

Holocaust Intersections in 21st-Century Europe: An Introduction

by Robert S. C. Gordon, Emiliano Perra

Two vignettes of contemporary memory politics, from the beginning and the end of the very recent period of cultural history that interests us, help to set out in the first part of this Introduction some coordinates for the field of transversal intersections which permeate 21st-century Holocaust legacies and which this special issue of *Quest* sets out to explore. The first vignette focusses on a strange conjunction at the turn of the millennium between two museum projects, one of them at least obliquely Holocaust-related, both forced to negotiate across fraught trans-communal cultural divides and to relate difficult parallel, convergent and divergent histories. The second picks out an instant, a transient flashpoint from the rolling news media of summer 2016, at which the sites, values and language of Holocaust memory were used to confront, in awkward but powerful ways, immediately contemporary anxieties and atrocities. Following these, the Introduction will move on to address the larger field of intersection between the terms, usages and scholarship of the Holocaust and genocide, including its often problematic aspects. Its aim is to set the stage and provide a framework for the six ‘intersectional’ essays that follow.

Wellington–Berlin

The museum Te Papa Tongarewa or ‘Container of Treasures’ in Māori, better known simply as Te Papa, was inaugurated in February 1998 in Wellington, New Zealand.¹ This remarkable turn-of-the-millennium, post-colonial centre for New Zealand’s (or rather Aeteroa New Zealand’s) national history, culture and art was conceived during the 1990s, following decades of reflection and debate, in order to rehouse and revitalize a series of tired Victorian and post-Victorian museums

¹ Information on Te Papa, on which this paragraph draws, is to be found at: <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz> and in particular <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/what-we-do/our-history> (this and all websites consulted 1 September 2016). See also William J. Tramosch “Te Papa: Reinventing the Museum,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 17/4 (1998): 339-350.

in Wellington (variously known since 1865 as the Colonial Museum, the Dominion Museum and the National Museum). Te Papa has been a remarkable 21st-century success story, both in museological terms and in its ambitious aim to crystallize a new, 'bicultural' vision and diverse national identity for New Zealand, equally attentive to, on the one hand, the Māori or indigenous Polynesian peoples on the islands and, on the other, the Western people, principally the British, who had established a right to settlement there with the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840.² Te Papa was careful not only to give equal space to its bicultural constituents and their shared histories of conflict and incomprehension, violence and oppression; it also shaped each part of the parallel museum narrative in ways that were sensitive to the different conceptions of memory, storytelling, the historical record and the past itself as practised by each of its constituent communities and their cultures. This near-impossible bicultural balancing act seems to have worked: by 2001, the museum had already drawn 5 million visitors and by 2015, 25 million.

Meanwhile, in Berlin between 1997 and 2001, another near-impossible 'bicultural' museum project, also addressing a tense and conflictual multi-ethnic national history and memory, one also conceived during the 1990s following decades of debate, was running into serious civic, political and conceptual-artistic trouble.³ Daniel Libeskind's shattering design for an extension to the Berlin Museum, intended originally to accommodate collections for a new Jewish Museum department, had been selected from competition in June 1989. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall months later and the imminent reunification of Germany and of Berlin, however, caught up in a whirlwind of fierce debate about the new Germany's commemoration of the Holocaust (focussed also on other Berlin sites such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and the so-called 'Topography of Terror'), Libeskind's design and the

² On this key notion of 'biculturalism,' see Tramposch, and also Kenneth Gorbey, "The Challenge of Creating a Bicultural Museum," *Museum Anthropology* 15/4 (1991): 7-8 (and for more on Gorbey, see below).

³ On the history of the Jewish Museum Berlin project, there is useful summary information at: http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/Pdfs-en/About-the-Museum/History_Museum/Museumsgeschichte_EN.pdf. There is also a large critical and analytical literature on the museum: see, for example, Ezra Akcan, "Apology and Triumph: Memory Transference, Erasure, and a Rereading of the Berlin Jewish Museum," *New German Critique* 37:/2 (2010) 153-179; Peter Chametzky, 'Not What We Expected: the Jewish Museum Berlin in Practice,' *Museums and Society* 6/3 (2008): 216-245; Amy Sodaro, "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26/1 (2013): 77-91; James Young, 'Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin: the Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture,' *Jewish Social Studies* 6/2 (2000): 1-23.

elegant original baroque building of the Berlin Museum alongside it could not contain their own bicultural tensions, its so-called ‘integrative concept’ between a city history museum on the one hand and a Holocaust museum and memorial on the other, was on the brink of collapse, the sheer traumatic force of the latter purpose increasingly coming to crush the former.⁴ Following a series of resignations and the appointment in 1997 of a dynamic German-American, Michael Blumenthal, as the new director, radical steps were taken to resolve the conflict, leading to a general reconceptualization of the project as a German-Jewish history museum. The redesigned museum was to take a purview of over two millennia of German-Jewish relations, from Roman times to Enlightenment flourishing to post-Holocaust community revival, the whole fractured both architectonically and museologically by Libeskind’s shards and disorienting spaces, marking the Holocaust as a traumatic and ever-present wound.⁵ And one of Blumenthal’s most controversial and decisive moves, to signal a break with the introverted anxieties and cultural politics surrounding local and national Holocaust memory practices cemented over the postwar era, and aimed to galvanize the museum’s practical move to completion, was his appointment in October 1999, as exhibition project director, of Kenneth Gorbey, anthropologist and museum designer, and one of the leading figures behind Te Papa.⁶ The museum opened in 2001 and has since become a key stop on the itinerary of Holocaust tourism and memory, and of modern architecture, in contemporary Berlin.

⁴ Comparable tensions, debates and solutions have been aired in the more recent case of the Warsaw museum, Polin, Museum of the History of Polish Jews, opened in 2013. See the account by the director of the museum project there: Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Inside the Museum: Curating Between Hope and Despair: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 45/2-3 (2015): 215-235.

⁵ On the interactions between the architecture and the exhibits, see Susannah Reid “The Jewish Museum Berlin. A Review,” *Virtual Library Museums* (2001), <http://www.historisches-centrum.de/aus-rez/reid01-1.htm>.

