

Sites of Violence and Their Communities: Critical Memory Studies in the Post-Human Era

September 23-25, 2019

**Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland
Research Center for Memory Cultures
Faculty of Polish Studies**

Along with the recent “memory boom”, countless sites of historical violence have acquired positive, identity-generating meanings, which can serve as powerful anchors for the mnemonic processes of a diversity of communities. Sites of this kind form the cornerstone of Pierre Nora’s (1994) notion of *lieux de mémoire*, a concept central to what Astrid Erll has called the “second phase” of memory studies (2005).

“Sites of Violence and their Communities” will bring together scholars, students and practitioners of memory work in an attempt to critically reinterpret the links between sites, their (human, and non-human) users, and memory. Discussions will focus on overlooked, repressed or ignored sites of violence that may benefit from new approaches to memory studies, approaches that go beyond the traditional focus on communication, symbolism, representation and communality. Clandestine or contested sites, in particular, pose challenging questions about memory practices and policies: about the status of unacknowledged victims and those who witnessed their deaths; about those who have inherited the position of “bystander”; on the ontology of human remains; and about the ontologies of sites themselves, with the natural and communal environments implicated in their perdurance. Claude Lanzmann – one of the first to undertake rigorous research on sites of violence – responded to Nora’s conception with his work; in a similar way, we hope to re-engage with the notion of “non-sites of memory.”

Methodologies emerging from forensic, ecological, and material perspectives allow us to engage with such “non-sites” from new angles. Our goals are as follows: to consider the needs and interests of post-conflict societies; to identify and critically read unofficial transmissions of memory; and to re-locate memory in new contexts – in the grassroots of social, political and institutional processes where the human, post-human and natural merge with unanticipated mnemonic dynamics.

This meeting of specially invited experts will focus on the phenomenon of non-sites of memory as a diagnostic tool to reveal unacknowledged social and material processes in post-conflict areas, but also to critically review the accepted traditions of memory studies, proposing newly relational, processual and inclusive approaches. The event concludes the three-year interdisciplinary research project *Unmemorialized Genocide Sites and Their Influence on Collective Memory, Cultural Identity, Ethical Attitudes and Intercultural Relations in Contemporary Poland* (funded by the National Program for the Development of Humanities).

Event co-organized by the Research Center for Memory Cultures, the Faculty of Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University (Kraków), Yahad – In Unum (Paris) and the Polish Studies Programme at the University of Cambridge.

Organizing team: RCMC, JU: Roma **Sendyka**, Aleksandra **Janus**, Karina **Jarzyńska**, Kinga **Siewior**, Aleksandra Szczepan; YIU: Patrice **Bensimon**, Michał **Chojak**; UoC: Stanley **Bill**.

MONDAY, 23 September 2019

Venue: Faculty of Polish Studies, Grodzka 64, room 302

Workshop: Non-Sites of Memory and Their Witnesses: The Testimonies of the Holocaust by Bullets

09.00-09.15 Workshop opening and introduction of the participants

09.15-11.00 Session 1: Michał **Chojak** (YIU): Holocaust by bullets: A historical outline

FIVE-MINUTE TALKS:

Daria **Cherkaska** (Staffordshire University): *Using oral history sources for Holocaust archaeological research in Ukraine*

Justyna **Rolińska** (Jagiellonian University): *Between the camp and bullets: The case of an unsuccessful escape from the Jewish transport to Auschwitz in Brzeźnica near Skawina in 1943*

Mateusz Jan **Majman** (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich): *"Shots could be heard in Shaumian": The extermination of the mountain Jews in the Shaumian kolkhoz in Crimea as an example of Holocaust by bullets*

Claire **Anderson** (George Mason University): *The creation of a transnational, transgenerational collective memory: The legacy of allied POWs in Poland*

Weronika **Romanik** (University of Warsaw): *Transformations of memory: The works of Mordechai Tenenbaum-Tamaroff from the Białystok ghetto*

