel, and Jerusalem. So I am very interested in resuscitating and re-mobilizing the Talmudic-Diasporic possibilities of Zionism. First, these possibilities precede both the Holocaust and modern colonialism: they therefore provide an opportunity for reconfiguring Zionism beyond these historical determinants. Second, I would like to unearth these alternate interpretations inasmuch as they can be mobilized within the present context of neo-colonialism and the new Imperialism. In the Exodus narrative, the Hebrews escape slavery, only to wander for years in the desert. I think it is very significant

that it is in this desert – a diaspora of sorts – that the Hebrews receive the Law at Sinai. And it is at this moment – receiving the Law in the midst of exile – that the Hebrews in fact become "Israel." At this point, Israel is a nation, and the land of Israel is only a promise. There is a Talmudic extract that deals with the Biblical moment when the Hebrews arrive at the border of Canaan, the Promised Land, which will become Israel. But before they enter the land of Canaan, they hesitate. Just outside the border, they are tattered, hungry, and living in makeshift tents: refugees, of a sort. When explorers return from investigating the land, the community is thrown into crisis. The Rabbis of the Talmud turn this border crisis into a furious debate. As one Rabbi argues, the Wanderers hesitate to become a nation ontologically "grounded," like trees in the soil. So they question their "natural" right to the land. As Emmanuel Levinas points out, it is precisely this questioning of a right to the land that forms the ethical basis of the Jewish relation to the land. The relation to the land is not one of rights or identity rooted in soil. Community is not founded in territory: it is grounded in justice and responsibility. Now the Talmud is often extremely conservative: I don't want to romanticize Talmudic Judaism. And the displacement of the Canaanites raises many problems. But this point – that community is founded on justice and responsibility – seems to radically bear witness to the diasporic context of the Talmud. Written precisely because of the geographic dispersion of the Jews, the Talmud replaces territorial identity with the question of responsibility. And I think that this point can be reclaimed in the context of globalization: it opens a space to think about solidarities and allegiances beyond the territorial violence of the nation-state.

Hanadi Loubani: Zionism existed long before the Balfour Declaration and its development was a response to the long and violent history of European anti-Semitism. The Damascus affair in 1840, the pogroms of 1881 in Russia, the Dreyfus trial in 1894-95, the Kishinev pogrom in 1903, and the Holocaust were but landmarks in the long march of anti-Semitic European barbarism sparking discourses of Jewish nationalism in Europe. I never denied that and, in doing so, I am, along with other Palestinians, continuing a tradition articulated more poignantly by the late Edward Said when he wrote: "I can understand the intertwined terror and the exultation out of which Zionism has been nourished." I also agree with you that radical possibilities did exist within political Zionism, as represented by Martin Buber. These possibilities, however, were violently silenced and neutralized within the course of political Zionism consolidating its hegemonic grip over land, history, society and identity. So the interesting question is the "how" of this silencing and normalization of dissent. I think that a closer look at Zionism's political program for the establishment of a state for the Jews in Palestine will reveal important clues. Whilst the Jewish *maskilim*, which developed in Eastern Europe, confronted anti-Semitism on its own turf, political Zionism, represented by Herzl and his disciples, conceived of itself not as a mode of resistance, but as a solution to European anti-Semitism, namely in the form of the removal, the transfer, of

Jews from Europe and their normalization within a European-like-colonially-mandated-buffer Jewish state outside of Europe, a solution long advocated by anti-Semitic Christian European Zionists. It is this logic of redemption of European anti-Semitic violence via colonialism, this collusion with European anti-Semitism and colonialism that neutralized the radical possibilities within political Zionism. This collusion ushered in what Ben-Gurion termed the "Jewish revolution," a revolution which promised to liberate Jews but only by an en route transformation from their Diasporic condition as victims to their new post-Diasporic Zionist condition as colonialists. This transformation as was/is conceived by political Zionism engendered a twofold negation, a negation of Jewish Diasporic history and heritage encapsulated in the phrase "negation of the Diaspora" and a negation of the Palestinians' presence on the land encapsulated in the phrase of "the empty land." The two modes of negation go hand in hand as they affected a violent transformation, I would rather call it a Zionization, of Jewish and Palestinian histories and their rewriting according to the Zionist dicta of supplanting Palestinian native history and society with a new land-based Jewish history, society and identity. As Ahad Ha'Am clearly realized this Zionization was devoid from the ethics of Diasporic Judaism. As I see it, only a dialogic interaction between anti-colonial Jewish and Palestinian nationalisms is pivotal to the recovering of different possibilities for existence and co-existence in the present and future. My worries about your reading of Levinas' border crisis is that its potential is radically compromised so far as the crisis is generated from a debate within the community and not through a dialogic interaction with radical alterity. It is this eradication of alterity which authorized the ancient and modern Hebrews' return to Zion be accomplished by replacing the book (sefer) with the sword (sayif), by transforming the Hebrews from refugees/victims to invaders/colonialists.

Joseph Rosen: In a strange way, your astute critique of Zionism has clarified, for me, the need not to "defend," but rather to resuscitate the possibilities of Zionism. Because Zionism, emerging against Europe's "Jewish problem," resulted in a colonially complicit "solution" rather than as a resistance to European anti-Semitism. And it was precisely by abandoning this necessary resistance that the book became the sword… So yes! – Zionism has yet to actualize its resistance. Vis-à-vis Palestinians, and in private, I am tempted to discard "Zionism" entirely. But this also remains an issue of public discourse. Because European anti-Semitism is not finished, and much "anti-Zionist" sentiment – even if "critically" valid – may, at the same time, be fueled by a very old anti-Semitism. And because of this, today, here, I am not comfortable proclaiming myself "anti-Zionist" – not in public. Instead I feel the imperative task is to articulate and actualize a resistant Zionism. So the dialogue you insist on is absolutely necessary: and it remains haunted by the specter of Europe. And in order to interrupt a cycle of violence, this dialogue must explicitly engage with the question of violence. The book of Exodus is a very double-edged

sword. On the one hand, the Exodus narrative can be (and has been!) mobilized by anti-colonial politics. For the story of Exodus insists that, after (ethnic, racial, geographic) violence, a state of sovereignty must emerge in the process of reparation. And dialogue may not be enough to instigate reparations: restitution, if it is not just a "benevolent" authoritarian gesture, may require a specifically anti-colonial violence. So we may have to investigate the possibility that there is a necessary violence. Sometimes the *sefer* must become the *sayif*! But on the other hand, the economy of slavery, Exodus, and national redemption can also lead to a perpetuation of violence: as with the sword (and also the "plowshare") of Israel. The formation of the State of Israel is extremely complex because it emerges out of both uses of the Exodus narrative. The nation is both reparation for violence and a means of reproducing violence. The Rabbis of the Diasporic Talmud are aware of this "apocalyptic" dilemma. They thus conclude that the state – although inherently violent – is unfortunately necessary: but the role of the state is to institute a hatred of violence. In this the Rabbis agree with Fanon! But the nation's identity must not become grounded in the soil: for the Diasporic Talmud, community is bound to territory through questions of justice and responsibility! So it is imperative that we remain incessantly vigilant against the violence of the political nation-state. For the redemption of past violence in the nation can always turn into a reactionary violence: hence the possibility of a never-ending cycle. Nationalism, as an identity born of past violence, continues to oppress new alterities in the present. In the midst of all this confusion, I think there has to be a critique of violence. I have to be suspicious of a national identity that is founded on a memory of violence and redeemed by a return to soil – Whether it's the Exodus, the Shoah, or al-Nakba. A nation-state founded exclusively on a memory of violence runs the risk of reproducing violence: this is at play, in a variety of ways, in Israel/Palestine right now. So the critical question I want to ask is: how can we differentiate between a necessary anti-colonial violence and a reactionary or symptomatic violence in the form of the nation? This question seems vital to the interruption of a cycle of violence. How do we differentiate between a mythic violence that – perpetuated through national identity – is condemned to reproduce violence, and a resistant violence – a violence that combats violence?

Hanadi Loubani: The Exodus narrative has been historically mobilized in the anti-colonial struggles in Latin America, Africa, South Africa, South Korea, the Philippines, just as much as it has been historically deployed in virtually all European colonial enterprises in North and Latin America, New Zealand, Australia, southern Africa. So how it is deployed, against or by colonialism, is important. Whilst violence against colonialism is an unfortunately necessary moment in the national liberation struggles of colonized peoples (Fanon), violence by colonialism is simply barbaric. This is why one ought to be suspicious of the fallacy that attempts to equate colonial violence with anti-colonial violence, to erase the differences between the oppressors and the oppressed. Now as long as it

follows the Western colonialist scheme of the nation-state, the state that emerges, be it via colonial or anti-colonial violence, is always-already violent. This is not to say that the colonized people's struggle for self-determination is in toto reactionary, but to emphasize that nationalism is always an empty promise, incapable of delivering on its promises of justice and equality. This is why, in my work on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, I am committed to recovering a model of governance other than the Western colonialist scheme of the nation-state which, to quote Buber "has only two parties, the one engaged in colonization and the other that suffers it." I share your suspicion of a national identity that is constituted on a memory of violence – the Shoah or the Nakba – and redeemed through the creation of a nation-state. Here I find it imperative, however, to differentiate between the memories of al-Nakba, the Exodus, and the Shoah. These differences depend largely on what location each memory starts off from. Unlike the Exodus or the Shoah, the Palestinian memories of colonial violence are not acknowledged and continue to be violently subjected to normalized processes of forgetting. The anger over Israeli TV screening of the Israeli documentary Tekumah (Revival), which in one segment showed the dispossessions of the Palestinians in 1948, is indicative of Israel's adamant attempt to absent al-Nakba and its refusal to take responsibility for al-Nakba.

Joseph Rosen: Inasmuch as Israel exerts a colonial violence – that absents Palestinians – the result has to be the perpetuation of violence. This absenting may be an essential means, or instrument, for a specifically colonial violence. To maintain this production of absence is, in a sense, the ongoing production of forgetting. And this is why I seek to understand how memory itself plays a role in the reproduction of violence. Memory itself can be the means whereby the past re-exerts it power on the present. In Freudian terms, a traumatic memory repeats, unconsciously, as action. Memory itself can remain seized by the trauma of an event like the Nakba or the Shoah. This is what happens when Jewish history is remembered only as a history of persecution, or when Israel sees its origin exclusively in the Shoah. The alterity of the other is forgotten when memory remains fixated on violence. When one remains trapped in the memory of the Shoah, every antagonism, every critique of Israel is interpreted as anti-Semitism: every threat is over-determined by the immense trauma of the Shoah. Memory, by fetishizing violence, absents the alterity of the other: hence foreclosing dialogue and reproducing violence. We fiercely hold onto memory: but memory also seizes us – and won't let go. And I don't think this is an entirely one-way process. It may be that in a cycle of violence both parties remain trapped in a traumatic memory of the past: both sides are unable to open to the alterity of the other in the present. And perhaps there is also the danger that Palestinians, too, can remain trapped in the traumatic memory of al-Nakba.

Hanadi Loubani: The opening up to Jewish memories of the Shoah demands that we Palestinians acknowledge that the Jews' desire to return and settle in Palestine must

not be seen as purely colonial, just as much as the opening to the Palestinian memories of al-Nakba demands that Jews contest the disingenuous attempts to represent Zionism's project for the establishment of a State for the Jews in Palestine as anti-colonial and to institute the space and time of Israel as post-colonial. The possibility of this mutual recognition is clearly erased when Israel sees its origin exclusively in the Shoah, when it only remembers and canonizes the Shoah in its narrative of beginning. This Zionist remembering affects an erasure/forgetting of Zionism's colonialist effects on the Palestinians. So how the memory of Shoah is Zionized in Israel's narrative of beginning, so as to effect a forgetting/negation of al-Nakba, is an important question to ask.

Joseph Rosen: The conflict over Palestine is not just a struggle over land: it is also a struggle over history. Edward Said writes, in *After the Last Sky*, "if you covered a map of Palestine with all the icons, insignia, and routes of the people who have lived there, you would have no space left for terrain." The space itself is over-determined by narratives and memory. This is an essential component of the conflict that the "Liberal Left" does not address. Liberals have obviously not read the story of Solomon and the infant: they think that the land can simply be cut in half with a sword. But the struggle is not just a matter of space: it is simultaneously a conflict between two traumatic memories. And this perspective is key to an understanding of the cyclical nature of the violence. On the one hand, this memorial conflict is asymmetrical: it is a struggle between a memory that is acknowledged, legitimized, and institutionalized – and the Palestinian memory, which is disavowed or forgotten by the State of Israel. And this asymmetry forces us to differentiate between exilic and non-exilic experiences of diaspora. In exile, two things must be addressed: one, a community is denied the right to geographic return. And, concurrently, the exile's memory is denied a place – not only geographically, but also in history. A traumatic history needs to be addressed. But a repetition of traumatic violence does not occur in some abstract collective unconscious: here psychoanalysis reaches a political limit. Unconscious trauma is repeated spatially and materially: concretely, the battle over memory takes place on political borders, through international Law, institutions, and legal documents. Take, for example, your interpretation of the Oslo accord…

Hanadi Loubani: This conflict over memory is not just a question of jamming off the terrain, but a question relating to, what I would call, after Deleuze and Guattari, the "sedimented" character of Zionized Jewish memory, where it has superimposed itself over Palestinian memories and onto the same geographic terrain. The building of kibbutz over the sites of 418 destroyed Palestinian villages and the substitution of new Hebrew names for centuries-old Arab names, are examples that point to how the One Zionized Jewish memory is simultaneously uprooting and substituting the Palestinian Other. And it is the institutionalization of this process of sedimentation that is responsible for the

failure of Oslo. Unlike Barak's interpretation, Oslo did not fail because the Palestinians/Arafat are not real partners in peace. Nor did it fail over the question of illegal settlements and hence over the viability of the Palestinian state as the peaceniks of the Israeli left would like to believe. Oslo failed over the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel, which, to me, signifies the right of the absented Palestinian memories of 1948 to return and unearth the sedimented spatial and temporal layers of Zionized Jewish memories. The Declaration of Principles signed in 1993 signaled the desire of both memories to dialogue for peace. Israel, however, forcefully relegated the right of return to a sub-clause. I read this relegation as signifying Israel's continued attempts to absent the Palestinian memories of al-Nakba, its adamant refusal to enter into dialogue with (to acknowledge and to take responsibility for) the Palestinian memories of al-Nakba. Because it only remembers the conflict as starting in 1967 and not in 1948, Oslo allowed Zionist Israel to extend its hands in peace to the Palestinian memories so long as they compromised their claims to land and history, so long as they accepted their bantustan-ization within the 1967 spatial/temporal zones of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Oslo also gave Zionist Jewish memory the right to peace without questioning its economy of sedimentation and the legitimacy of its hegemonic grip over land and history. This is why the Israelis still interpret Oslo as the Palestinians "refusing Barak's generous offer" and are now punishing us for our "ingratitude."

Joseph Rosen: So Oslo is a particular kind of violence – a juridical legitimized violence. Oslo grants a partial place to Palestinians – hence it "remembers" 1967 – but it does not remember 1948: it does not remember, or do justice to al-Nakba. Oslo, as a Liberal strategy, recognizes the struggle over space, but it does not address the conflict over memory and history. So the institutionalized memory of 1967 is simultaneously a legitimized forgetting of 1948. We see here an essential way in which memory is complicit in the perpetuation of violence. This form of collective memory takes place through juridical institutions and legal documents. Oslo, as an institutionally sanctioned memory, simultaneously denies the memory of al-Nakba. So the battle for history continues. I think that it is absolutely essential to address this component of colonial violence: there is a suppression of the other's memory of violence. In the case of Palestine/Israel, we can see how one Zionized memory of violence can continue violence by denying the Palestine memory of violence. But at the same time, I don't think this is entirely a one-way street. It seems to me that, despite the powerful asymmetry of the situation, the possibility of dialogue – and the interruption this endless cycle of violence – will necessitate a certain mutual recognition of the other's memory of violence.

Hanadi Loubani: The questions that I must ask as I address the necessity of Palestinian memories opening up in a politics of recognition to the Jewish memories of the Shoah is how can one ask recognition for memories that are absented? How to ask Palestinian

memories of al-Nakba to recognize the memories of the Shoah when the Shoah is Zionized so as to make it complicit in the absenting and forgetting of Palestinian memories of al-Nakba? How to engage Palestinian memories in a politics whose agenda is not that of reversal, of a desire to substitute the colonialist Zionist signifier with that of a Palestinian nationalist signifier that promises nothing but a repetition and reproduction of the violence? How to articulate a politics of recognition whose agenda is the displacement of the irresponsible, unjust normalized politics of remembering/forgetting that are inscribed in the very economy of sedimentation? A mutual recognition of the other's memories of violence necessitates that we engage with the similarities and differences, but always in the context of asymmetries between the absented Palestinian memories of al-Nakba and the canonized Jewish memory of the Shoah. The tasks before us are that of affirmative deconstruction, of becoming …

Joseph Rosen: I agree with you on an important point: Israeli memory has sedimented in a way that is institutionally and judicially legitimated. Through the international recognition of a state, Israel is in a position to enact a very different kind of violence – hence it has a different kind of memory to de-sediment. However, it is important to recognize that juridically and institutionally legitimized violence – "State" violence – is not the only form of violence. The State is not the only medium of collective memory. And juridical legitimization is not the only way to absent the other. As demonstrated by the history of the Jews – including but also preceding the Shoah – violence is not exclusively colonial. And this is where I see the necessity of Palestinian self-critique. Many Palestinian media reproduce ancient forms of anti-Semitism. In fundamentalist Palestinian publications such as the Islamic Jihad weekly Al-Istiqlal and the Hamas weekly Al-Risala, one finds multiple articles equating not just Israelis, but "world-wide Jewry" with Satan and the betrayal of God. Hasan Al-Kashef, Director-General of the PA Information Ministry, is quoted in Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda (July 7, 1997) as claiming "we know that Jesus was a victim of the roots of Talmudic extremism." A very old Euro-Christian claim that, whatever its motivations, also appeals to classical European anti-Semitism. An Arabic translation of Hitler's "Mein Kampf" was distributed in East Jerusalem in 1995 by Al-Shurouq, a Ramallah based book distributor. And of course Holocaust denial, in multiple forms, can be found in many places, including Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda – the official newspaper of the Palestinian Authority – which claims that the gas chambers were a Jewish fabrication (July 2, 1998) and that Jews collaborated with Nazis to forge the stories of slaughter (Sept. 3, 1997). In Al-Risala, in August 2003, Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rantisi, the Hamas activist in the Gaza Strip, went so far as to write that the Zionists were responsible for the murder of Europe's Jews, having given the Nazis $151 million to accomplish this "Zionist" task. These anti-Semitic discourses undeniably have a negative effect in reproducing the cycle of violence. And the violence of these discourses is not simply anti-colonial. There is an attack – in excess of anti-colonial resistance – on the entirety

of Jews and Jewish history: and of course there is a violence attack on the Jewish memory of the Shoah. How can Israelis and Jews recognize this as "anti-colonial resistance"? This violence is neither institutionalized nor legitimized by means of the state – but nevertheless it holds some responsibility for propagating the cycle of violence. I know, more than anyone, that you yourself personally critique these mobilizations of anti-Semitism: but, nonetheless, they play a powerful role in Palestinian discourse – and I am suspicious of their ongoing appeal to European anti-Semitism. In this context I don't think that Israel is solely responsible for "disengaging" its own "Zionized" memory of anti-Semitism, persecution, and the Shoah. There has to be a mutual responsibility to differentiate between (and disentangle) anti-Semitic and anti-colonial violence. And this task will require a Palestinian self-critique of violence.

Hanadi Loubani: The task facing both Palestinians and Jews inside Palestine/Israel and in the Diaspora is that of self-criticism. We have both duplicated this ethics at the level of our friendship. The question before us, however, is how to politicize this personal moment so as to bear on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict? If the time has definitely come for Jews inside Israel and in the Diaspora to disengage from the colonial violence of Zionism (and to mute the semi-hysterical pitch of Sharon's terror campaign against the Palestinians and Bush's fascist campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq), then the time has also definitely come for Palestinian intellectuals and activists to face up to the failures in vision and logic on the Palestinian side. The questions that we Palestinians must engage with are: how to cultivate an anti-Zionist politics that will press the national and civil rights of our people, who have been dispossessed for 54 years and militarily occupied for 35, without (un)wittingly seeding, or ceding ground to anti-Semitic politics? How to ground our resistance to Zionism in visions that promote coexistence, citizenship and the worth of human life and not in vague ideological promises of redemptive violence which can only give rise to a cult of death? In other words, how to develop sustainable resistance strategies that are ethically and politically accountable to the long history of anti-colonialist struggles and the sacrifices of our people and not reflective of the contemporary powerlessness and exasperation of the much-abused and tattered Palestinian body (politic)? Whereas the Jewish memories of the Shoah must deconstruct the Zionist economy of sedimentation and force themselves into what Deleuze and Guattari call, "a becoming minoritarian," the Palestinian memories of al-Nakba must retain the memories of their absenting and deterritorialization and to resolutely resist the desire to a "becoming Major," replacing it with another dream, "a becoming minoritarian"…

Joseph Rosen: To refuse to sediment one's memory… to adamantly resist "forgetting" the other's memory of violence…. This is a radical way to resist the violence of memory. I think this self-critical moment is essential to interrupting the cycle of violence. And self-critique actually has an incredible political efficacy. A Palestinian self-critique must

acknowledge Jewish memory by disentangling itself from all anti-Semitic violence. But this is simultaneously an effective act of resistance! For this clarification can serve to sharpen the point that Palestinian resistance is a response not to "Jews" but to colonial violences. And Israel must recognize this fact: that Palestinian resistance – and some of its violence – emerges out of the colonial brutality of the State of Israel. Israel must respond to this resistance and become self-critical about its own systematic forgetting of al-Nakba. Both sides – albeit in different ways – must open to the other's memory of violence. Two different forms of self-critique necessitate a mutual responsibility to the other's memory.