⁶ As he had done in Wellington, Gorbey worked together with Nigel Cox on the project.

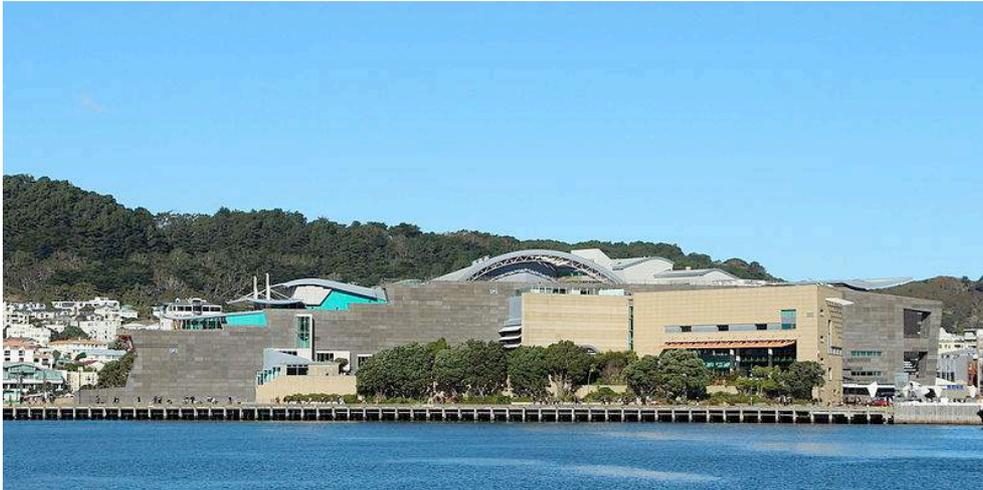


Fig. 1: Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

By Michal Klajban (Own work), via Wikimedia Commons (<https://goo.gl/77qR6d>)



Fig. 2: Jüdisches Museum, Berlin.

By Studio Daniel Libeskind (Architecture New Building); Guenter Schneider (photography), via Wikimedia Commons (<https://goo.gl/ojOOgK>)

The strange conjunction between Te Papa and the Jüdisches Museum Berlin [Fig. 1 and 2], by way of Kenneth Gorbey, is a minor but revealing one. It by no means constitutes a complete nor even a dominant key for understanding and interpreting the Berlin project, with all that building means for contemporary Europe's Holocaust legacy; it nevertheless serves as a powerful symptom of how

complex, how transversal and how layered the conceptual and practical dynamics of that legacy have become, set also against the wider context of contemporary global (and globalized) museology. Blumenthal's turn to Gorbey meant stepping dramatically beyond the close community of first- and second-hand witnesses, of first-, second- or indeed third-generation participant historians and memorializers who inevitably (and rightly) dominated postwar Holocaust discourse in Germany. Gorbey was not Jewish, spoke no German, was not European; and his appointment was roundly criticized at the time as that of a 'Disneyfyer,' a popularizer and simplifier of complex histories.⁷ But the success of his project since its opening, as with Te Papa, and some of his own reflections on his work on it, suggest that this unpredictable turn produced (or was produced by) some powerful lines of convergence and connection within contemporary Holocaust traces in our culture.

We can point briefly to four such lines of intersection: first and most evidently, the Wellington-Berlin link suggests an overlap between post-colonial history and memory, and Holocaust (and other post-genocide) memories. This is a thread that has emerged powerfully in 21st-century critical debate on Holocaust culture, in the work of Rothberg and Cheyette among others,⁸ with analyses concentrating particularly on post-war French colonial politics or civil rights politics and literature, but which, significantly, has become a key focus of debate only recently, a symptom of 21st-century intersectionality as much as of mid-20th-century identity politics. In a comparable fashion, we might note, historiographical and memorial links have come to the fore in Italian memories of and recent scholarship on Fascism's African colonialism and racism as a context for understanding its anti-Semitism. Loose but operative macro-historical analogies link European empire and the Holocaust.⁹ And, we might note in passing, the very looseness of the analogy marks the way in which the Holocaust can be intersectional in contemporary culture, precisely because it has become a pervading superficial presence, a metaphor for any and every form of extreme violence and ideology, if not for evil per se.¹⁰

⁷ See discussion in Reid.

⁸ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁹ For an interesting discussion, see Max Silverman, "Interconnected Histories: Holocaust and Empire in the Cultural Imaginary," *French Studies* 62/4 (2008): 417-428.

¹⁰ On these metaphors in the Italian case, see Robert S. C. Gordon, "Shared Knowledge" in *The Holocaust in Italian Culture, 1944-2010*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 109-138.

Secondly, and closely related to the first, Te Papa's biculturalism and Gorbey's adapted form of an 'integrative concept' for the Jewish museum space – the move from a planned Berlin museum with a Jewish extension, to an integrated 'Berlin + Jewish' museum, to a German-Jewish museum through which to view and understand both German history and Jewish history (and Holocaust history)¹¹ – speaks to a wider politics of diversity and multiculturalism of the contemporary first world (Europe, but also New Zealand), with all the negotiations of similarity and difference that this brings. Researchers such as Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, and Annette Seidel–Arpaci have explored comparable dynamics in the ways in which contemporary immigrant, such as Muslim communities in Germany (before the new influxes of 2015), have been educated into a German Holocaust memory culture.¹²

Thirdly, Gorbey was keenly attentive to the intersection of aesthetics, in this case of Libeskind's architecture, and the historiography and pedagogy of the exhibition project, and also the works of art deployed within the historical displays, a key and distinctive element also of Te Papa. He wrote in a 2007 lecture of the need to overcome the impulse to treat Libeskind's work as an obstacle to visitor experience, to pedagogy and also to the integration of (other) works of art into the information space: "the architecture helps achieve the public good by offering new and unique programmatic opportunities, perhaps not available in other museums, by the alliance of programme and architectural language and space;" and further on, "Libeskind's architecture was a major catalyst in leading the Museum toward exploring art as a vehicle to bring complex emotion to play in the exhibitry."¹³

Fourthly and finally, after the completion of the project, Gorbey reflected on how forms of writing and literature had been a key intersectional influence on his thinking about the visitor experience and the subjective interactions s/he might have with the museum's spaces and exhibits. In particular, he noted the impact of reading Primo Levi's Holocaust testimony, in a 2013 lecture entitled

¹¹ These shifts in concept and design are discussed in detail in Reid, Sodaro and others.

