

**The Uses of a Sentimental Education? The Role of Memory
and Emotions in Museum Learning.**

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Ulrike Ehret, 29 March 2021

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Introduction

One day before his inauguration as president of the USA, Joe Biden received an invitation by Karl Freller, president of the Bavarian Memorial Foundation, to visit the Holocaust memorial site Dachau. Any misunderstanding that might have arisen on his last visit to the former concentration camp in 2015 could then be addressed. In his 2017 memoir 'Promise me, Dad', Joe Biden recalls a visit with his grand-daughter Finnegan to the memorial site at Dachau two years before. He writes about his disappointment that the gruesome details on the NS mass murder at the site had been toned down over the years. Everything seemed clean and freshly varnished, the bunkbeds with the cuts carved by their occupants were gone. A guide even told the group that no prisoners were murdered with poison gas at the Dachau site. Gabriele Hammermann, director of the memorial site, clarified in a separate letter that the site was opened in 1965 and had been used for diverse purposes since its liberation by the US-Army in April 1945. There had indeed been no systematic gassing of prisoners at Dachau even though the SS-leadership had a working gas chamber installed. Two barracks were rebuilt for the memorial site, including the bunkbeds 'which are still unpainted today'. But 'to present horror and violence, crampedness and dirt, smells and cold in a museum' is hardly possible without the authentic furnishing (Teller Report, 20/01/2021).

The recollections of several memorial museums at former concentration camps and their iconic images and narrative must have either overwritten Biden's personal memory of the site at Dachau or fused into one, new memory. The concerns at Dachau memorial site over Biden's recollection illustrate several aspects I explore in this dissertation. How do memories and emotions contribute to the historical knowledge of the Holocaust as it is presented at memorial sites or in mass media such as films and TV-productions? How does individual agency and memory engage with the representations and memories offered at these experiential sites and finally, how does the social and cultural memory of the Holocaust influence individual remembering?

The history of the Holocaust is highly emotional, yet it is not clear how these emotions arise for those unaffected by its events. Memorial sites are part of a new form of historical

tourism and offer authentic spaces in which visitors can get sensually close to the represented past. At the same time, they, too are confronted with their own emotions, dependent on their national, social and family background or their level of education. They are part of the visitor's baggage upon their entrance to the site. (Assmann, Brauer 2004, 73).

'Personal feelings and memories, whether accurate or appropriate or not, indeed are always a factor in the contexts in which historical consciousness is made, because they shape how an experience is remembered' (Crane 1997, 48).

Research Question

I analyse the interaction between individual and cultural memory yet with a clear focus on emotions, individual memory and individual agency in this knowledge creation.

The function of memory is to craft identities, be it on an individual, a group or on a national level. Stuart Hall interprets identity as knowledge of yourself and about the place from which you act, speak, position yourself in. It is never fixed nor a fact, but a production, never complete, always in process (Hall 1990, 222). It is 'always constituted within, not outside representation' and thus always positioned (Hall 1990, 222). Thus, the interaction between individual, group and cultural memory is a process of positioning self and society, history. All of this is naturally laden with emotions.

In a broader sense, the dissertation is also an investigation into the changing expectations of museums by visitors and public policies in an increasingly diverse society, at a time where 'fake news' challenge the authority of received knowledge.

Theoretical framework

Alison Landsberg's concept of a prosthetic memory lends itself well to my investigation. Prosthetic memory arises at the interface of individual and collective memory at an experiential site such as an experiential museum or mass media. In a negotiation with the individual's 'own archival experience', the person 'sutures' themselves 'into a larger history' (Landsberg 2004, 2). This prosthetic memory is not limited to a specific social

framework but can be acquired across ethnic, national and religious divides (Landsberg 2004, 3). With this focus Landsberg addresses my interest in individual agency in the process of remembering and considers emotional and experiential effects on memory.

Proposed Research Paradigm and Research Methodology

My investigation will be guided by the interpretivist research paradigm that assumes that a diversity of social realities exists through the interaction of social agents. Knowledge is produced to understand the world created (Paquett, Redaelli 2015, 100).

As research methodology I chose an autoethnography of my encounters with the Holocaust and its history. Autoethnography is a qualitative method and takes a phenomenological approach to explore deeper structures as well as human intentions, motivations, emotions, actions (Roth, Auto/, 9). With this approach, I take note of my subjective experiences in these encounters as a means to understand the wider culture, in this case of the cultural memory of the Holocaust.

Why is autoethnography useful for my exploration of individual and cultural memory? Telling a personal story through autoethnography is a form of 'witnessing' (Ellis, et al. 2011, 280) and thus deals with individual memory and its contingencies of the past and the present. In this form, autoethnography helps unearth a learning process in my emotional and experiential encounters with the history of the Holocaust (Ellis et al 2011, 282).

The autoethnography is divided in two parts due to my changing roles in these encounters. One part focuses on my past personal experiences with representations of the Holocaust, largely untouched by historical knowledge. In the second part I observe my role as researcher and teacher within the field of holocaust education. This is to acknowledge that visitors (in this case, me) bring their own baggage of past experiences, previous knowledge, emotions to a site.

Research Method in Collecting Data

The autoethnography is the empirical source of this dissertation and is largely based on my recollections of these encounters, noting emotions (especially the first part), my teaching notes, observations of myself and my interaction with others or responses to memory media.

The secondary literature on holocaust education, individual and cultural memory, the experiential museum, memory and knowledge production provides the frame representing the wider culture against which I probe my observations noted in my autoethnography.

Research Method in Analysing Data

While I took notes of my recollections of my past encounters with representations of the Holocaust, I looked for recurring themes and emotive expressions in my descriptions of my experiences. I focus on processes, on patterns of behaviour, thoughts, emotions emerging, and ultimately on the process of knowledge creation and the role of my memories and that of others in that process (Ellis et al 2011, 276). Using an inductive method, the particular (the autoethnography) to learn about the general (gauging the generalizability of subjective observations), I compare and situate these observations with and against the experience of others as noted in other case studies or the secondary literature.

Prior Literature

Museums have changed from untouchable institutions of education in (national) culture to places where visitors encounter moments of courageousness and engage with empathy with past lives. Museums today offer experiences using multimedia installations and invite visitors to interact with the exhibits and engage emotionally with individual historical experiences (de Simone 2003, 86). Personal accounts and memories are a favourite means to facilitate this emotional bridge to the past. Yet how do memories aid our knowledge acquisition and production?

Alison Landsberg has offered an explanation when she introduced her concept of a prosthetic memory to memory studies. She defines prosthetic memory as a 'privately felt public memory' (Landsberg 2004, 19), a definition that neatly summarises her innovative approach that places individual agency and individual emotional experiences at the centre of her enquiry into contemporary cultural memories. Landsberg explains how individuals gain prosthetic memory through an embodied experience with a historical narrative at an experiential site either as a visitor to an experiential museum or as spectator of a movie. Through this experience they 'suture' themselves into a broader history presented at such sites (Landsberg 2004, 2). In further negotiating the representation of unfamiliar historical experiences with their own 'archive of experience' individuals craft their prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004, 135). It is an adopted, 'sensuous memory' that becomes part of the spectator's self just like a prosthetic limb (Landsberg 2004, 20, 28) and connects them to an unfamiliar past without abandoning their awareness of their contemporary moment. This process has a transformative effect on the individual as it offers the possibility to rethink their own identity. This in turn can lead to 'ethical thinking' and influences the political outlook and engagement of the individual (Landsberg 2004, 2, 9). As prosthetic memory is not bound to a specific social group or framework as widely accepted within memory studies, it is 'portable' and reaches across geographies, social spaces and different cultural practices (Landsberg 2004, 8).