Hanadi Loubani: This opening up is not about the creation of a facile composite, for memories, like all relationships, are antagonistic and they don't add up. The opening of memory to alterity is a process of the talking back of one memory to another, a process of dialogic recognition between two memories where both have to emerge modified. Here we are in the plains of affirmative deconstruction, which necessitates that we acknowledge that the simultaneous becoming, and I would also add the simultaneous responsibilities, of asymmetrical memories are discontinuous.

Joseph Rosen: In politics, one does not work-through trauma on one's own: politics necessitates conflict and contestation with very concrete others. And it is only through these political others that you can become other to yourself. So, in a sense, Palestinian resistance "contests" Israel and demands a self-criticism that disengages the memory of the Shoah from (colonial) Zionism. But at the same time, this de-sedimentation of memory is a way of becoming-other! Here, working-through one's "own" traumatic memory is simultaneously a responsibility to the other's memory of violence. And this is the "Law" of responsibility: a Diasporic Law, received in the desert! Mahmoud Darwish writes: "If only one of us would forget the other so that forgetfulness itself might be stricken with memory"…

Hanadi Loubani: Darwish here articulates what our friend Kourosh Azizi calls "an enabling forgetting." This mode of forgetting is not amnesiac for it is grounded in opening one's memories to the memories of alterity. To put it in your words: in adamantly resisting a "forgetting" of the other's memories of violence. Only then can one afford to forget, for another will carry her/his memories, for you as a Jew shall carry my memories. Just like you carry my memory and my father's memory in your memory of Safad.

Joseph Rosen: The sound of your father kicking cans – that interrupted my own memory, re-opening and contesting my own narrative. That sound had such a bodily impact on me. I think it was a shocking recognition of someone else's pain – and this shock interrupted my own narrative of pain as "mine." And in opening to an other's memory of violence, in a very real way I sense the possibility of forgetting… a forgetting that, strangely, feels joyous…

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The Refusal to Mourn

Confronting the facts of destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne[1]	Karolina Szmagalska

My domain, ethnography, does not occupy itself with facts, but with what people babble about facts. What people babble about facts is a trifle for a historian, no wonder then, that in the face of the chimera of collective memory, a historian remains helpless. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

ABSTRACT

The Refusal to Mourn: Confronting the facts of destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne

On July 10, 2001, Jedwabne, a town in north-eastern Poland, had become the focus of national and international attention. The 60th anniversary of the killing of local Jews by the Polish townspeople drew a score of esteemed guests, including the President, who uttered an apology to the Jewish people for the Polish guilt in this atrocity. This article backtracks to Jan T. Gross's book Neighbors, *which initiated the national debate culminating in the anniversary ceremony. It critically analyzes the reaction of the state and of the Polish elites to the revealing, after nearly 60 years of silence, of the facts of killing. It suggests that the insistence on the primacy of "historical truth" in resolving the Jedwabne controversy has limited the debate's potential transformative dimension.*

Debates over the interpretation of wartime history are a familiar part of the public discourse in both "Old" and "New" Europe. The aim here is to expose and discuss some of the difficulties with reprocessing the past in Poland. The focus of my analysis is the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the 1941 killing of Jews in the town of Jedwabne. This ceremony was the culmination of a wide-ranging public debate that

ensued after the publication in 2000 of the book *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* by New York-based Polish sociologist and historian Jan Tomasz Gross. This book is an account of the brutal killing of Jews perpetrated by their Polish neighbors in a small town in north-eastern Poland on the eve of the German occupation of that area, shortly after the Nazis pushed out the Soviets. Until Gross' account of the massacre, it was officially held that the Jews of Jedwabne were victims of the Nazis, and such a view was sanctioned by an inscription on the memorial stone at the site of the crime. The stone was removed in the spring of 2001 and the governmental Council for Protection of the Memory of Battle and Martyrdom was charged with formulating the new inscription. After a period of closed consultations with Jewish institutions in Poland, Israel, the United States, as well as with the historians and lawyers of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, war veterans, the Catholic Church and the Town Council of Jedwabne, "a compromise was reached" (as it was announced by the press) and in June 2001 the following inscription had been decided upon:

To the memory of the Jews of Jedwabne and vicinity, men, women and children, joint keepers of this land, murdered, burned alive at this site on July 10, 1941. Jedwabne, July 10, 2001.

As a warning to future generations, may the sin of hatred ignited by German Nazism never again turn against each other the inhabitants of this land.

The compromise, or more specifically the passive voice and the absence of the name of a perpetrator in the first part of the inscription, was hardly satisfactory to the Jewish guests of the ceremony.[2] The Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski left no doubts as to his personal stance toward the tragedy in the core address delivered at the town square: "As a human being, as a citizen and as the president of the Polish Republic – I apologize. In my own name and in the name of Poles whose conscience are moved by the atrocity in Jedwabne." However, the avoidance in the inscription represents the way in which Polish historians affiliated with state institutions had dealt with the issue.

The ceremony brought together the highest Polish official authorities, Jewish official representatives as well as relatives of the survivors. As a participant observer at this ceremony, I noted that there was a manifest disparity between the official acknowledgment and mourning of the tragedy, and the reaction to it of the inhabitants of Jedwabne. The local people collectively rejected the joint effort of the Polish authorities and Polish intellectuals to acknowledge and express sorrow for the crime. I will offer here an interpretation of the tension between official utterances of grief and the vernacular response to them. This tension reflects not only a discontinuity within the realm of Polish collective remembrance, but also a latent conflict within the Polish society on the brink of the country's accession to the European Union.

The subject of Jan Gross's book is the mass murder of the entire Jewish community of the town Jedwabne in northeastern Poland. The killing was most probably

inspired by the Nazis who (after 21 months of Soviet occupation) had entered the town on June 22, 1941. Most certainly however, according to Gross's account, it was carried out solely by Poles. On July 10, 1941, in a planned and organized way, the Polish inhabitants of Jedwabne attacked the homes of their Jewish neighbors, rounding them up in the town square, and beating up and humiliating them along the way, chasing them into a previously designated barn. It was in the barn where those victims who hadn't been killed in the square and on the way, were burned alive. The number of people killed according to *Neighbors* was ca. 1 600.[3]

The first description of the massacre that the author had encountered was the testimony of Szmul Wasersztajn, a survivor of the pogrom of Jews in Jedwabne. Other sources, on the basis of which the book was written, were also mostly contemporaneous. Gross recounts his initial inability to fully grasp the meaning of the material that he had come across. The fact that a historian who has written extensively on this period and area was stupefied with what he found, is an indicative sign of the lack of space in the historical discourse for reports on atrocities like this one. Thus the author sums up his account of coming to terms with his sources: "In any case, once we realize that what seems inconceivable is precisely what happened, a historian soon discovers that the whole story is very well documented, that witnesses are still alive, and that the memory of this crime has been preserved in Jedwabne throughout generations" (Gross 22).

Narratives about the second world war told in Poland in the course of the years that passed since its end, varied in content depending on the political allegiance of the narrator, yet unequivocally they represented the Polish people as the ultimate victims of Hitler. The lack of space for accounts of Jewish suffering in the public discourse had only started to become evident at the end of the nineteen eighties. Subsequently came the first voices calling for a more truthful representation of the past. The true turning point in the course of revisiting history was the publication of *Neighbors*. There, one finds an account of an event that, as Gross himself puts it, invalidates the claim that Polish wartime history is disengaged from Jewish wartime history, which had been the premise of most historiography since 1945 (8). The record of how Polish inhabitants of the town burned its Jewish inhabitants in a barn, forces one to come to grips with a situation, where the victims of the Nazi occupation become at the same time the perpetrators of crimes that so far had been ascribed to the Nazis themselves or, in some cases, to their deprived helpers recruited from other nations. Before Gross, research on wartime pogroms carried out by local Poles in Nazi-occupied territories had not been done. It is advisable, Gross tells us, that researchers adopt a "new approach to sources" i.e. an approach to the testimonies of the survivors that would be "in principle affirmative," rather then "*a priori* critical." This method (central to Gross's project of a "new historiography" on which he elaborates in the book) would help "to avoid more mistakes than we are likely to commit by adopting the opposite approach which calls for cautious

skepticism toward any testimony until an independent confirmation of its content has been found" (Gross 139-40). This methodological premise became an object of severe criticism leveled against him by the circles of professional historians. According to those opinions, he had done an inadequate job researching the sources. Needless to say, official history is suspicious towards the kind of uncertain sources that Holocaust testimonies represent. "Tainted by emotions," containing "imprecise information about persons, places and circumstances," according to the publication of the Institute of National Remembrance, testimonies of the survivors can only be considered in the recapitulation of the events "in confrontation with other documents that pertain to the same places and incidents" (Machcewicz 20). A quest for precision, according to the Institute and other historians, is the only responsible way of dealing with Gross's findings.

The idea of responsibility that emerges from Gross's methodological considerations appears to be quite different: "The greater the catastrophe, the fewer the survivors. We must be capable of listening to lonely voices reaching to us from the abyss" (Gross 140). Such voices, like voices of survivors in general, bring disruption to written history. Despite the fact that elsewhere (mostly in Germany) historians of the Holocaust went through a process of transformation of their historiographic practice, in Poland countering suppression and ideological generalizations remains to a large extent a subversive project. Various forms of avoidance characteristic of Nazi-era studies of some German historians, discussed in Saul Friedlander's essay *Trauma, Memory and Transference* (257-58) closely resemble the afflictions of historians participating in the Jedwabne debate. There is an acute shortage of accounts that would have an *integrated* approach to both the narrations of the Holocaust and descriptions of the background (260). Gross's attempt to achieve this end, ran counter the mainstream of historiographical practice. When the methodological debate went public, it unsettled the firmly held beliefs about what had *really* been going on in Poland during the war.

One of the first responses to Gross's book was an interview with Tomasz Szarota, a renowned historian, expert on the period and area, published in the largest Polish daily, under the title: "The Devil is in the Details" (Zakowski 2001). In those devilish details, such as the actual role of Gestapo functionaries in the killing, or the number of people participating in the killing and their motivations, we should seek, according to Szarota, the understanding of what had happened in Jedwabne. He does not in any way deny Gross's findings. His call for more research, on the surface, may not raise any objections. From the point of view of historian's craft, precision is important indeed. Yet what is troubling, is the fact that precisely this call, and not Gross's postulate, has found political resonance and practical realization in the subsequent months. Shortly after the interview with Szarota, a piece by another historian, Krzysztof Jasiewicz, endorsed the need for a deeper study. The issue of "how many victims could there have been?" (Jasiewicz 124), and what was the scale of Jewish collaboration with the Soviets

(Strzembosz 164), which are nothing more than further questions regarding historical details, set off the pattern known from elsewhere, described years ago by Theodore Adorno in reference to Germany:

All of us today recognize a readiness to deny or belittle what happened – however difficult it is to conceive that people are not ashamed to argue that it was surely at most only five million Jews and not six million, who were killed. Irrational too is the widespread "settling of accounts" about guilt, as if Dresden made up for Auschwitz. There is already something inhuman about such calculations, or in the haste to dispense with self-reflections through counteraccusations. (Adorno 116)

Seeking settlement in weighing "Dresden" against "Auschwitz" in Poland had its counterpart in weighing Jewish participation in Soviet terror against the Jedwabne massacre.

This is not to say that a historian's imperative to take a second look at Gross's findings is unjustifiable. The point, however, is that stressing the need for precision implies that the tragedy can be measured and classified, and thus rendered understandable. Meanwhile, an approach stressing the experience of sufferers brings into the picture the moral weight of how history is interpreted. Modes of establishing causal explanations and of declaring truth bear heavily on what is preserved in the realm of social memory.

My interest is in grasping the dynamics operating within the chimerical domain of collective remembrance. The Jedwabne debate presented a unique opportunity to extend the postulate of the "new approach to sources" from historiographical practice into a moral project of what Adorno calls "reprocessing the past."[4] It appears, however, that this opportunity was lost as a result of dynamics that I shall explore below. The debate, which began with a series of articles in the main Polish daily, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and spread across all of Polish media, shook public opinion by forcing it to turn towards a tragedy occurring sixty years before that no one wanted to remember. Achieving such a high level of interest was a great accomplishment of the original animators of the exchange. Without negating the undoubtedly positive outcomes of the disputes, such as breaking taboos and promoting truthfulness, here I would like to point to the patterns that have impeded the debate's course and rendered divisive the efforts to reprocess the past.

Observers of the debate (Ost, Michlic, Cienciala, Bikont, among others) have generally classified the opinions into two categories: (a) the "liberal" i.e. the self-critical approaches taking *Neighbors* to be a signal that it is time to challenge the old, biased interpretations of Polish-Jewish relations, and (b) the "conservative," i.e. the defensive expressions of criticism and/or denial of Gross's findings aiming at preserving the old representations of the Polish fate as that of the ultimate victim. Assessing the outcomes of the debate however is not a matter of determining which of the two options "won."

There have been, in my view, two main self-limiting patterns that have impeded the reevaluation of Polish collective self-image. The first one was the taking up of the

methodological postulates of historians by both the "conservatives" and the "liberals." Thus the focus shifted from testimonies of the survivors to questions such as whether there was Jewish collaboration with the Soviets or not, the extent of German instigation and the actual number of the victims. However it would be unfair to asses the entire Jedwabne debate through the prism of publications, whose authors displayed "a lack of psychic mastery" (Adorno 117) in the face of an issue that poses much more fundamental questions than those of historical details. Yet regardless of the ability of some historians to go beyond the national agenda, it is difficult not to notice that searching for evidence of some sort of legitimate pattern of persecution and vengeance, not to mention focusing on counting the skeletons in the mass grave for the purpose of establishing "the correct number of victims," were the results of a drive to preserve the domination of some sort of Nietzschean monumental history. The highest authority in establishing truth was consensually granted to the Institute of National Remembrance (a state institution for historical research and prosecution of crimes against the Polish nation). This institution clearly stated its agenda of protecting the stability of the "identity of the national community" (Machcewicz 17).

The second problem is, what I call, the elite takeover of the debate. By this I mean the fact that outrageous claims (such as outright denials of Gross's findings) have barely, if at all, been addressed in the main outlets of the public discussion: mainstream media and socio-cultural journals. Thus, if one paid attention only to publications in the latter, one could walk away with the impression that the discussion is happening at a fairly high register and that argumentation does not fall below a certain level of sophistication and validity. Meanwhile, through other media outlets, those not recognized as "respected," yet not only legal but also popular among a fraction of the public, throughout the duration of the debate one could encounter accusations of lying and manipulations directed at Gross.[5] There were outright denials of the fact that Poles participated in the Jedwabne killings at all. Such illicit claims however, were being dismissed and/or ignored as "marginal," "pathological" and "not reflecting the opinions of the majority of Polish society."[6]

I believe that these two main problems provide the correct background to address the disparity between the official acknowledgment of the massacre, and the reception of this acknowledgment among the people who, in theory, were supposed to be co-hosts of the commemoration ceremony, but who in the end were completely alienated from it – the inhabitants of Jedwabne. The most striking fact I observed in the town on July 10, 2001, was the absence of Jedwabners from the ceremony. The townspeople fully rejected and withdrew from the official proceedings whose aim was to acknowledge the fact that it was Polish neighbors who carried out the killing 60 years before, to express the Polish sorrow for Jewish suffering and to mourn the victims.

Aside from the mayor and one more man (whose family saved Szmul Wasersztajn in 1941), not one local person listened to the presidential address and none walked

in the procession to the site of the barn for the unveiling of the memorial. The window curtains of the houses in Jedwabne were pulled, only occasionally could one see a face peeking out onto the street. Groups of men in their Sunday best stood in the vicinity of the market square, but they did not speak, even when asked for directions. They turned the other way when approached by reporters. No women were present on the streets, and despite the fact that it was a weekday, stores were closed, with the exception of a kiosk with newspapers and cigarettes, where no mainstream daily paper was on sale that day. A banner was displayed in front of the church, which carried an allusion to the alleged incompleteness of the findings about the massacre: "Hope is of truth. Truth has the privilege of unity. Only meager matters need to be buttressed with deceit."

Along the street leading to the outskirts of the town and towards the site, there were more people, some uttering angry comments towards the visitors. A larger cluster of people gathered by the security point that had been erected where the street ended and the dirt road leading to the memorial started. There is no point here in quoting the anti-Semitic slur that two or three visibly drunk men were shouting every now and again towards the ceremony participants slowly passing the narrow alley. The issue is not so much in the fact that such men were there, and that such words were pronounced (since this was unfortunately more than predictable). We ought to focus rather on the generally hostile atmosphere in the town, which reached its apogee on the day of the ceremony, and which was developing in the town ever since the debate about *Neighbors* broke out and the name of the town became infamous across Poland and abroad. Outright and vocal demonstrations of hostility were not isolated incidents, but an expression of this atmosphere. It was evident that the guests of the ceremony (including the President of Poland) were not welcome. Local authorities on behalf of the local population made it obvious that the new truth about the massacre was not accepted.

My intention here is neither to indict the inhabitants of Jedwabne, nor to deny them agency simply by saying that their response was conditioned by the dynamics of the debate. It is rather to say that, although the record of what happened had been officially changed, the course the debate had taken not only allowed for attitudes like those in Jedwabne to remain unchanged, but reinforced the logic that allowed them to thrive for decades in the first place. It was, in my view, a failure of the debate to address this state of consciousness that contributed to the scene being as hopeless as it was. On top of that, Jedwabners' self-defensive reaction to the excessive attention of the media, which they experienced from day one of the debate, was frowned upon and condemned in liberal opinion outlets. This only reinforced their protests and exacerbated their frustration.

Anna Bikont, in her account of interviews conducted in Jedwabne, makes in passing a curious observation: "*The Holocaust Industry* by Norman Finkelstein reached Jedwabne

the moment it was translated into Polish.[7] This does not mean that everybody in Jedwabne reads it before going to sleep, but I have heard the title mentioned in every discussion" (5). This comment provides a good introduction to my concluding remarks.

I have pointed out above that, beside the detrimental pattern of granting the right to utter the last word in the Jedwabne debate to historians, another failure was the tendency to ignore as socially marginal the publicly voiced expressions of "pathological anti-Semitism." Meanwhile, this "pathology," which apparently afflicts Jedwabne (and there is no shortage of proof that Jedwabne is no isolated case) has its own inner logic. The fact that no single Jew lives in Jedwabne today (and very few in Poland) has not shaken the stability of this logic, nor has the knowledge (more or less absorbed) of the horrors of the Holocaust. This fundamental fact should be enough to replace the "pathology" perspective with a more direct interest in the reasons for persistence of radically anti-Semitic views.

The linguistic repertoire and imagery, from which the hostile Jedwabners drew their arguments against the "Jewish ceremony" that was organized in their town on the anniversary of the massacre, bears the features of common sense, as it was described by Clifford Geertz in his essay *Common Sense as a Cultural System* (1983). Common sense according to Geertz is historically constructed and subject to historically defined standards of judgment. I do not, however, refer to this term in order to relativize in any way the anti-Semitic beliefs enlivened by the Jedwabne debate (or, for that matter, any anti-Semitic beliefs at all). I do it rather to point out that the easiness of dismissing them as marginal and unimportant stems from the unwillingness to perceive them as a system – a cognitive framework within which things make sense as long as they lend themselves to a description in familiar terms. This is where the popularity of Finkelstein's book in Jedwabne becomes a case in point. His theses are often vulgarized and oversimplified in anti-Semitic publications, being rendered as a Jewish admittance of the fact that "the Jews are making *geszeft* out of the Holocaust" (Bikont 4). *Geszeft* is a term more familiar, and more organically belonging to anti-Semitic common sense than the term Holocaust, no matter how frightening the implications of this are. This is what ought to have been addressed in the Jedwabne debate.

How the terms of the anti-Semitic discourse were formed and to what they owe their persistence is yet another matter. A genealogical study would be the most desirable approach to the task of uncovering the centuries-long formation of beliefs that hold strong in Jedwabne. A Polish anthropologist, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir took on such project, investigating the 19th century records of folklore studies (Tokarska-Bakir, "Zydzi u Kolberga"). In her work (which was completed before the publication of *Neighbors*) she casts a fresh perspective on the issue of pogroms and of indifference towards the annihilation of the Jews during the war. I find her conclusions very helpful. She counters the view that pre-Modern, folk anti-Semitism was an unfriendly yet benign (in any case far from outright hostile) form of an attitude towards otherness.

To the contrary: within the realm of pre-modern culture, religious, ethnic and social anti-Semitism assigned to Jews a truly "dangerous place," which at any moment could disappear from the face of the Earth. "Pre-modern eye swiftly reacted to the moves of otherness. 'Indifferently' it could only gaze at how the deserved punishment falls upon the Jews, considering not their life, but their death 'a part of the eternal sacred order of the world' " (Tokarska-Bakir, "Zydzi u Kolberga" 38).