11.00-11.15 Coffee break

11.15-13.00 Session 2: Patrice **Bensimon** (YIU): Yahad – In Unum's methodology and archival resources

FIVE-MINUTE TALKS:

Jonathan **Webber** (Jagiellonian University): *Memorializing sites of mass graves: Some reflections on appropriate inscriptions*

Maria **Piekarska** (University of Warsaw): *Memorialization in natural spaces: Strategies and narrative outcomes. Israeli case study*

Criss **Beyers** (independent scholar): *Between Auschwitz and emptiness: March of the Living's museological encounters with Płaszów*

Katarzyna **Liszka** (University of Wrocław): *Ethics, memory, and the Shoah*

13.00-13.45 Lunch

13.45-15.30 Session 3: Renata **Masna** (YIU): Shoah in a town: The chronology of a crime in Mszana Dolna

FIVE-MINUTE TALKS:

Olga **Grochowska** (Collegium Invisibile): *The absent neighbour: Post-war memory of the Jewish community in Pułtusk, Poland*

Sylvia **Papier** (Jagiellonian University): *Koszyce: An uncovered story of post-Jewish city and its material testimonies*

Paweł **Michna** (Jagiellonian University): *Between memory and oblivion/repression: How I've tried to find out what happened in the house closest to the place of executions of Jews*

Magdalena **Chmiel** (Jagiellonian University): *Buildings as silent witnesses of the Holocaust*

Julia **Machnowska** (University of Warsaw): *Jewish communal property in Poland 1945–1956: Reflections on state administration documents with witnesses' testimonies in mind*

15.30-15.45 Coffee break

15.45-17.15 Session 4: Aleksandra **Szczepan** (RCMC): Witness at a crime scene: Video testimony in memory and performative studies

FIVE-MINUTE TALKS:

Jenny **Watson** (University of Edinburgh): *Landscapes of genocide: Socio-spatial factors in history and memory*

Emily-Rose **Baker** (University of Sheffield): *Post-communist representations of the Holocaust by bullets in Ukrainian and Western European literature*

Franziska **Koch** (University of Potsdam): *Disturbing “Righteous”: Gentile helpers in the Polish Shoah discourse*

Matilda **Mroz** (University of Sussex): *The neighbours remember: Exhumation, testimony and complicity in Polish Holocaust film*

Marlena **Nikody** (Jagiellonian University): *The importance of testimony in Wojciech Tochman's book We are Going to Draw Death*

17.15-17.45 Closing discussion

Venue: **Faculty of Polish Studies, Grodzka 64, room 06 (aula)**

18.00-20.00 Keynote and discussion

Rev. Patrick **Desbois**, dr h.c. mult., Crimes in broad daylight and non-sites of memory

More than one-third of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust were murdered in mass shootings that largely took place across Central and Eastern Europe in thousands of towns and villages, in forests, fields or swamps. In many instances, German units eliminated entire communities in a matter of days or even hours in broad daylight. And yet many of these killing sites remain less well known, both in their local context and in the larger remembrance of the Holocaust. This opening lecture will focus on the importance of studying these sites to preserve the memory and the dignity of the forgotten victims.

TUESDAY, 24 September 2019

Venue: Galicia Jewish Museum, Dajwór 18

9.00-9.15 Welcome and opening remarks: Dean of the Faculty of Polish Studies, Roma **Sendyka** (Jagiellonian University), Stanley **Bill** (University of Cambridge)

Morning session

Chair: Jonathan **Webber** (Jagiellonian University)

PANEL 1: Sites of violence: New perspectives and readings

9.15-9.45 Roma **Sendyka** (RCMC, Jagiellonian University)

Researching non-sites of memory. Outline of the research project *Uncommemorated Genocide Sites and Their Influence on Collective Memory, Cultural Identity, Ethical Attitudes and Intercultural Relations in Contemporary Poland* (National Program for the Development of Humanities). Presentation of the research team.