Landsberg is adamant that prosthetic memory is not a 'Disneyfied' ride through history but a way to gain knowledge. She insists that prosthetic memory does not replace cognitive knowledge or rigorous historical inquiry, a dichotomy that neither neuroscience nor evolutionary neurologists uphold: 'thought is physical; sensation is mental' (Berger 2007, 602-603) and by extension history should be accompanied by memory and emotions 'must be annotated by facts' (Landsberg 2004, 130). In her phenomenological study on individual memory formation, Landsberg has primarily looked into representations and memories of painful and traumatic histories, such as the Holocaust or the enslavement of Africans. She found prosthetic memory particularly suited to engage with these histories. After all, she claims, the 'hegemony of the cognitive' has been 'woefully inadequate' in the representation of the Holocaust: 'if an iconography of the

Holocaust is emerging, an iconography that is all about objects and the disability to speak, then [prosthetic memory] might help us find ways to address our local traumas, our national *différend*, the silences and displacement in family memories as well as in cultural memories. Mass media and experiential events can be 'transferential arenas' to learn, wear memories of trauma so 'that they become speakable to us' (Landsberg 2004, 139).

Landsberg faced fierce criticism for her carefree embrace of mass media culture in her memory studies. Silke Arnold de Simine cautions that mass media technology has the capacity to re-encode, overlay or even repress personal memories (de Simine 2003, 28). Given that media play an active role in the production of memory in individual remembering (Errl 2011, 132), their memory offers should be examined to what extent they represent the ideological interests of their producers (de Simine 2003, 29). James Berger applauds her new way of thinking about representations of the past but maintains that she neither analyses memory nor their prosthetic quality. Instead, he argues that the prosthetic qualities of mass media and experiential museums that Landsberg stresses do not differ in kind to those inherent in traditional texts. Mass media might reach more people, but this makes it merely a difference by degree. Consequently, empathy could equally be learned from traditional texts and is not exclusive to experiential media (Berger 2007, 597, 601). De Simine asks if someone else's memory can be adopted at all (de Simine 2003, 33) and if so, she doubts that memory acquired from mass media representations has the same sense of belonging as experiential and embodied memory (de Simine 2003, 29). She is particularly critical of the use of prosthetic memory in Holocaust education. What if this mediated memory of someone else overrides first-hand memories? With the frailty and death of Holocaust survivors, de Simine suggests that the historical reality of the Holocaust is receding ever more into memory and replaced by representations and re-enactments (de Simine, 34).

Landsberg places the emphasis on individual agency in remembering, insisting that prosthetic memories are personal, 'inflected by our own experience and place in the world' and thus different from collective memory (Landsberg 2004, 137). Landsberg's

defence of individual experiences and meaning-making is her strongest contribution to our understanding of how individual memory engages and changes in encounters with public memories. It is an emancipation from the social frameworks in which French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and subsequently modern memory studies have mostly located individual remembering. Most memory scholars agree with Halbwachs' theory that individual memories cannot be recalled through cognitive effort alone but are shaped by social relationships (Errl, *Memory in Culture*, 15, Assmann, 51-52, de Simone 2005, 12). Considerable effort has been spent on the analysis of these frameworks of shared concerns, values, experiences and narratives and their influence on individual remembering. Only recently have memory scholars turned their attention on the processes at play in individual remembering. Simone Wesner argues that the individual 'holds the memory key' in the formation of memory as public representations need to be recognized as valid interpretations of the past by individuals to legitimize their authenticity (Wesner, 2018, 67). How individuals remember depends on their childhood socialisation, past experiences and normatively imprinted emotions (Schmidt 2008, 192-93). What they recall depends on how they perceive themselves and their place in society (socio-cultural environment, other people, institutions, emotions), they remember because the images and narratives offered as memories correspond with their learned knowledge and their expectations (Schmidt 2008, 196-97).

Like Landsberg, these studies point out the individuals' choice to favour certain recollections over others and evaluate them against their own personal archive of memories and experiences. Landsberg takes this choice even further when she proposes that individuals acquire unfamiliar memory beyond their social and cultural frame. In both cases the acquisition, evaluation and adoption should be read as a distinctly individual process of meaning-making be it of one's own place in the world or history or of past events and experiences.

Landsberg's phenomenological approach to remembering considers the experiential and emotional aspects in these processes that are often underrepresented in the analysis of power relations in those mnemonic social networks. Experiential memory is embodied

memory and cannot be transferred from one person to another (Assmann 2008, 50). Autobiographical memory on the other hand cannot be embodied by other people. But both can be shared through common symbols, language or visual images. In Aleida Assmann's definition, this mediated memory becomes part of an 'intersubjective symbolic system' encoded in a common medium (Assmann 2008, 50). She calls the participation in this collective memory 'cognitive learning in imaginative and emotive identifications with images, roles, values and narratives' (Assmann 2008, 50), while Landsberg characterises the process as a negotiation between an embodied experience and historical knowledge (Landsberg 2004, 135, 2). The result is the same despite the different terminology: the mediation is the moment, when an individual acquires unknown memory or 'sutures' themselves into a broader historical context.

Likewise, phenomenological approaches in museum studies have underscored the role of individual agency in how visitors craft meaning in their museum experience (Connor 2013, 31, 33). Yet, the thought that experience exists per se is a chimaera (Jensen, Springorum 2013, 436-57). Despite the deeply individual flavor of even embodied experiences, they are contingent to past experiences, cultural norms and education (Connor 2013, 26; Joy 2003, 264), essentially the personal baggage individuals carry with them, including the images, metaphors they have previously learned (Joy 2003, 264). 'Each of us is the sum of experiences we have accumulated over our lifetime. They shape us as we shape them, constantly becoming who we are' (John Dewey in Hein 2006, 5).

The Experiential Museum

Visitors are 'interlocutors without a discussion partner in the museal conversation', responding to objects, images and narratives rather than to curators or historians (Crane 1997, 48). Experience arises in this interaction with the exhibits. These interactions produce meaning through a sensual-affective experience and 'perceiving consciousness' (Crane 1997, 48). I find Crane's concept of 'perceiving consciousness' intriguing as it entails more than acquiring knowledge in a museum setting. It contains understanding and comprehension as well as a change to the visitor's awareness of themselves and their world. It has an experiential and cognitive quality and implies that the visitor has engaged

actively with the exhibits. The personal identification with the museum's protagonist or narrative, which Penrose favours as experiential sensation, simply helps to be more receptive to the stories (Penrose 2020, 1252). Susan Crane suggests that 'perceiving consciousness' is initiated by distortion. This distortion is a collision of subjectivities and objectivities, the lack of congruity between personal experience and expectations and institutional representations of the past (Crane 1997, 44, 46). Within this tension, Crane locates a 'historical consciousness' as 'a personal awareness of the past as such and desire to understand experience with reference to time, change and memory' (Crane 1997, 45). Rather than dismissing memory and testimonies as too subjective and vague, Crane assumes that the nature of memory is change and distortion (Crane 1997, 50). Consequently, a useful approach for museums is not to search for veracity of memory but look out for 'interactions that produce, reduce and conflate memory' (Crane 1997, 50).