Tokarska-Bakir makes a convincing case for the persistence of the kind of common sense in which explosions of hatred remain latent. Her argumentation finds an unsettling echo in the words of Ewa Dziedzic, of the Dziedzic family that saved the only survivor of the Jedwabne killing. After a disturbing account of insults and threats that her family had to face upon displaying their truthful attitude towards the uncovering of the facts of the killing in Jedwabne, she concluded:

And sixty years ago it was people like that, just like the ones that are threatening us now, who robbed their own neighbors, Poles like us, of their lives. Now we have the same kind of people, the same kind of priest, and if someone gave them permission, some of the people in Jedwabne would do again what their fathers once did. Only this time there are no Jews left to burn. (Bikont 13)

So much for the "old approach to sources," to paraphrase Gross's postulate. It offers no way of transforming a horrific event from a not so remote past into a normative lesson and a bridge into the future. Jedwabne's collective refusal to mourn their neighbors burned alive by some of their ancestors sixty years ago, is a symptom of the alienation of significant groups within the Polish society that are not ready or willing to change their perceptions of the past. In order to begin to address this alienation, serious attention must be directed at the flawed methods of preserving the favorable self-image of the entire society. This is how I think contentions over the interpretation of newly-revealed facts of the history of Polish-Jewish relations reflect tensions present within the Polish society on the brink of the country's accession to the European Union.

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Notes

1. This paper was inspired by the seminar course entitled "Memory, Trauma, Evil" taught by Professor Richard J. Bernstein and Professor Carol Bernstein at the 11th Democracy and Diversity Graduate Summer Institute in Cracow, Poland. I thank Professor Richard J. Bernstein for his guidance and support. I also thank the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research for awarding me a scholarship without which I could not have completed this work.

2. Among the guests at the ceremony were Israel's Ambassador to Poland Szewach Weiss and Rabbi Jacob Baker, a former inhabitant of Jedwabne who fled Poland just before the war and who came back to participate in the anniversary ceremony.

3. In the course of the further investigation carried out by the Institute of National Remembrance, this number was challenged. According to the Institute's official statement, today we are in possession of historical evidence that the number of victims was "probably about 300" (Machcewicz 17).

4. "We all need a new approach to sources" wrote Joanna Tokarska-Bakir in her widely

discussed essay *Obsession of Innocence* (2001), indicating that Gross's book brings a call for an overall reevaluation of national historiography. She was, however, one of the very few Polish intellectuals who seemed to have grasped the fact that Gross's argument goes beyond mere methodological recommendation.

5. An extremist nationalist-Catholic daily newspaper during the time of the most heightened debate was running a daily rubric entitled "100 lies of J.T. Gross" during the time of the most heightened debate.

6. Such opinions were expressed, among others, by Wladyslaw Bartoszewski (former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs and co-founder of the war-time underground organization ZEGOTA i.e. Council for Support of the Jews) and Adam Michnik (former dissident and Editor-in-Chief of the main Polish liberal daily newspaper) both of whom I have questioned about this during their public lectures.

7. Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000). The following is a quotation from the footnote added by the Yad Vashem Studies editor to Bikont's text: "Finkelstein's very controversial book has been widely criticized for its vicious diatribe against Holocaust memorial institutions. He contends that they [the Jews] have exploited the Holocaust and have manipulated the American government in order to press lawsuits against Swiss banks and to be awarded large sums of money in general" (Bikont 5).

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Testimonial Objects

Memory, Gender and Transmission	Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer

ABSTRACT

Testimonial Objects: Memory, Gender and Transmission

Focusing on a book of recipes and a miniature artists' book from the Terezín and Vapniarka concentration camps, this essay argues that such material remnants can serve as testimonial objects that carry memory traces from the past as well as embodying the process of its diasporic transmission. Inspired by Roland Barthes' notion of the punctum, *we read such testimonial objects as points of memory – points of*

Figure 10.1 "Entrance to Vapniarka": Drawing by Leibl and Ilie (Kessler family archive)

intersection between past and present, memory and postmemory, personal and cultural recollection. They call for an expanded approach to testimony in diasporic recollection – one in which a consideration of gender can play an important interpretive role. Testimonial objects enable us to consider crucial questions about the past, about how the past comes down to us in the present, and about how gender figures in acts of memory and transmission.[1]

The First Book

Between 1942 and 1944, Mina Pächter and several of her women neighbors interned in the Terezín (Theresienstadt) camp undertook a remarkable project: together they reconstructed from memory and wrote down in German on small scraps of paper the meal recipes that they had routinely prepared in prewar times. Even while they themselves were barely surviving on potato peels, dry bread, and thin soup, they devoted their energy recalling recipes for potato and meat dumplings, stuffed goose neck, and Gulasch with Nockerl, for candied fruits, fruit rice, baked matzohs, plum strudel and Dobosch torte. Many of them had inherited these recipes from their own mothers and, in writing them down, they used them not only to remember happier times, or to whet their appetites in recollection, but – more importantly – as a bequest addressed to future generations of women. Before her death in Terezín in 1944, Mina Pächter entrusted the assembled recipes to a friend, Arthur Buxbaum, asking him to send them to her daughter in Palestine if he should somehow survive. Arthur Buxbaum did survive, but it took twenty-five years and several other intermediaries for the mother's package to reach her daughter, Anny Stern, who had since moved to the United States. Another twenty years later, in 1996, the recipes were published in the original German and in English translation, in a book edited by Cara De Silva and entitled *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezín* (De Silva, "Introduction").

Nowadays, more than sixty years after the end of World War Two, children of victims and survivors of the Holocaust, dispersed throughout the world, are still discovering legacies such as the recipe book from Terezín among their parents' possessions, and are still trying to scrutinize the objects, images and stories that have been bequeathed to them – directly or indirectly – for clues to an opaque and haunting past. In recent years, a powerful memorial aesthetic has developed around such material remnants from the European Holocaust. The writings and artistic productions, for example, of Art Spiegelman, Patrick Modiano, Anne Michaels, Carl Friedman, W.G. Sebald, Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Mikael Levin, Tatana Kellner, Shimon Attie, and Audrey Flack reflect this type of creative engagement. In the course of our own work on the history and memory of Czernowitz (Cernăuţi), the Central European city where Marianne's parents grew up and survived the war, we too have received memorabilia from prewar days and from the ghettoes and camps associated with the Holocaust in Romania, and we have wondered how we might best respond to their demands.

The study of such personal and familial material remnants calls for an expanded understanding of testimony. Such remnants carry memory traces from the past, to be sure, but they also *embody* the very process of its transmission. At this moment in Holocaust studies when, with the passing of the first generation, we increasingly have to rely on the testimonies and representations of members of the second and third generations, we need to scrutinize the "acts of transfer," as Paul Connerton has termed them, by which memory has been passed down over the years. In such "acts of transfer," Connerton would include narrative accounts, commemorative ceremonies, and bodily practices – but we would also add the bequest of personal possessions, and the transmission and reception of their meaning, to his categories of analysis (Connerton, 39-40). Indeed, for anyone willing to subject them to informed and probing readings, material remnants can serve as testimonial objects enabling us to focus crucial questions both about the past itself, and about how the past comes down to us in the present in diasporic recollection.

In Memory's Kitchen, for example, carries powerful personal, historical, cultural, and symbolic meanings that far exceed its deceptively ordinary contents, drawn from the domestic everyday world of its authors. We cannot cook from the recipes in this volume – most of them leave out ingredients or steps, or they reflect wartime rationing by calling for make-do substitutes (for butter or coffee, for example), or by making eggs optional. But we can certainly use them to try to imagine a will to survive, and the determined commitment to community and collaboration that produced this extraordinary book. For persons familiar with the history of the Terezín ghetto, moreover, the recipe collection becomes a testament to the power of memory and continuity in the face of brutality and dehumanization.[2] Evoking shared trans-cultural associations of food and cooking with home and domesticity, the recipe writers also, paradoxically, enable us to imagine hunger and food deprivation through the moving and extraordinarily detailed fantasies of cooking and eating that their fragmentary efforts reveal. The recipe collection testifies to the women's desire to preserve something of their past world, even as that world was being assaulted, and it attests to their own recognition of the value of what they had to offer, as women, namely the knowledge of food preparation.

As a book of recipes, created and exchanged among women, and bequeathed from mother to daughter, *In Memory's Kitchen* thus invites us to think about how acts of transfer may be gendered and engender feminist readings. The recipes embody and perpetuate women's cultural traditions and practices evident both in their content and in the commentary that accompanies some of them (one, for example is called "Torte (sehr gut)" ["Torte (very good)"]). But in a book about food from a concentration camp, considerations of gender also quickly disappear from view as we consider the Nazi will to exterminate *all* Jews, and to destroy even the memory of their ever having existed. This text, therefore, also illustrates some of the well-known hesitations about using gender as an analytic category in relation to the Holocaust – the fear of thereby

detracting attention away from the racializing categorizations that marked entire groups for persecution and extermination. If those targeted for extermination were utterly dehumanized and stripped of subjectivity by their oppressors were they not also degendered? Gender, in circumstances of such extreme persecution and trauma, may well be an immaterial, even offensive, category. As Claire Kahane has put it: "If hysteria put gender at the very center of subjectivity, trauma, in its attention to the assault on the ego and the disintegration of the subject, seems to cast gender aside as irrelevant" (Kahane, 162).[3] Hunger and, thus, food, is, after all, a fundamental concern of every Holocaust victim. It is a persistent theme in every testimony and every memoir, regardless of the victim's gender or of other identity markers. This extends even to accounts of food preparation, which, perhaps in less sophisticated form, preoccupied male as well as female prisoners throughout Nazi ghettoes and camps.[4]

Kahane goes on to ask: "Does feminist theory of the past several decades make a difference in my reading of Holocaust narratives? … Could – and should – the Holocaust even be considered within the context of gender?" In response, the book of recipes from Terezín does raise significant historical questions about the role of gender *then*, in the ghettoes and camps, and representational questions about its role *now*, in our readings of those experiences. Far from being irrelevant, we would say that a feminist reading and a reading of gender constitute, at the very least, compensatory, reparative acts. If the Nazis degendered their victims, must we not make a point of considering the effects of gender, even when these cannot always be kept clearly in view? In fact, we have been interested in looking at gender precisely when it recedes to the background, when it appears to be elusive or even irrelevant. Our broader aim in this paper is to suggest a reframing of the discussion of gender in Holocaust studies. On the one hand, we want to avoid what we see as an unfortunate and all too common opposition between erasing difference and exaggerating it to the point of celebrating the skills and qualities of women over those of men. On the other hand, we would like to get beyond "relevance" or "appropriateness" as categories.[5] As we will show in a detailed reading of another handmade book from a concentration camp – our own testimonial object from Vapniarka in Romania – gender is always relevant, if not always visible.

Points of Memory

What type of intervention can a feminist reading bring about when gender virtually disappears from view? We have found Roland Barthes' suggestive writings on photography and mourning helpful in this regard. We propose to use Barthes in the service of a feminist reading of testimonial objects, a reading that not only interrogates gender, but that is also more broadly inspired by feminist assumptions and commitments.[6]

Barthes' much-discussed notion of the *punctum* has inspired us to look at images, objects, and memorabilia inherited from the past as "points of memory" – points of

intersection between past and present, memory and postmemory, personal remembrance and cultural recall.[7] The term "point" is both spatial – such as a point on a map – and temporal – a moment in time – and it thus highlights the intersection of spatiality and temporality in the workings of personal and cultural memory. The sharpness of a point pierces or punctures: like Barthes' punctum, points of memory puncture through layers of oblivion, interpellating those who seek to know about the past. A point is also small, a detail, and thus it can convey the fragmentariness of the vestiges of the past that come down to us in the present – partial recipes on scraps of paper. In addition, such remnants are useful for purposes of remembrance – in order to help generate remembrance – which constitutes another meaning of the term "point." And points of memory are also *arguments* about memory – objects or images that have remained from the past, containing "points" about the work of memory and transmission. Points of memory produce piercing insights that traverse temporal, spatial and experiential divides. As points multiply, they can convey the overlay of different temporalities and interpretive frames, resisting straightforward readings or any lure of authenticity.

Following Barthes, then, we might say that while some remnants merely give information about the past, like the "studium," others prick and wound and grab and puncture, like the punctum – unsettling assumptions, exposing the unexpected, suggesting what Barthes calls "a subtle beyond," or the "blind field" outside the frame.[8] For Barthes, the punctum is first a detail: a pearl necklace, for example, or a pair of lace-up shoes in a family portrait taken by James van der Zee in 1926 (Barthes, 44). It is a detail only he notices, often because of some personal connection he has with it: he is interested in the necklace because someone in his own family had worn a similar one. This acknowledged subjectivity and positionality, this vulnerability, and this focus on the detail and the ordinary and everyday – all these also belong to feminist reading practices.

And yet, even though it is largely subjective and individual, the memorial punctum is also mobilized by collective and cultural factors. The meanings of the coffee substitute in the Terezín recipe book, or of the pointed collar or the bad teeth in the images in Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, are derived from a cultural/historical rather than a personal/familial repertoire. A point of memory emerges in an encounter between subjects – the mother who wanted her daughter to receive the recipes assembled in the camp, the daughter who receives those recipes from beyond the grave, and who transmits them to others, along with her mother's memory. As encounters between subjects, as acts of reading personal as well as cultural meanings, points of memory are contingent upon the social factors that shape those subjects, and upon how those subjects experience them – factors such as class, age, race, religion, gender and power, and the intersections between them. But as acts of reading, they also expose historical and cultural codes, codes marked by gender and other factors. In both these ways, testimonial objects and images, bequeathed and inherited, can focus and keep visible the elusive question of gender in relation to cultural memory. For Barthes, the

punctum is precisely about visibility and invisibility – once a particular detail, however off-center, interpellates him, it screens out other parts of the image, however central or primary these might initially have appeared. This sort of "insistent gaze," as he terms it, this search for what might lie outside the frame, may well be what it takes to keep gender in focus when one is talking about the Holocaust (Barthes, 49-51).

In the second part of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes elaborates his discussion of the *punctum*, stating: "I now know that there exists another punctum (another 'stigmatum') than the 'detail.' This new punctum, which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* ('that-has-been'), its pure representation" (Barthes, 96). The *punctum* of time is precisely that incongruity or incommensurability between the meaning of a given object *then,* and the one it holds *now*. It is the knowledge of the inevitability of loss, change and death. And that inevitability constitutes the lens through which we, as humans, look at the past. The photograph, Barthes says, (and, we might add, the memorial object) "tells me death in the future" (Barthes, 96).

But, looking beyond Barthes' own frame, through a lens primarily focused on war and destruction, we might suggest that death does not preoccupy us all in the same ways. What if death is untimely, violent, or genocidal? Wouldn't that make the temporal disjunction between then and now utterly unbearable? In ordinary circumstances, people who use or produce the objects that survive them, or who are depicted in photographic images, face indeterminate futures that are made poignant by the certainty we bring to them in retrospect. In the context of genocide, however, intended victims actually anticipate their own untimely death in a *near* future. In the images or objects that emerge from such traumatic circumstances, the act of hope and resistance against that knowledge may well be the punctum. Our work of reading entails juxtaposing two incommensurable temporalities, and exposing the devastating disjunction between them. It is a question of scale – the smaller the hope, the greater the courage required to resist. This is precisely the paradox we find in the recipes from Terezín, and also in the little book from Vapniarka to which we will now turn.

The Second Book

This little book came to us through the family archive of a cousin, David Kessler, the son of Arthur Kessler, a medical doctor who, along with a group of others accused of communist or anti-government activities during the early war years, had been deported in 1942 from the city of Czernowitz/Cernauti to the Vapniarka concentration camp in what was then referred to as Transnistria.[9] When Arthur Kessler was diagnosed with Alzheimers' disease in Tel Aviv in the early 1990s, his son David inherited a number of boxes containing documents and memorabilia from his father's experiences in Vapniarka in 1942/43. In subsequent years, David Kessler, now an engineer in Rochester, New York, spent much of his free time sorting and cataloguing the items that would teach him about events his father had mentioned only rarely, and that father and son

Figure 10.2 The little book

could no longer discuss during their regular visits over the last decade of Arthur Kessler's life. Vapniarka was a camp run by the Romanians (allied with the Germans) for political prisoners, communists and other dissidents, most of them Jews, and it was a camp that housed not only men but also women and some children. This family archive has been invaluable to us in our research into the painful history of the virtually unknown and highly unusual Vapniarka camp and the deliberately induced *Lathyrismus* disease that maimed or killed many of its inmates.

Throughout his childhood and youth, the camp's existence had been constituted for David through his father's fractured stories, his encounters with other camp survivors, and through silences, whispers, and the power of his own fantasies and nightmares.

He told us:

I knew about this mysterious place called Transnistria and that there is some place called Vapniarka there, that it was a camp. But nothing specific. You could not not hear about it. There was a string of people coming to our house on crutches. I knew the people, we were surrounded by them. They had special cars, built especially for them. My dad took care of them. It was all part of my surroundings. And my father would say in German, "There are some things children should be spared knowing. One day the story will be told."… In my imagination it was someplace over there that doesn't exist any more. It was always in black and white of course, very unreal, it belonged to the old old past, it had to do with old people.[10]

Figure 10.3 Map of Romania and Transnistria showing Vapniarka

Now that his father could not transmit that story directly, David was left with the objects in the boxes labeled "Vapniarka:" a photograph of a model of the camp, built by an inmate after the war and exhibited at the Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot museum in Israel; a lengthy typed memoir in German that his father had written during the 1950s and '60s but that David was unable to read because the language they shared in Israel was Hebrew; some published and unpublished accounts of the camp; a vast correspondence which included numerous requests for Dr. Kessler to certify to his patients' camp-related ill-health before various reparations boards. The boxes also contained carefully filed copies of the medical articles Arthur Kessler had published about "Lathyrismus," the debilitating paralysis Vapniarka inmates contracted from the toxic *Lathyrus sativus* chickling peas that were the substance of their diet – from peas fed to them, but not to the camp guards and officers.[11] In addition, David found a series of original woodcuts by Moshe Leibl, a camp inmate, depicting scenes from the camp, and a number of small hand-made metal memorabilia: a key chain and shoe horn marked with a capital V; a bracelet-charm; pin and miniature crutch; and a medallion of a running male casting away his crutches. The most compelling among these is a tiny book, less than one-inch long and about a half-inch wide.

Vapniarka, like Terezín, was a camp where, in certain periods, the prisoners had some amount of autonomy, and thus artists were able to produce remarkable work there. The little book, the metalwork memorabilia in the Kessler family archive, as well as the woodcuts and drawings by various artists, attest to the lively cultural and artistic life that was thriving in the camp even at its worst moments. In his Vapniarka

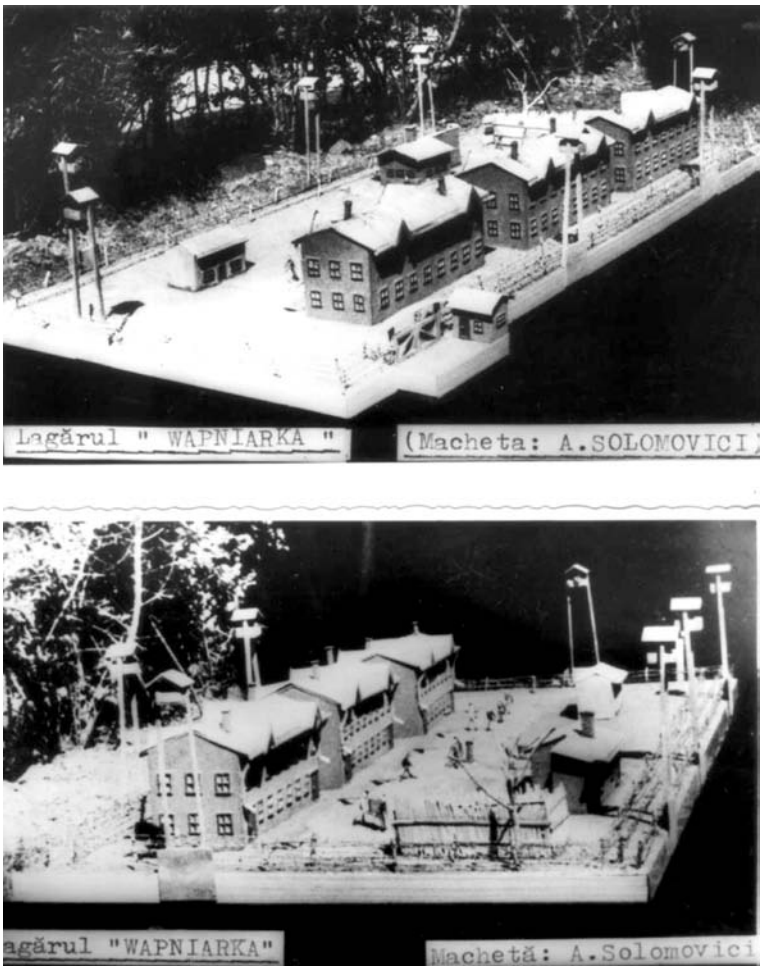

Figure 10.4 Model of the Vapniarka camp made by A. Salomovici (Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot Museum)

memoir, *Finsternis* (*Darkness*), Matei Gall evokes the determination with which artists created their works in the camp:

One day I saw a man who held a nail in his hand and tried to flatten it, to refigure it so as to create a kind of chisel; this seemed unusual if not somewhat suspicious. I continued to observe him. From somewhere – may be from a fence, or from his bunk, I don't know – he got a piece of rotting wood; he looked at it, tried to make it smooth, found a place in the courtyard of the lager and started working on that piece of wood, to chisel it. … A few days later the men who unloaded coal at the railway station brought him something he mixed to create a kind of ink. Now he had color! With a brush made

Figure 10.5 Vapniarka barrack and inmates by Mărculescu (Matei Gall *Finsternis: Durch Gefängnisse* 1999)

out of some remnants of rags he began to color his piece of wood and he pressed the damp surface unto a sheet of paper. The carving became a work of art: In front of me I saw an engraving that represented our pavilion. It is only then that I learned that this carver was a well-known and talented artist, a master of woodcuts, engravings and lithography who had worked at a number of magazines. (Gall, 150. Our translation)

We know from the Vapniarka memoirs and testimonies, that, in 1943, toward the end of Arthur Kessler's internment in the camp, under a more lenient camp commander, inmates invented ways to pass a few of their evening hours through various forms of entertainment and cultural activities. This was possible because of the unusual organization of the Vapniarka camp: the absence of Kapos; the prisoners' own initiative in running certain aspects of camp life; and the experience of a number of them in clandestine activity from their work in the communist underground.

