

## I.i.: Introduction: The Holocaust in Contemporary Culture

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### **Dancing on Thin Ice**

Picture the following scene: an ice-skating rink. The lights are dimmed, but a spotlight seeks out a couple in the middle of the ice. Instead of sequins and sparkly spandex, though, both are dressed in concentration camp striped pyjamas, with Stars of David on prominent display. Music begins slowly and haltingly, to only become louder and more powerful. To the strains of the theme tune of the acclaimed Italian film *La vita è bella* (1997), the couple begin to perform a Holocaust-themed ice-dancing revue that features pretend shooting, guard dogs barking and that ends with the sound of machine gun fire. Throughout the performance, both skaters smile broadly. Their emotional dance ends in raucous applause from the spectators, and a perfect score from the ring-side judges.

No. This is not a tasteless imagined scenario. It is a very real performance that featured on the Russian reality show *Ice Age* in November 2016. The skaters were the former Olympic ice-dancer Tatyana Navka and her partner Andrew Burkovsijy – and maybe, just maybe, the performance would not have received quite so much media attention worldwide if Tatyana Navka hadn't happened to be the wife of Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov. Although studio audience and show judges seemed to 'enjoy' the performance – one can only hope that the judgement was based on its athletic and not its ethical value – it received strong condemnation in the international news media.<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Jones, the Director of International Affairs at Australia's Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, considered the performance 'unbelievably tasteless'. In an interview with CNN he condemned 'the lack of thought' behind the performance and predicted that 'long after they're forgotten as ice skaters they'll be remembered as people who sunk to such depths to get some celebrity'.<sup>2</sup> In the run up to the performance, Navka herself had posted images of her upcoming routine on Instagram, urging viewers to witness the performance to remember the Holocaust, and explaining that the film *La vita è bella*, with its devastating use of humour to highlight horror yet still resulting in a message of hope, was her favourite film. But when the show was broadcast, their performance caused a veritable Twitter storm, with viewers giving full rein to their shock and disgust. Some called it 'Tasteless. Insensitive. The Holocaust is not happy entertainment' while others became more personal with comments such as 'you make me

sick'.<sup>3</sup> The performance also had political undertones – presumably due to Navka's proximity to Putin and the Russian government – with viewers contacting Russian embassies worldwide; twitter user @nevilleprinsloo tweeted: '@EmbassyofRussia I want to lodge a complaint of disgust against your government and Tatyana Navka's Holocaust themed ice skating show!!' and demanded that 'Tatyana Navka should be ordered by Putin to make a public apology'.<sup>4</sup> The following article does not offer a detailed discussion, nor indeed a judgement *pro* or *con* Navka and Burkovsjy's hotly-debated performance. Instead, it wants to use the previously created image of the performance that has so divided viewers all over the world as a starting point for a discussion of what *is* and *isn't* considered acceptable in Holocaust representation and commemoration. It seeks to offer an overview of debates of recent trends in Holocaust studies that simultaneously serves as an introduction to this Special Issues that – at its core – addresses the fundamental questions 'Who has the right to represent the Holocaust?' and 'How should the Holocaust be represented to ensure its continued commemoration?'

### **The Holocaust Debate: from Eye-Witness Account to Trauma-Drama**

In 1905, the Spanish philosopher George Santayana coined the well-known phrase 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'<sup>5</sup> Santayana's words came decades before the Holocaust – but have been consistently used to warn of historical amnesia and to emphasise the importance of commemoration. The Holocaust has, since the Second World War, become the most notorious historical event of the twentieth century, and debate about 'correct' and 'incorrect' commemoration of it is rife. Since the liberation of the camps by the Allies at the end of the War and the first war-crimes tribunals, the Holocaust has become the epitome of man's cruelty to his fellow man and, far from being restricted in its commemoration to survivors and their families, commemorating the Holocaust has become a global phenomenon. In 2005, the United Nations officially designated January 27, the Liberation of Auschwitz, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This is, of course, a positive development. Global commemoration of and education about traumatic historical events is vital. However, Holocaust commemoration has also become overtly politicized, with different countries following different agendas in their commemorative practices, and that can be problematic. The novelist Lisa Appignanesi, herself the daughter of two Polish Holocaust survivors, ponders that