Holocaust in Films and Memorial Sites

To view a film on the Holocaust or visit a memorial site as the historical place of mass murder offer different experiences. Films connect the historical place and its time and invite the viewers to immerse themselves in those images. It allows them to enter the past as silent and invisible observers through illusion and re-enactment and offer a mimicked experience therein (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 90). As an optimist in the representations of the Holocaust in films, Umberto Eco joked that he preferred its 'vulgarisation' to oblivion and indifference (in Baer 2001, 493). Zielinski, similar to Landsberg, claims that popular media (film, serials, mass media) made Holocaust history comprehensible more effectively than previous 'rational-objective-historical' accounts of the past (Zielinski 1980).

At memorial sites visitors can enter the place, but not the time. It confronts the visitors initially with absences and silence. It is a fractured experience that does not invite the visitor to re-live the history of the camp (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 90). A memorial site is a complex contact zone. The visitor enters the historical place with their own lived experience of the present, but can move from their present to the Other's past and back again through the assistance of guides, narration, photo footage and historical knowledge

(Assmann, Brauer 2011, 90). There is multiple scope for individual agency on this journey as everyone needs to decide where and how they want to enter the Other's past or what they take with them. This needs imagination as well as the capacity to bear the emotions connected to it. Visitors are guided less closely than they are in films and can display astonishing ideosyncracies (*Eigensinn*) in their choice of traces that ignite their imagination (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 91).

Quite contrary to de Simone's worries that Landsberg's prosthetic memory would remove the Holocaust even further from historical reality, recent research in tourist and memory studies observe how visitors use prosthetic memory in their encounter with Holocaust memorial sites to generate their own representations of historical trauma and contribute to its commemoration (Reynolds 2016, 334-49, Assmann, Brauer 2011).

Landsberg's concept of prosthetic memory attractively brings together aspects in memory studies that have rarely been investigated together - in particular the scope of individual agency in the process of remembering, the emotions involved therein and the contemporary relevance of past memories. I read it as an invitation and instruction to reflect on my own acquaintance representations of Holocaust or its past itself. Her still abstract description on the processes of individual remembering has been expanded further by other phenomenological studies. Still, my imagination of how I relate to unfamiliar history without prior knowledge remains blurry. Does prosthetic memory contribute to historical knowledge or to my own meaning-making of this past (which would not be bad either as it would invite distortion, consciousness), to what extent is this all about me instead of the Others? Should prosthetic memory probe the reach and purpose of the social world and the cultural memory in which memories circulate more thoroughly (Noakes 2014, 9)?

Considering this list of questions, I look more closely at how I craft meaning and what kind of meaning in the exploration of prosthetic memory in my autoethnography. How does individual, communicative and cultural memory interact?

Autoethnography

Part I. Encounters with Representations of the Holocaust

If it is epiphanies that are first remembered in auto-ethnographic notes, it would be the evening when I used my parents' absence to watch TV, knowing full well that there would not be any children's programmes on at that time of the night and that my parents expected me to sleep. Zapping through the three channels available then, my attention was arrested on what must have been a documentary on the liberation of the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen: piles of skeletal human bodies and a bull-dozer trying to keep these piles in shape. Only later when researching and teaching the Holocaust did I get to know these images as iconic images of the Holocaust shown to the German public after the liberation as an act of education. Glued to the screen, sitting close to the power switch of the TV I was gripped by two overwhelming emotions. One, the fear of my parents' return, knowing that I should not be there and sensing that they would not approve of what I was watching. Second, the fearful disbelief that these might be real human bodies and the many questions running through my mind: why were they naked, their bodies so skeletal. What had happened to these people, how and why did they die? Who are the people driving the bull-dozer? Were they 'bad'? Were they responsible for this hellish sight? I was not glued to these images. Indeed, I kept changing channels as I found it unbearable to look at these scenes. Still, I kept switching back to them, maybe due to a mix of a gory fascination and the urge to find out what these scenes meant, find out what had happened to these people and who was responsible. The narrator's tale did not make much sense to me and I could not connect what he said to anything I had come across before. There was no relief and enlightenment gained and I switched off the TV which at least relieved me from the fear of being caught in the act by my parents.

Like the photographer Lee Miller facing an abandoned train full of corpses and dying men at the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp in April 1945, I encountered an image devoid of a narrative (Sliwinski 2010, 402). Yet, while Miller and the soldiers could place it within the context of war and war crimes, I, at the age of probably eight years had no historical or even anecdotal knowledge of the war and certainly not of the

Holocaust. I made this cognitive link only much later during my studies, yet the memory of these scenes stayed in my mind as did the emotions they stirred: the dread that the bulldozers and the corpses were ‘real’, and the guilt of having disregarded my parents’ instructions. My nightly trespass consequently grew into a guilty silence, as I did not dare asking my parents what these scenes were all about. For quite some time I had to find my own ways of cobbling together a narrative in which I could place those images. Eventually, secondary school would hand me a thread to follow leading me to the Second World War in the books discussed in our German lessons. From that to some connecting pods to ask my parents and grand-parents about their lives during the war. My memories on the books are vague and I think they initially focused on the war in the East, on the territory lost, like for example, ‘Maikäfer flieg’. A book, I could connect to emotionally because the title refers to a much loved song, routinely hummed by my grandmother and mother. The content of the book I remember seems linked to the song, too, the notion of loss of family members and a home in far-away Pomerania, then no longer part of Germany.

Yet, as I was looking for the date of publication of ‘Maikäfer flieg’ to double-check when I had read it, it turned out that the book was not set in Pomerania but Vienna at the end of the Second World War. It was written by Christine Nöstlinger, a well-known Austrian writer whose books have been classroom staples in German secondary schools. Thus, in my recollections the lyrics of the folk song ‘Maikäfer flieg’ overlapped with the content of the book. This should not surprise as lyrics are much more memorable as prose due to their rhymes, rhythms and melodies. In this case, the inherent paradox of the folk song made it even more memorable. While the lyrics recite a childhood nightmare of absent parents – the father in the war, the mother in burnt-down Pomerania – and a child left behind, these rhymes are embedded in the soothing lullaby of ‘Schlaf, Kindlein schlaf’. Yet, instead of soothing, the song harbours a disquiet at its centre that cannot be solved. Alida Assmann explained that you might sing the song but cannot confront nor process its images. This unresolved disquiet then contributes to the memorability (Assmann quoted in Wieden 2015).

Intriguingly, even though my memory of the lyrics of the folk song overwrote the content of the book 'Maikäfer flieg', the book mirrors the stories my family told of their war experience. Nöstlinger, in the voice of the eight years old narrator Christine, recounts her childhood memories of the final weeks of the war which she experienced with her mother and younger sister as guests of a family von Braun in their Viennese villa after the family house was destroyed in an air raid. The plot focusses on the theme of the absent father, the dread of air raids and the impending invasion of the Soviet army. Nöstlinger's father deserted the German army and returned wounded to the family who went to great lengths to hide him – a soldier of Hitler's war of annihilation – from the Soviets. In contrast to my vague memory of the book, the persecuted did feature in Nöstlinger's narrative in the character of the Russian army cook Cohn whom Christine, the first-person narrator, befriends.

My family's war stories revolved around Nöstlinger's key themes: missing and wounded family members, the dreaded air raids, scavenging for food in the countryside and the fear of 'the Russians' as hellish riders of the apocalypse (even though their invasion of the southern reaches of the Black Forest were highly unlikely). Told almost exclusively by my maternal grandmother, these were distinctly female experiences and fears. There were no stories from the battlefields as both my grandfathers were too old to fight, although my maternal grandfather was recruited for the 'Volkssturm'. He deserted, so they told, as he did not see the point in fighting when the war was already lost. He was the only member of the family who was wounded in action – however, I am not sure in which war. Since the wounded leg had to be nursed decades after the wars, it became something like a family war relic, a reified memory that 'proved' those stories true. I remember asking my mother for similar books to 'Maikäfer flieg'. They told stories of the German war experience from a child's perspective, of defeat, air raids and expulsion and flight. Those persecuted and murdered by the Germans and their allies had no place in my recollections of these narratives.