The professional artists, musicians, theatrical persons, and scholars interned in the camp narrated stories, recited poetry, gave lectures on topics such as Marxism, Fascism, the cause of the war, and the history of Jewish resistance against the Romans. They performed music, dance pieces, theatrical sketches. They composed and made up songs in German and Romanian, a number about the very place where they were imprisoned. Matei Gall writes that "In Vapniarka I heard [Schiller's 'Ode to Joy'] for the first time, and I was deeply moved, even though it was sung without orchestral accompaniment" (Gall, 152). And, perhaps most tangible and potentially accessible from the perspective of memory transfer across generations, they produced woodcuts and drawings,

Figure 10.6 … in the palm of a hand

reflecting their physical surroundings and camp life – works of impressive quality and superb testimonial value.

Together with the drawings and woodcuts, the little Vapniarka book enables us to imagine the elaborate cultural activities in the concentration camp and their function as forms of spiritual resistance both against the dehumanization imposed by the jailers, and the despair produced by the spread of an incurable disease.

The little book fits easily fits into the palm of a hand. Bound in leather and held together by a fancifully tied but simple rope, it immediately betrays its hand-made origin. Elegant raised lettering graces the cover: "Causa … Vapniarka, 194…" – the last number is missing, the writing or decorations at the top impossible to make out, the word "Causa" (spelled with an "s") making little sense in Romanian. The title page, in purple lettering in Romanian, is less a title than a dedication: "To doctor Arthur Kessler, a sign of gratitude from his patients." Its forty pages contain a series of scenes and anecdotes of camp life, expressed, in graphic form, by seven different artists: each begins with a signature page, followed by several pages of story board drawings, a few with labels, one page of writing. We know that the majority of the seven artists are male, but some signed only a last name and thus their gender is ambiguous. More than the question of the signature, however, the little book raises a more fundamental question about the readability of gender in this account of poison, disease, starvation and resistance.

This little book has a great deal in common with the recipe collection from Terezín. Both books were hand-sewn and made out of scarce scrap paper; both were collectively made in the camp in communal acts of defiance and resistance, constituting unconventional collective memoirs marked by the bodily imprints of its authors; both were

assembled as gifts. Although, unlike Mina Pächter, Arthur Kessler survived and would have been able to tell his story to his son, the transmission of the full story of Vapniarka was also broken, delayed by a half century (the only three published Vapniarka memoirs appeared in the late 1980s and '90s). Both books, moreover, were structured in response to rigid formal limitations – the recipe format, the tiny rectangular page – and they thus conceal as much as they reveal, requiring us to read the spaces between the frames, to read for silence and absence as well as presence, employing Barthes' "insistent gaze." Both texts emerged out of moments of extremity and provoke us to think about how individuals live their historical moment, how the same moment can be lived differently by different people. In surviving the artists to be read by us, now, the two texts also embody the temporal incongruity that Barthes identified in the *punctum* of time. They demand a form of reading capable of juxtaposing the meanings they may have held then, with the ones they hold for us, now. And, like the book from Terezín, the little book from Vapniarka is intensely preoccupied with food – not as a source of fond memories of home, but as the cause of a crippling and deadly disease.

Arthur Kessler's memoir describes the moment when he received the little book and other gifts – just before the camp was dissolved towards the end of 1943, when the war on the Eastern front had begun to turn against the Germans and their Romanian allies, and the prisoners were relocated to other camps and ghettoes in Transnistria. Kessler left with the first group of 100 inmates. "The patients feel that changes are under way; they are grateful to us as physicians and turn up later with expressions of thanks and small handmade symbolic presents … testaments to their artistic talents."[12]

For Dr Kessler, the little book was no doubt a sign of gratitude, a form of recognition of his remarkable work as a physician who diagnosed the *Lathyrismus* disease brought on by the inmates' food, and who spared no effort in trying to get the authorities to change the camp diet. The book was a gift that shows, as he writes, not just the patients' talents for drawing, but also their ingenuity in finding the materials, their skill in bookmaking, their resilience and collaboration. It is a testament to him as well as to his fellow inmates – to their relationships and sense of community – a message of good wishes for freedom, health, and a safe journey.

But the book was certainly also intended to be a souvenir containing scenes and anecdotes of camp life in graphic form: the barbed-wire compound, the buildings, the bunks, mealtimes, men and women on crutches. Souvenirs authenticate the past; they trigger memories and connect them indexically (in C.S. Peirce's sense of the term) to a particular place and time. They also help to recall shared experiences and fleeting friendships. Some of the pages in the little book are thus located and dated, "Vapniarca, 1943" and each series of drawings is also signed and personalized, as though to say: "Remember me?" "Remember what we lived through together?" And as a souvenir, the book is also a testament to a faith in the future – to a time yet to come when the camp experience will be recalled. It is thus an expression of reassurance – of a will to survive.

There is no doubt that Arthur Kessler and his fellow survivors would have found meanings in this little book that for us now, looking at it in the present, remain obscure. There may be messages, references to specific incidents that we are unable to decode. For us, in the context of our second- and third-generation remembrance, the little book is less a souvenir or gift, than an invaluable record – a testimonial object, a point of memory. Read in conjunction with other now available sources for its visual account of small details of the camp itself and of camp experiences, it transmits much of what the Romanian authorities meant to commit to oblivion when they dissolved Vapniarka – all that today, in the now-Ukrainian town of Vapniarka, and on the site of the camp itself, is largely erased and forgotten (Hirsch and Spitzer, forthcoming). Concerning gender relations and differences, for example, it illustrates that, in this camp, unlike in other better-known camps, there were not only men, women, and children among the internees, but that they shared some of the same spaces. It confirms that the prisoners clearly came to understand the connection between food and disease: that both women and men suffered from the paralysis.[13] It displays the inmates' primary preoccupations; with food, water, the crippling malady – as well as with freedom and its attainment.

The book, of course, also testifies to Arthur Kessler's important role in the camp, depicting him in a number of the drawings as a competent and respected doctor. But it also reveals contemporary prejudices, and highlights details largely omitted from subsequent memoirs. In one of the sequences, for instance, we see a woman working alongside Dr Kessler, either as a fellow doctor or as a nurse. We know from Arthur Kessler's memoir and other sources that there were over twenty doctors in the camp, and that one, Dora Bercovici, was a woman who headed the nursing staff that the prisoners had organized. Written accounts of Vapniarka, including Kessler's very detailed narrative, mention Bercovici in passing, but give her little of the recognition for battling the Lathyrismus epidemic which, in the opinion of Polya Dubs, a woman survivor who had worked with her, she rightfully deserves.[14] A feminist reading of the little book and other sources does help us to redress this inequity, however slightly.

Dubs's testimony and some of the camp drawings that have survived underscore traditional gender differences that were operative in Vapniarka: women did not work outside the camp but tended to stay in the one camp building that was assigned to them and their children; they worked as nurses and cleaning staff, and they prepared food.

In looking for confirmation and elaboration of some of these differences in the little book, a detailed look at the way human figures are actually represented by its artists can prove instructive. Is gender clearly recognizable in these figures, and if so, are there instances when they are particularized and explicitly gendered, and others when gender and other forms of particularity disappear from view? Are any patterns detectable? Such a close reading does immediately reveal that the little book offers us more than the historical information it contains or the scenes it narrates – scenes that all seem to tell the same story, through the same bare-bones, minimalist plot, repeated seven

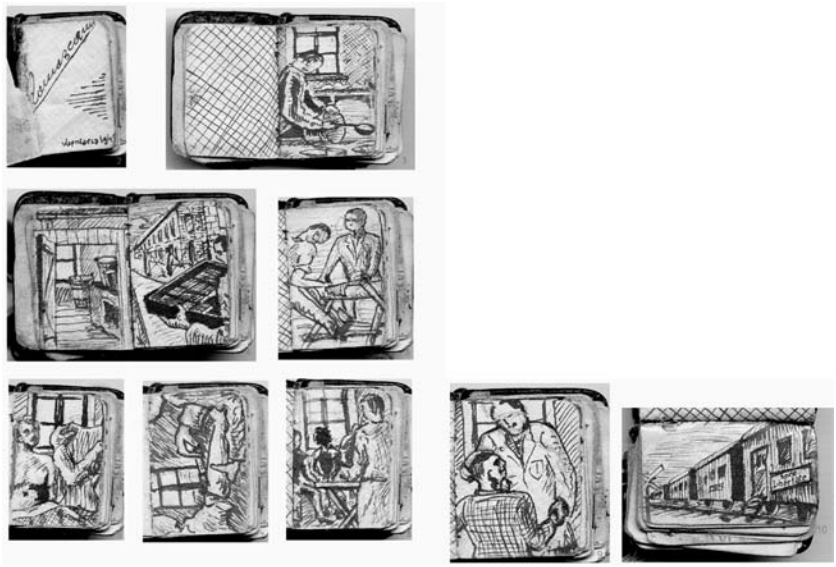

Figure 10.7 Romascanu's illustrations (Note: the spelling of the artist's name, transcribed from the signature on the art, is uncertain.)

times, with slight variations. What is most strikingly apparent is not uniformity at all but minute and larger scale differentiation – the stamp of individuality, of voice, tone, and modulation that each of the miniature graphic accounts is able to convey.

The first artist, Romascanu, for example, uses purple ink and closely-drawn grids to frame his pictures tightly. Through the grids, as through windows, we can make out images of daily life that seem to provide regularity, perhaps even comfort: several scenes of nursing, close human contact, cooking and food. Still, these scenes are mediated, almost inaccessible. We have to peer around the backs of the figures that obstruct the access to the interior spaces, allowing only partial views. The train in the last frame of this sequence, marked "*spre libertate*" ("toward freedom"), may be traversing a railroad crossing, but it is still encased by the claustrophobic grid. Freedom may be hoped for. But it has certainly not been reached.

Preceding the departure, there is a scene of farewell between a male doctor and a woman standing below him, with her back to the viewer. She is looking right, toward the train. His look is kind, paternal; hers, however, is in no way submissive, despite her smaller stature and the lower positioning of her figure. With her back to us, she seems bodily to enact the inaccessibility of these images and the privacy they seem to wish to preserve. Questions emerge: were these first drawings in the little book done by a female artist (the artist's signature contains no first name)? Or did a male artist draw them, sketching a woman to figure mystery and opacity? These questions

Figure 10.8 Ghiţă Wolff's illustrations

stimulate us to think about gender as not only a factor in everyday life or a historical category, but also as a vehicle of representation.

When we view the second artist, Ghiţă Wolff's images, all the framing inhibiting our vision is gone. These drawings appear joyful, childlike, revealing a seemingly unbounded (or indomitable) life within. Here the same everyday scenes of outdoor camp existence take place under a smiling sun and they seem to reflect a brighter, perhaps more optimistic, consciousness. Gender is clearly marked in some of them: the first includes men, women and children, the next two, only men. Yet in the ensuing sketches gender is illegible. The figures, whether lying in their bunks or in the infirmary, are of indeterminate sex. Indeed, in the last image of Wolff's sequence – a drawing which appears to dissolve even the boundaries set by the book page – a small stick figure walks out through the camp gate toward us, raising her (or his) arms on the road to freedom. The individual is "*liber*," free. But in this fantasy of liberty from ruthless confinement, gender appears irrelevant.

All allusion to liberty disappears in the next three segments. The third artist, Avadani, is the most cryptic. The stick figures here are initially simpler and more basic than Wolff's, but they evolve, becoming more complex, less skeletal, as the illness seems to advance. Even here, however, gender is not clearly marked until the fourth panel. In this one, a more substantial figure (a doctor perhaps? Dr Kessler?) stands before a pot of food, possibly coming to the conclusion that we now know was made: that the toxic contents of the

Figure 10.9 Avadani's illustrations and the proverb (Note: the spelling of the artist's name, transcribed from the signature on the art, is uncertain.)

inmates' diet induced their increasingly debilitating, frequently fatal, paralysis. Or is the figure, here and in the final sequence, not meant to be an inmate at all, but a camp guard, more "fleshed out," perhaps, because he enjoys a non-toxic, chicken-in-the-pot meal? Certainly, a context is missing in these sketches: their figures, almost entirely unmoored, are not identifiable or located in a specific moment or place.

And yet the panel in the little book that follows Avadani's enigmatic contribution – the only page of writing within it besides the cover page – contains a powerful allusion to place in the form of a proverb: "*Omul sfînteste locul; Locul sfînteste omul – Wapniarca"* ("Man sanctifies the place; the place sanctifies man – Wapniarca"). Read as a proverb, applied to a concentration camp in which inmates were being slowly poisoned by the officials imprisoning them, its words are ironic if not sarcastic, to say the least. But as an insertion within an artists' book praising the efforts and accomplishments of Dr Kessler, it must certainly also be read more straightforwardly – as a tribute to the honor he bestowed on the place (and on his fellow inmates) with his presence. Like so much else transmitted in such testimonial objects, the page's meanings are layered and not at all mutually exclusive. The generic universal "omul" (man), moreover, like the incongruous genre of the proverb, is related to some of the universalizing gestures we find in the drawings – if, indeed, it makes sense to say that the artists are universalizing the figures when they make gender invisible. Are they, rather, perhaps

Figure 10.10 The proverb

just erasing particularity in the way that a proverb comes to stand in for and reduce a wealth of experience to a formula which, no matter how *à propos*, is always inadequate?

Jeşive's watercolors, which come after the proverb, stand out among all the drawings for their visual complexity. They require that we turn the pages sideways at times, since some are horizontal and others vertical. Although all depict exterior scenes, they offer no allusion to freedom. These stark scenes of disease and forced labor – performed by clearly male and also by some more ambiguous unmarked figures – stand in sharp contrast to the beauty of their pastel depiction, as they most poignantly illustrate the stubborn persistence of the imagination amidst pain and persecution. Jeşive's colors perform an escape into beauty, even as they refuse to represent the dream of escape that is present in the form of trains or open gates in virtually all the other drawings.

In Mărculescu's images, which then follow and which project a very different view of exteriority, the shaded ink drawings seem dark and sinister in comparison to Jeşive's pastels. In them, each figure is situated in front of a barbed wire fence or a massive building, or both. Here, the only escape is through the imagination: the first panel shows a man – perhaps the artist himself – drawing, and the last shows isolated figures in their bunks (or, ill, in the infirmary), alone with their thoughts and their dreams. The first three panels depict men, but the last two representing extreme imprisonment and extreme privacy and interiority are more ambiguous, echoing a pattern we've perceived before.

The last two sequences in the little book are briefer, as though the artists were running out of space. "DB"'s dynamic stick figures, male, it would seem, give a foreshortened, minimal history of the Vapniarka inmate experience, in four panels. A figure walks through the open gateway of the camp energetically, with a walking stick, carrying a bundle on his back. This is the moment of arrival at the camp. But the disease cripples him and we see him on crutches in front of a barbed wire fence. He is not

Figure 10.11 Jeşive's illustrations

alone: in the next panel, three figures stand with arms interlocked in front of this fence, in a gesture of defiant resistance. And, in the last panel by DB, the now seemingly empowered figure runs out through the same camp gateway, his arms raised in triumph.

The book ends with a sequence of drawings by Gavriel Cohen, one of the talented artists who also left behind a number of additional pencil and pen-and-ink sketches of life at the Vapniarka camp. Here, he sketches a double-page scene in accurate perspective of what must have been the interior of the infirmary. A doctor or nurse is tending to a patient reclining on a bunk. Another patient lies on another bunk, a crutch by the side, in a position suggesting resignation if not despair. Gender is blurred in these sketches, secondary to the disease and affliction that is foregrounded. It recedes into the background, suggesting more questions than answers. In this light, the final panel of the series, and of the book itself – of a moving train with a giant question mark above it – takes on a layered meaning. Certainly, it, too, echoes the yearning for departure and freedom expressed by previous artists. But the unknown destination

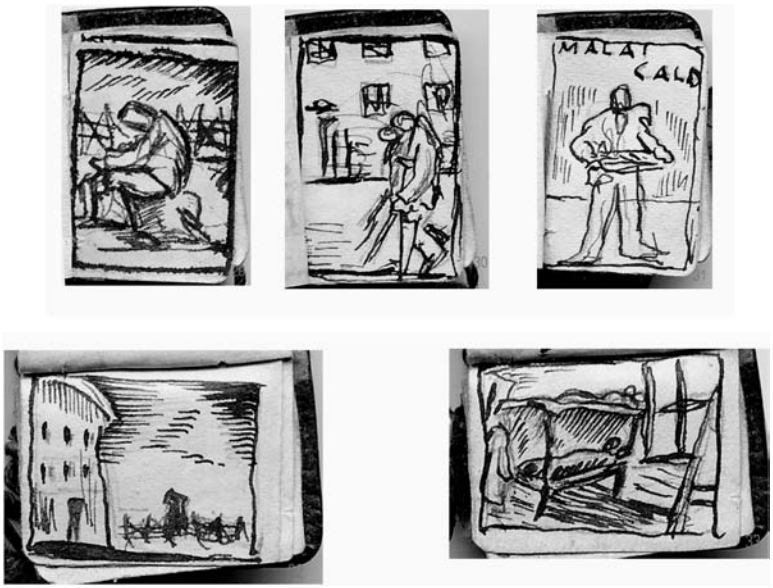

Figure 10.12 Mărculescu's illustrations

implied by the mark can also be read as a final entreaty to the departing Dr Kessler. When he leaves, what will happen to the patients left behind?

Although they tell nearly identical plots, all of the drawings in the little book have vastly divergent emotional colorings. Like the recipes from Terezín, and like witnesses in oral testimony, they expose more than they say, and they do so through mode, shading, and tone. In proportion to the book's small size, each of these differentiations, including gender, becomes hugely meaningful. As Barthes suggests in his reading of photographs in *Camera Lucida*, in each of the artistic representations in the little book, one aspect of an image, one detail, can make everything else recede from view, assuming the role of a *punctum*. And yet, as we have also seen, the testimonial impact of the little book – for Arthur Kessler at the time when he received it, and for us now – greatly exceeds the sum of its parts and, of course, its miniature form.

How can we understand the book's miniaturization, its most distinctive feature? Certainly the materials – leather, paper, string, pens and watercolors – must have been difficult to come by, and the miniature form, in all likelihood, attests to their scarcity. It would also have been easier for Arthur Kessler to hide such a minute object when he left the camp for unknown further destinations in Transnistria. Gaston Bachelard, who has written eloquently about the miniature, provides us with an insightful observation that is applicable to this little book. He recounts a passage by Herrmann Hesse, originally published in *Fontaine*, a French literary journal that appeared in Algiers during World War Two that describes a prisoner who paints a landscape on

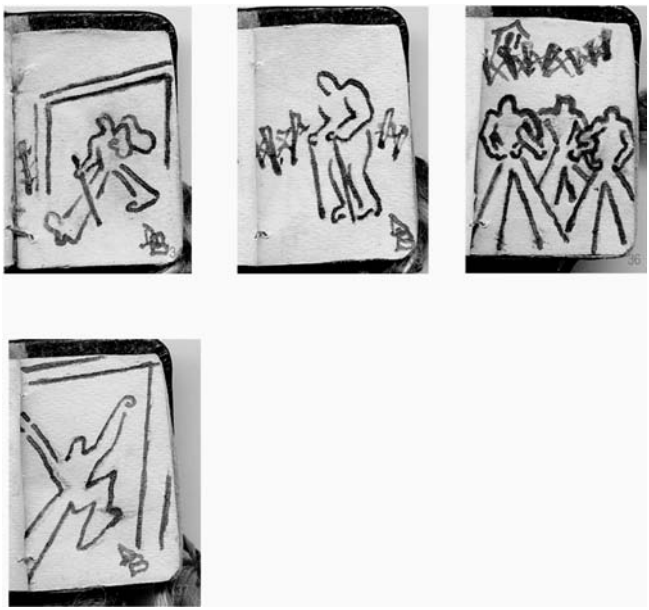

Figure 10.13 D.B.'s illustrations

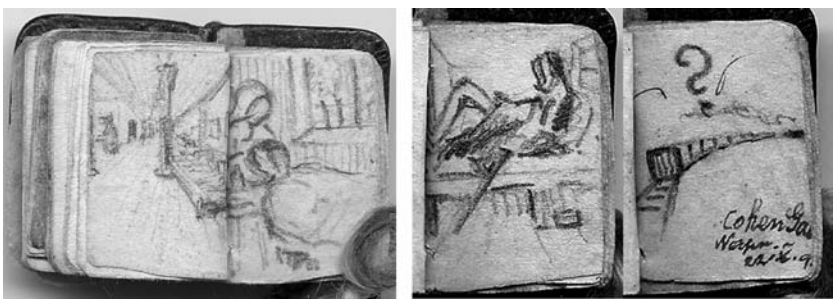

Figure 10.14 Illustrations from Gavriel Cohen's segment

the wall of his cell showing a miniature train entering a tunnel. When his jailers come for him, the prisoner in Hesse's story writes:

I made myself very tiny, entered into my picture and climbed into the little train, which started moving, then disappeared into the darkness of the tunnel. For a few seconds longer a bit of smoke could be seen coming out of the round hole. Then this smoke blew away, and with it the picture, and with the picture my person… (Hesse in Bachelard, 150)

This passage vividly highlights the deep connection between miniaturization, confinement and power. The miniature offers the powerless the fantasy of hiding, of escape,

and of a victory over the powerful jailers. The escape is possible only through wit, imagination, and fantasy, as legendary small figures like Tom Thumb have demonstrated again and again. One could argue that as a fantasy of the disempowered, the miniature is marked by gender. Feminized and infantilized by their jailers, male prisoners engage in fantasies of escape, expressed within and through the miniature, instead of through armed combat, a traditionally more masculine response.