Guest Projects Presentations (1)

9.45-10.15 Caroline **Sturdy Colls** (Staffordshire University)

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of archaeological investigations at Holocaust sites across Europe. However, such research is affected by and must consider the wide range of ethical issues and communities connected to the events and sites being investigated. This paper will provide insights derived from more than a decade of working in this field, with a specific focus on the religious, political and social issues that have relevance not just for archaeologists but for all practitioners working at sites of violence.

10.15-10.45 Agnieszka **Nieradko** (Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries, Zapomniane ["Forgotten"] Foundation)

Should we seek the graves of Holocaust victims? How? Why? A presentation of work carried out by the Rabbinical Commission for Cemeteries and the Zapomniane Foundation. Realities of the search for uncommemorated graves of Holocaust victims. Challenges related to the changing working environment and public mood.

10.45-11.00 Coffee break

Guest Projects Presentations (2)

11.00-11.30 Rob **van der Laarse** (University of Amsterdam)

Accessing Campscapes: Inclusive Strategies for Using European Conflicted Heritage (iC-ACCESS) looks at traces of 20th-century mass violence and terror as tangible reminders of the "age of extremes" and their present uses in (trans)national contexts. It does so, however, from a critical perspective of what is and what is not remembered at these places, and how the past is used, and misused, for current politics of exclusion or inclusion. The sites are therefore assessed within a national and transnational context.

In most post-war European countries, some former Nazi internment camps have become icons of antifascist resistance and symbols of the Holocaust and have played a consistent role in post-war European memory of totalitarianism and genocide. But how open are these narratives to historical complexity, multiple perspectives on conflicted pasts and shared heritage and ongoing memory debates and issues of ownership? These discussions have been conducted in the context of a tense transnational context of competing narratives on the Holocaust, Soviet occupation and postcolonialism. The project therefore focuses on the difficult heritage – both of some of the most powerfully symbolic Holocaust “dark heritage” sites as well as of some silenced campsites which come to represent the unwanted past, a past excluded from national memory. This entanglement of remembering and forgetting and the silencing of competing narratives (commonplace in relation to completely unknown forms of historical injustice) shows the strong connection between heritage, storytelling and the politics of identity, as well as the need for more inclusive strategies and technologies.

A serious challenge thereby arises to museums, remembrance institutions, civil society organizations, social activists, critical academics and educators tasked with the development of new and alternative narratives: to make these spaces ever more relevant, with the difficulties of rising visitor numbers and growing populist aggression. Instead of giving a project overview, I will focus my contribution on some of the competing narratives and the exclusive/inclusive access theme (Lety conflict case and the Westerbork Night of the refugee conflict.)

11.30-12.00 Michał **Chojak** (Yahad – In Unum)

The village as a crime scene: German killing units conducted mass execution of Jews in thousands of towns and villages across occupied territories. This genocide was perpetrated in various landscapes, mostly in a rural environment. This presentation will focus on the topographical aspects of the crime and on the interactions between the crime and the village.

12.00-13.00 **Plenary discussion (1): Topomnemonics: Topographic and topological approaches to memory.** Do sites possess generative memorial force? How can engaging with spatial processes be useful for memory studies? Is witnessing always a situated practice?

Moderators: Aleksandra **Szczepan** (Jagiellonian University)
Kinga **Siewior** (Jagiellonian University)

13.00-14.00 Lunch break

Afternoon session

Chair: Iwona **Kurz** (University of Warsaw)

PANEL 2: Post-violence communities: Relational models of implication

14.00-14.30 Christina **Morina** (Bielefeld University)

In search of the “bystander society”: focusing on interpersonal relations and social dynamics within a “bystander society” enables us to understand issues of mass complicity and involvement in perpetration as the result of a complex

interplay between subjective and structural factors. We can thereby add new layers of explanation to the analysis of the roots and reasons for systemic violence during and beyond the Holocaust. I will achieve this by: 1. Revisiting Alfred Schütz's sociology of the life-world and Karl Jaspers' philosophy of guilt to delineate an innovative path towards integrating "small" and "big" history(s), individual experiences and structural processes; 2. zooming in on the "grey zone" between complicity and perpetration based on Schütz's and Jaspers' ideas; 3. discussing some of the empirical and methodological challenges of this approach in the light of recent scholarship on Nazism as a "social project", especially studies based on Jewish and non-Jewish diaries.