Memory is an emotional climate, a thick set of sights and smells and sounds and imprinted attitudes which can pollute as well as clarify. In several parts of the world today, battles of ideas are being fought over how we remember the Second World War. Sometimes the ideas take up arms. In France, people still agonise over degrees of collaboration and complicity, what the immediate post-war years chose to bury along with the dead. The Poles have a festering need to be exonerated from some of their guilt in the Holocaust: they too, after all, were victims of the Nazis. In Israel, the Holocaust has become a holy litany: can its embattled survivors ever do any wrong? In the former Yugoslavia, old remembered enmities between partisans and Cetniks fuelled the ethnic strife. In Germany, many wonder whether bigger and better memorials to guilt are a simple way of shedding it, while neo-Nazi parties once again agitate for a homogenous German population.<sup>6</sup>

Appignanesi succinctly shows how different countries use the Holocaust and its commemoration for their individual agendas that, potentially, overshadows the actual act of commemoration. David Rieff points out that remembrance has become ‘a species of morality’ and that ‘today, most societies all but venerate the imperative to remember’.<sup>7</sup> This suggests that what *has* become imperative is the actual *act* of commemoration, not necessarily *what* is remembered and *how*. In its beginnings, Holocaust commemoration did not even have a name. During and after the liberation of the Camps, the Allies chronicled what they saw and experienced; German residents were marched through the camps to see for themselves what had been done in their name. The earliest form of ‘commemoration’ was to seek justice – the Nuremberg War Crimes tribunal that tried high-ranking Nazis but also doctors, judges and concentration camp guards, for instance. Trials highlighted the facts, the overall and horrific *crimes* against the Jews, but did not allow – yet – for personal stories, the individual account. Early survivor memoirs struggled to find publishers or listeners. The world did not want personal stories, it wanted the larger picture. Elie Wiesel, one of the most prominent Holocaust survivors, who dedicated his life to writing and teaching about the Holocaust, struggled to find a publisher for his memoirs *Un di velt hot geshvign* in 1954. The 800+ page manuscript was eventually picked up by an Argentine publisher but barely sold any copies.<sup>8</sup> It was only in 1958, and with the prominent help of François Mauriac, that Wiesel found a French publisher for the much slimmed down version *La Nuit* which was then eventually published in English as *Night* in 1960. Similarly, Primo Levi’s seminal *Se questo è un uomo*, although first published by a small Italian press in 1947, failed to attract a larger readership. It was only in 1957 that it was picked up and reprinted by the more influential Italian publisher Einaudi, and not before 1959 that an English translation was published.<sup>9</sup> Even at that point, almost fifteen years after the Holocaust, the world was not ready to read

about individual suffering. But the time for personal stories came with the Eichmann trial in 1961 when survivors acted as witnesses for the prosecution and recounted their personal experience in the dock. The Yad Vashem website states that ‘The trial introduced the Holocaust into the historical, educational, legal and cultural discourse, not merely in Israel and the Jewish world, but on the consciousness of all peoples of the world. Sixteen years after the end of the Holocaust, it focused attention upon the account of the suffering and torment of the Jewish people’.<sup>10</sup> After the trial, survivor accounts were highly sought after; Holocaust survivor memoirs were suddenly widely read; authors such as Wiesel and Levi achieved canonical status. With this new focus on the suffering of the victims came the increased use of the term ‘Holocaust’ to denote the genocide of the European Jews. And once a term was attached to it, official commemorations could start, and ‘the Holocaust’ became a collective cultural property, seemingly belonging to all who want to engage with it.