Susan Stewart writes that the miniature is a "metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject," while the gigantic is a metaphor for "the abstract authority of the state and the collective, public, life" (Stewart xii). Although it was collectively made, we can see the little Vapniarka book as an expression of the subjective interiority that is most assaulted and threatened by confinement in a concentration camp. But it is also a remnant – and reminder – of persistence against all odds. Each miniature drawing in stick figure form represents individualized experiences of unprecedented suffering and survival, even as it underscores the inadequacy of this or any other idiom for its expression. Whatever the practical reasons for the book's miniature status, they need to be supplemented by an understanding that, by giving Arthur Kessler this tiny object, the patients were giving him the most precious gift they could bestow – the small bit of privacy and interiority, of depth and subjectivity, they had been able to preserve. Hand-made, jointly conceived and constructed, yet individually imagined, the miniature object they are endowing to him – and, through him and his son, to us as well – contains not only their signature but also their bodily marking. Through this multiple "act of transfer," the miniature appears as the small core of privacy – a shared privacy in this case – that defies smothering by the deadly authority of the state.

Along with other surviving Vapniarka drawings and woodcuts, the little book enables us to imagine the elaborate cultural activities of the Vapniarka camp and their function as forms of spiritual resistance against the dehumanization imposed by the jailers, and the despair produced by the spread of an incurable disease. In this way, again, the little book is related to the recipe book from Terezín. In Terezín, where art was sanctioned and even coerced for use in Nazi propaganda efforts, the recipe book, generated by the women as a clandestine project, reflected a refusal and a resistant challenge to the purposes of the Nazi authority.

Additionally, the Vapniarka book's tiny size specifically relates to, and provides a graphic analog for, another incident of miniaturization discussed in several of the Vapniarka memoirs: the elaborate communal letters that the inmates composed and smuggled to the outside world. Here is Matei Gall's account:

What are our letters like? An ordinary sheet of paper was folded so as to produce 24 squares of one centimeter each. Every square was numbered front and back, each one of us received a code number that corresponded both to the number on one of the squares and to the number of our respective family. I for example had the correspondence Number 14. Once the currier arrived safely with the folded and well-hidden

Figure 10.15 Dr. Honoris Causa, Vapniarca, 1943

sheet of paper, the letter was cut into the respective squares and everyone received the correct message. (Gall 151)

Arthur Kessler, upon receiving the little book as a gift, would no doubt have recalled the miniaturized form of letter writing in which he also participated. For us, as well, its reduced dimension enables us better to visualize those collective letters and the calculated process of producing them. This ability to make us imagine the camp's lively cultural activity, or the practice of smuggling letters, makes the little book and its drawings into points of memory that pierce through the temporal and experiential layers separating us from the past.

But, as we have already seen, more is at stake in the miniature form. The little book's size reflects the minimalism of the master-plot that we find in the seven narratives. Perhaps, paradoxically, it is only through minimalism and miniaturization that the prisoners could express the enormity of their experience. As with the recipes from Terezín, it is literally only by going off the scale in the other direction that we can begin to imagine the numbers, the totality of devastation, the shattering of individuality and collectivity that was the Holocaust. As we look at the recipes and the drawings in the little book, we can imagine how Anny Stern might have read the book her mother transmitted to her, how she might have tried to find hidden messages, accounts and explanations, meanings that exceed the recipe form. We can try to imagine receiving a one-centimeter letter from a relative in Vapniarka, as Judith Kessler, Arthur's wife, did: how minimal the messages must have been and how rich and multivalent they must have become in the act of her probing readings. The recipes from Terezín and the little book from Vapniarka elicit similarly meticulous and multiple readings from us. There is so little space that every line, every word, counts as a possible clue. In such a context, minute marks and variations, virtually invisible, become hypervisible, disproportionately enormous.

A similar oscillation between invisibility and hypervisibility marks the question of gender in relation to the Holocaust: its seeming irrelevance makes it all the more relevant and significant. Like a figure/ground pattern, or like the oscillation between

stick figures and fleshed-out drawings, it emerges as significant, tangible, only to recede again, making space for other concerns. The recipes from Terezín and the drawings from Vapniarka thus become more than microcosms and emblems of the camps in which they were produced – they are emblems for the very process of reading gender within the context of the Holocaust. As points of memory, they have indeed provoked a piercing insight that traverses time and space – the incongruity of gender and the Holocaust; its oscillation between foreground and background; its legibility and illegibility.

The miniature, Stewart writes further, contains the daydream that "the world of things can open itself to reveal a secret life … a life within life" (54). But this tiny memory-book, a remnant that has now survived the death of those who could have told us more about it, does not reveal its secrets easily. It took bright lights, magnifying glasses, and a great deal of persistence for us to decode even its cover – and yes, once we succeeded, it did reveal a secret life. It turns out that the word "Causa," which is part of the book's title, was not meant to be Romanian at all, for it became apparent to us that, before some of the letters had faded, the cover title actually read "Dr. Honoris Causa, Vapniarca, 1943."

Once the cover became legible, it became hypervisible, exposing the depths of irony and incongruity structuring this gift. Indeed, the irony revealed is particularly evident to us who dwell in academia. With this gift, patients were bestowing on Arthur Kessler an *honorary doctorate from their concentration camp!* Once we decode the cover, the book's intent as gift and souvenir is thus superceded by its function as an award of honor – as a kind of ironic certificate of merit embellished by a loopy ribbon made of ordinary string. But that honor does not contain any grand official diploma. It contains, instead, in graphic form, small individual accounts of the patients' encounters with Dr. Kessler. The miniature form, juxtaposed with the grand title, underscores the incongruity of producing art in a concentration camp, of finding kindness, goodness and friendship in the midst of deprivation and suffering. That juxtaposition, once we are able to make it visible, is indeed poignant. The punctum here is not in the details, but precisely in this incongruity that echoes others – the incongruity of asserting humanity in the face of starvation and dehumanization, of figuring hunger through dreams of food, of reading gender in the context of the Holocaust.

But in holding the little book from Vapniarka in the palm of a hand, and reading its images with an insistent gaze, we can do even more. We can remember those who created and crafted its contents, and we can highlight and try to further transmit their courage, their resilience and their collaborative determination. And yet, only if we acknowledge the temporal and spatial distance that separates us from them, the layers of meaning and the multiple frames of interpretation that the intervening years and diasporic resettlements have introduced and that have influenced our reading, can we hope to receive from them the testimonies and the testaments they may have wished to transmit.

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Notes

1. This essay emerges from the work we are doing on our co-authored book in progress *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of a City in Jewish Memory and History*. It has previously appeared in a special issue on testimony edited by Geoffrey Hartman in *Poetics Today*. We are grateful to Geoffrey Hartman, Irene Kacandes, Nancy K. Miller, Ivy Schweitzer, Diana Taylor, and Susan Winnett for suggestions on earlier drafts of this argument, and to Meir Sternberg for his excellent editorial suggestions. Many thanks to David Kessler for sharing his archive and knowledge of Vapniarka with us and to Mirta Kupferminc for making us a facsimile of the little book. Parts and earlier versions were presented at Yale University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Michigan, the University of Calgary, Columbia University, and the University of Amsterdam.

2. Theresienstadt (known as Terezín in Czech), northwest of Prague in Bohemia, was built in 1780 by the Habsburg emperor, Joseph II as a walled military garrison and named after his mother, Empress Maria Theresa. Connected to this larger fortified town (known as the Big Fort) was the so-called Small Fort that was used as a military and political prison. In 1940, when Czechoslovakia fell under Nazi control, the Small Fort became a Gestapo prison and, starting in 1941 (and until its liberation in 1945), the larger fortified town, called by the Nazis "Ghetto Theresienstadt," was used as a Jewish concentration and transit camp. Although tens of thousands of persons died there, and multiple thousands more were deported to extermination camps in Poland, Nazi propagandists presented the camp as a "model Jewish settlement," sanctioning – but for the most part, compelling – artistic and cultural production by inmates for propaganda newsreels, and staging social and cultural events to convince International Red Cross visitors in 1944 of the positive nature and high quality of their Jewish ghetto resettlements schemes. See Chádová, 1995; Adler, 1958; Schwertfeger, 1989; Troller, 1991.

3. For an analysis of dehumanization as a form of degendering, see for example, Spillers, 1987; Hirsch and Spitzer, 1993; Hartman, 1997.

4. Israeli archives (Beit Theresienstadt at Givat Chaim-Ichud) even contain one recipe collection written by a man, Jaroslav Budlovsky, and there is also another recipe book written by male prisoners-of-war in the Philippines during World War Two entitled *Recipes out of Bilibid* (De Silva).

5. There is a substantial and contested literature on women's experiences in the Holocaust that distinguishes it from the experiences of men. See, for example, Baer and Goldenberg, 2003; Ringelheim, 1884, 1990; Goldenberg, 1990; Rittner and Roth, 1993; Ofer and Weitzman, 1998; Baumel, 1998; Kramer, 1999; Tec, 2003. For feminist analyses of gender and the memory and memorialization of the Holocaust that foreground issues of representation, see, for example, Hirsch and Spitzer, 1993; Hirsch, 2002; Kahane, 2001; Horowitz, 2001; Bos, 2003.

6. Others have done feminist readings of *Camera Lucida*, or have used Barthes in the service of feminist analysis, focusing either on Barthes' discussion by the detail (see especially the brilliant discussion by Schor, 1987); or on the relationship of photography to death and to the mother (see esp. Kritzman, 1988; Phelan, 2002; Jones, 2002; Gallop, 2003).

7. On postmemory, see Liss, 1998; Hirsch, 1997, 2001, 2002. We have developed the notion of "points of memory" in relation to Barthes and the *punctum* in several related essays: see especially Hirsch and Spitzer, 2005. Barthes' compelling discussion of the relationship of photography to death has inspired much of the vast literature on visuality, photography and the Holocaust, and on the transmission of affect: see Hornstein, 2002; Baer, 2000 and 2002; Zelizer, 1998 and 2001; Hüppauf, 1997; Yacobi; Morris, 2001; Eigler, 2001; Van Alphen, 1997 and 2005.

8. Among the numerous insightful discussions of Barthes' notion of the *punctum*, see especially Rabaté, 1997; Derrida. 2001; Olin, 2002; Prosser, 2005; Fried, 2005.

9. On Transnistria and Vapniarka, see Ancel (1986, 1993), Benditer (1995), Carmelly (1997), Fischer (1969), and Ioanid (1999). Also see Hirsch and Spitzer, forthcoming.

10. Videotaped interview with David Kessler, Suceava, Romania, July 2000.

11. At the end of December 1942, almost five months after Ukrainian prisoners in Pavilion III of the camp, and some three-and-a-half months after the others, had been introduced to a chickling pea (*lathyrus sativa*) soup diet, the first among them showed the symptoms of a strange illness: severe cramps, paralysis of the lower limbs, and loss of kidney functions. Within a week, hundreds of others in the entire camp were also paralyzed. By late-January 1943, some 1000 in the Lager were suffering from this disease in its early and intermediate stages; 120 were totally paralyzed; a number had died. Lathyrus sativa, occasionally mixed lightly into animal fodder in times of food shortage or famine, was widely known to be toxic to humans by the local peasantry and, presumably, since it was only fed to camp inmates, by Romanian authorities and officials as well. See Arthur Kessler, "Lathyrismus."

12. All Arthur Kessler quotes in this essay are from his "Ein Arzt im Lager: Die Fahrt ins Ungewisse. Tagebuch u. Aufzeichnugen eines Verschickten." ("A Doctor in the Lager: the Journey in the Unknown. Diary and Notes of a Deportee"). This memoir, in typescript, is based on notes taken in the camp and written not long after the war. An English translation by Margaret Robinson, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, edited and with an introduction and annotations by Leo Spitzer and Marianne Hirsch, is in preparation.

13. Both Arthur Kessler's and Nathan Simon's account of the spread of the disease agree that, proportionately, women contracted lathyrismus at a lower rate, and suffered fewer fatalities from it, than did men. Their explanation is that women consumed smaller portions of the toxic pea soup than did the men.

14. Videotaped interview with Polya Dubs, Rehovoth, Israel, 6 September 2000.

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Imaginary Lands and Figures of Exile in Elia Kazan's AMERICA, AMERICA

Sylvie Rollet

ABSTRACT

Imaginary Lands and Figures of Exile in Elia Kazan's AMERICA, AMERICA

AMERICA, AMERICA is the place where the filmmaker Elia Kazan has attempted to refound a "hauntless" relationship with Anatolia, his ancestral land. If the film narration, situated between a documentary and a fiction, can appear as a means of remembering a collective and a badly-limbed personal history, it means that the work establishes an "in-between" which keeps away the moviemaker from his living ghosts. The reconstructive virtue of the narration is, in fact, inseparable from the existence of the spectator-witness: the "recomposed memory" of the film thus becomes a shared experience.

AMERICA, AMERICA occupies a unique place in the work of filmmaker Elia Kazan who had already, by 1964, made fifteen films in the context of Hollywood. It is, in effect, the first film for which he wrote the entire screenplay. In 1961, he wrote a first version for the theatre, entitled *Hamal*, then a script in dialogue, which was published in 1962 with the title *The Anatolian Smile*, before directing the film itself.

Like Kazan's uncle, the film's hero, a young Greek from Anatolia, manages to leave Asia Minor – where, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, Greeks and Armenians live under the menace of the massacres perpetrated by the Turkish army – and finally reaches America after many ordeals.[1]

At the age of fifty-five, Elia Kazan finally brings to the screen the stories he had been told by his grandmother, and listened to as a child, as well as the accounts of tens of other Greek people coming from Anatolia. "My film-making career," says Kazan, "really started in the sixties. […] It was my first coming-into-the-world" (Ciment 260). If AMERICA, AMERICA is the true place of its author's "birth," it is because the film sets the very scene where the fundamental enigma of Kazan's existence can be exhibited: that of

a lost identity, a "subject" which cannot be found, and whose history lies elsewhere, in another place, but also in other lives than his. The origin of America, America is to be found, therefore, in the haunting fear of a lost, forgotten, Anatolia whose ghostlike presence represents the reverse side of an incurable absence.

This absent presence is the basis for the contradictory demands of fiction and documentary to which the direction of the film must comply, influencing how the director chooses to shoot his work. The precise casting of the actors, Jewish or Greek, all of whom were unknown up until this point, stems from a key preoccupation: all of them had grandparents in the "Old World" who had experienced the journey toward a new identity.[2] In search of the connection, which, in Anatolia, unified men with their land, Kazan chose, in the same vein, to engage a cameraman (Haskell Wexler) who came from documentary filmmaking and was used to shooting films with a handheld camera. Similarly, he took a close look at the particular way in which, in Asia Minor, people sat in a chair or played with a *koboloï*. The sequence that shows the arrival of the immigrants to New York had, admittedly, to be filmed in an old Greek customs house, because in 1963 Ellis Island no longer existed. The immigrants, themselves, however, are authentic refugees from Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, who, at the time of the film, were cooped up in a camp at the Greek border, reliving their own history: the long wait for a hypothetical border opening. Even more ironically, the fictional story of America, America involuntarily turned into reality. In spite of the fact that three weeks of filming were, in effect, scheduled in Turkey, the film crew, running up against police harassment, had to pack their bags after four days and continue filming in Greece, as if the exile of long ago were happening all over again!

If the film resembles an exercise field in which contradictory forces are in training, the "conflict" is even more clearly apparent in the arena of its writing. Indeed, Kazan's imaginary displacement is the exact inversion of that of his hero. Whilst the characters in the story, moved by the "American Dream," leave their own reality, Turkish Anatolia, the filmmaker, on the contrary, abandons American reality for the fiction of an ancestral homeland, which is completely imaginary. The radical gap between Kazan's position and that of his principal character becomes an essential or "fundamental" contradiction by dint of the filmmaker's decision to tell "someone else's story, that is to say – Stavros's, to little by little make of it his own story" (Ciment 238).

It is in this way, therefore, that the contours of Kazan's mission take shape. This mission is not strictly-speaking autobiographical – which would suppose that the narrated story were actually lived – but is a "biotext" (Robin 202), a reconstruction of his own story, which remains inaccessible to the subject beyond its textualization. The first slant of this project, a primitive goal which manifests itself in an exemplary way in the prologue, is in effect to put an end to the violence of an absence without face: a lack of being resulting from the ruin of all links with the ancestral land, for ever unable to be given a face, for ever elsewhere, of which the consequence is the loss

of internal coincidence of oneself with himself. Whereas the exile, "for whom the fantasy of a possible return is the very mark of the psychic continuity of himself in time and space" (Altounian 86), for the person without a homeland that is Kazan, there is a true "impossibility of being," because "the exile's past existence is nowhere to be found" (Altounian 90).

The diabolical perversity of the past crime against the *genos* is that it perpetuates itself from generation to generation without the "survivor" ever being able to recreate its event. An imageless and wordless pain is the common characteristic of the descendants of the victims of the Twentieth Century's genocides and deportations. And yet, as Janine Altounian shows us, it is on the written scene that the memory of an event that cannot be remembered may be built – through displacement, through "translation." Hence writing becomes an "inheritance procedure, [...] a mediation capable of promoting a discontinuous, indirect transmission, so that the loss of a homeland that is henceforward nowhere can be assembled and be symbolically inscribed" (Altounian 99).

Substituting itself to an impossible recollection, the construction of a truth-like fiction opens a space and reinscribes the out-of-space and out-of-time nature of the lost homeland. The story told in AMERICA, AMERICA thus presents itself as a journey, leading the young hero (who is at once the ancestor, the son and the double of Kazan himself) from the fantasized "over there" and "other time" to the very real "here and now" of the filmmaker. The narrative, having replaced the initial void by the conjunctive tissue of the fiction, makes it appear as the main tool in the reconstruction of an appeased memory – the crucial instrument in restoring the link between past and present.

"In the beginning..." a no-where

The film suddenly "appears" with a voice: "My name is Elia Kazan. I am a Greek by blood, a Turk by birth and an American because my uncle made a journey." Yet the place from where the voice comes is a black screen. Moreover, when the director names himself, indicates his Greek origins and the ties that connect him to a lost ancestral land, he does so in his adopted language: American. This blind spot, this absence of mother tongue constitutes the film's place of origin: a "no-where." Fiction appears, therefore, to be the only arena in which the re-conquering of forgotten images and language can be performed.

This being said, the film constantly affirms that the cinematographic image is not an illusory substitute for an absent reality, but actually the only "mediation" possible for the imaginary. More precisely, the relation between the film's images and the mental images that it awakens, can be thought of in terms of reciprocal action, of dynamic exchange and not in terms of "representation" (Tisseron 13). This is powerfully illustrated by the shots of the mountain on which AMERICA, AMERICA opens. It is worth noting that Mount Argee had to be replaced by Mount Olympus in the film, as Anatolia could

no longer be represented, except by a mediatory image. If the space in which the shooting of the film took place bears the scars of exile, this is equally in evidence in the frame.

It is via a series of static, distance shots, diving alternately in and out, that we are shown the image of the uninhabited mountains. At no point can we identify the adopted viewpoint as relevant to an individual or even a group of people. We cannot even find continuity between the shots that would enable us to piece together a landscape. The impression of abstraction, conveyed to us by clichés impossible to fit into a fictional framework, is also accentuated by the fact that no sign of a "human" gaze appears in the choice of framing: the adopted viewpoints (high-angle or low-angle shots) just refer back to possible visions. The unlocatable voice of the *muezzin* (mosque official) calling prayers, rises out of and above the shots of the mountains. Hence the sound is no more linked to the images than they are linked between themselves. Out of these fragments, some form of unity can, undoubtedly, be reconstructed, although its coherence can only be the result of the mental exercise of the spectator that is comparable to the anamnestic process in which Kazan is engaged.