¹² Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, "Memory Citizenship: Migrant Archives of Holocaust Remembrance in Contemporary Germany," *Parallax* 17/4 (2011): 32-48; Annette Seidel–Arpaci, "Swept Under the Rug: Homegrown Antisemitism and Migrants as 'Obstacles' in German Holocaust Remembrance" in *Migration, Memory, and Diversity Germany from 1945 to the Present*, ed. Cornelia Wilhelm, (New York: Berghahn, 2016) [forthcoming].

¹³ Kenneth Gorbey, "Landmark Architecture Serves Museums. The Example of the Jewish Museum Berlin," (Auckland, March 2007), available at: http://www.museumsaotearoa.org.nz/sites/default/files/conferences/MAo6-MA10/ken_gorbey_ma_2007_conference_paper.pdf.

“How Primo Levi Helped Plan a Museum in Berlin.”¹⁴ Gorbey talked there of a series of intuitions and insights he gleaned from his reading of Levi which then informed his work on the museum: these included a sense of a moral humanism in his/our eye onto history, but one that is fluid, uncertain, not set in stone, and accompanied by a strong sense of voice and persona. This was in other words an ethical approach to the encounter in the museum space and gave a fluid narrative frame to Gorbey’s exhibition planning. A guiding aim, as he puts it, was to find a ‘persona of the place.’ In drawing on Levi and imaginatively, conceptually and pragmatically translating his voice and insight into the informational and experiential content of the Jewish Museum Berlin, Gorbey reflects not only as a distant immigrant into the culture of Holocaust remembrance but also as a vehicle of more subtle intersections between text, museum and memory.

The convergences between Te Papa and the Jewish Museum Berlin, then, are multiple if not necessarily all concrete and substantial: they suggest a dynamic field of multiply overlapping intersections in contemporary Holocaust culture, between post-colonial and post-war histories, between bi- and multi-cultural identity practices, between aesthetics and pedagogy as well as historiographical museology, literature and testimony, as though this layered complexity were of the very essence of ‘late’ Holocaust memorialization.

Auschwitz–St Étienne du Rouvray

The Jewish Museum Berlin was inaugurated on 9 September 2001, two days before the Al-Qaeda assaults on New York and Washington, DC. Holocaust memory, among myriad other settled cultural and geopolitical equilibria, were deeply shaken by 9/11 and its spiraling and on-going global consequences, and these continue to act as a primary point of intersection and framing for 21st century Holocaust discourse, up to and including the present day.¹⁵

In late July 2016, Pope Francis undertook his first solemn visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, following his participation in Catholic ‘World Youth Day,’ a mass gathering taking place in nearby Kraków. During his visit to the Lager complex, Pope Francis met some ageing survivors and rescuers, meditated in the cell of the Franciscan victim and Holocaust martyr Maximilian Kolbe, and wrote moving

¹⁴ We draw here on lecture notes kindly provided by the author.

¹⁵ One example of many is found in the opening and closing images of the documentary *La strada di Levi / Primo Levi’s Journey*, (dir. Davide Ferrario, 2006). For an ‘intersectional’ reading of this film, see *Holocaust Intersections. Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millennium*, eds. Axel Bangert, Robert S. C. Gordon and Libby Saxton (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), 10-15.

reflections in the visitors' book; but the most notable aspect for the Vatican press corps and accompanying global media, was the Pope's silence: in the face of this symbolic site of the genocide, his act of witness was to remain wordless, not to be drawn into the tangle of discourse surrounding the Holocaust and its now-long legacy, a complex and contradictory legacy not least for the Catholic Church and for Poland.

It was a characteristically contrarian and also sensitive response by this Pope, one in contrast to visits by his predecessors Benedict XIV in 2006 and, most importantly, John Paul II in 1979, shortly after his epoch-marking election to the papacy in 1978. John Paul's visit to his native Poland, including his visit to Auschwitz, was surrounded by a swirl of passionate acclaim, fierce criticism and vast media attention. The contrast with Francis at first glance might suggest that the Holocaust and its commemoration might be in the process of undergoing an attenuation or a fading in the 21st century from its peak of public presence and discourse in Europe in the later years of the previous century, a withdrawal into a zone of private moral meditation and respectful distance, somewhat sealed off from the hard geo-political, historical and socio-cultural controversies that surrounded it and intersected it in 1979, and continued to do so across Western and Eastern Europe at least up until the turn of the millennium.

And yet, Francis's silence by no means told the whole story. His literal silence in many ways stood less for withdrawal and introspection than for a shift towards new modes of encounter and intersection between the Holocaust, as history and memory, and the many layers and pressure points of contemporary culture and politics. Auschwitz, and the Shoah more broadly, still stands at the heart of Europe's contemporary reality and poses questions, even if answered in meditative silence, to its deepest sense of present identity and values, and its anxieties over both of these.