This summary might seem over-simplified. But there are some clearly discernible stages of post-war engagement with the Holocaust: the initial relative silence to focus on healing wounds and rebuild scarred nations throughout the late 40s and 1950s gave way to a wave of individual Holocaust commemoration and, linked to that, a revolt of the younger generation to find out about their parents’ and grandparents’ culpability in the crimes committed during the Holocaust in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>11</sup> ‘The Holocaust’ became more visible: the US mini-series *Holocaust* of 1978, for instance, brought the Holocaust into the living rooms of ordinary citizens all over the world, and while it was an important moment for raising increased historical awareness of the events of the Shoah, it was also the first foray into a dubious ‘Holocaust entertainment’, the appropriation of historical trauma for financial gain and viewing figures of a worldwide TV audience.<sup>12</sup> Since the late 1980s, the Holocaust has been everywhere: on the small and on the big screen; in school curricula; on university syllabi; on ever-elaborate memorials and museums specifically dedicated to it.<sup>13</sup> Most of this has, of course, to be seen as a beneficial development: it *is* important that we learn about the past; that we remember it. But, increasingly, question marks have been raised by cultural commentators about the *how* of this commemoration and its political connotations. There is a proliferation of Holocaust representations in contemporary society – but for Jeffrey C. Alexander this leads to a problematic universalization of the Holocaust. In his view, the ‘originating historical event ... has come ... to be redefined as a traumatic event for all of humankind’.<sup>14</sup> This indicates that the Holocaust is no longer considered a specific tragedy that happened to real people, but that it is increasingly being used as a metaphor, as a fixed image to connote general rather than specific trauma. For the Israeli sociologist Ronit Lentin,

the terms Auschwitz, Holocaust and Shoah ‘are all ... euphemisms, standing for something one does not want to hear mentioned’.<sup>15</sup> They act as a protective screen: mentioning specific terms has almost become a tick-box exercise, suggesting a historical knowledge that, however, does not go beyond clichés and that is limited to basic facts. Most people merely have a *vague* idea of the Holocaust as a historical event with unimaginable human suffering – but lack the specific knowledge about what exactly happened, and, importantly, what led to it in the first place. And the majority of people are unwilling to dig deeper. The Holocaust frightens us – as it needs us to critically and meaningfully engage with it, rather than at a superficial level. For Alexander, the term ‘Holocaust’ has become ‘the social creation of a cultural fact’ which, in turn, affects ‘social and moral life’.<sup>16</sup> He suggests that the creation of a collective memory of the Holocaust has come at the expense of historical completeness. In his words, ‘in the course of constructing and broadcasting the tragic narrative of the Holocaust, a handful of actual dramatizations – in books, movies, plays, and television shows – played critically important roles’.<sup>17</sup> What Alexander refers to as the ‘trauma drama’<sup>18</sup> suggests that a certain Holocaust narrative has been sanctioned and, consequently, been developed into the predominant meta-narrative of the Holocaust: one that is victim-focused and that allows readers and viewers to unquestionably identify with the suffering of the victims without considering the origins of Fascism and the political events that led to the Final Solution. Appignanesi similarly elaborates that ‘those concrete blocks of memory we call museums package the experience of the Holocaust so that everyone becomes a survivor’.<sup>19</sup> This, effectively, leads to a one-sided historical representation of events, one that uses by now easily recognisable visual markers of the Holocaust: striped uniforms; the Star of David; train tracks; the *Arbeit macht frei* entrance gate to Auschwitz; the wooden barracks of Birkenau; smoking chimneys. In article I.ii of this special issue, Anna Clare Hunter picks up on this notion of a Holocaust metanarrative that, in her estimation, ‘acts as a screen between the cultural imagination and the damaging effects of the Holocaust’. Focusing on the victim, giving a voice to the stories of the millions who did not survive to recount it themselves, is, of course, a vital part of Holocaust commemoration that must never be lost or silenced. But ritualizing a continuous re-enactment of trauma essentially devalues it. It also avoids critical engagement with the perpetrators and leads to an over-simplified distinction into ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ and an avoidance of Levi’s ‘Grey Zone’ of multi-layered innocence as well as multi-layered guilt. For Hunter, the crucial question is how to maintain but, crucially, also how to nurture the cultural memory of the Holocaust – and this is Special Issue aims to contribute to this overarching question by offering assessments of new and often

challenging forms of Holocaust commemoration that deviate from a sanctioned metanarrative of Holocaust suffering and offer, instead, alternative viewpoints and perspectives.