What is at stake in the film appears clearly when, after the *muezzin*'s call, we hear Kazan's voice: "This story was told me over the years by the old people of my family." The wording itself makes the narrative we are about to be told into an authentic story, rooted in collective memory or, to put it otherwise, something lived (Halbwachs 97-142). Above all, this ancestral memory, transmitted by word of mouth by the elders' narrative, places the autobiographical fiction in the frame of a living link of filiation. Thus, the film's author becomes the guardian of a tradition – the work itself being the place of its transmission.

Due to the power of the voice-over, the inaugural images of "no-where" and "no-when" become the territory of the past. It is this once-inhabited territory that is presented in the second part of the prologue. The images from "long ago" are violently in contrast with those that preceded them. Whilst the first part is composed of empty frames (in the same way that subjectivity is absent from the shots), the second part uses compositions that close in on a multitude of men, children and animals on the move. The dominant characteristics of the ancestral territory are set down: the saturation of space (the congestion of the picture, shots at ground level) and the incessant movement (directing the links between the shots and the camera's shifts).

In the last part of the prologue, there is nothing more for Kazan to film but the mental split between his hero and this territory. This is accomplished when the men are no longer connected to their land by activities but only by looking at the landscape: contrasting with the previous links based on movement, the last shots of the prologue are connected by the hero's point of view on the mountains. Henceforth, from a distance, Mount Argee becomes no more than an image that can be projected in any way desired. Then, because an image can always give birth to another, erasing the

first, the title AMERICA, AMERICA, born of Stavros' gaze and growing bigger and bigger on the screen, might even reach a size where it consumes the image of the surroundings and the faces of the past. Then, for the second time, the musical theme that accompanied the characters' departure from the mountain rises up again. The first time, it was a male choir that interpreted the exile's song composed by Manos Hadzidakis to Nikos Gatsos's verse: "And you, my long lost homeland/you will remain as caress and wound/when the dawn rises over another land." When the title invades the screen, the voices have disappeared: the song has become unrecognizable behind the mask of the orchestral version.

The rift

The meaning of the title AMERICA, AMERICA remains enigmatic, however. Referring to the name defined, for the emigrants, by the "American Dream," the repetition of the noun is somewhat perplexing. An invocation or a mode of exorcism? A faltering or stammer? Somewhat insidiously, a split seems to be insinuated, fracturing the dream from within. Thus appears the second slant to Kazan's project: to film the violence wreaked on the immigrants' dream when reality replaces the desirable image.[3] It is precisely the brutality of this convergence, the shock of the images, which is the object of the arrival sequence in New York, itself split in two, as the boarding of the ship by the American health inspectors precedes the marshalling of the immigrants on Ellis Island.

With the arrival of the immigrants, in sight of New York, all the violence of exile surges up, that is to say, the violence produced by the shock of two make-believe worlds. In place of the oppression of which the immigrants were victims "over there" – Turkish repression and brutality is rendered even more sensitively by overloaded frames – the film substitutes the icy, literally "inhumane," image of the American territory. In effect, the hubbub of voices and the mix of languages is followed by a silence which only the intervention of the mechanical noises breaks up, similarly, faces and bodies pressed together, one against the other, give way to the geometrical square pattern of the space and the rectilinear layout of the trajectories. In the New World, technical and social machinery organize and subordinate human activity.

The dual sequence of the arrival in New York is even more remarkable because, twice, Kazan chooses to reverse the anticipated viewpoint: it is not the immigrants who are entering American territory, but America which, from outside, comes to them. And this "approach" is filmed like an intrusion, a "breaking and entering" even, on the immigrants' universe: a sonorous break-in with the sounds of motors and footsteps which silence voices, a forced entry of light in a world plunged in matrix obscurity. The signs that had inspired such hope – the Statue of Liberty, the Star-Spangled Banner – give way to a highly organized space, yet, its abstract order appears to be totally arbitrary. Hence, the Ellis Island sorting office obeys a strict geometry, which isolates invisible but necessary cells, imposing their order not only on the immigrants

but also on the officers, whose movement scrupulously follows the design of a virtual frontier.

From this point on, America ceases to appear a Promised Land and the final meeting of the immigrants' dream and reality is concluded by an ultimate victory for the American conquerors: the new arrivals are dispossessed of their paternal names, that is to say, they are detached from their lineage to better relieve them of the burden of their history.[4]

As a result of the wrenching of the fathers from their land of birth, the absence of ancestral territory can henceforth only be expressed by the internal tear that makes the sons absents to themselves. Whilst the film ends with the photographs of its fictional characters – the film's "family photo album" becomes a substitute for the other, real one which is missing, from this moment on – Kazan's voice duplicating the wording of the end credits, for each of his actors or technicians, disappears suddenly when his own name comes up. The final image is of Stavros who, by completely filling the screen's surface, serves to obscure the director's retreat. However, something of the tear in the inaugural "I," Kazan's, is definitely there: one half of the character's face is plunged in darkness. The new, American identity seems to be able to see the light of day because the other one, which continues to attach the immigrant to the Old World, is destroyed. A useless undertaking: the "other" in him, that which still belongs to the other shore, cannot be completely eradicated. At the heart of the void lives a phantom that makes bereavement impossible.

In this way, between the initial black and the final black, for the length of a film, a place has been made for a story, as if the film's "stuff" could guarantee the reconstruction of a coherence, even if fictitious, and restore a narrative continuity, there where the cord of family and collective history was cut. Consequently, we can understand why Kazan's two "personal" films, America, America and The Arrangement (1969) could be said to constitute what the filmmaker himself calls a "rebirth."

Over and above the diversity of the times and aesthetic choices, the numerous areas of convergence between Kazan's work and that, for example, of the Canadian filmmaker from Armenian origin, Atom Egoyan, start to become apparent here. In the same way as Calendar (1993) or Ararat (2002), Kazan's two "autobiographical" films constitute, first and foremost, the "site" of a reconstruction or, more precisely, re-representation: on the stage which is fiction, history's ghosts, whom the present pretends to have eradicated, are reinstated. Cinema appears, therefore, to be the tool of recollection for a dismembered, collective history. I believe that the reason why this conception, of a memory inseparable from image, finds a privileged expression in cinema is because of the very filmmaking device – projection – where the technical side of the apparatus meets the word's psychological meaning. Indeed, to escape the haunting, the grip of the specters, implies giving them an exterior existence, that of the simulacrum, where fiction "takes the place" of what is absent. This way, the film projection

device allows one to go from the "something is haunting" to the creation of a figure – that of the ghost or, in a more general sense, of the apparition in the image of that which has no image. As Jacques Derrida says, cinema cultivates " 'grafts' of spectrality, it inscribes the traces of ghosts in a general framework, the projected film, which is itself a ghost. [...] Cinema is the absolute simulacrum of absolute survival. It tells us the story of that from which there is no return, it tells us the story of death" (78-80).

The possibility of a comparison of artistic works which are born of such diverse aesthetic approaches, is less a question of a shared thematic and more a matter of the connected way in which the resources of film language are used: the frame, the montage, the relationship between sound and image… are all put into action in order to say that which no "phenomenological" camera could record. A certain number of recurring, cinematic figures seem therefore to define what could be called a "filmic writing of loss." But the reception into the work of the unexpressed collective trauma is a reconstruction for this very reason, because the body of the film gives place – even through the very figure of emptiness – to that which, up until then, had not found "a place to set itself in order to be thought and to join the flow of individual stories with the flow of collective ones" (Kaës XV).

The reconstructive virtue of the text is, however, inseparable from the existence of a third party: the spectator-witness. The public aspect of the cinematographic projection makes the "recomposed memory" of the film a shared experience. Finally, it is this new "sharing of memories" that forms the true antidote to the transmission, twice interrupted by the collective catastrophe and its obliteration, its "retreat" out of the subject's memory.

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Notes

1. The genocide of one and a half million Armenians in 1915, the massacre of the Greeks in 1922, followed by the forced exile of some two million of them, put an end to the two-thousand year-old presence of these peoples in Asia Minor.

2. Stathis Gialellis, Lou Antonio and Gregory Rozakis are Greek, Linda Marsh, Paul Mann, Harry Davis and Elena Karam are Jewish.

3. More precisely, ever since the appearance of America, America, Kazan was outlining the aim of the second film in his "autobiographical" diptych, The Arrangement, made in 1969. The internal rupture from which the main character in the second film would suffer, was being sketched out. Evangeli, son of Greek immigrants, hesitates, in fact, between two identities: that of Eddie Anderson, the advertising executive, and that of Evans Arness, the writer.

4. The scene evokes the experience of millions of immigrants. For further reading, see Georges Perec's *Ellis Island*, Paris, 1995, P.O.L.

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The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting in present-day South Africa

André Brink's *On the Contrary*

Saskia Lourens

There is so much darkness in the people of this land. Can it be that the light is too hard for them, forcing each to retreat into himself? (88).[1]

ABSTRACT

The Politics of Remembering and Forgetting in present-day South Africa: André Brink's *On the Contrary*

By engaging in a close reading of André Brink's On the Contrary *in terms of the text's concern with reinventing identity by means of both private and public/collective memory, this article seeks to investigate how the imposition of totalizing narratives on diasporic identities can be circumvented. This article will examine how concepts of "diaspora" and "memory" can contribute towards such an exploration of questions in post-apartheid South Africa and what their usefulness is in terms of gaining an insight into the role of South Africa's history in the confirmation and/or contention of a collective identity.*

The quote above, ostensibly from the pen of Estienne Barbier, the central narrator and focalizer in André Brink's 1993 novel *On the Contrary*, raises numerous questions concerning South African identity. Who does Barbier, a Frenchman newly arrived at the Cape Colony of the eighteenth century, regard as "the people of this land"? Why does he see a problematic "darkness" in these people and what is the significance of Barbier's accreditation of the land with possession of its people (if "of" is read as a possessive) when it is usually the other way around? Questions like these, which pertain to the nature of and criteria for national identity, have burgeoned ever since the franchise was secured for all citizens of South Africa in 1994.

Whereas the country's apartheid government interpreted the term "South African" as referring exclusively to the country's white population, today the new Government of National Unity seeks to forge a united South African identity that replaces previous compulsory identifications with artificially contrived ethnic groupings. The official dissolution of formerly imposed segregation therefore has deep implications for the maintenance of social identity and the creation of a new sense of community among South Africans. This article will examine how concepts of "diaspora" and "memory" can contribute towards the exploration of questions that pertain to identity and community in post-apartheid South Africa. After delimiting my interpretation of the definition of these terms in order to transform them into workable concepts, I will explore their usefulness by looking at the ways in which André Brink seeks to access an inclusive identity for a divided population in his colonial novel *On the Contrary*.

The term "diaspora," denoting the dispersal of people from their original homeland and traditionally applied to the historical dissemination of Jewish people, shifted beyond its limited definition during the course of the previous century, to be fruitfully employed in postcolonial and other studies as a concept that illuminates identity politics. The concept of the "African Diaspora," for example, was born during the rise of Black Consciousness in the nineteen-fifties as part of a striving for solidarity among people of African descent across the world. This solidarity was not so much based on biological features as on a shared experience of suffering under dominant discourses of black inferiority. The advantage to be had from using the concept of "diaspora" within the concept of "African Diaspora" apparently lay in its connotations of shared identity and a shared experience of (wrongful) displacement. In this way the concept could be usefully employed as a political tool, attempting to forge a unified black community for the purpose of lobbying for political recognition of this community.[2]

This particular way of framing the concept of "diaspora," useful as it is in examining certain aspects of the politics of identity, is not the one that will be employed in this present exploration of constructions of South African identity. Instead, this study will engage with the concept according to its redefinition by Stuart Hall and likeminded postcolonial critics, who seek to emphasize the resultant hybrid nature of the identities and consciousness of communities in diaspora. This revised interpretation of the concept of "diaspora" focuses not only on the "displacement from" but also the "displacement to" a particular society or locality. It emphasizes that the displaced are "without the illusion of any return to the past" (Hall 362) and are a product of their "new" situation as much as that of any "original" location.

The usefulness of this specific definition of "diaspora" lies in its allowance of – even insistence on – the multifarious nature of history, memory, consciousness and place of origin. This is particularly apt when applied to the South African context, where displacement has been political even more than geographical. The memories of a previously united community that traditionally link together groups that are in diaspora

are, in this case, marked not only by dispossession from place but dispossession from power.[3]

In both cases, however, the concept of "memory" transcends that of the individual and serves to legitimize the experiences and stories of groups that have functioned as objects, never as subjects, in the official records of any country's history. The concept of "memory" that joins the concept of "diaspora" in this consideration is hereby transformed into a politics of memory that sets itself up as the alternative to official discourses of history. The flexible arrangement of memory allows it to work outside the dominant discourse and use the discourse of the imagination, of stories, of memories and of the possible. It is this sense of "memories" as "unofficial histories" that I will be engaging in my investigation of the imaginative reconstructions of South African national identity evident in Brink's novel.

"Scribe, latinist, lover and liar": The Role of Literature

Although literature is not the only, or necessarily the most effective, medium for remembering and reexamining national stories, it is a means of articulating the experiences and perceptual framework of a nation's people at a given time that is both flexible and relatively accessible. In the context of more public and politically-laden initiatives, such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that convened from 1995 to 1996 and formed part of the official attempts to reconcile the country's past with its new national identity, the importance of a shared national narrative was emphasized. South African writers and critics, in particular, accepted the commission's challenge of opening the discussion on whose history had been endorsed as that of the nation and whose history had been left out, and on what it means to have a South African identity. The natural regard that writers feel for language and storytelling makes them particularly qualified to examine aspects of a nation's narratives as a comprehensive expression of its cultural identities. In the post-1990 novels of André Brink this aptitude takes on its full potential.

Novelist André Brink (born in 1935) has won South Africa's most prestigious prize, the CNA Award, three times and has twice been shortlisted for the Booker Prize. His novels have been translated into thirty languages and his work provides an apt example of the way in which social and political values are represented in South African culture. Brink's "Kennis van die Aand" ("Looking on Darkness") in 1974 became the first novel in Afrikaans to be banned by the South African Government. His earlier novels played an important role in the opposition against apartheid and his recent works, while still rooted in the contemporary South African condition, center on South Africa's quest to come to terms with its past. Not only is André Brink an imaginative novelist, he is also a critical author who has written extensively on the significant political role of literature in both the "old" and the "new" South Africa.[4]

On the Contrary is André Brink's eleventh English novel and was first published in 1993, a year before South Africa's first free and democratic elections were staged in April 1994, and three years after a number of apartheid laws were revoked and initial preparations were made for the establishment of an interim government. The work is presented in the form of an extended letter composed by Estienne Barbier, a Frenchman described by the subtitle of Brink's novel as "a famous rebel, soldier, traveler, explorer, reader, builder, scribe, latinist, lover and liar." The novel is based on a character that can be historically verified to have existed and lived in the Cape Colony in the earliest years of Dutch colonial settlement. The main events described in the novel have their counterpart in official (but brief) historical accounts, but the bulk of the novel consists of fabricated events and dialogues that see the author respond to the enticement represented by the silences and blanks in the official texts.

Although set in the eighteenth century, *On the Contrary* deals with contemporary South African misconceptions and attitudes towards the country's past. Its protagonist functions as a convenient catalyst that allows Brink to tackle issues in his novel that are pertinent in present-day South Africa. By making use of Barbier as a narrator who both criticizes the colonial system and is complicit in it, Brink opens up the discussion of reclaiming the past as a strategy of empowerment, or as collusive in a new form of oppression.

"Allowing the possibility of the lie": Language and Authority

Like no other novel, André Brink's *On the Contrary* expresses a post-colonial concern with the crisis of (national) identity. Its narrating protagonist, Estienne Barbier, is the perfect example of an identity continuously under construction and constantly at odds with itself. This disharmony is mainly caused by the change that occurs in Barbier's personality as a result of his experiences in the Cape Colony. Such dissension between old and new selves is explained by Nicola King, who, in her *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self* of 2000, establishes that "the 'I' of the present is constructed out of, but also continues to rewrite, the 'I' of the past" (King 40). The construction of identity out of narrative serves to explain the self to oneself, as well as to others, by conferring meaning on experience that creates a bridge from the past self to the present self. By incorporating later knowledge and insight into a (reconstructed) past, a sense of continuity is created between the self of the present and the self of the past, which is necessary to our survival because it creates a sense of continuous identity.

This logic, which tackles the dangers inherent in a fracture between erstwhile and current perceptions of personal identity, can be usefully employed in examining dissension in national identity as well. The onetime forced displacement of the majority of the country's population in South Africa, has caused discontinuity in the composition of the community's identity. The automatic integration of the experience of displacement

into a communal identity, which seeks to maintain pretence at continuity, alters and hybridizes that social makeup. At the same time, power relations complicate the process of regaining cohesion, because the experience of displacement or dispossession is always accompanied by the experience of disempowerment. Brink's novel suggests that it is the very nature of fictional accounts, that do not pretend to truthfulness, that equips them to take on the role of a country's biography that can re-establish the continuity of its discourse and exorcise the negative effects of a past which, unresolved, is doomed to repeat itself. It is for this reason that the medium of "memory" as an unofficial and flexible medium that opposes the dominant discourse is useful, since it allows for an identity that is uninterrupted because it allows for change in experience. The narratives of memory can function as the story, or history, of a dispossessed community and, in this sense, it can replace the dominant narrative that fails to describe the experience of those that it disempowers. In this way narrative plays a central role in (subconsciously) sustaining a sense of identity and in healing the rift between South Africa's past and present perceptions of its national character. Brink's novel suggests that such a rift may be repaired by means of the imaginative construction of histories and memories that may not be strictly truthful but will forge a reality that is bearable to all the members of its divergent community.

Brink's narrator demonstrates the usefulness of the flexible nature of memory in his own recollections. Barbier's narrative appears, at first, to be too "unreliable" to be employed in the construction of identity. He continuously fails to tell a consistent story of how he got to be the way he is in *On the Contrary*. On narrating his arrival at the Cape, Barbier variously refers to being welcomed by "No less a luminary than the governor, …(because) I was a very important person, having been dispatched as their personal representative by the Lords Seventeen" (5), and to being "a stowaway, crouching under the tarpaulin" (62) who was too "sick unto death" (77) even to be "aware of our arrival in Table Bay" (57). On considering Barbier's assertion that "only by allowing the possibility of the lie … can (we) grope … towards what really happened, may yet happen" (27), however, it can be argued that Barbier's multiplicity of stories can be read as an attempt to construct different identities for himself in order to help him cope with the different roles and positions imposed on him by the dominant discourse. Because stories are strategies that help humans make sense of their world, narratives form an important resource for structuring and comprehending experience. It can therefore be assumed that the study of narrative has a bearing on the study of the cultural and social framework by which lived experience is interpreted.

The contradictory nature of Barbier's stories needs explaining. According to Nicola King, "the construction of the self is a provisional and continuous process," which makes it impossible for a single version of one's life story to contain the truths of all of one's various experiences. In telling his life story, Barbier creates an identity perpetually in the process of changing as he invests his experiences with meaning through

different versions of events (King 17). Although Barbier speaks of "writing" his story down for Rosette, a slave woman that he meets in the Cape and who continues to fascinate him throughout the novel, the permanent nature of actual writing makes it impossible to record a truth that is fluid and changes with every new interpretation. The only place where he can eventually write and rewrite his "truth" is in his mind. He can converse with the absent Rosette "without a single impediment: I do not write, you cannot read; the flow is perfect," Barbier exults (147-48). The suggestion inherent in Brink's novel is that the power relations inherent in language can be overthrown by making use of the adaptability of narrative to re-imagine stories from a different perspective. Although this recommendation cannot pretend to solve existent political oppression, it does set up viable alternatives to the one-sided nature of officially endorsed accounts of South African history.

Brink's narrator appears to be aware of the power relations inherent in language because he repeatedly expresses his awareness of the power struggle inherent in the definition of identity. "I can offer you my life (…) as a story" (4), Barbier starts his narrative, assuming control of the story in so far as he presumes himself to be in the position to define his experiences. In telling his story, however, he does not only assume the power of creating versions of himself, but seeks to define the other as well. By doing this, Brink's narrator initially denies the authority of defining the self to those that inhabit a social position other than his own: women, for example, but also Afrikaners and the native KhoiSan people.

"Beyond the reach of my male definitions": Diasporic Identities

The groups of people that fall victim to Barbier's initial belligerence are, interestingly, those that Hall would characterize as "diasporic identities": identities that relate to, and are (in)formed by, various places at the same time. The Cape slaves, exemplified by the slave woman Rosette who is taken from Bengal or Goirée (she refuses to specify which), are a case in point, as are the KhoiSan, previously nomadic and now fugitive from colonial oppression. Equally the Afrikaners, who reject their Dutch heritage in favor of a purely "South African" identity but remain implicit in Dutch claims of superiority over, and difference from, South Africa's autochthonous population, could be labeled as diasporic – if only for the purpose of facilitating discussion of the consequences of the multi-faceted genealogy of the country's current population.