14.30-15.00 Presentations (RCMC, Non-Sites of Memory project; texts pre-circulated):

Jakub **Muchowski**, Vernacular historians at non-sites of memory

Karina **Jarzyńska**, Transreligious practices and objects at non-sites of memory and their postsecular potential

Aleksandra **Janus**, Difficult heritage community? Legacy of violence and social resonance

15.00-15.30 Erica Lehrer (Concordia University)

Discussions about the need to „decolonize” museums with colonial-era roots, such as ethnographic museums, tend to privilege post-colonial concerns related to Western Europe and the “source communities” whence many collections originate. This talk proposes the term “communities of implication” to both address the different historical context of Eastern European (particularly Polish) ethnographic museums, and to propose ways to enrich the curatorial treatment of objects that have been “museumized” in the wake of large-scale violence and injustice.

15.30-15.45 Coffee break

PANEL 3: Post-violence communities: Denial, repression, redress, reconciliation

15.45-16.15 Krijn Thijs (University of Amsterdam)

Debating a nation of Bystanders: the persecution of Jews in Dutch history and memory. I will give a short overview of Dutch historiography on the question of the attitudes and behaviour of the Dutch “majority population” (at the same time problematizing that concept) and then go into a case study referring to a recent publication Probing the Limits of Categorization. The Bystander in Holocaust History (Morina, Thijn 2019) commenting on the issue of “knowledge”.

16.15-16.30 Presentation (RCMC, Non-Sites of Memory project; text pre-circulated):

Maria **Kobielska** and Aleksandra **Szczepan**, Testimony: Modes of witnessing at non-sites of memory

16.30-17.00 Tomasz **Żukowski** (Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Science)

As early as the 1940s, many writers and journalists were analyzing (and with considerable insight) the attitudes of the Polish community towards Jews at the time of the occupation, and the consequences of these attitudes for the exterminated. At the same time, this knowledge has never permeated the broader culture in its self-awareness. The image of Poles and their behaviour during the Second World War is consistently and repeatedly whitewashed. I would like to analyze the narrative strategies of neutralizing existent knowledge – as one might put it – about Polish violence against Jews.

Case study: Site-generated mnemonic processes – area of Przeworsk

17.00-17.45 Film screening *Not to Judge* (2017), dir. Magdalena Lubańska, Pawlina Carlucci Sforza, intro by Magdalena **Lubańska** *Postwar killings in the woods at Dębrzyna. A Postsecular anthropological perspective* (Non-Sites of Memory project; text pre-circulated)

17.45-18.15 Alina **Skibińska** (Polish Center for Holocaust Research, Polish Academy of Science)

My talk will concern the post-war exhumation of Jews, Poles, Germans and Red Army soldiers (1940s) on the basis of a case study of the Przeworsk county (powiat). What are the murder sites, the burial and exhumation sites? What was the state of the bodies and what objects were found with the bodies? I will discuss various functions of exhumation: as criminal evidence, as honouring the victims, as part of a sanitizing campaign, as the result of political decisions.

18.15-19.15 **Plenary discussion (2):** New approaches to societies of violence: bystander societies of implication. How can new approaches to bystanding communities develop understanding of relations between the area of violence and the bystanding? Is bystanding site-dependent? Can sites be bystanders?