### **New Directions in Holocaust Writing**

The Holocaust scholar Saul Friedlander astutely links contemporary debates about adequate and respectful Holocaust representation to the rise of postmodernism. On the one hand, there is the historical and irrefutable fact of the Holocaust. On the other is postmodernism with its challenge to the very notion of one over-riding truth or 'story'. For Friedlander, 'it is precisely the "Final Solution" which allows postmodernist thinking to question the validity of any totalizing view of history, of any reference to a definable metadiscourse'.<sup>20</sup> There are deep and seemingly unbridgeable divides between advocates of one form of Holocaust commemoration over another that Friedlander's work openly addresses. On the one side are the purists: those critics, writers and thinkers, but also survivors, who say that the Holocaust fundamentally cannot and should not be represented outside of factual historical accounts. Elie Wiesel, for instance, considered the Holocaust a subject unlike 'all the others. It imposes certain limits. There are techniques that one may not use, even if they are commercially effective. In order not to betray the dead and humiliate the living, this particular subject demands a special sensibility, a different approach, a rigor strengthened by respect and reverence and, above all, faithfulness to memory.'<sup>21</sup> For Wiesel, paradoxically for a writer and teacher, silence was best-suited to preserve the memory of those who had died.<sup>22</sup> For others, notably the Holocaust scholar Berel Lang, the Holocaust should only ever be represented in factual form, without an accompanying narrative.<sup>23</sup> It is those silences, those 'unspoken' truths that have become part of the Holocaust metanarrative outlined above – the one where referring to certain images has replaced talking about facts in more and, inevitably, painful detail. Although Wiesel's work has rightly been canonized and in spite of its unquestionable status as invaluable survivor testimony, the 'certain limits' he refers to – and that he undoubtedly adhered to himself in his writing – have helped delineate what is and what is not considered appropriate to write about in Holocaust commemoration; the fear of doing / saying / representing something that could be misconstrued, that could be deemed unethical. On the other side of the divide stand critics such as Roger Luckhurst who pertinently wonders whether 'the right to speak of trauma' 'can or should' be limited, but also Friedlander himself.<sup>24</sup> For him, challenging a metanarrative of the Holocaust opens 'the way for a multiplicity of equally valid approaches'.<sup>25</sup> Not just one sanctioned metanarrative, but countless and diverse, personal narratives from different perspectives. It is these

multifarious stories, voices and approaches that ultimately allow for a more rounded picture of the Holocaust. Importantly, contemporary trauma writing, as Anne Whitehead has pointed out, ‘has shifted attention away from the question of what is remembered of the past to how and why it is remembered’.<sup>26</sup> Whitehead acknowledges the dictum of Wiesel, Steiner, Lang and others that the Holocaust is essentially unrepresentable but counters this with the assertion that contemporary Holocaust writing is ‘committed to exploring new modes of referentiality’.<sup>27</sup> Over seven decades after the events of the Holocaust, new modes of representation are needed to stop Holocaust memory from solidifying and becoming static; only if it is kept alive can it keep its message and its relevance to contemporary society.

It is, in particular, Holocaust fiction that has opened the door to widening participation in the creation of Holocaust memory and commemoration. Eyed with suspicion by some for its very fictionality that appears ‘tantamount to making a fiction of the Holocaust’, it seems particularly suitable for ‘problematising the relationship between past and present’.<sup>28</sup> It can (re)create stories from the past; it can pitch them against contemporary concerns; but it can also creatively assess the very motivation behind why we commemorate what. In Rachel Seiffert’s novel *The Dark Room* of 2002, for instance, the contemporary protagonist Micha angrily ponders contemporary commemorative practices: ‘*Every year it’s the fucking same. The students read survivors’ accounts. Everyone cries these ‘we didn’t do it’ tears. Then the essays get marked, the displays are packed away, and we move right on with the next project.*’<sup>29</sup> Micha’s diatribe highlights the quandary in a contemporary Holocaust commemoration that has become ritualized but that has, through this very process, lost much of its meaning. Students are made to read; made to feel something; made to write an assignment about their experience. Then a box has been ticked – and the next item on the curriculum has to be covered. This mechanical way to ‘commemorate’ merely pays lip service to the collective act of remembering and only results in acquiring basic facts. It ultimately lacks the critical and continuous engagement that is necessary to meaningfully engage with the past. For Micha, a grandchild of the perpetrator generation, it also highlights another problem: ‘*... it’s perverse ... They identify with the survivors, with the victims. ... Those are the words they are taught. Those are the words they cry about. ... they should cry. But they should cry that we did this. We did this, it wasn’t done to us.*’<sup>30</sup> Micha realises that the only way to counter this institutionalised metanarrative of the Holocaust is to find his own story: to investigate what his grandfather did during the War, to unearth a story particularly painful and potentially divisive for his family – but in the process, to add to the polyphony of voices that are painting a bigger picture of the Holocaust.