Within Brink's novel, the organic nature attributed to the national identities of the indigenous KhoiSan and rural Afrikaners, who are associated with the South African landscape and are said to "belong" to the land, contrasts starkly with the diasporic identity of the slaves in the colonial Cape. The slave woman Rosette, taken from elsewhere and brought to the Cape, has an identity that is in constant flux. The diasporic identity of the South African colonial slave is difficult to grasp, because it has been suppressed in historical accounts of the colonial era of South Africa. During the apartheid

years descendants of slaves preferred to lay claim to a "Colored" or fictive Malay identity rather than associate themselves with a disadvantaged African population. After the apartheid years it became more fashionable to pretend to an indigenous identity than a settler slave status, pushing the identity of colonial slave to the margins of allowable experience. Those people who were slaves brought over to South Africa from other African countries, like Rosette in Brink's novel, can be said not to have existed at all: they have been pushed out of South Africa's history.[5]

Rosette, however, refuses to take on the position of victim in Brink's novel. Her penchant for creating a new history for herself from memories and half-forgotten stories prove her to be Barbier's equal in that she, too, refuses to be fixed or defined by an official version of her identity. "I was caught in the forest where I hid when I was only a child without breasts," she first tells Barbier of her capture as a slave. "They tell me (in) Bengal (…). My parents, my three brothers, my two sisters all got away. Not I" (32). Later, however, Rosette changes the story. "I come from the House of Slaves on the island of Gorée," she says, "They caught me with my two brothers and my sister" (70). On being confronted by Barbier with the assertion that "That's not what you first told me" she replies: "What does it matter what I first told you?" (70). Rosette has claimed the right to narrate, and also change, the story of who she is and will not allow Barbier to correct her account according to his own idea of the truth.

The idea that self-narration achieves self-empowerment informs the greater part of South Africa's present-day initiatives to fill out the gaps in the country's officially recorded history by giving a voice to the previously disenfranchised, the proceedings of the TRC being a case in point. In Brink's novel, Barbier comes to recognize that Rosette "embodies something beyond the reach of my male definitions" (303), and is capable of textual empowerment that will preclude her from having to accept the natural or inevitable outcome of being positioned as victim. As his narrative progresses, Barbier appears to realize that his presumptions of power over the people he meets, and whose lives and motives he undertakes to define and discard without a second thought, have deprived him of a rewarding relationships with these people. He is quick to point out that the mistreatment of Rosette by her "masters," or that of the KhoiSan by the Afrikaners, is lamentable and to be condemned by morally upright people such as himself. He does not, however, promote or even consider the possibility of an alternative to this mistreatment in his narrative. This appreciation for suffering, which is contingent on the continuation of suffering, darkens his relationship with the women he claims to champion, as it does his relationship with the South African natives to whom he claims to pay tribute in the final journey of the novel.

The realization that discrimination deprives both perpetrator and victim of their humanity, as experienced by Barbier, is also reflected in contemporary narratives of the erstwhile victims of apartheid recorded during the sessions of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that was referred to at the beginning of

this article. Cynthia Ngewu, the mother of one of the Guguletu Seven, expresses this concept from the vantage point of victim during the proceedings:[6] *This thing called reconciliation…if I am understanding it correctly…if it means that this perpetrator, this man who has killed Christoper Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back…then I agree, then I support it all.* (Krog 109)

In the context of Brink's novel, Barbier's recognition that discrimination debases all human relationships initially results in nothing more than a renewed attachment to Rosette as the recipient of his benevolence. Barbier is slow to discard his belief in the inevitability of power relations and initially neglects to look for a solution in the eradication of inequality.

The TRC claims to heal the rift within a silenced, and therefore discontinuous community by allowing people who have suffered the atrocities of the apartheid system to tell their story in a public setting. This can, however, also be interpreted as a mere substitution of one dominant ideology for another. Critics within South Africa have interpreted the proceedings as an attempt to manufacture a new national identity for South Africans based on communal suffering under the apartheid regime, which ignores the atrocities committed during South Africa's more distant (and less publicized) colonial past. The danger of replacing the "old" South Africa's grand racist narrative with what Michael Chapman calls "a grand liberation narrative" (Chapman 93), proclaims the need for different criteria to unify all South Africans under the banner of one nationality.

"A different kind of reason": Conclusion

In the current Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, initially drawn up in 1993, provision is made to a certain extent to define the "South African." In the preamble of the constitution it states, among other things: "We, the people of South Africa (…) Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity." This clearly relates national identity to residence on South African soil, regardless of race, gender, class, parental lineage or place of birth. Barbier's limited interpretation of "the people of this land" as referring exclusively to communities such as the KhoiSan and the Afrikaner population, is hereby broadened considerably.[7]

During the closing stages of the novel, Barbier realizes that his practice of defining South Africa's communities as "other" to himself have left him powerless to relate to those others, and he redefines his own position with regard to the dispossessed communities that inhabit South Africa. The means by which he achieves this redefinition is by making allowances for the legitimacy of "other forms and ways of living, a different kind of reason" (268). Barbier's employment of "a different kind of reason" in reading the land and its people sees him recognize the landscape as a narrative of connected events that ties the fate of people to the fate of the land itself.

This perception of interdependence between people and land could be further developed to the idea that all identity is relational and that the extent to which one is conscious of one's national identity is dependant on the position one inhabits in relation to fellow nationals. This idea is not a foreign one to the South African culture. The acknowledgement of the central implication of the lives of others in the telling of one's own life story corresponds to the fundamental African concept of ubuntu.

This concept was used in South Africa at the end of apartheid as a catchword promising a new definition of South African identity. Ubuntu comes from the Nguni language and refers to the shared experience of being human. The concept emphasizes the fact that an individual exists not by him- or herself but within a community. Both the Xhosa ("Umuntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu")[8] and Sotho ("Motho ke motho ka batho")[9] languages have equivalent expressions, which represent the belief in the fact that ones humanity is caught up in everyone else's humanity. This negates the previous need for establishing and exercising dominance over the other because the need for fixed hierarchies and social positions is usurped by a communal construction that allows for "diasporic" cross-influencing rather than impositions from above.

In Brink's novel, narrating Frenchman Barbier eventually demonstrates his identification with this concept in his determination to "read" the South African landscape on its own terms and abandon his previous attempts to think in terms of classifications and solutions "as such" (351). To this end he endorses the validity of conflicting versions of experience and, in rejecting the idea that the ability to "literally invent (one)self through what (one chooses) to tell," in any way helps one to gain "control over (ones) destiny" (191), leads the reader to realize that the various versions of his narrative do not hinder the search for the truth but, instead, facilitate it. Such an endorsement of various versions of the truth is also reflected in the practices of South Africa's TRC, which treats "memory" as "history," in that it allows each participant to tell anew what was experienced under the apartheid regime, without placing the authority of one story over that of the other. In this way, Brink's work hints that it is the ability to construct multiple memories that tell a coherent story of our life, rather than the ability to recall the past as it really was, which constructs a stable and effectual identity.

By the end of his narrative, Barbier transforms his frustrated yearning for possession of the South African landscape and dominance of its people into an acceptance of the intractability of the land. Instead of answering his fear of the vast landscape with the colonial language of violence, Barbier realizes that this response is inappropriate. "Our error is not that we deny solutions, or attempt the wrong ones," he speculates:

Our error is thinking in terms of solutions as such…the colonists are here, these natives are here, the earth and dust and scrub and light are here. They are not problems to be solved. They are here, that's all. (351)

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Notes

1. All page numbers in this chapter, unless stated otherwise, refer to André Brink. *On the Contrary*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1993.

2. For an historical overview of the various transformations that the term "African Diaspora" underwent from the nineteen fifties onwards, see Edmund T. Gordon and Mark Anderson's 1999 article in *The Journal of American Folklore.* Volume 112, Number 445: 282-96.

3. Although dispossession from one's home community and resettlement in a "foreign" location most definitely did occur under the apartheid regime and its diasporic effects should not be underestimated, struggles against apartheid naturally focused first and foremost on the question of political franchise rather than on resettlement in original communities.

4. Attridge and Jolly's *Writing South Africa* makes mention of this in their introduction, as does Nuttall and Coetzee's *Negotiating the Past* (both published in 1998).

5. Discussed in Kerry Ward and Nigel Warden's "Commemorating, suppressing, and invoking Cape slavery" in Sarah Nuttal and Carli Coetzee 201-17.

6. The term "Guguletu Seven" refers to the group of seven young men who were shot and killed by South African policemen on 3 March 1986 in the township of Guguletu, near Cape Town. Two subsequent inquests cleared the police of all responsibility for their deaths. The names of the Guguletu Seven were: Zandisile Zenith Mjobo, Zola Alfred Swelani, Mandla Simon Mxinwa, Godfrey Jabulani Miya, Themba Mlifi, Zabonke John Konile and Christopher Piet.

7. The interim constitution was drawn up in 1993 and the final constitution in 1996.

8. "a person is a person through other persons."

9. "a human being is a human being with, by and for other human beings."

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Memory and Forgetting

Traces of Silence in Sarkis	Soko Phay-Vakalis

ABSTRACT

Memory and Forgetting: Traces of Silence in Sarkis

Sarkis, contemporary artist of Armenian origin living in Paris, works metaphorically on the memory of "catastrophes". His work resonates with the 20th-century's mass exterminations and belongs to the universal diaspora, between acquiescing to forget and the duty of remembering. It is a matter of looking for crutches and landmarks in a phantom-like past, by saving the vestiges and telling the story of the losses. Set out to restore the link between past and present, Sarkis also works with magnetic strips, plastic objects that symbolize Ariadne's thread; that thread of memory, which – although visible – conceals itself because it remains silent. In his work, forgetting dwells in memory like a silent voice.

My memory is my homeland was the title of Sarkis' exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Bern in the summer of 1985, which testified to his aesthetic, political and personal commitments. Of Armenian origin, Sarkis was born in 1938 in a German hospital in Istanbul. His wife is of Turkish origin. Sarkis' early childhood was marked by the experience of the second world war and Turkey's alliance with Germany. Many years later, when he was evoking these difficult days with some Turkish, Jewish, Greek, and Armenian friends, they all remembered a very particular detail: carpets on the windows, which they believed were placed there as curtains. Later, they understood that the carpets had actually been used to black out the windows at nightfall. That way, the bomber planes could not spot the houses. In the same way, as a child in 1945, Sarkis had believed that "Hintli," which means "Indian" in Turkish, and "Hitler" referred to the same thing. The recurrent figures of his artwork find their origin in these early

childhood memories: blackouts, wordplays, misunderstandings, genre confusions, and misappropriations of the primary function and meaning of objects.

Living in exile since 1964, Sarkis has developed an art that extols nomadism and proceeds from the inventory of a personal mythology at the center of which he creates his own stories and legends. Having left the old world of his origins behind him, he builds a new identity for himself by staging the allegories of his wandering. "Exile is distantiation," he says. Constructing his work as a narration of wandering, he invents a double of himself under the pseudonym of "Captain Sarkis," whose duty it is to put back together a "war chest" dispersed over the four corners of the world.

Lacking an initial place of memory, Sarkis' oeuvre carries the imprint of the material and psychic "deterritorialisation" of subjects and things. His work inscribes itself in the fixation and fiction of traces, right up to their reconstruction in the form of scale models, most notably of his studios. Serving simultaneously as a place of storage and a place of expectation, the studio in the rue Vergniaud, where Sarkis has worked since 1971, is first of all a space for the sedimentation and accumulation of memorial fragments.

The Kriegsschatz, armors against forgetting

Kriegsschatz refers to a number of works that Sarkis has made since 1976. This word, either written out in full or reduced to its initial "K," appears recurrently throughout his oeuvre. Objects discovered and seized – very often by using violence – become trophies of colonial looting, marks of power. The idea of the treasure hunt, then, becomes a symbol of the quest for material or spiritual power. As a concept, *Kriegsschatz* is centrally and intimately connected to the history of civilizations and cultures. Works of art are objects of transaction and possession, particularly during the conflicts fought between peoples over the ages: war chests have the common trait of invariably surviving death and destruction. They subsist beyond wars and massacres to establish a universal and diasporic memory. In this way, Sarkis establishes a close link between the transcendence of art and the modalities of human survival. For him, the artwork is, at the same time, an effective "weapon," and a form of overcoming or even redemption (Cousseau 7-15).

Even though Sarkis has never dealt directly with the Armenian genocide or the suffering of his people, he works metaphorically on the memory of "catastrophes." His work re-echoes the mass exterminations of the Twentieth Century. He declares:

Everything that has happened in humanity, in terms of pain and love, is inside us, and this is our greatest treasure. And everything I have lived through, experienced, and done, is my treasure. If one embodies this in art, if one makes it visible, one can travel with these forms, one can open borders instead of closing them. (Von Drateln 295)

Sarkis' work belongs to the universal diaspora, situated in between the agreement to forget and the duty to re-member. The point is to find support and as many

landmarks as possible in a spectral past while also rescuing the traces and narratives of loss.

The disappearance of the voice or the impossible forgetting

Searching for a restoration of the link between past and present, Sarkis works with tape-recordings as plastic objects that symbolize Ariadne's thread, that thread of memory that, although visible, also conceals itself because it stays mute. According to Sarkis, forgetting inhabits memory as a silent voice.

Among the installations created by Sarkis, *Le Troisième Reich des origines à la chute/The Third Reich from its origins to its fall* (1971) foreshadows his reflection on the concept of the *Kriegsschatz*. This work shows that the invisible is also the visible that is hidden: a tape-recording containing the story of Nazism is locked inside a safe. Sealed in this way, history remains inaccessible and inaudible.

It was with the 1984 exhibition entitled *La Fin des siècles et le début des siècles/End of centuries and beginning of centuries* at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris that Sarkis made the tape-recordings visible by displaying them in open boxes, as in the example of *Gold Coast. Gold Coast* takes the form of a small-scale replica of a Ghanaian barge built by "natives" which, during the English colonial era, were used to unload liners. The replica is connected to a transfixed human figurine shaped out of a pile of audiotapes containing twenty-four hours of music by the German and Austrian composers Wagner, Schönberg, Berg and Webern. These threads of music, which are not heard, become a symbol of forgetting, of a breakdown in collective or individual memory.

Also in 1984, in Berlin, Sarkis created *I love my Lulu.* The entire *Lulu* (Alban Berg's opera conducted by Pierre Boulez) is recorded on audiotapes. The human sculpture constructed from these tapes, listens to the story of her own body in silence. The story does not need to be restored, since it never loses itself (Lawless 123). Finally, *Lulu* travels through different museum institutions, not inside a box, but inside a house so she can remain on her pedestal, always traveling in silence.

Other pieces by Sarkis are placed on trolleys, landing just long enough for a meeting, in this way they avoid direct contact with the ground. A connection can be made between Sarkis' artistic approach and the concept of "survival" as proposed by Janine Altounian. Altounian writes:

We could call "survival" the unconscious strategy reciprocally put in place by the survivors of a collective catastrophe and their descendants in order to reconstruct on stilts the precarious foundations of a possible life among those normally living in the world in which they have been stranded. (1)

The ground is not touched either by trolley wheels or stilts. Thus, Sarkis' works wander through spaces, gathering the memory of places and experiences without ever truly setting foot on the ground. His works grow richer all the time in going from one place to another.

Lulu and the figurine of *Gold Coast* are like black specters. The audiotapes at the same time represent the memory, the flesh and the blood that flows through the veins of the sculptures. The entrance of these creatures resembles the apparition of a ghost. The visitor physically senses a link between the space and the field invaded by the specters: these beings seem animated and capable of touching the visitor, of fixing them with their look.

Sarkis' primitive figures without faces perhaps refer to the survivors who vacillate under the weight of a denied memory, which seals the identity of the victims of genocide. Indeed, the obsession of the historical motif, here the collective trauma (metaphorically represented by the *Kriegsschatz* and the works made out of audiotapes) will show up again and again in ghostly forms. How does silence become the metaphor of denial, of the "trace" of an impossible mourning? How to reveal the secrets so that these voices will no longer haunt us? How to hear again those disappeared voices and ancient music? Which voice-path does Sarkis want to hand down to us?

The silent scream or sleepless memory

Sarkis' first contact with a work of art was Munch's *Scream* reproduced in a newspaper used as wrapping paper in his father's butcher's shop in Istanbul. Sarkis wrote:

What's more, when I look at the face in Munch's Scream, it does not resemble any of the figures Munch had painted before. It is as if he forgot all that he had learned. The face expresses extreme urgency. Someone who screams never pays attention to his own expression. There is no discrepancy between feeling and expression. Without discrepancy, there can be no formal construction. It is like the expression of a new-born baby upon first breathing air. (13)

This scream also leads back to a childhood memory of the artist:

… between 1943 and 1944, when I was five or six years old, I would scream in my sleep during the night. As I woke up, I found my mother, worried, sitting on the edge of my bed. However, the image that made me scream was not really nightmarish: I saw a chandelier made out of thousands of multicolored pearls. Its only light-source was a single bulb of a low wattage. Thousands and thousands, that is always the relation of one to all, that is to say, the feeling of solitude, the impossibility of establishing a dialogue. If it passes to the other side, that is to say the side of art – what I have been trying to do in my work for over thirty years – then the object exists in solitude. (Ducros 55)

With Sarkis, the scream is turned into mutism, visually translated by the recorded audiotapes, such as, for instance, in his self-portrait *La Perruque en bande magnétique sur la tête en terre glaise de Sarkis/The wig made of audiotapes on the clay head of Sarkis* (1961-1980). His head, which acts as a death mask, is almost hidden under an abundance of heavy, tangled hair. This mutism – a result of screaming an unnamable pain out into the universe of the deaf – is perhaps a metaphor of the foreclosed memory of genocide survivors.

Thus, what is foreclosed by the victims in the image of Munch's *Scream*, is the non-symbolized "blank" horror of war and atrocity. The time-out of the word can last for decades. This survivor mutism has multiple causes: survivors do not want to burden the next generation with such a heavy load, or they want to spare themselves. A problematic alliance is forged when forgetting accompanies silence. The greater the denial, the more intense this alliance becomes and the more strongly it makes itself felt. In the case of the Armenian genocide, the mutism of its victims is reinforced by the embarrassed deafness of the world. For a long time speech was impossible and the amnesia unbearable. Only shame, that painful in between, was transmitted. From generation to generation, the wrong thing is heard. In this way, the survivors themselves dig the graves for their dead.

The way in which even speech cannot always escape the extreme solitude of surviving testifies to an impossible mourning (Weinrich 253-282). "Why does the pain of each day translate itself in our dreams with such insistence into the ever-repeated scene of a story told but never listened to" wrote Primo Levi (77). The emblem of this amnesic memory would be the mute Jew of Nicole Lapierre, mythical and real at the same time, who was the only Shoah survivor to return to his home town (Lapierre 333-334). The audiotapes, related either to Sarkis' personal memory, or to the memory of mankind, testify to nothing else than an ancient presence. Nevertheless, the tapes remain obstinately dumb with regard to the main point: the reasons for the absence. This turns them into enigmas for the possessors of the post-memory. Silence, however, is also an expectation: the hope that this voice will one day be listened to and understood. The virtual quality of this speech is perhaps symbolized by Sarkis' audiotapes. Music remains present, even if it is no longer audible. The recorded tapes fulfill a mnemonic function and carry within them a visible narrative. They are, in fact, only a simple materialization of sound, and as such they construct an "image" in the virtual nature of their memory.

Silent conversations

Amnesia can be transcended by digging into the past, by unfreezing the sedimentary strata of pain and mutism. It is a question of traversing the discontinuities and ruptures of memory and of understanding their meaning. This work of an-amnesia helps rebuild a unified identity. In this regard, Sarkis' approach consists of transforming a foreclosed, silenced memory into an appeased memory, that is to say, one that is capable of remembering the past. Across his installations, taking control of the aesthetic museum space (hence the importance of scenography, music and lighting for this artist) is the sole means for Sarkis to withstand forgetting.

Sarkis' work is an eternal return from exile. He says he carries his culture on his back, from place to place. Over the course of this long journey across territories of forgetting and memory, Sarkis transforms wandering into a poetic and spiritual space. He rebuilds

a new identity by granting these specters citizenship. The damaged objects are collected and loved by the artist precisely *because* they were abandoned. They enrich his own artistic creations. Abandonment has no place in his work. On the contrary, a "solidarity" is established between his expositions and his various interconnected pieces. Now that they bear the artist's imprint, these wreckages of a cultural or political history no longer remain in anonymous isolation.

On a foundation of silence, Sarkis' oeuvre whispers the missing, giving presence to the absent. His work also testifies to the fullness and voids of the past. He makes other people's stories and incidents that happened before his birth, his own. In *The Collective Memory* (1950) by Maurice Halbwachs, "wrapped memories" refers to everything that is heard, read, or learned when people incorporate or even amalgamate the patrimony of memory.

Sarkis' aim is to invent a world that secures an evasive memory, as in *12 Kriegsschatz dansent avec le sacre du printemps de Igor Stravinsky/12 Kriegsschatz dancing to the Sacred Spring by Igor Stravinsky* (1989-2001). Twelve sculptures are put on turning pedestals, the feet of which are covered with audiotape recordings of the *Sacred Spring*. This major work represents the memory of mankind. All bearing the artist's mark, the objects were collected over the course of Sarkis' many wanderings: a ceramic figure made by a lunatic, a face made of dough with a candle in it, an eighteenth-century stone Tibetan altar, watercolor prints, a ceramic Chinese figure from the fifth or sixth century with two sleeves made out of plants, a volcanic rock from the Etna with its crystal molding, and so on. Sarkis orchestrates so many miscellaneous objects for so many fragments of a life. In this silent dance, a conversation is whispered. The confrontation between objects of such diverse provenance creates a tension, an exchange. Each element retains its own voice in the silence and the spectator can catch their faint whisperings through the projections and the metaphorical connections that are being woven.