It must have been around the same time, in my early years in secondary school, when I asked my maternal grandmother and parents if anyone in the family had supported the

National Socialists. They routinely denied this. Neither did they speak out against the regime, because anyone who did, would have been ‘taken away’ – as they phrased it. No one responded to my queries where these dissenters were taken to. The tales my family told began to frustrate me. The stories got sparser and more bereft of emotions when asked for the persecuted. My grandmother mentioned that they had noticed people vanishing and that they were aware and fearful of denunciations. Yet, she claimed to have no knowledge of what had happened to those who vanished. I did not learn much more about the persecuted within this echo chamber of my family’s tales. It was the literature I read at school and even more so the 1982 TV mini-series ‘A Square of Sky’ that finally managed to breach the self-referential communication within the family.

In his criticism of Landsberg’s prosthetic memory, James Berger insists that readers engage with the same kind of empathy with traditional written texts as they do with representations through mass media. However, they are, he argues, not exposed to the ideological or market-oriented reach of corporate capitalist mass media (Berger 2007, 605) or the present-day political agenda of a ‘culture industry’ (Reynolds 2016, 344). With this focus on the influence of cultural memory, Berger underestimates the emotional reach of the social framework and the social memory crafted therein, especially if it is unchallenged by any alternative information. Looking back at the books and films I had consumed on the persecution of the Jews, the influence of both frames were quite striking. I illustrate this in my recollections of two classic young reader’s books, Judith Kerr’s ‘When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit’ and the ‘Diary of Anne Frank’ as well as the film classics ‘A Square of Sky’ (Wirth 1982), ‘Schindler’s List’ (Spielberg 1993) and ‘Life is Beautiful’ (Begnini 1997).

I was initially introduced to the stories of persecution in Hitler’s Germany through my school reading in our German classes. Fascinated by these accounts I read beyond the proscribed literature with, usually, great interest. Yet, I distinctly remember my disappointment in two classic reads: Judith Kerr’s ‘When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit’ as part of our school reading in the early secondary school years and ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ which I read out of personal interest around the age of 16. ‘Pink Rabbit’ is the

correspondent childhood memory that narrates the experience of a German Jewish family. Published around the same time as 'Maikäfer flieg', 'Pink Rabbit' has since been essential reading at schools in West Germany. Set at the beginning of Hitler's government in 1933, Kerr recounts how her family was forced to flee from their home in Berlin because her father, the renowned critic Alfred Kerr, had criticized Hitler and his movement and because they were Jewish. Kerr describes the family's lives in exile in Zurich, Paris and eventually London firmly from the perspective of her first-person narrator, Anna, with a focus on their everyday lives. However, the reader gains brief insights into the full scale of persecution of Jews in Hitler's Germany when Anna listens to conversations within her family. Through these snippets of information, the nine-year old girl learns of the social isolation, violence and murderous internment in camps of family members and friends left behind. Both books were meant to represent the horrors of persecution, yet I had read 'Pink Rabbit' more as a travelogue of an involuntary journey, guided by the narrator's hopeful attitude and her gratitude that the family was not separated. I cannot recall if I noticed the Jewish identity of the Kerr family, I definitely was oblivious to Kerr's references of the persecution of Jews in Hitler's Germany and was confounded that I did not see the tragedy in Anna's story that the teacher implied. Back then, neither my family nor my school education had introduced me to the historical events of the Holocaust. This had changed by the time I read Anne Frank's diary. My response to Anne Frank's diary was nevertheless equally out of synch with the reverence the book had received public commemoration of the Holocaust. While I identified with Margot Frank, the quiet, conscientious older sister of Anne, I found Anne's vanity and boisterousness deeply annoying and out of place considering the gravity of her family's situation and the constant dread of being detected and deported by the Germans.

Reading a book leaves considerable scope of mental and emotional agency for the reader who has to summon their own images in response to the text that in turn invoke emotions already tagged to these impressions. Yet, these images or an existing knowledge on the topic need to be present in the reader's 'personal archive' (Landsberg) to be drawn up while reading. In the case of 'Pink Rabbit', my personal archive was filled by my communicative memory on the Second World War provided by the tales of my family

and the books on the topic, I had read before. Against this background Anna's experience of flight and exile felt alien, yet not as dramatic as I expected it to be from the vantage point of my previous reading. Contrastingly, Anne Frank's diary jarred with my expectation set by a cultural memory that invoked the horrors of the Holocaust without naming them. The lack of information on the range of experiences of persecution and a largely symbolic formulization of the Holocaust threw me back onto my own small world of family tales, literature read and the classroom teaching, largely unrelated to the experiences of Anna and Anne.

I experienced none of this when watching a film as I could let myself be carried away by its images, the heroes and the setting. Emotions were part of the package, if not proscribed by the cinematographic craft of cuts, zoom-ins and music. Critics of history in film or on TV would deplore this 'colonisation' of my historical imagination (Kaes 1990, here in Baer 2001, 493) and with it the emergence of a public memory alienated from personal and active recollections (Hartmann 1995, Jameson 1991 here in Baer 2001, 493). Yet, who would assume that the 'colonised' are not aware of the intentions of the cinematographic craft or would even relinquish their critical reflection of what they watch? Kramer, who studied viewers' responses to the British TV series 'Who Do You Think You Are?' stresses that viewers spot and reject fabricated stories, pre-scripted experiences and the 'milking of emotion' (Kramer 2011, 438). Likewise, Baer emphasizes individual agency in the consumption of mass media products, arguing that viewers are aware of the constructedness of history and choose from a variety of representations to build their own understanding and knowledge of past events (Baer 2001, 493). In this reading, visualized history in films and on TV transmit knowledge outside the 'formal historical discourse and traditional institutions of socialisation' (Baer 2001, 491).

The most memorable visualisations of the Holocaust to me were classics in their genre: the TV mini-series 'A Square of Sky' (1982), 'Schindler's List' (1993) and 'Life is Beautiful' (1997). Thinking back, I still remember how these visualisations pushed me out of my comfort zone and introduced me to new factual and emotional knowledge

outside my social network and ahead of my historical knowledge. The emotional resonance of the TV mini-series 'A Square of Sky' still lingers in my recollections of the dramatisation of Janina David's autobiography of the same title (Janina David 1964). It must have been the first dramatization of aspects of the Holocaust I had seen. It, too, was the first time when I consciously encountered the persecution of a family because of their Jewish identity. I was hooked to Janina's story of her childhood in Poland at the moment the German army invaded, forced her family to settle in the crowded Warsaw ghetto, her escape from there and her survival as the only member of her family in a Catholic convent. Even though the setting in a foreign country and the events of ghettoization and deportation was completely alien to me at the time, I identified and sympathized with that girl of a similar age and character, and seemed to share her fears and loss. The similarities drawn to Janina's personality were provided by the 'idiom of family' (Kramer 2011, 442) which I knew from my previous children's literature and my family's tales. Yet, the dramatization of her story in a TV series provided an emotional education beyond my emotional and cognitive horizons. As suggested by Landsberg, taking on parts of Janina David's memory allowed me to transgress borders, languages, cultures and allowed me to step outside my (confined) cognitive knowledge and social memory to acquaint myself with the experience and history of someone else. It was not an appropriation of Janina David's experience, more a feeling of empathy, while still being aware that I am a completely different person in a different time and place. The similarity of the idiom of family and Janina's similar age were the connective part to a 'prosthetic memory' that provides a readiness to follow her story into otherwise unknown terrain. It is worthwhile looking into the motivation behind the production of 'A Square of Sky' for the West German TV screen, as it highlights the power relations and the then prevailing cultural memory of the war. The TV adaptation of David's childhood memory was meant to be the German answer to the highly successful and popular US-American series 'Holocaust' aired in 1979. It was to be an 'anti-Holocaust', not as 'lurid' and without any scenes of extermination, a 'comprehensible', authentic survival story that offers reconciliation (the director Franz Peter Wirth in Rauch 168, 169). The decision to present the Holocaust for a 'child's eye' helped justify a restrained and subtle film production (Rauch 2018, 161).