Holocaust Fiction is thus moving away from the sanctioned narrative of what Gillian Rose provocatively terms ‘Holocaust piety’.<sup>31</sup> Recent years have seen the publication of works that seem to contradict if not challenge the traditional Holocaust narratives outlined in this introduction and in Hunter’s article on Holocaust metanarrative: Holocaust comedies; Holocaust perpetrator fiction; Holocaust fiction that openly questions the relationship between history and memory, history and narrative. It is important to highlight that these are not acts of commemorative sabotage. These works do not question the Holocaust, nor do they doubt the importance of remembering. What they *do* challenge is an over-simplified, ritualized, unreflective act of remembering merely for the sake of remembering. What these works of literature seek to do is to find new and meaningful ways of engagement with the past that make their readers think and reflect. The second and largest part of this special issue is thus dedicated to ‘Recent trends in Holocaust fiction’. Christopher Madden’s discussion of a seemingly incongruously Holocaust humour offers a thoughtful assessment of Howard Jacobson’s *Kalooki Nights* (first published 2006) and Shalom Auslander’s *Hope: A Tragedy* (first published 2011) alongside Woody Allen’s film *Crimes and Misdemeanours* of 1989. Madden poignantly states that ‘history is being increasingly absorbed into acts of imagination’ but that the texts he discusses offer an ‘affective response to traumatic history’ that, importantly ‘resist[s] full identification with the experience of the victim[s]’. Holocaust humour seems to resist all the conventions commonly associated with Holocaust writing – but ultimately offers new perspectives and insights. For Audrey Bardizbanian, writing on Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Everything is Illuminated* of 2002, it is ‘a haunting sense of emptiness that needs to be filled’ that lies at the heart of our quest for history. In the case of the Holocaust, this ‘emptiness’ is the literal void that has been left by the deaths of over six million murdered Jews and by the eradication of the East European Jewish *Shtetl* culture, suitably highlighted by Foer through the complete destruction of the village of Trachimbrod. Bardizbanian’s discussion focuses on the ‘silence’ many Holocaust commentators advocate in lieu of extended Holocaust narratives but she convincingly relates these silences to ‘affect’, as ‘something that literally cannot be articulated, cannot be said’. For her, it is ‘only literature [that] can “phrase” the unspeakable’ and so contribute to a different understanding of the unimaginable events of the Shoah.

With Zuzana Burakova’s analysis of Markus Zusak’s 2005 novel *The Book Thief* the discussion moves into the realm of Holocaust perpetrator fiction. A relatively recent genre that divides the critics, prominent examples of Holocaust perpetrator fiction include Bernhard Schlink’s *The Reader* (first published in Germany in 1995, with a first English translation in



1997), Hubert Mingarelli's *A Meal in Winter* (first published in its French original in 2012, with an English translation following in 2013) and, in particular, Jonathan Littell's hugely controversial *Les Bienveillantes* (2006), published in English as *The Kindly Ones* in 2009. Burakova's article starts with a brief discussion of *Everything is Illuminated*, continuing on from Bardizbanian's assessment of the novel, and arguing that, in Foer's novel, the grandfather 'becomes a perpetrator and a witness to a perpetration which haunts him throughout his life until he commits suicide', highlighting once again Levi's Grey Zone and the fact that the perpetrator can, ultimately, also become a victim of the very trauma he himself has afflicted on somebody else. Perpetrator fiction does not aim to exonerate or exculpate the perpetrator, but to show that things are, maybe, not simply black or white but grey, murky, complex and confusing instead. My own discussion of Laurent Binet's novel *HHhH* (2010; 2012) in article II.iv further develops the theme of Holocaust perpetration but also highlights the problems faced by history writing and, in contrast, historical fiction. Taking its cue from Linda Hutcheon's idea of 'postmodern historiographical metafiction', I argue that Binet effectively creates something that could be labelled 'postmodern historiographical metafiction', a 'factual narrative fictionally elaborated but aware of its own processes in constructing the narrative and establishing and verifying the very "facts" it is based on'.