The director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau site, Piotr Cywiński, was quoted in the press commenting on this very convergence with present-day problems on the day of the papal visit:

[The world] is increasingly internally divided, threatened with terrorism and deterioration of human rights. It is a world where human solidarity is slowly being worn down. If 15 years ago someone had told us that we would so hysterically react to aiding refugees from war-torn territories, I would never have believed it. This is a world which is desperately in need of a wise message, of being reminded of the

fundamental human truths. Auschwitz and the tragedy of the Holocaust sensitize us acutely to these issues.¹⁶

Cywiński was alluding to the series of parallel crises that cast deep shadows over Europe in the summer of 2016: mass migration from the devastated regions of Syria, the wider Middle East and North Africa, and the post-9/11 wars and terrorisms that have both caused it and accompanied it; and the fracturing of intra-European solidarity and identity following the 2008 crash, the Greek crisis, Brexit and the widespread rise of reactionary politics across Europe. More particularly, as Pope Francis had openly acknowledged on his visit to Kraków, the most immediate context that made the message of Auschwitz still so resonant and essential was the shocking sequence of terrorist attacks in France and Germany in July 2016, most but not all inspired by DAESH/ IS: Nice, Würzburg, Reutlingen, Munich, Ansbach, culminating in the gruesome murder of a Catholic priest by two French youths in St Etienne du Rouvray, Normandy, on 26 July. In France, the Catholic Church with all its complex and contradictory relationship to the secular Republic, and the latter in turn in its deeply fractured relation to its French-Muslim communities, was perhaps for the first time directly drawn into the current terrorism crisis, and so too, as response across Europe confirmed, was the Christian-democratic foundations of Europe itself. Meanwhile, the large French Jewish community was still reeling from its position as recurrent target and victim, alongside mainstream symbols of contemporary French culture and democracy, of Islamist terrorist attacks in France in 2012 and 2015. The long-planned visit to Kraków and Auschwitz by Pope Francis inevitably turned into a symbolic declaration of Christian defiance and community in the face of such violence, as well as an act of solidarity and mourning for another Christian martyr in St Etienne and for victims of other beliefs, Muslim, Jewish and secular. There was no ‘war of religion’ in Europe, Pope Francis insisted to the travelling press corps on his plane to Poland within hours of the St Etienne murder;¹⁷ but it hardly needed stating that Maximilian Kolbe was murdered for his religion, like Father Jacques Hamel in St Etienne, as were the 1.1 million Jewish victims who died at Auschwitz, this latter an aspect that has long sat both awkwardly and powerfully alongside the canonization of Kolbe as the saint of Auschwitz.

¹⁶ Quoted in: Harriet Sherwood, “No Words as Pope Francis visits Auschwitz Death Camp in Silence,” *The Guardian*, July 29, 2016 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/29/no-words-as-pope-francis-visits-auschwitz-death-camp-in-silence>).

¹⁷ Tim Hume, “Pope on Priest killing: World is at War, but It’s Not a Religious One,” *CNN*, July 27, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/27/europe/france-church-attack-aftermath/>.

The point here is certainly not to revisit the troubled history of Christian-Jewish relations in the light of the Holocaust, nor to chart the many intractable layers of Europe's contemporary crises. Rather, it is to note that the Holocaust remains, deep into the 21st century, still a persistent presence and touchstone, an echo chamber of contemporary anxiety, a ready symbol, often a symbol that circulates out of any planned control or deployment, embedded in the sites, cycles of events and language of our public discourse. Its power to shock and to signify has perhaps been thinned out by the passage of time and of generations, but nevertheless it remains structurally present, even foundational, cutting in unpredictable ways into the discourse of the present. To revisit Auschwitz, literally or symbolically, or indeed to design a Jewish history and Holocaust museum in 21st-century Europe, is to walk on a ground that is shifting, something more mobile and displaced than its once solemn status in the postwar cultural field implied, something less conventionally stable as a historical referent, something that has variously been labelled global and cosmopolitan, palimpsestic, transnational, multidirectional, or, as here, intersectional, and which therefore requires new tools or perspectives to decode.¹⁸ It is this dynamic of intersection, operating across many different cultural fields and practices, as well as across borders and media, across contrasting constituencies of history, memory and identity, that this issue of *Quest* sets out to develop and probe.

Holocaust-genocide

If these two incidental case studies show surprising or contingent examples of transversal intersection, perhaps the most sustained and substantial axis of intersection in 21st-century Holocaust discourse and representation has been that between the category and label of the Holocaust on the one hand and of genocide on the other. This topic in many respects provides the founding conceptual framework for this issue of *Quest*.

The point of departure is the rise of genocide scholarship since the 1980s-1990s, and more decidedly in the 21st century, as a distinct and burgeoning

¹⁸ See, variously, Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *Holocaust Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Rothberg, *Multidirectional*; Bangert et al, *Holocaust Intersections*; Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory. The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction*, (New York: Berghahn, 2013); Larissa Allwork, *Holocaust Remembrance Between the National and the Transnational: A Case Study of the Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the ITF*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

interdisciplinary field of research with its distinct institutions, networks and journals. The earliest periodical publication in the field was *Internet on the Holocaust and Genocide*, a newsletter published since 1985 by the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem, founded in 1981 under the leadership of Israel W. Charny, Elie Wiesel, and Shamaï Davidson.¹⁹ Independently from it, one year later, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* started publication.

Both publications have the intersection between Holocaust and genocide inscribed in their very name. At the same time they also contain the tension between the two terms, seen by many as denoting a hierarchy and predominance of the former (Holocaust) over the latter (genocide). This was the view of Henry H. Huttenbach, who in 1994 launched his own semi-personal newsletter *Genocide Forum* explicitly devoted to the comparative study of genocide. *Genocide Forum* morphed into the *Journal of Genocide Research* (JGR) in 1999, when it transferred to Routledge publisher. In 2005, JGR became the official publication of the European Network of Genocide Scholars (ENoGS, now renamed InoGS – International Network of Genocide Scholars – to mark its extra-European reach) established earlier that same year.²⁰

The other main scholarly organization devoted to the study of genocide was established in 1994 in the USA with the name Association of Genocide Scholars (AGS), and was led by pioneers in the field of genocide studies Helen Fein and Roger Smith. In 2001, AGS assumed its current name International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS). In 2006, the association launched its own journal *Genocide Studies and Prevention*.²¹ As noted by Adam Jones, the early 21st century saw ‘something of an explosion’ in the field of genocide studies.²²

This rise in genocide consciousness is not exclusively an academic phenomenon, but is corroborated by a rise in the proliferation of the term “genocide” in the public sphere. Some of the contributions in this issue of *Quest* will address this theme with reference to specific case studies. In this introduction, we reconstruct in broad brushstrokes the history of the rising centrality of the term.

