

Memory in Exile: 80 Years since the Liberation of the Nazi Camps

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In 2025 there will be 80 years since the Nazi camps were liberated.

As Dan Stone showed, citing as examples scenes from the Red Army's films of the liberation of Majdanek and Auschwitz to the final scenes of *Life is Beautiful* and *Schindler's List*, '[i]n the popular imagination, the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps was a joyous affair, bringing an end to the inmates' torments' (*The Liberation of the Camps: The End of the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, 2015). Yet for many of the inmates who were still alive when the liberation armies entered the camps, and even for the witnesses of the Nazi crimes, the mental scars remained for life. American and British liberators reported how insanely hungry the inmates they found in Dachau, Buchenwald, Mauthausen or Bergen-Belsen were. Soviet soldiers reported on the mountains of shoes they found in Majdanek and the thousands of emaciated prisoners who hugged them and cried at the three camps that made up Auschwitz. 'I remember their faces, especially their eyes which betrayed their ordeal,' soldier Ivan Martynushkin declared in an interview for *The Times of Israel* (see Erin Blakemore, 'The Shocking Liberation of Auschwitz: Soviets "Knew Nothing" as They Approached', *History*, 2020, <https://www.history.com/news/auschwitz-liberation-soviets-holocaust>)

Time passed and the trials from Nuremberg (1945-1949) and of Adolf Eichmann (1961) ushered in the 'era of Holocaust awareness'. This was followed by the establishment and proliferation of audio and video archives of survivors' and witnesses' oral testimonies in the United States, Europe, Israel, and Australia. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/7 (2005), urged all member states to 'develop programmes that will inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to help to prevent future acts of genocide'. In the 'after testimony', 'post-witness', 'after memory' or 'post-testimonial era' (see Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman and James Phelan, *After Testimony: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, 2012; Diana I. Popescu and Tanja Schult, *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era*, 2015; Matthias Schwartz, Nina Weller and Heike Winkel, *After Memory: World War II in Contemporary Eastern European Literatures*; 2021; Arleen Ionescu and Simona Mitroiu, 'Holocaust Narratives in the Post-Testimonial Era', *Parallax*, 2023), this challenge becomes more timely than ever, since direct witnesses passed away and acts of genocide have kept on being committed, as if the lessons of history are never learnt. It is as if our 'memory is in exile', to quote Elie Wiesel's words from a 1985 interview with Roger Lipsey. When Lipsey asked Wiesel about his position as a witness, Wiesel replied that he did not consider himself privileged, as 'We are all witnesses.' Lipsey insisted that Wiesel witnessed things that most people did not see and asked for advice: 'what is it we should remember?' This is when Wiesel expressed his fear that 'memory is in exile', since it seemed to him that people forgot that they had to remember everything even what they could not remember (see Lipsey, Interview with Elie Wiesel, *Parabola* x:2 'Exile' Issue (May 1985)). Remembering what cannot be remembered is akin to what Maurice Blanchot meant by the 'immemorial': 'How can it be preserved even by thought? How can thought be made the keeper of the Holocaust where all was lost, including guardian thought?' (*The Writing of the Disaster*, 1995, 47), a concept that we are also interested in for this special issue.

Our issue proposes to deal with the notion of memory in exile. Topics of interest include (but are not limited to):

- Representations of the Holocaust in literature, films, visual arts 80 years after
- New perspectives on the representation of the Holocaust in canonical texts 80 years after (i.e. *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the memoirs of Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Victor Frankl, Gisella Perl, Charlotte Delbo, the poems of Paul Celan, Dan Pagis, etc.)
- Recuperation of unknown or under-explored Holocaust memories 80 years after
- Holocaust memory, language and cultural translation 80 years after
- Holocaust memory from gender and sexuality studies perspectives in the 21st century
- Holocaust memory and various generations' perspectives 80 years after
- Holocaust memory as a toolkit of resistance strategies in new situations of crisis
- Holocaust memory in relation to other genocide memories in the 21st century
- What do we remember about the liberation of the camps 80 years after? What did we forget?
- How do we deal with Saul Friedländer's suggestion to create 'an integrated history of the Holocaust' (1997) in an era when no firsthand witnesses remained?
- What challenges do digital technologies/ platforms or A.I. pose for Holocaust memory nowadays?
- How do recent scholarly categories of analysis like Emily Budick's 'implicated reader/writer' (*The Subject of Holocaust Fiction*, 2015), Michael Rothberg's 'implicated subject' (*The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, 2019) or Mihaela Mihai's 'impure resistance' (*Political Memory and the Aesthetics of Care: The Art of Complicity and Resistance*, 2022) promote new directions of engagement with Holocaust memories in the 21st century?
- Can we include other 20th or 21st century historical traumas in the notion of 'memory in exile'?
- Remembering Wiesel's words: 'We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.' (Wiesel, *Acceptance Speech for the Nobel Prize*), how can 'intercontextual' readings (Leona Toker, *Gulag Literature and the Literature of Nazi Camps: An Intercontextual Reading*, 2019) help develop solidarity with the victims of all genocides?

We welcome interdisciplinary approaches, ranging across Holocaust and trauma studies, memory studies, critical theory, literary and cultural studies, visual arts, as well as other relevant disciplines in the humanities.

Interested contributors should submit a 300-500 word abstract along with a short bio note (no more than 200 words) as attachments to the editors of this special issue of *Word and Text*, Arleen Ionescu, Feng Li, Dana Mihăilescu and Adrian Tudurachi (arleenionescu@gmail.com; franklee1978@163.com; dana.mihailescu@lils.unibuc.ro; adrian.tudurachi@gmail.com) by 30 September 2024. We will notify authors whose proposals are accepted for publication by 31 October 2024. Articles (7500-10000 words) are expected by 31 March 2025. Every author who submits an article must adhere to the policies and guidelines of *Word and Text*:

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