The aim of the public broadcaster West German Broadcaster (WDR) was to enlighten a young audience about German guilt for the crimes committed during the war (Rauch 2018, 222). To achieve this, the director, Franz Peter Wirth, overrode key aspects of David's memoirs against the determination of the author and the script-writer, Leo Lehman. Apart from sparing the audience from the horrors of the Holocaust, Wirth left out any ambivalence on the culpability of the German characters and played down the racism and antisemitism in Poland. Instead, the Catholic Church in the guise of the nuns who take in Janina comes out as unblemished savior. The antisemitism David faced in the convent and describes in her book never made it on the screen. The overrepresentation of Christianity in contrast to Judaism turns David's baptism in the convents and thus the entire narrative into a classic Christian redemption story. Interesting are the power relations behind those decisions which memory should prevail. Leo Lehman and Janina David, both Polish-Jewish survivors of the Holocaust provide the script for the film and with their biography the historical authenticity, the broadcaster was after. The director, Franz Peter Wirth, was an experienced post-war film-maker, a member of the NSDAP and a former Wehrmacht soldier in Poland (Rauch 2018, 169-71). Of course, when I watched the TV series aged 11 (and again at 15), I was not aware of the ideology behind its production. Yet, judging retrospectively, the dominance of the cultural memory in the production of the series clearly left the interpretative Christian/German frame of my social memory intact. Considering that Catholic rites were dear to my family and my childhood, the whitewashed portrait of the caring and protective nuns must have contributed to my sense of a 'prosthetic memory'. It might even have assured me that my family as Catholics had been on the 'good side'. I had learned empathy with someone unknown through this sense of a 'prosthetic memory' and with it an acquaintance with the persecution of the Jews otherwise blanked out by my social frame and memory. Yet, with this 'prosthetic memory' I had swallowed the underlying message of the series on German guilt and an oblivion to the brutality of the Holocaust hook, line and sinker.

While I had happily indulged in the emotional journey that 'A Square of Sky' had taken me onto at the age of 11 and 15, I made a conscious effort to keep emotions from welling up when I saw Stephan Spielberg's 'Schindler's List' in cinema more than ten years later.

As elsewhere, the film was popular in Germany. Four million people had seen it within the first eight weeks of its release. It had gained notoriety as it was the first fiction film that visualized not only concentration camp life but the gas chamber itself (Denham 1995, 135). Positive and negative reviews seized on Spielberg's audacity to point the camera into the gas chamber, visualizing the heart of the holocaust that had been an absolute taboo in German cultural life (Ball 2006, 2-10). Conservative critics dismissed 'Schindler's List' as an unreliable and dubious representations of the Holocaust because it was a Hollywood Spielberg production, disseminating a US-American view of its history that relied on shock and voyeurism as its central emotions (Ball 2006, 2-10). Yet the film was like an intervention to the German media production that had then exclusively focused on the German war experience in films such as 'Stalingrad' (Vilsmaier 1993) or 'Das Boot' (Peterson 1981). I approached Spielberg's dramatization of Otto Schindler's rescue of 'his' Jewish forced labourers with a very critical eye of an amateur historian (I had just started my undergraduate degree in Modern History) primed by the reviews of the film as a sentimental Hollywood interpretation of German history. I remember how I felt manipulated by the cinematographic use of music in particular and the hero-like worship of Schindler as the unlikely 'good German' at the closing of the film. Unlike the public discourse at the time, I welcomed the visualization of the everyday horrors and cruelty of life in in the camps as a necessary part of the story. Watching it might have felt oppressive but not nightmarish.

In contrast to 'Schindler's List', I let myself be swept away by the humanity and emotions in 'Life is Beautiful' - and enjoyed it. All the criticism that humour and the clownish Roberto Benigni had no place in a representation of the Holocaust did not resonate with me. Unlike 'Schindler's List', Benigni's tale offered plenty of opportunities to identify with the main characters, again through the family idiom and thus engage emotionally with the experiences of a young Italian Jew, Guido Orefice, his non-Jewish wife Dora and their young son Giosuè in a NS concentration camp. Important to my emotional reception of the film was my location outside the German cultural memory of the Holocaust. Instead I lived and worked in London as postgraduate student, exposed to the British public and academic discourse on the Holocaust that did not embrace an image

ban (*Bilderverbot*) nor did it repress emotional encounters (Critchell 2016, Pearce 2019). Apart from the indulgent bath in swathes of emotions, the film positively upset my view of the persecuted as a mass of victims. The film ascribed them agency even inside the deadly camps. This was at the time a notion I had not yet considered, as I had not read any survivor memoirs or other witness accounts from inside the camps, nor had I seen visualizations of these experiences.

As I traced my memories back to my first exposures to the Holocaust, the allied film footage of one concentration camp that I had watched clandestinely stood out like a solitaire, disconnected to any narrative, yet wrapped in a sense of horror and guilt. The reason why I could not make any sense of it lay not in its ‘emotionally dramatic representation of history’ (Baer 2001, 492), but in a lack to me of context and narrative. Holocaust historians used to insist that its only appropriate representation would show its ‘uniqueness, enormity and unspeakability’ (Baer 2001, 494), which it did in my case. I understood that the footage I was watching was something unique and enormous but I did not grasp much more. I could not speak about it, but not because the horrors the images had shown defied any words but because of my guilt of having betrayed the trust of my parents. Yet it had the same result – silence. And the images vanished into a cognitive void. Consequently, these images were not part of the communicative or social memory that shaped my first encounters with stories of the Second World War. The revelation that the lyrics of the song ‘Maikäfer flieg’, so closely and emotionally connected with my mother and grandmother, and my family’s stories of the war overwrote my recollections of the content of Nöstlinger’s book underlines how important the social framework of the family was to my early impressions of the war. Its influence dominated my interpretative framework for years where the German war experience overshadowed that of the persecuted Jews. This framework was only broken through the visualization of the persecution in ‘A Square of Sky’, even though it complied with the German cultural memory and educational mandate of public broadcasters. This cultural memory was by no means monolithic, even if the blustering demands to draw a line under the history of National Socialist Germany during Helmut Kohl’s governments seemed overwhelming. From the mid-1980s it was challenged by a growing interest in survivor stories and a

history from below in popular culture as well as in academia. Yet, the focus on a German experience of dictatorship and war remained dominant as well as the reluctance to visualize the brutality of mass murder. Simultaneously, the historical sciences in German academia had only just started to use anthropological methods that would have highlighted individual agency and the role of emotions in their accounts. I could only disentangle myself from these frameworks when I moved to London and immersed myself in the discursive culture and cultural memory of the war in Britain.