¹⁹ The Institute is still active, and between 2010-2012 published its own genocide studies journal *Genocide Prevention Now*. For more information, see <http://www.ihgilm.com/>.

²⁰ See Anton Weiss-Wendt, “Problems in Comparative Genocide Scholarship,” in *The Historiography of Genocide*, ed. Dan Stone, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 61.

²¹ Samuel Totten and Paul R. Bartrop, *Dictionary of Genocide*. 2 vols, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008), 217.

²² Adam Jones, *The Scourge of Genocide: Essays and Reflections*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 1.

In order to start answering these questions, two graphs from Google Ngram Viewer will be helpful. The first one [Fig.3] looks at the diffusion of the word genocide in books written in English from 1940 to 2008.²³

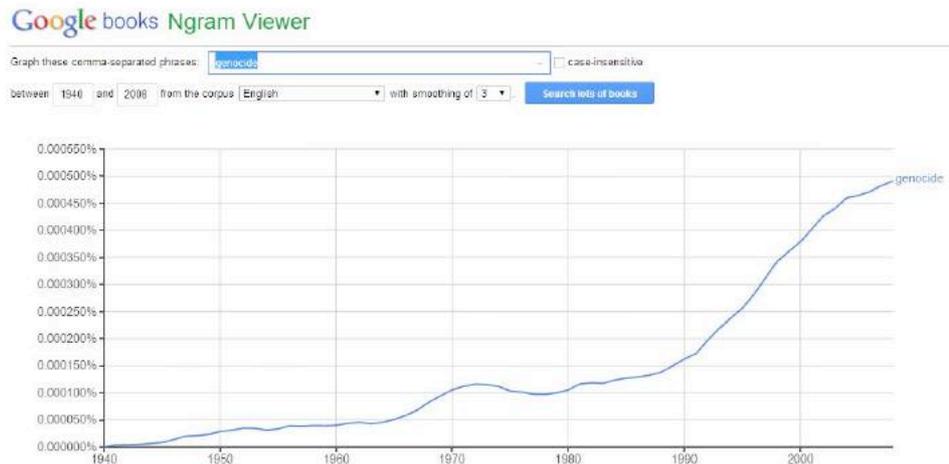


Fig. 3: Google ngram, “genocide” (English, 1940-2008). <https://books.google.com/ngrams> [accessed, November 5 2016]

As we can see, there is no clear and obvious big bang, no clear moment in which the term “explodes.” However, there are two moments in which “genocide” rises more decidedly. These are in the second half of the 1960s and in the 1990s. These increases were due to a combination of factors. For the late 1960s, we can identify three main ones. First, the term was used in works on the Armenian genocide published on the wave of its fiftieth anniversary; secondly, and in larger numbers, in relation to violence in post-independence Rwanda (and later in Burundi); thirdly, and with developing domestic political implications for the USA, in relation to the Vietnam War and the development of the civil rights movement.²⁴

²³ As is well known, the term was introduced by Raphael Lemkin in 1944. See Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944).

²⁴ See as examples James H. Tashjian, *Turkey: Author of Genocide: The Centenary Record of Turkey, 1822-1922*, (Boston: Commemorative Committee on the 50th Anniversary of the Turkish Massacres of the Armenians, 1965); Haigaz K. Kazarian, *Minutes of Secret Meetings Organizing the Turkish Genocide of the Armenians: What Turkish Sources Say on the Subject*, (Boston: Commemorative Committee on the 50th Anniversary of the Turkish Massacres of the Armenians, 1965). On Rwanda and Burundi, see René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, (New York: Praeger, 1970); Michael Bowen, Gary Freeman, and Kay Miller, *Passing By: The United States and Genocide in Burundi, 1972*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International

For the 1990s, the dominant factors are the growth of publications in the fledgling field of genocide studies, the incorporation of the term into works about the Holocaust, and the events in Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the course of the decade and their impact in the use of the term.²⁵ Thus, we see that Armenia, Yugoslavia and Rwanda (twice) played a major role in the rise of the term. Now, if we add to the Google ngram search the noun “Holocaust” (with capital h to optimize references to the destruction of European Jews), we notice two main features [Fig. 4].

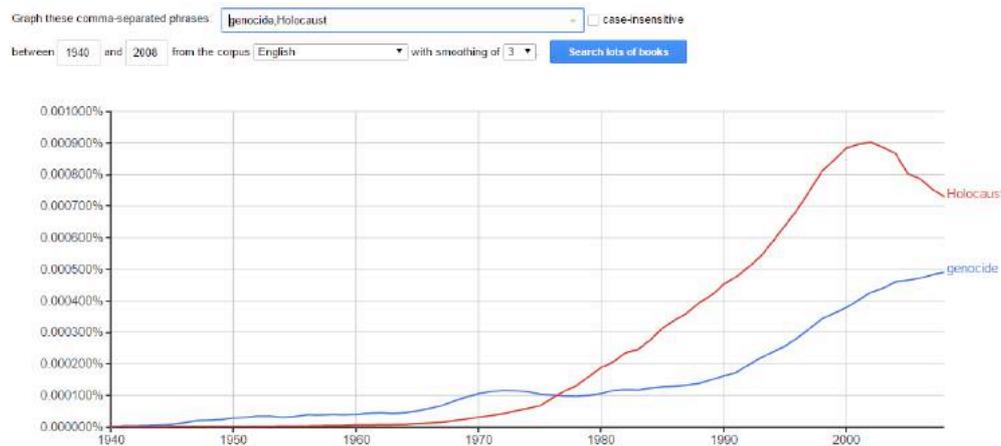


Fig. 4: Google ngram, “genocide,” “Holocaust” (English, 1940-2008).
<https://books.google.com/ngrams><https://books.google.com/ngrams> [accessed, November 5 2016]

Peace, 1973). For examples of the use of “genocide” with reference to the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement, see *U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam*, (Hanoi: Juridical Sciences Institute, Viet Nam State Commission of Social Sciences, 1968); Haig A. Bosmajian, and Hamida Bosmajian, *The Rhetoric of the Civil-Rights Movement*, (New York: Random House, 1969).²⁵ For two landmark works in the field of genocide studies published in the early 1990s, see Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective*, (London: Sage, 1993). The use of the term “genocide” in important works of Holocaust scholarship can be found in, for example, Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide. Essays on Launching the Final Solution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Popular works published on the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s include Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998) and Norman L. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of “Ethnic Cleansing,”* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995).