Sue Vice, in article II.v, picks up on the idea of Auschwitz as a metaphor for the totality of the Holocaust which, she argues, goes back to Adorno's often quoted maxim 'No poetry after Auschwitz' that 'uses the name of the camp to stand in for the experience of genocide as a whole'. By contrast, Vice's discussion focuses on 'the Holocaust by Bullets', the cruel and brutal face-to-face mass shootings of Jewish civilians by the infamous *Einsatzgruppen* along the Eastern Front. Vice argues that 'the forms of representation with which we are familiar in relation to other kinds of Holocaust experience are either unlikely or impossible where these mass shootings are concerned'. For Vice, the cultural representation of the *Einsatzgruppen* murders is again symbolised by a void – the lack of survivors from those shootings means that eyewitness reports are few and far between – but that, increasingly, imaginative engagement with these horrific events is shedding new and important light on them. The final article in this section on Holocaust Literature is Kirsten Grimstad's masterful essay bringing together W.G. Sebald's evocative and genre-defying writing that has the Holocaust as its usually unspoken but ever-present backdrop with the Activist Memory work of Gunter Demnig's worldwide *Stolperstein* project and local memory works in Berlin. For Grimstad, 'these methods of literary, public art, and activist memory work actively repudiate the

repression, silence, and forgetting of the previous, complicit generation, while beginning to fill the emptiness with the narratives of the lost people who return from oblivion to memory with their names and stories’.

This memory work in Berlin is further developed in Caroline Pearce’s article that opens the third section of this special issue, dedicated to ‘The Holocaust in Contemporary Culture’. Her work focuses on the ‘unwanted’ victims of the Holocaust, the ones that are only very slowly and seemingly reluctantly finding representation in the official and sanctioned Holocaust history narrative: the victims of Nazi euthanasia. She outlines the painful process of getting official recognition for the victims through a dedicated monument in the German capital that, however, never achieved the same kind of publicity as Peter Eisenman’s much bigger and more-widely visited Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Dominic Williams, in Article III.ii leaves formal Holocaust remembrance and commemoration behind and moves into the realm of virtual reality and ‘entertainment’. His article assesses the impact of games such as *Wolfenstein 3D* (1992) and *Sonderkommando Revolt* (2010) that have been judged ‘offensive portrayal[s]’ of the Holocaust, before offering a discussion of the 2001 film *The Grey Zone* (2001) and the 2009 comic *Magneto: Testament*. Williams here offers a clear ‘dichotomy between a perceived work of high art and a product of mass culture’ with the ‘implication that only high art can deal with traumatic subjects’. Both *The Grey Zone* and *Magneto: Testament* focus on the Sonderkommando, Jewish slave labourers in the gas chambers and crematoria, that has posed a not inconsiderable challenge to Holocaust presentation and has, as yet, remained largely unrepresented. As Williams cleverly demonstrates, both film and comic ‘build unrepresentability into their narratives’ and ‘make their testimonies fairly straightforward pieces of reporting’. The issue of popular Holocaust ‘representation’ and reporting, coupled with the ethics of representation, is the focus of attention in Gemma Commane and Rebekah Poton’s pertinent and very timely piece on ‘Instagram and Auschwitz’. In January 2017, the German-Israeli artist Shahak Shapira published his YOLOCAUST project on his social media sites. In it, he combined tourist selfies taken at the Holocaust memorial in Berlin with iconic images from the concentration camps. The result is a series of hard-hitting images that highlight the, at best, unthinking, at worst disrespectful attitude of tourists who take selfies for self-publicising reasons without thinking about *where* exactly they are taking them and what that site represents.<sup>32</sup> Commane and Poton start their article by asking the same questions that frame this special issue: ‘who can talk about the Holocaust?’ ‘How should it be discussed?’ The Instagram images they discuss clash with the ‘official narrative [of Holocaust commemoration] that is sanctioned