Moving to London not only exposed me to a different way to engage with the history of the Holocaust, but introduced me – for the first time – to Jews and Jewish culture. Throughout my education in Germany, I had never met or experienced an encounter and conversation with a survivor who visited a school or a museum to tell his or her life-story. In fact, before I went to study in London, I had not consciously met a Jewish person. To me, Jews were either historical figures as victims of the murderous persecution by Hitler Germany or lived in the remote and foreign state of Israel. While I had met survivors outside of Germany, I visited the historical spaces of murder and slave labour, the concentration camps, in Germany. I now explore my encounter with the ‘authentic’ rather than through representations of the Holocaust and ask for the knowledge gained as well as the emotional affect and the sensation of ‘prosthetic memory’ therein.

Part II. Memories of Others

Survivor witness accounts

It was during my four-week volunteer placement at the Jewish Museum in London that I went through a crash course in Jewish history, traditions and contemporary life. This included an immersion in the community’s daily routine as a Jewish school shared the grounds with the Museum. On other occasions, I helped out at small festive events. People were friendly, open and curious about my German background and easily approachable, addressing any queries on Jewish holidays or food. I might have enjoyed my first hering bagel there. I did not consciously subscribe to the feeling of a personal German guilt, more to a sense of responsibility to be a ‘secondary witness’ (Ralph Giordano) to the

Holocaust, someone who knows about the crimes and suffering committed and contributes to the preservation of its memory. Yet I felt shy around the community and even more so when I was casually talking to a survivor after his talk, not daring to ask any questions myself (did I even have any?). Any question felt petty, banal or too emotional or personal in the face of someone who had survived the camps. I did not want to appear clichéd or ignorant and feared I might thus not live up to the expectations I had (and I assumed the speaker, too) of Germans confronting survivors of the Holocaust.

While the presence of the survivor intimidated me, that of a passport of a Jewish child refugee I had to prepare for an exhibition fascinated me. In my eyes then, there was at last an object that bore witness to a history I have so far only encountered in texts, literature or films (which was not true, since I had been to a concentration camp site at school; this, however, did not register in my memory as an artefact and witness to history). Given that I had the possibility to engage with survivors, this enthusiasm for objects looks to me now like an attempt to find a protective shield in these objects that kept emotions at bay.

Would I have felt more comfortable speaking to a hologram of a survivor, asking any question, stupid, banal, personal? The computerized three dimensional image could not judge me. The worst that could happen was that the person's computerized voice responding 'I cannot answer this question'. I would probably have felt quite at ease, as the technology would work like a screen filtering out the emotions of the speaker and in turn calming mine. It would be as if I handled an artefact of the Holocaust or consulted a 3-D dictionary, not engaged with a person and his or her memory. When I attended a panel discussion at the Munich NS-Documentation Centre on the use of holograms in museums or memorial sites, I found the video-interview with Eva Schloss (a companion of Anne Frank and Auschwitz survivor) and her family more informative and moving than Schloss's hologram (as screened in Pardo 2017, '116 cameras'). The video showed silences, moments when Schloss's children stepped in to answer questions that seemed too difficult for their parents to respond to and vice versa. In these interactions, the affect of the Holocaust over generations became visible as did the body language of the

interviewees and the emotions embedded in these. A hologram offers a semblance of a communicative interaction, but no emotional interaction. Even the body language is subdued therein as Eva Schloss was, for instance, instructed to use only minimal physical movements and facial expressions when filmed to record her holographic image. Further – the authenticity of the survivor as witness to the Holocaust (granted through documents, the tattooed prison number, the museum setting and his or her narrative and performance) comes across as curated and susceptible to manipulation as the hologram can only answer to a set of around 2,000 questions that had been asked by audiences in previous live encounters with survivors.

A few years later, when I was writing up my doctoral thesis in France, I found my access to survivor testimonials through the daughter of two Hungarian Jews who had been deported to Auschwitz in 1944, survived and had settled in the USA. I came to work for her research into the economy of the camps and the importance of appearance and dress among and for the prisoners. It all began with the stories of her parents and aunts about their everyday life in the camp. When she told me about these experiences, I was moved to tears, though desperate to hide this as it (still) seemed like appropriating someone else's sorrow. Yet, she spoke about her family history quite matter-of-fact, as if it was anybody's ordinary history. I assisted her research into everyday life inside the camps reading prisoner memoirs and testimonials, published and unpublished. Both the conversations with the second-generation witness and the at times raw, unstylised recollections in the memoirs made the camps more fathomable. The authors described the brutality, cruelty and mass murder – to bear witness was the purpose of putting their recollections to paper. Yet, the memoirs were full of emotions, too, expressing fear, hatred, despair, sorrow, but also pride, care, determination to survive. They brought human interaction and action of the prisoners to my attention. Survivors were no longer iconized, victimized victims but personalities.

This was a tremendous advancement of my cognitive and emotional knowledge of the Holocaust. Still, I learned through a protective shield of conversations with a second-generation witness and representations of survivor experiences in their memoirs. These

were emotional encounters that allowed me to relate to the survivors. At the same time, I could control my exposure to these emotions, even distance myself from these in my role as ‘objective’ academic researcher if I felt they were too overwhelming. This shield did not allow a sensation of a ‘prosthetic memory’.

Memorial sites & Museums visits

I now turn to the historical and authentic places the survivors have experienced. The former concentration camps have been turned into memorial sites since the late 1960s on the initiative of the survivors against the protests of local population and politics. Today they are popular tourist destinations. Reynolds claims that being present at these sites means to overcome the experiential and temporal distance to the victims (Reynolds 2016, 343). Is that so?

I visited a former concentration camp for the first time in my last years of secondary school, probably aged 16 or 17. More than thirty years later, I visited another camp as participant of a workshop on oral history at the Free University Berlin. In all those years in between, I never actively followed my inner voice urging me to visit a former concentration camp for the simple fear that it might be emotionally overwhelming.

I hardly remembered anything from my first visit of a former concentration camp – I even had to look up the name of the camp. It was Struthof-Natzwill in Alsace (France), about 1,5 hours drive from my home town of Freiburg. I assume I associated the camp then with the murder of the European Jews, expecting to see its horrors. Yet, most camp inmates were political prisoners, prisoners of war and members of the French resistance. I remember, however, my disappointment and boredom at the initial sight of the former camp: there were iconic watchtowers, the fence, probably some barracks – other than that, the place was barren. Conversely, the black and white photos of former inmates (portraits as well as emaciated bodies) in the adjacent museum exhibit stayed in my memory. They moved me, but I cannot recall a narrative on them, as I cannot remember if we had a guided tour. I seem to recall I had friends at my side and we shared our observations. It was a direct encounter with a historical site. Yet, it did not diminish the distance between

present and past. And while the museum gave the victims a face, I was far from even envisaging their experience. The visit to the memorial site was more a three-dimensional illustration to our history lessons.