The first is that the Holocaust had two moments of sharper rise, in the late 1970s and early 1990s. A great deal has been written about this, and we will not dwell on it here.²⁶ The other is that the rise of the terms “Holocaust” and “genocide” follows a similar curve, albeit with clearly different quantities. In other words, the rise of the Holocaust preceded, influenced, but also facilitated that of genocide. The intersection between the two is palpable, and it needs investigating. The argument presented here is, as mentioned above, that the Holocaust has intersected and often acted as a paradigm for the conceptualization of other genocides.²⁷ Whilst the first part of this introduction focused on more transient and at times fruitful areas of cross-fertilization, this second part will engage with some problematic examples of this process, in particular with reference to history-writing and visual culture.

In recent years, a small body of literature has emerged about the use of the Holocaust as a paradigm for the discussion of other phenomena. In her interesting book, Angi Buettner has argued that “the Holocaust has become a benchmark against which other events are judged [...] Using the Holocaust and its images for representing and recording other historical events is a widespread practice in the news media and other cultural fields.”²⁸ Holocaust images are a means to turn our attention towards violence, injustice and suffering. They work by signification or figuration, i.e. as metaphor and symbol. The Holocaust is a set of signifying practices used to gain access to other events.²⁹ In this sense, it serves as the already known through which we can approach the new. Buettner argues that “the more [the image of the Holocaust] has become integrated into the world’s consciousness and memory, the wider and larger it has become, containing more and more different referents, ideas and victims. The story of the destruction of European Jewry gradually has become the story of the destruction of life in general.”³⁰ As Hilene Flanzbaum famously asked, “if the Holocaust as metaphor is part of our common language, who can control who speaks it?”³¹

²⁶ See, e.g., Tom Lawson, *Debates on the Holocaust*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 125-192.

²⁷ The bulk of this Introduction was written before and independently from the publication of the important work by Rebecca Jinks, *Representing Genocide: The Holocaust as Paradigm?* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

²⁸ Angi Buettner, *Holocaust Images and Picturing Catastrophe: The Cultural Politics of Seeing*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 2. And cf. note 10 above.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

³¹ Hilene Flanzbaum, “Introduction,” in *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 8.

Buettner sees two decisive moments of this shift: from human to animal victims, and from the Holocaust to other genocides. Here we concentrate on the latter.

Again, this phenomenon has been noted and discussed by others since the 1990s, especially with reference to the theme of ‘uniqueness.’ It is a well-known – and in itself historically significant – debate that need not be rehashed here.³² Suffice to say that, whilst in the past the cause of disagreement was that comparing the Holocaust to other events was seen by some as detrimental to the historical specificity of the Holocaust itself, my argument here is that this process is now harmful to a fuller understanding of the other genocides represented through the lens of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the process continues unabated.

As noted by Leshu Torchin, one problem with the use of Holocaust metaphors is that they tend to simplify and discard complexity in favour of the already known, however atrocious the latter might be. Cueing atrocity through verbal and visual metaphors (the Armenian Holocaust, the American Holocaust, the Spanish Holocaust, as well as images like cattle-cars, shaved heads, camp-like settings) leads to an unavoidable process of selection. We can see this slippage at work in many of the more popular historical works on genocides or crimes against humanity other than the Holocaust, such as the Herero and Nama genocide, Belgian and British colonial crimes in Congo and India, the genocide of Native Americans, and the crimes of Franco during and after the Spanish Civil War.³³ With reference to this latter case, Paul Preston writes in the preface to his otherwise excellent *The Spanish Holocaust* that he “could find no word that more accurately encapsulates the Spanish experience than ‘holocaust.’”³⁴ He also adds that in choosing this term he hopes to suggest “parallels and resonances that will lead to a better understanding of what happened in Spain.”³⁵ Perhaps, but one cannot help but asking why that is the case, and more importantly whether using the term Holocaust really helps understanding what happened in Spain during and after the Civil War.

³² For a good overview see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, “The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 13/1 (1999): 28-61.

³³ See David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide*, (London: Faber, 2011); Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, (London: Macmillan, 1998); Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*, (London: Verso, 2001); David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*, (London: HarperPress, 2012).

³⁴ Preston, *Spanish Holocaust*, xi.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, xii.

As stated above, this use of the Holocaust as shorthand for the conceptualization of other instances of extreme suffering is far from limited to history-writing, but is integral part of genocide “talk” and representation. This is partly understandable: evoking Holocaust imagery represents valuable moral capital for advocates of group victims of severe abuse. This process was often contentious in the recent past; it is perhaps less so now, but it no less present.³⁶ But the Holocaust is not only called forth by representatives of victim groups. It is also widely used in mass culture and media as a paradigm for the presentation and representation of other past and present humanitarian crises. In fact, some of the most well-known representations of genocides, which for large portions of public opinion might be the first if not only entry point into the specific history represented, make heavy use of Holocaust tropes. Several contributions to this issue of *Quest* will develop specific case studies of this phenomenon. The following section of this introduction will briefly discuss the use of Holocaust imagery in some well-known representations of genocides about Australia, Armenia and Rwanda.

Australia, Armenia, Rwanda

³⁶ Two radically divergent examples from the relatively recent past are Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, ed. Alan S. Rosenbaum, 3rd edn (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009). The first edition of Rosenbaum’s edited volume was published in 1996. On these differing perspectives, see David B. MacDonald, *Identity Politics in the Age of Genocide: The Holocaust and Historical Representation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 30-33.