and respectful’ and that are ‘universally adhered to’. In their assessment, ‘taking selfies in sites of trauma highlights the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private’: pictures largely taken for private consumption become, through uploading them on a public platform such as Instagram and equipping them with the eponymous hashtag, public property, visible to all and sundry, and open to comments, likes and further public sharing. While this might be problematic, Commane and Poton also point out that it ‘allows more voices to be present in discussions of the Holocaust’. Although their investigation revealed many unethical and downright racist images and hashtags, they also discovered that the majority of them contribute respectfully to ongoing debates, thereby adding to a ‘moving and affective dialogue’ that keeps Holocaust commemoration both alive and addressing a new generation that might otherwise engage less with the official and sanctioned Holocaust discourse. The final article in the issue is Claire Griffith’s creative attempt to come to terms with her own experiences of visiting Auschwitz. The terms ‘ethical’ and ‘accurate’ feature prominently in Griffith’s account of her many visits to Auschwitz during which she sought to assess the official tone and content of the guided tour. She comes to the troubling conclusion that the guided Auschwitz tour, with its emphasis on ‘the few, most “narratable” stories’, inevitably leads to a ‘standardised tour narrative, lacking in variation and unreflective of the complexities of the concentrationary universe’. Griffiths concludes on a hopeful note, though – that Holocaust tourism scholarship does not merely wish to critique, but to ‘identify and analyse ethical issues connected to the use of guided experiences’ and ‘by helping to devise less problematic representational models’.

The issue does not end on a neat conclusion. Holocaust commemoration in contemporary society, it seeks to show, is constantly moving, changing and evolving – and rightly so. It is slowly moving away from an over-arching, sanctioned metanarrative – though this still, of course, exists. More recent Holocaust memory work – be it in literature, in art, in community work, in official commemoration, in film, but also in private commemorative acts – has become more critical, more reflective on *why* it is important to remember, on *how* the Holocaust happened in the first place. The victims must never be forgotten. But in order to look to the future, to keep Holocaust commemoration alive for future generations, engagement has to move away from a single narrative perspective and offer alternative accounts and perspectives – provided they are grounded in fact or based on respectful research. In the conclusion to the issue I will be looking ahead and assess an alternative mode of Holocaust commemoration via an interview with the traditional drut’syla Shonaleigh. Shonaleigh tells Yiddish stories that long precede the Holocaust. But persecution of the Jews

was not a new invention of the Nazis. And so Shonaleigh's stories reflect century-old prejudice against and active persecution of the Jews that, with historical hindsight, gain in meaning but also provide food for future thought. They give voices to the voiceless; they allow fears to be addressed; fortunes to be reversed. In her own words, her stories 'resonate, they are ways of dealing with the unbearable because they are in a story'. In our contemporary society of 'post truths', 'alternative truths' and 'fake news' this is more pertinent than ever.

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- <sup>4</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/putin-ally-dmitry-peskov-holocaust-ice-skating-concentration-camp-tatiana-navka-a7442121.html>.
- <sup>5</sup> Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 284.
- <sup>6</sup> Appignanesi, *Losing the Dead*, 6-7.
- <sup>7</sup> Rieff, 'The Cult of Memory', n.p.
- <sup>8</sup> See <https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/publications/night.pdf>.
- <sup>9</sup> Levi, 'Afterword', 381.
- <sup>10</sup> [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/eichmann/awareness\\_of\\_the\\_holocaust.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/eichmann/awareness_of_the_holocaust.asp).
- <sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', pp. 235ff.
- <sup>12</sup> See Bos, *German-Jewish Literature*.
- <sup>13</sup> See, for instance, Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*.
- <sup>14</sup> Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', 197.
- <sup>15</sup> Lentin, *Re-Presenting the Shoah for the Twenty-First Century*, 6.
- <sup>16</sup> Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', 197.
- <sup>17</sup> Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', 229.
- <sup>18</sup> Alexander, 'On the Social Construction of Moral Universals', 229.
- <sup>19</sup> Appignanesi, *Losing the Dead*, 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Friedlander, 'Introduction', 5.
- <sup>21</sup> Wiesel, 'Art and the Holocaust', n.p.
- <sup>22</sup> See Wiesel, *Against Silence*, 119.
- <sup>23</sup> Lang, 'Is it possible to misrepresent the Holocaust?'. See also Chp. II.iv of this issue.
- <sup>24</sup> Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, 3.
- <sup>25</sup> Friedlander, 'Introduction', 5.
- <sup>26</sup> Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, 3.
- <sup>27</sup> Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, 83.
- <sup>28</sup> Vice, *Holocaust Fiction*, 1; King, 'We Come After', 94.
- <sup>29</sup> Seiffert, *The Dark Room*, 288.
- <sup>30</sup> Seiffert, *The Dark Room*, 288-9.
- <sup>31</sup> Rose, 'Beginning of the Day', 43.
- <sup>32</sup> See <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-german-artist-shames-holocaust-memorial-selfies/>.