My juvenile response to the memorial site seemed quite common. The Holocaust survivor and Professor of German Studies, Ruth Klüger, once remarked that those who think to find something at Auschwitz, must have brought it with them in their luggage (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 87). As spaces, memorial sites hold no meaning, just like a photo or object without caption. Their iconic architectural remnants, the watchtowers, fences and barracks, mark them out as former detention centres, but not much else, as the response of a 17-year old girl at the memorial site Bergen-Belsen exclaimed: 'I expected it to be far more shocking. I thought I would come to a real concentration camp just as in the movies. But as I walked around here, there were only buildings' (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 89). Assmann and Brauer have found that teenage visitors bring along less historical knowledge and rely more on an unpicked repository of images they have gathered in their exposure to western mass media exposure: Hollywood has increasingly turned into a history teacher (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 88). To the extent that historian Volkhard Knigge fears an 'overwriting' of history through 'powerful images' (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 88). Memorial sites are authentic spaces of crimes of the Holocaust with many purposes. They are places of traces for the purpose of historical science and probing juristic enquiries. They are cemeteries, too, places of personal sorrow for lost family members and a remembrance site for all victims (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 80). Today, they are tourist destinations, sites of pilgrimage and stages for national commemoration acts. According to Assmann and Brauer, the over-arching purpose of memorial sites today follows a 'state-paradigm' to provide a powerful, authentic trace to ignite the historical imagination (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 86).

Visitors can follow a signage through the camp, a museum presents the history and purpose of the camp, as well as biographical accounts of individual inmates. A pedagogical programme provides a narrative that engages a diverse and broad audience with the site. Until the 1990s, conversations with survivors were a key aspect of the

educational concept at memorial sites. These real-life individual life stories should illustrate the processes of exclusion, persecution and murder. These authentic interactions with a survivor were meant to be an emotionally stimulating meeting with the past (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 82). As the survivors grew old and more fragile, memorial sites designed concepts that placed the historical traces within the topography of the historical place and its remains at the centre of their learning programmes (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 82). Memorial sites provide both explanatory texts and contemporary photos captioned by the life-stories of the murdered to give the numbers an individual story. Unlike the principles of a Holocaust education that seeks pure emotionalisation in the empathic identification of the audience with the victims, these biographies are embedded in the representation of the place. They are meant to focus a vague sadness experienced by the audience into pointed attention, empathetic interest and a willingness to engage with the history of the place (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 85). The biographies thus help to craft an experiential site. A notion of authenticity of these places is central to the experience of the place and rests on the transparency and accuracy about the processes in place to maintain the sites at every stage of its existence (Reynolds 2016, 348-49).

Hardly any German memorial site engages this 'empathic interests' through the display of horrendous brutality. These are seen as 'transgressional displays' that invite voyeurism. Simply used as illustration, such images would aestheticize violence and are seen as tactics of 'emotional assault'. All they achieve is to expose the visitors to 'unbearable impressions' and 'extorted empathy'. This form of empathy, however, could not replace the value of cognitive empathy or knowledge that highlights the processes behind those horrors (Heimann-Jelinek 2018, 247-49). Susan Crane firmly rejects such cautious curating and stresses that '[h]orror devoid of voyeurism is a powerful teaching tool which draws on personal experience and creates memory' insisting on superior historical knowledge or on undistorted personal memory to the exclusion of the other does not (Crane 1997, 62). Referring to the success of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, she suggests that only personal, physical, yet distanced experience of Holocaust could constructively distort the excess personal historical memory of the postwar generation in the US (Crane 1997, 61). The display of horrors in

various degrees, yet embedded in historical analysis of the context and processes at play is more tolerated at the memorial sites in the US and Israel (Yair 2014, 484).

Why do people visit a memorial site? Critics of ‘dark tourism’ see in the lure of gore and horror the strongest motivation in visitors to memorial sites (Lennon, Foley 2000). While the sensation of risk-free shivers at the imagination of excessive violence is an undercurrent, the motives of visitors are more differentiated. Each visitor group has different expectations and thus different emotional patterns in participating: survivors and their families come to mourn and remember, groups of school children to learn (or simply to spend a day outside of the classroom). Memorial sites are popular among foreign tourists, whereas locals and their families rarely visit the sites. Studies into the reception of and engagement with memorial sites have moved away from a mere critique of consumerism and focused on the agency of the visitors. Assmann and Brauer suggest that these sites and exhibitions fulfil a need for emotional participation and a wish for information (Assmann, Brauer 2011, 82). Even if it is just a desire or curiosity to get to know first-hand what visitors had previously only encountered through the media, it is an act of cognitive cross-examination of sources. The philosopher Giorgio Agamben sees in those needs not just a cognitive engagement with the memorial sites but a moral desire to bear witness by filling the gap between the events of the past and the ability to account for them (Reynolds 2016, 343). Reynolds and Landsberg take the argument even further and argue that rather than merely consuming information and indulging in someone else’s pain, visitors engage actively and productively with these sites. They should thus not be seen as consumers, but as prosumers and ‘memory workers’. On an individual level their visit to unfamiliar places complicates their experience of the everyday and may trigger reflection and self-invention (Landsberg 2004, 2). As ‘secondary witnesses’ of those ‘traces of violence’ preserved at memorial sites they contribute to the commemoration of Holocaust history. Their ‘memory work’ is then able to bridge the temporal ‘aporia’ (silence) between the past and present representations of the Holocaust (Reynolds 2016, 343). At the same time, visitors are ‘primary witnesses’ to the documentation of the victims’ experiences at the sites. Through their participation in a collective effort to preserve the Holocaust for cultural memory, they are ‘custodians’ of this memory

(Reynolds 2016, 344). To have any meaning beyond the memorial site, these institutions ‘must rely on the memory work of tourists ... to stitch different Holocaust memorials together into a coherent representation’ and generate a discourse that allows accountability of these sites to a touring public (Reynolds 2016, 349). As visitors add their own productions (stories told to friends and family, photo albums, chosen books) and practices to their ‘memory work’ they acknowledge the distance to the victims but bridge the gap through ‘emphatic imagination’ (Reynolds 2016, 344).

I was excited and relieved that I could visit the Ravensbrück memorial site of the former NS concentration camp for female prisoners as participant of an academic workshop. Excited because it was my second visit of such a site, often intended and always abandoned. Relieved because I accessed the site with a like-minded group of academics and artists to explore the use of witness accounts on the site. Following a research inquiry had worked as protective shield against uncontrollable emotions before and would keep my unease over what might await me there at bay. Thus, while I wanted to enrich my cognitive and emotional knowledge of the Holocaust and find inspiration on how to pass this history on in a meaningful way, I also had to face my discomfort and anxiety of those sites.

It was a privileged visit as the Head of Education and Learning at Ravensbrück guided us through the barren grounds of the site where the crematorium and the SS-headquarters and living quarters were the only buildings left of the NS concentration camp. The monumental memorial to the political prisoners built in the time of the German Democratic Republic documents previous and different ways to commemorate the history of the site. It looks out on the nearby lake and the neighbouring town of Fürstenberg. Given the emptiness of the space, the narrative and stories told by the guide were the only means to add meaning to what we saw. It was an accomplished narrative that provided the historical knowledge of the processes and routines of camps in general and Ravensbrück and its vicinities in particular. At the same time, the guide managed to embed the experiences and emotions of the inmates in this cognitive framework. Taking us across the patches of different coloured gravel that outlined the size and place of the

former barracks, the guide did not recreate images of the buildings in his narrative (nor did he show photos of them) but focused on their purpose and the living-conditions therein and how they changed with to the seasons or times of severe over-crowding of the camp. He took particular care to recreate the point of arrival of the prisoners to the camp. This is a procedure that has gained iconic status because it has a central place in the memory of survivors and has subsequently been visualized in countless film and TV productions. Rather than simply referring to this mediatized memory, he used our recollection of these images and adapted those to the architectural physique of Ravensbrück. The focus of his narrative was then on the experience of this entry for the SS-guards and the arriving female prisoners alike. While the guards observed the undressing, the physical examination and the shaving of the hair from an elevated place, the women had to endure this male gaze on top of the shame and dehumanising experience. It was a powerful narrative device where all the elements added up to an experiential imagination: calling up my (fictional) pre-existing images and the well-documented emotions of the prisoners in the memoir literature right at the moment when I stood at the very same place the women had to file through.