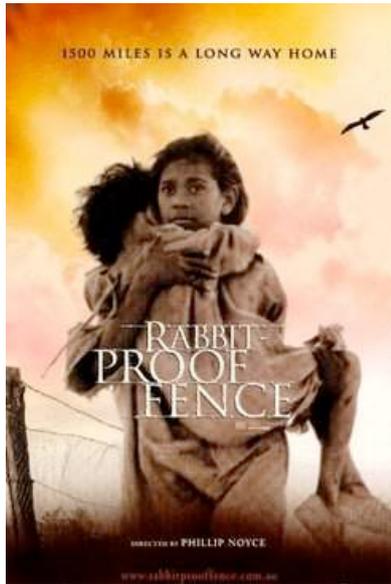


Fig. 5. *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (dir. Philip Noyce, 2002)

Directed by Philip Noyce and released in 2002, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is the cinematic adaptation of Doris Pilkington Garimara’s non-fiction book telling the story of her mother’s escape from the Moore River Native Settlement in Australia and her return to their native community at Jigalong after a 1500-mile long journey in 1931. As such it is an example, one of the many, of what Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg defines as “counter-historical dramatic film” – in other words a film based on a true story but presenting a counter-narrative to an official version of history or to a perceived silence surrounding a historical event.³⁷ Tony Hughes d’Aeth sees this as only one of the many similarities between *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and Holocaust films, in particular *Schindler’s List*. In his view, a series of signs like the barbed wire in the lettering and poster of the film [Fig. 5], the shaving of Olive’s hair, the replacement of everyday clothes with white uniforms and the ‘selection’ scene in which the children are separated at Moore River Native Settlement, are clear Holocaust references. Moreover, in the film the transfer of the two sisters is carried out by the codified means of the train, instead of the ferry, as was actually the case.³⁸ While Hughes d’Aeth himself acknowledges that there are significant differences between the two films (first of all in the fact that the perspective is not that of an ambiguous witness/rescuer but

³⁷ Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg, *Beyond Terror: Gender, Narrative, Human Rights*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 29.

³⁸ Tony Hughes DuAeth, “Which Rabbit-Proof Fence? Empathy, Assimilation, Hollywood,” *Australian Humanities Review* (September 2002), <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-September-2002/hughesdaeth.html>.

that of the victims themselves), the relevant point here is the one made by Donna Lee Frieze, that all these links with the Holocaust serve to reinforce the film's view that the chief protector's policy was genocidal.³⁹

The Holocaust template and its shortcomings are more obvious in the case of Rwanda, and of its most widely known representation *Hotel Rwanda*. They are evident in the film itself, and all the more so because they are explicitly stated in one of the companion essays to the official script, journalist Nicola Graydon's "The Rwandan Schindler."⁴⁰ Moreover, they are also picked up by empirical viewers, as noted in an interesting article that analyzed the reception of the film among 41 empirical viewers, 21 of whom were Germans and 20 Americans. This research showed that interviewees made frequent comparisons to the Holocaust to address the ethnic differentiation between Hutu and Tutsi in *Hotel Rwanda*, noting the use of dehumanizing words to address the victims, but also the silence of bystanders, a phenomenon clearly underscored in the film. Respondents often mentioned *Schindler's List*, primarily to draw a parallel between Paul Rusesabagina and Oskar Schindler's courage in helping innocent victims. The context of reception plays an important role in this process: twice as many German interviewees mentioned *Schindler's List* and the Holocaust compared to the Americans.⁴¹

Hotel Rwanda is by far the most widely known film in a mini-canon of cinematic representations of the Rwandan genocide that also include *100 Days* (dir. Nick Hughes 2001), *Shooting Dogs* (dir. Michael Caton-Jones, 2005), *Sometimes in April* (dir. Raoul Peck, 2005), and *Shake Hands with the Devil* (dir. Roger Spottiswoode, 2007), among others. Even a cursory analysis flags up some of the main problems in the adoption of the Holocaust paradigm. The combination of the fact that the topic is a non-Western genocide and a set of assumptions about Rwanda as part of Africa, result in an overreliance on the Holocaust template to make the stories told in these films understandable and palatable to a Western audience. The Holocaust paradigm thus compounds other deep-seated problems of Eurocentrism.

Just as scholars like Philip Gourevitch, Samantha Power, Stephen Haynes and others felt compelled to compare discrimination practices, the death toll and

³⁹ Donna Lee Frieze, "The Other in Genocide: Responsibility and Benevolence in *Rabbit-Proof Fence*," in *Film & Genocide*, eds. Kristi M. Wilson and Tomás F. Crowder-Taraborrelli, (Madison: The University Of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 122-132.

⁴⁰ Nicola Graydon, "The Rwandan Schindler," in *Hotel Rwanda: Bringing the True Story of an African Hero to Film*, ed. Terry George, (New York: New Parket Press, 2005), 33-45.

⁴¹ Christian Gudehus, Stewart Anderson, and David Keller, "Understanding Hotel Rwanda: A Reception Study," *Memory Studies* 3 (2010): 344-63.

other aspects of the Rwandan genocide to the Holocaust, so do films.⁴² The Rwandan genocide “raises the problematics of representing *yet another* genocide, in this case moreover, *an other, non-Western* genocide,” one which the public are expected not to know much about.⁴³ This leads to a series of narrative and representational choices that are not without consequences. One of these is to rely on Holocaust-like tropes. The parallels between *Schindler’s List* and *Hotel Rwanda* have been debated widely and will be only mentioned briefly here. The characters of Rusesabagina and Schindler follow the same development. They are both male protagonists who, finding themselves in a position of power, decide to save lives whereas many others would have killed.⁴⁴ They do so by showing the same cunning resourcefulness, resorting to charm and bribery when needed.⁴⁵ Both start out as motivated by self-interest but in the course of the film morph into selfless and almost saintly figures. Rusesabagina leaves his family to be rescued while he stays behind with people he wishes to protect.