Moderators: Maria **Kobielska** (Jagiellonian University)
Łukasz **Postuszny** (University of Wrocław)

Reception

WEDNESDAY, 25 September 2019

Venue: Galicia Jewish Museum, Dajwór 18

Morning session

Chair: Katarzyna Bojarska

(Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Science)

PANEL 4: Performances and social rituals at non-sites of memory

9.00-9.30 Bryce **Lease** (University of London)

I will discuss links between walking, performance and memorialisation, and will attempt to distinguish theatre practices from concepts of theatricality. While the former addresses specific artistic strategies, theatricality is a contested term that helps scholars to consider reception, agency and conditions of spectating. Walking through environments (cityscapes, memorial sites or museums) produces distinctive embodied performative registers that inform our understanding of cultural memory and shape relationships between affect and the ethics of commemoration. I will demonstrate how concepts of theatricality and performativity (distinct terms that are frequently collapsed into one another) form a significant methodology in memory studies.

9.30-10.10 **Presentations** (RCMC, Non-Sites of Memory project; texts pre-circulated):

Maria **Kobielska**, *Celebrations at non-sites of memory*

Aleksandra **Szczepan** and Kinga **Siewior**, *Necrocartography: Topographies and topologies of non-sites of memory*

Katarzyna **Grzybowska**, *On the alert for non-sites of memory*

10.10-10.40 Sławomir **Kapralski** (Pedagogical University, Kraków)

I would like to address the topic of how the memory of past events is encoded in a non-verbal manner in societal structure, in gender relations or in the relations between other elements of culture. Does, for instance, the ritual control of women's sexuality and their low position in contemporary Roma societies represent a way of codifying the memory of sexual violence towards Roma women in the Second World War, a subject which is passed over in silence in traditional societies? Or, for example, is the threat to the social boundaries of the Roma people encoded as obsessive control of intra-cultural relations in the area of purity and defilement? So, I would like to consider memory as *mneme* -- the impression remaining from past events in the present which is, however, stored in domains where we would not expect to find memories.

10.40-11.00 Coffee break

PANEL 5: Non-anthropocentric readings of post-violence sites

11.00-11.30 Ewa **Domańska** (Stanford University/Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

Homo, Humus and Unbecoming Human. To investigate a problem of 'unbecoming human' in my talk, I attempt to show how certain insights coming from soil science might have a profound effect on our tendency to view post-genocidal (and post-Holocaust) sites as a cultural and social phenomenon (a 'landscape event'). I claim that understanding humus as the form of a post-human form of life, it might ultimately help us form a better understanding of what it means to be human. I consider how an 'environmental history of the grave' might allow us to problematize cultural approaches to post-genocidal sites and questions of (soil) heritage. I would like to argue that the ecological perspective becomes a necessary and essential element in managing the sites, particularly when it comes to planning their conservation and preservation.

11.30-12.00 **Presentations** (RCMC, Non-Sites of Memory project; texts pre-circulated):

Jacek **Małczyński**, "The Earth is the medium": Geological turn in memory studies

Mikołaj **Smykowski**, Managing memory, managing nature: Towards the environmental memorial of the Shoah

Łukasz **Posłuszny**, Spatiality and materiality of non-sites of memory

12.00-12.30 Zuzanna **Dziuban** (Institute of Culture Studies and Theatre History of the Austrian Academy of Sciences)

I will consider the material travels and affective/symbolic/political economies of a particular type of object stolen from the Holocaust dead by representatives of the non-Jewish local population – gold teeth. This subject is viewed through the conceptual lens of atopic objects. Cutting across empirical and theoretical realms, the paper will consider the dynamics rendering the ties between those objects and the violence through which they originated undone or discernible, and the political/cultural implications of this process, including the understanding of the Holocaust and its aftereffects in Eastern Europe.

12.30-13.30 **Plenary discussion (3):** Non-anthropocentric perspective on non-sites of memory: How does it broaden our research fields? What memorial meanings can be assigned to objects from sites of trauma and different life forms related to them? What new forms of commemoration can appear in a post-anthropocentric era? How to commemorate genocide in the era of ecocide?