The exhibition in the museum housed in the commandantur building was largely based on objects, artefacts of everyday camp life often personalized by the prisoners such as dolls or clothes. This highlighted the individualism and agency of prisoners further embellished by their individual life-stories as told by the guide. These were no graphic stories of torture or gory death. They simply conveyed to me the immense sadness and sorrow of survivors at the loss of family members. In this combination, the object or photo and the narrative invited an empathetic imagination and in this (rather than in the immersion into a different world) an experiential sensation.

How did I engage with the site and its museum? I took notes of names and occasions that showed the culpability of ordinary Germans in the neighbouring town, the job of SS-guard as well-paid career opportunity and the commemoration of the camps in the GDR. I have no notes on the experiential encounters mentioned above that stayed quite vividly in my memory. I took one photo which was an arduous process as I was well aware of

the ethical implications of taking photos at a former concentration camp. Should you really take tourist pictures of a graveyard? There are codes of ethics at such sensitive sites that restrict photography: show respect, bear witness, preserve the exhibits. They are at times ‘uneven invocations of respect toward the victims’ (Reynolds 2016, 340), e.g. at Auschwitz it is prohibited to photograph the (reconstructed) gas chamber, but visitors are allowed to take pictures at the shooting wall of the prisoners block (Reynolds 2016, 340). More problematic was my concern not to employ a ‘tourist gaze’ that objectifies the Other (the persecuted) (Urry, Larson 2011) as target of my curiosity (Reynolds 2016, 339) or even of my sense of empathy. Visual studies scholars suggest, however, that there is no unilateral flow of power of tourists over ‘natives’ as the ‘reverse gaze’ complicates the ‘tourist gaze’ and invites the photographer to reflect on his place and motives (Robinson, Picard 2009; Alex Gillespie 2006). This complicating influence of the ‘reverse gaze’ was quite obvious in my search for the perfect photo opportunity. I wanted to take a photo to document my second more conscious visit to a memorial site, an indexical product of more intangible experiences (Robinson, Picard 2009). The bare camp site was not that photogenic, yet taking a picture of the crematorium was out of the question, too, as this would have been too voyeuristic, clichéd and disrespectful of the dead at same time. Taking photos of the exhibits seemed equally disrespectful. Hirsch observes a disquieting sense of complicity in the viewer when staring at the often circulated historical photos of victims who stare back with frightened expressions. I certainly did not want to use the same instruments of surveillance as the persecutors (Hirsch 2008)? More importantly, these photos would not be able to convey the intense experiential sensation anyway. I eventually settled to take a photo of a woman and a child prisoner/survivor to commemorate those murdered at Ravensbrück (I think it is a memorial initiated by survivors in gratitude for all those who aided those in need). I settled on this image as it related to my personal role as mother and would have been a picture to show my older daughter, partly as touristic evidence, partly as initiation to her Holocaust education. But I also made sure that no one observed me taking this photo, quite aware of the ‘reverse gaze’ of other visitors that might reprimand and shame my action (Reynolds 2016, 340). Did I perform ‘an ethically engaged subjectivity’, one of which is the self as witness

(Reynolds 2016, 341-42)? I certainly was conscious of the ethical code of a witness, but I had understood myself as 'secondary witness' for many years before this photo-op dilemma. At this moment, the photo was a trophy that documented my victory over my unease in visiting former concentration camps. Judging from the chosen motif, I simply confirmed my-self as parent and teacher. Likewise, it shows how pivotal the family idiom has been in my engagement with the history of the Holocaust.

So, I had at last arrived at one of the iconic centres of the Holocaust that I have been orbiting like a black hole for years. It felt like a closure and was everything I expected it to be: moving, sad, enraging, but not unsettling. Silence? The site itself is silent in its emptiness (there were no streams of tourists on that day) with no signs and few captions. Visitors needed an audio or real-life guide to enliven the site and the museum, which turns the curators and guides not just in 'custodians of memory' but into gate-keepers of the narrative and message of the site.

Conclusion

Looking back at the occasions where I located my acquisition of a prosthetic memory, it is quite striking to see that my most memorable encounters with representations of the Holocaust were indeed those provided by media visualisations. The clearest recollection of a mnemonic limb rests in a time when I had no historical knowledge of the Holocaust. Instead the emphasis was on fictional stories on the Second World War and memoirs. They were decidedly emotional encounters where the family idiom was the access to an unfamiliar memory. The sensation of suturing myself into another history was not a process of wholesale identification with another person. The prosthetic memory clearly opened my mind to new historical knowledge, namely the persecution of the Jews in Hitler Germany and taught me empathy with Janina David and her family. At the same time the narrative based on a Christian redemption story and the focus on Janina David's family linked back to my own social frame, like a safety belt.

The characteristics of a German cultural memory of the Holocaust were imprinted in these early memory media: the attribution of German guilt for the atrocities, the restrained use

of emotions and the absence of violent images of the Holocaust. My individual process of remembering, even the acquisition of a prosthetic memory, did not challenge this frame, not even after I had learned aspects of National Socialist history. I could only disentangle myself to some extent once I had moved to London. This enabled me to adopt a more distanced and critical view of German (and British) cultural memory.

With a growing historical knowledge on the Holocaust, the occasions for the adoption of prosthetic memories diminished. More relevant in the process of 'perceiving consciousness' or cognitive knowledge was Crane's concept of distortion. Still, the strength of the cultural memory remained undiminished in my practice to explore and represent the Holocaust with emotional restraint, cognitive, fact-based. The knowledge I searched and gained was biographical and emotional, putting human agency in the structures of Holocaust history.

The themes that kept emerging in the process of writing the autoethnography were silence with respect to the persecuted, the culpability of Germans, and restrained emotions in representations of Holocaust. Did an identity theme emerge, too? A recurring theme was the family idiom and my self-identification as a 'secondary witness' to the commemoration of the Holocaust or as 'memory worker'. Identities that invited and enabled an exploration of my identity as German.

What did the acquisition of prosthetic memory mean for my own work as a guardian of memory? If I consider memory as a resource for my work, I have largely used memoirs and memories as a means to capture the attention of the visitor or to illustrate a more complex historical context. The instruction of our Education & Learning department to avoid sentimentalisation suited me fine. Using other people's memory usually works as a hook and fleshes out the text- and image-heavy permanent exhibition at the NS-Documentation Centre. How did my own exposure to someone else's memory influence my 'memory work' at the Centre? I have so far felt comfortable in the clean, white cube of the Centre's architecture. The rational, cognitive approach of its main exhibition made emotions scalable and predictable. I consequently do not use the film footage of the Dachau train in my guided tours. However, my consumption of video-interviews with

survivors and a gradual familiarization with oral history have turned my interest to the biographies of the persecuted and away from the perpetrators. It is, too, a change in my subjectivity as a custodian of memory.

Prosthetic memory adopts many elements of Holocaust education in the US and the UK: the identification with victims, the duty to speak about memories and to preserve them, emotions, the encouragement to empathise, but also the call to preserve human rights, freedom and democracy. Prosthetic memory preserves parts of first-hand memory, but it is in its entirety more a reflection of the cultural memory of the Holocaust an individual was exposed to and how influential it was or not.

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