The unity of Sarkis' own identity is rebuild out of other pieces of identity that belong to a poetic space as well as to a poetic fiction. Creating an artistic oeuvre is to break, to some extent, with the silence in which the painful past has been immured. The living memory is perhaps in the end the "memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin 247).

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Recollective Processes and the "Topography of Forgetting" in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*

Silke Horstkotte

ABSTRACT

Recollective Processes and the "Topography of Forgetting" in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*

Employing recent conceptualizations of cultural memory (Assmann, Huyssen, Crewe), the article examines the poetics of remembering and forgetting in W.G. Sebald's novel Austerlitz *(2001). Displaced from his native Prague with one of the Red Cross "Kindertransporte" of 1937/38, Sebald's protagonist leads a life that is characterized by geographical displacement as well as by suppressed and inaccessible childhood memories. Horstkotte reads Austerlitz' search for his past and the novel's topographic and archaeological view of memory as a metafictional and intermedial model for overcoming amnesia on a cultural level.*

One of the topoi of recent memory research has it that cultural or collective memory is not simply a passive store or archive of the past, but is predicated on individual acts of memory, making it active and processual. As Maurice Halbwachs argued, it is the individual who remembers, even though that which can be remembered is premised on a social framework (Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*). Halbwachs' main emphasis was thus on the social conditioning of individual memory, as Jonathan Crewe has succinctly stated, his "postulate of collective memory made individual memory a function of social memory, not an isolated repository of personal experience" (75). However, the relationship between individual and collective memory works in both directions: individual acts of remembering can also influence the social framework, since otherwise there would be no possibility of change within cultural memory. The question, though, is how this operation works precisely – that is, how an individual act of memory can reach out to the collective level.

To understand this, we need a more differentiated model of memory, such as the one formulated by Jan Assmann. Assmann distinguishes between three levels of memory, the first of which is made up by individual acts of recollection. These are embedded within a "communicative" memory that roughly corresponds to Halbwachs' "mémoire collective," is constituted in daily social interactions, especially within families, and reaches back about three generations (roughly eighty years). This communicative memory is in its turn framed by cultural memory, which forms a system of objectified culture as it is stored in texts, images, rituals, buildings, monuments, or even postal stamps.[1] These objects function as cultural mnemonics, and, through them, societies ensure cultural continuity by preserving their collective knowledge and value systems for longer periods of time. Assmann's concept of cultural memory is thus comparable to Jörn Rüsens "Geschichtskultur" ("history culture"), but is more focused on aesthetic representations. And with good reason, for it is exactly at the level of cultural representations that the individual can intervene in the process of cultural memory.

In his much-discussed Zürich lectures on "Air War and Literature" (published in English as the first part of *On the Natural History of Destruction*), W.G. Sebald has harshly chastised German literature after 1945 for failing to adequately represent the air war on German towns (Sebald *Luftkrieg und Literatur*; *On the Natural History of Destruction*). This failure, Sebald argues, reflects the refusal of the German population to face up to its national past: in the book's foreword, he calls Germans "a nation strikingly blind to history and lacking in tradition" (2003: viii). The air war in particular "left scarcely a trace of pain behind in the public consciousness" (4).[2] However, German historical blindness is not complete, but partial. In our memories of the years 1930 to 1950, Sebald claims, "we are always looking and looking away at the same time" (ix). In his 1993 collection of stories, *The Emigrants*, Sebald made similar claims about the Holocaust. In the final story, the narrator, while visiting a disused Jewish cemetery, feels increasingly affected by "the mental impoverishment and lack of memory that marked the Germans, and the efficiency with which they had cleaned everything up" (225). In another story, one of the characters bemoans "the systematic thoroughness with which these people [i.e. the Germans, S.H.] kept silent in the years after the war, kept their secrets, and even, I sometimes think, really did forget" (50). Again, this particular form of forgetting is incomplete and partial. David William Cohen has called this form of cultural amnesia a "topography of forgetting … in which knowledge is always and everywhere present, even where partial and conflictual, but almost never spoken. It is a knowledge which, on the one hand, 'does not exist' and, on the other, has the power to harm, even kill" (xxiv). "Remembering and forgetting," Cohen concludes, "are not opposed and reciprocal programs; they are deeply intertwined."

As Ernestine Schlant has argued in *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust*, German literature about the Holocaust suffers from the same cross-eyed "looking and looking away at the same time":

… the West German literature of four decades has been a literature of absence and silence contoured by language. Yet this silence is not a uniform, monolithic emptiness. A great variety of narrative strategies have delineated and broken these contours, in a contradictory endeavor to keep silent about the silences and simultaneously make it resonate. (1)

This paradox of presence-absence is maybe not so surprising since the main way in which the Holocaust figures in German culture is, indeed, as a double absence: "the absence of a strong Jewish presence in society and a traumatic burden on national identity," as Andreas Huyssen puts it (1994: 257).

W.G. Sebald has found a way around the problem of representing this absent presence by focusing on the diasporic identity of the Jews, most explicitly in his last novel, *Austerlitz*. Sebald had already approached the problem of representation caused by the contested German cultural memory in *The Emigrants*, which Schlant found "steeped in images of the Holocaust and a language of mourning and melancholy so pervasive that it applies even when the text speaks of other events and times" (234). In *Austerlitz*, Sebald goes one step further by focusing exclusively on a Jewish protagonist. The central themes of the novel are the geographical displacement of Jacques Austerlitz and his partial grasp on his familial past, as well as the general loss of memory after WWII. Displaced from his native Prague to Great Britain with one of the Red Cross "Kindertransporte" of 1937/38, Austerlitz leads a life characterized by displacement and exile that is also challenged by suppressed and inaccessible memories. At the same time, the novel addresses the wider problem of cultural amnesia with regard to the Holocaust. Austerlitz' failure to remember is (at least partly) the result of society's refusal to acknowledge the "topography of forgetting" that the Holocaust has left all over Europe: the "marks of pain which … trace countless fine lines through history" (16/20).[3]

Austerlitz is permeated with references both to individual acts of recollection and to the mechanisms of collective memory, and it is quite obvious that Sebald, who taught German at the University of East Anglia, was well read on the most recent scholarly research on memory. However, the novel is a work of fiction and these references should not be confused with the author's opinion, especially since they are often voiced by fictional characters, usually the enigmatic Jacques Austerlitz. The novel relates the story of a series of (chance) meetings between the unnamed first person narrator and the central character. During these meetings, Austerlitz tells the narrator his life story and keeps him up to date on his, Austerlitz', search for his origins. From his childhood onward, Austerlitz' identity and indeed, his whole life, have been determined by displacement and exile: "Since my childhood and youth, he finally began … I have never known who I really was" (60/64). Austerlitz has grown up in the household of

a Welsh Calvinist preacher and his wife, whom he takes to be his parents. He assumes his name to be Dafydd Elias. However, when he is about to sit his final school exams, the principal informs him that he will have to put the name "Jacques Austerlitz" on the official exam papers as "It appears … that this is your real name" (93/97). At this point in the narrative, Austerlitz/Elias' foster mother has recently passed away and his foster father has gone insane with grief, leaving the protagonist with no clue as to his true identity and his origins.

In every town he visits in later life, Austerlitz consults the phone directory, looking for other people with that uncommon name. But there are no Austerlitzes in London, Paris, Antwerp or Amsterdam. The few Austerlitzes he comes across – Fred Astaire's real name was Austerlitz, Kafka's diaries contain a reference to a circumciser called Austerlitz, and a Laura Austerlitz is mentioned as a witness in an Italian Euthanasia trial – are obviously false leads which the protagonist does not pursue any further. Then, entirely by chance, Austerlitz listens to a BBC radio discussion with two women who came to Great Britain on a Red Cross "Kindertransport." When Austerlitz hears the women talk about the ferry "Prague" which brought them from Hoek van Holland to Harwich, he suddenly becomes convinced "that these fragments of memory were part of my own life as well" (200/204). Austerlitz travels to Prague and visits the national archives, where he is given the addresses of all Austerlitzes who lived in Prague in 1938. The very first address turns out to be that of his mother, and as soon as Austerlitz enters their old neighborhood, his lost memories start to return:

As I walked through the labyrinth of alleyways, thoroughfares and courtyards between the Vlašská and Nerudova, and still more so when I felt the uneven paving of the šporkova underfoot as step by step I climbed uphill, it was as if I had already been this way before and memories were revealing themselves to me not by means of any mental effort but through my senses, so long numbed and now coming back to life. (212-13/216-17)

While personal memory in *Austerlitz* is incomplete, insufficiently framed, and prone to failure, location provides a much better archive of the past. Prague functions both as a site of recollection – providing memorial clues which render Austerlitz' buried memories accessible again – and as a topography of forgetting, since it is the place itself which has stored these memories – memories that Austerlitz had completely forgotten about. Insofar as certain memories become identified with specific places, memory in *Austerlitz* follows a topographical rather than a chronological organization. Topographical concepts also account for the sense that the past is not gone or inaccessible, but is kept alive within the present through a movement of dislocation. At the same time, recollecting, or retrieval of the dislocated memories, is depicted as a strongly visual experience that depends on the rememberer's glance alighting on the location of memory storage. Austerlitz' old childhood nanny Věra expresses this fairytale-like idea of a past hidden away within the present that can be accessed by looking: "When memories come back to you, you sometimes feel as if you were looking

at the past through a glass mountain …" (224/228). The importance of looking and of visuality for recollective processes also accounts for the special function of images as memorial signs. In remembering his journey through Germany, Austerlitz relates recollective experience to visuality, especially to the experience of watching a film: "everything becomes confused in my head: my experiences of that time, what I have read, memories surfacing and then sinking out of sight again, consecutive images and distressing blank spots where nothing at all is left" (319/323).

Sebald's topography of forgetting is premised on a spatialized rather than a chronological model of time: that of archeological traces. According to this model, the past is not irretrievably lost, because has left behind objective, material traces that remain buried within the present. This is aptly illustrated by the Liverpool Street Station episode and its accompanying photographs (180-91/184-95). As Austerlitz informs the narrator, the modern London train station partly covers the ground of an old cemetery, as well as some of the grounds of the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, popularly known as "Bedlam." Not only are memories of the dead and buried Bedlam patients kept alive through Austerlitz' narrative, they are also present in the form of material, archeological traces. In 1984, Austerlitz explains, a number of skeletons were found during the course of construction work carried out near the station. Austerlitz himself has taken pictures of these skeletons, and one of them is reproduced in the novel (185/189). Here, the idea of archeological strata as a model for memory – already present in the numerous references to Thomas Browne's essay "On Urn Burial" in Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* – is linked not only with the objective, material traces of history (the buried dead), but also with the subjective memories of the protagonist, and with the visuality of the accompanying photographs.

Photographs and film serve a double function for recollective processes in *Austerlitz*. On the one hand, photos retain objective traces of the past and therefore provide clues for the protagonist's memories. On the other hand, photos may be wrongly contextualized and therefore misleading, they may have gone missing or been lost. Therefore, photographs can serve as metaphors for the unreliability of personal memory, which, according to the preceding quotation, is riddled with painful blind spots. This description connects Austerlitz' internal memory processes with the problematic nature of objective, archival sources, which may also be damaged or lost. Memory in *Austerlitz* does not provide direct or immediate access to the past since it is always incomplete and fragmented. If they are to make sense, the fragmented images of personal memory have to be mediated, relying on objective traces and archival sources. Photographs are privileged mediators of memory because they are simultaneously indexical traces of the past, and visual objects, hence analogous to memorial images, which are also visual.

A large part of the second half of the novel deals with Austerlitz' "investigation of my most distant past" and the quest for an image of his mother (331/335). Although Austerlitz claims to have a visual memory of his mother leaning over him, this memory is vague and only occurred to him in a remote childhood moment of falling

asleep: “Not until I was numb with weariness and my eyelids sank in the darkness did I see my mother bending down to me just for a fleeting moment” (62/66). When he later recalls it, this is only the memory of a memory, remote and intangible. Moreover, Austerlitz does not know how to interpret this flash of memory: who was his mother, and to where did she disappear?

In researching his past, Austerlitz has to rely on verbal sources, most importantly on Věra Ryšanovà’s testimony, which he seeks to complement with visual documents. However, his quest for a photograph of his mother proves a daunting task, since none of the pictures in Věra’s possession can be identified as his mother’s image, and the unlikely search for a glimpse of his mother in the Nazi propaganda film “Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt” proves futile too. This film, shot in the second half of 1944, captures the SS’ attempt to convince a Red Cross delegation of the benevolent intentions behind the internment of tens of thousands of Jews in the former military camp of Theresienstadt. By the time it was released in early 1945, most of the Theresienstadt inhabitants “acting” in the film had already been killed in the death camps. Today, the film is only accessible in a very bad, damaged and incomplete video copy (345/349). Austerlitz’ search for this film through the Imperial War Museum and through the Berliner Bundesarchiv and his attempts to identify his mother on the video copy provide ample illustration that archival sources are just as unreliable as personal memories, they are also equally constructed – the film is, after all, a piece of propaganda with the explicit intention of hiding the true conditions and purposes of the ghetto from the eyes of the world. Although Austerlitz is at first convinced that he has seen a glimpse of his mother in the film, Věra robs him of this illusion: she cannot identify the unknown woman as Agáta Austerlitzova.

Even though Austerlitz’ battle against his personal amnesia is not very successful – for instance, he never discovers what became of his father – the Terezín episode in the second half of the novel does offer a model for overcoming amnesia on a cultural level. Austerlitz travels to Terezín, the former Theresienstadt, searching for memorial clues that might enable him to imagine his mother, who was interned there before her final deportation to the camps. But far from finding any sign of the “marks of pain” crossing Theresienstadt, Austerlitz only discovers emptiness there (266/270). No trace of the deported Jews remains, and the city’s doorways are forever closed. Sebald illustrates this emptiness by reproducing four full pages of photographs of the closed doors of Terezín (268-71/272-74). The paradox at the heart of these photos is perplexing at first: why does the author reproduce so many of these photos when Austerlitz could see only emptiness in Terezín? Would it not have been more indicative of emptiness if there had been only one photo, or none at all? Why, in other words, show so much, if there is nothing there?

The sheer number of photos suggests that there is something in Terezín that the readers of the novel simply cannot see. In fact, it is precisely the absence of people,

and of life altogether, in a city that once housed tens of thousands, which constitutes a painful mark of history. Thus, Terezín functions as a topography of forgetting, and Austerlitz has to understand the negativity of Terezín's memorial clues before he can access the memories stored there. In order to grasp this negativity, memory and forgetting have to be conceived of as determinant and overlapping states, not as binary opposites. This paradoxical state is exemplified by the allegory of the porcelain statuette that Austerlitz sees in the Antikos Bazar in Terezín. The bazaar is a residue for the ruins of memory: it contains only trash and worthless knick-knacks that provide the observer with no memorial clues, yet remain curiously auratic and fascinating. Thus, even though Austerlitz knows nothing about its history – did it belong to one of the Ghetto inhabitants? – the statuette of the rider who draws a woman up to him in the saddle can allegorize the process of destruction:

They all were as timeless as that moment of rescue, perpetuated but for ever just occurring, these ornaments, utensils and mementoes stranded in the Terezín bazaar, objects that for reasons one could never know had outlived their former owners and survived the process of destruction, so that I could now see my own faint shadow image barely perceptible among them. (276-77/281)

The timeless moment of salvation that Austerlitz sees illustrated by the little porcelain figurine echoes Walter Benjamin's concept of "Rettung" and is one of many unmarked intertextual references in the novel. The protagonist's concept of memory contains allusions to theories of memory such as Benjamin's, as well as literary references to authors such as Kafka, Proust and Thomas Bernhard. Austerlitz' interpretation of the small, meaningless figurine in the Antikos Bazar as the clue to an understanding of the Holocaust ("the process of destruction") is clearly inspired by Benjamin, whose negative messianism is based on the principle of "Vergegenwärtigung," or re-presentation, in which a past text is put into a network of constellations with the present. The messianic gesture is therefore analogous to the activity of reading, which is itself an actualization of the past within the present. Symptomatically, therefore, the angel of history in Benjamin's theses "On the Concept of History" looks backward – at the past, thereby arresting history's natural chronology (Benjamin I, 2, 697). On the other hand, the messianic backward glance can only grasp the past "als Bild das auf Nimmerwiedersehen im Augenblick seiner Erkennbarkeit eben aufblitzt" ("as an image that only flashes up in the moment of its perceivability, never to be seen again"; my translation, Benjamin I, 2, 695). While destruction and redemption have always been closely linked in covenant religion, Benjamin concentrates the chronological sequence into one single moment, so that the two terms become identified with each other. At the same time, he converts the relationship between the two into one of looking: the "flashing up" of the past is a strongly visual experience.

Austerlitz realizes such a momentous arresting of history when he feels as if the deported Jews were still living in Terezín. Yet this experience is recounted in a

subjunctive mode that resonates both with possibility and with irreality:

… a little later, when I was out in the deserted town square again, it suddenly seemed to me, with the greatest clarity, that they had never been taken away after all, but were still living crammed into those buildings and basements and attics, as if they were incessantly going up and down the stairs, looking out of the windows, moving in vast numbers through the streets and alleys, and even, a silent assembly, filling the entire space occupied by the air, hatched with grey as it was by the fine rain. (281/285)

Again, the forgotten and suppressed past can be accessed, if only briefly, by means of looking. At the same time, however, the messianic rescue of the deported and murdered ghetto inhabitants is a recollective stance that can never be fully separated from imagination and fantasy. It is therefore closely related to the activity of the author, W.G. Sebald, who relies on a topography of memory and forgetting rather than on traditional concepts of history in the telling of his tale. Sebald's intermedial narration with its integration of visual and narrative sources thus constitutes an "alternative temporality in which the past is subsumed but *not* lost in the present" (Bal 65). This alternative temporality does not follow a linear chronology, but seeks to incorporate the simultaneity and spatiality of recollective processes. In a statement that can be read as programmatic of the novel's structure, Austerlitz describes such a topographic view of history:

It does not seem to me, Austerlitz added, that we understand the laws governing the return of the past, but I feel more and more as if time did not exist at all, only various spaces interlocking according to the rules of a higher form of stereometry, between which the living and the dead can move back and forth as they like … (261/265)

Since memories of the past can be recalled and actualized within the present, past and present can interact through memorial structures. Not only does the overlapping of past and present therefore follow a topographical organization, but it is also predicated on visuality and on looking.

Austerlitz does not simply describe the quest for memory – personal as well as cultural – of the protagonist, but the novel's intermedial arrangement of photographic images and verbal narrative incorporates the visual and spatial aspects of memory within its pages. Because of photography's iconic function, the photographs reproduced in *Austerlitz* act as *metaphors* for the painful marks of history. That is, the photographs resemble the dead and buried past on a visual level, and can therefore stand in for a narrative account of the past. But because the photographs also function as indexical signs, they are themselves painful traces that the reader has to uncover and decipher by relating them to the surrounding verbal narrative. Hence, the photographs also stand in a *metonymical* relation to that which they depict because they are themselves part of the represented past. By including photographic evidence of the marks of pain tracing history, the novel thus offers a strategy for overcoming the condition of cultural amnesia, keeping the suppressed and forgotten past alive within its pages.

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Notes

1. Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne* project comes close to this conception of cultural memory, see Warburg (2000).

2. Sebald's argument that the Germans (and German literature in particular) have been afflicted with a bad case of cultural amnesia has been rejected by a large number of critics, who have pointed out that there are many novels dealing with the air war that Sebald failed to include in his discussion. However, it is true that novels such as Gert Ledigs *Vergeltung* ("Retribution") were not well received at the time of their original publication, and have only recently gotten the acknowledgement they deserve – thanks, partly, to the discussion engendered by Sebald's essay. The discussion is summed up in Hage (2003). Also see Huyssen, *Present Pasts* 138-57.

3. Page numbers refer to the English translation of *Austerlitz* first, and the German original second. It is not quite clear who utters this sentence, since it is embedded in a story Věra tells the grown-up Austerlitz about his youth. However, given the philosophical depth of the question, I propose to read it as the thought of the protagonist.

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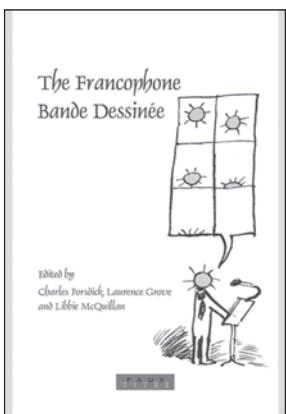
The Francophone Bande Dessinée

Edited by Charles Forsdick, Laurence Grove and Libbie McQuillan



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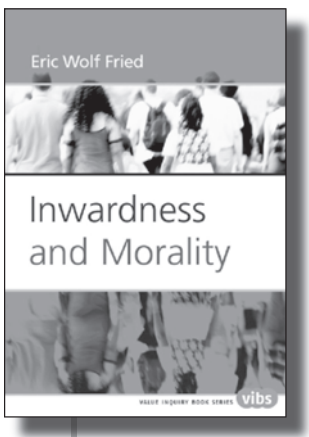
Inwardness and Morality

Eric Wolf Fried



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