Moderators: Karina **Jarzyńska** (Jagiellonian University)

Aleksandra **Janus** (Jagiellonian University)

13.30-14.30 Lunch

Afternoon session

Chair: Tomasz **Łysak** (University of Warsaw)

PANEL 6: The materialities of difficult sites: Art-based research. Artistic interventions, documentations and readings of sites of violence

14.30-15.00 Jacek **Leociak** (Institute of Literary Research, Warsaw, Polish Academy of Science)

I would like to speak about particular areas of the post-ghetto-place in Warsaw, the underground parts, about what is under the surface of streets, squares and the backyards of today's Muranów district. About post-Jewish things and post-Jewish ruins. This is the territory of the Holocaust: 1. uncommemorated and extremely difficult or impossible to commemorate; 2. inaccessible, invisible, hidden/covered from sight, lying beyond the everyday experience of people living in this city here and now; 3. being the only such underground deposit of the Holocaust (the most diverse kinds of artefacts, everyday objects; rubble, ruin: bits of brick, the remains of houses and other building materials; the remains of foundations, cellars, vaults etc.). This would be an attempt to sketch the underground map of a post-ghetto-place, or rather the prequel towards such an undertaking. (In future, this map would include not only the final remains of the ghetto standing on the surface (this kind of map has already been prepared in the cartographic work of Paweł E. Wespiański for the book of Barbara Engelking and myself "The Warsaw Ghetto, A Guide to a Nonexistent Town." [Original: "Getto warszawskie, Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście"], but also what is under the ground — mapped out on the basis of archaeological research using non-invasive methods. This kind of research could ultimately to some kind of commemoration of Muranów's underground — perhaps in the form of an archaeological exposed site in a particular location (perhaps in the vicinity of POLIN) and the creation of a kind of lapidarium of the Holocaust or the Warsaw Ghetto.

15.00-15.30 Artur **Żmijewski** – presentation of project in progress on material remains from Warsaw's ghetto (talk related to the project presented by Jacek **Leociak**)

15.30-16.15 Artists probing non-sites of memory: presentations of works by Karolina **Grzywnowicz** (Second nature, Weeds, Ground records), Anna **Zagrodzka** (Alternaria alternata), Solomon **Nagler** and Angela **Henderson** (from their project Closing on Unrest)

Presentations (RCMC, Non-Sites of Memory project; texts pre-circulated):

Aleksandra **Janus**, Depth of the field: Towards forensic art practice

Roma **Sendyka**, Askance gazing on landscape: Bystanders' art

All artworks deal with the effects that a non-site of memory has on its immediate surroundings – whether it is the ecosystem – the soil, plants, mould – or the society and communities that live nearby.

Discussion with Karolina **Grzywnowicz**, Anna **Zagrodzka**, Katarzyna **Bojarska**

Moderator: Aleksandra **Janus**

16.15-16.30 Coffee break

16.30-17.00 Gaming sites of violence (RCMC, *Non-sites of Memory* project; text pre-circulated):

Tomasz **Majkowski** and Katarzyna **Suszkiewicz** (et al.), *Report from the Educational Experiment in Radecznica*

17.00-18.00 **Plenary discussion (4) – a summation:** What are the key ontological, methodological and ethical dimensions of researching non-sites of memory? Can we learn more about mnemonic processes in Poland and post-violence Eastern Europe and about memory cultures by using the lens of the concept of non-sites of memory? What are the next steps that can take research to non-sites of memory to the next level (comparative, international, global)? Are non-sites of memory useful in a reflective critique of the key concept of the “memory boom”, i.e. Pierre Nora’s “sites of memory”?

Moderators: Roma **Sendyka** (Jagiellonian University)
Jacek **Małczyński** (University of Wrocław)

18.00 **Closing event: buffet**



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