The similarities are also visual. The original poster for the theatrical release of *Schindler’s List* depicts the entwined hands of the iconic ‘girl in the red coat’ with a man: an image of hope and salvation. In *Hotel Rwanda*, this iconic image is replicated near the end of the film when Rusesabagina is being liberated by the UN convoy and taken to a refugee camp. In this scene, the camera focuses on Paul gripping his family’s hand. Moreover, Joya Uraizee identifies two defining scenes including the male protagonists showing pivotal moments of horror and confrontation with the effects of the genocides. In *Schindler’s List* it is the climactic liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto scene; in *Hotel Rwanda*, it is when Rusesabagina steps out of his car to discover the site of a massacre.⁴⁶

Beyond these visual symmetries, there is at least one more important consequence to the use of the Holocaust paradigm. One key feature of

⁴² Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You*; Samantha Power, “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Stephen R. Haynes, “‘Death Was Everywhere, Even in Front of the Church’: Christian Faith and the Rwandan Genocide,” in *Confronting Genocide: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*, ed. Steven Leonard Jacobs, (Lanham: Lexington, 2009), 183-94.

⁴³ Madelaine Hron, “‘Genres of ‘Yet Another Genocide’: Cinematic Representations of Rwanda,” in *Film and Genocide*, eds. Kristi M. Wilson and Tomás F. Crowder-Taraborrelli, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 135.

⁴⁴ Joya Uraizee, “Gazing at the Beast: Describing Mass Murder in Deepa Mehta’s *Earth* and Terry George’s *Hotel Rwanda*,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (2010): 10-27.

⁴⁵ Joyce B. Ashuntantang, “Hollywood’s Representations of Human Rights: The Case of Terry George’s *Hotel Rwanda*,” in *Hollywood’s Africa after 1994*, ed. Maryellen Higgins, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 54-67.

⁴⁶ Uraizee, “Gazing at the Beast,” 19.

Holocaust films is the enclosed space of boxcars, ghettos and camps, and the gas chamber. With the exception of *Sometimes in April*, films about Rwanda present confined camp-like spaces, thus failing to account for the open air, broad daylight and intimate nature of this genocide, in which there was no clearly defined separation between the space of life and death.⁴⁷

This aspect highlights a much larger problem in the intersection of Holocaust and genocide: the lack of interest in putting on screen the sets of conditions that led to the genocide. Most films about the genocide confine Rwandan history to the few weeks of the genocide itself. The opening of *Hotel Rwanda* is exemplary from this point of view, but the same applies to *Shooting Dogs*.⁴⁸ The film opens with a dark screen and the sound of an announcer from Radio Milles Collines — a station also known as Hutu Power Radio and infamous for having facilitated the organization of the genocide — while the screen stays dark. The anti-Tutsi propaganda of the radio station situates the conflict as a clash of ethnic identities rooted in the former colonizers' privileged treatment of the Tutsis. This opening is significant. Its rhetoric of darkness and the disembodied voice of ethnic hatred construct Africa through the Conradian trope of the monstrous and spectacular, the “dark continent” where evil lurks. The film's opening focus on Hutu Power Radio gestures toward a primordial understanding of African politics, while, in contrast, the protagonist Paul Rusesabagina, a Hutu manager of the *Hotel des Milles-Collines*, and his wife, Tatiana, a Tutsi, designate Africa's and Rwanda's political modernity and rationalism. The failure to historicise Hutu rage and hatred plays into the hands of established stereotypes of Africa as a continent without history and civilization.⁴⁹ From this weakness follows another important one: the Manichean division between Hutu and Tutsi, perpetrator and victims, evil and good, barbarity and civilization (with the exception of Westernised Hutus like Rusesabagina). As Joyce Ashuntantang points out, the “Dark Continent” is identified with the Hutus and their savagery.⁵⁰ These binaries, while well meaning, preserve the clear-cut “us” versus “them” dynamics that make genocides possible in the first place. Moreover, they are still to some

⁴⁷ On this, see Hron, “Genres of ‘Yet Another Genocide,’” 137.

⁴⁸ Ann-Marie Cook, “Based on the True Story’: Cinema’s Mythologised Vision of the Rwandan Genocide,” in *Promoting and Producing Evil*, ed. Nancy Billias, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 169-86.

⁴⁹ Heike Härting, “Global Humanitarianism, Race, and the Spectacle of the African Corpse in Current Western Representations of the Rwandan Genocide,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28/1 (2008): 61-77; Ashuntantang, “Hollywood’s Representations of Human Rights.”

⁵⁰ Ashuntantang, “Hollywood’s Representations of Human Rights,” 61.

extent evidence of a lingering colonial gaze, for example the stereotype of Africa as a racialized space of danger and exoticism fully deployed in the interracial love story in *Sunday in Kigali*.

This is even more clearly the case in many documentaries made in post-genocide Rwanda, such as for example *Au Rwanda on dit...La famille qui ne parle pas meurt* (dir. Nathan Réra, 2004). Here, a certain ethnographic gaze merges with the imposition of a Christian narrative of redemption and reconciliation that does not take fully into account the trauma of survivors who have to live side by side with their perpetrators. Cinematic representations of the Rwandan genocide are often presented with heavy Christian overtones, for example in the martyrdom of Father Christopher in the BBC-produced *Shooting Dogs*.⁵¹ More in general, they present a strong emphasis on a universal humanist message. This brings us back to the Holocaust paradigm. As director of *100 Days* Nick Hughes drily pointed out, “before you start looking for Schindler’s List you need to establish what happened in Auschwitz. The problem with the Rwandan genocide is that everybody started making human films about the humanity of people and the possibility of hope surviving the genocide. You shouldn’t do that before you establish that there is no hope and nothing good can come out of that particular event.”⁵² By creating a narrative proximity between a certain type of popular Holocaust representations and the Rwandan genocide these films digest (badly) the Rwandan genocide for a Western audience.

Of course, it is worth asking if these claims that the implementation of a certain type of Holocaust paradigm serves as a ready-made surrogate for understanding of the specificities of genocides, while at the same time facilitating public engagement with it are applicable beyond scholarly writings on these films. The last example, about the Armenian genocide, engages with this point (and the Armenian genocide will be discussed further in Peretti’s essay below).

The extermination of up to 1.3 million of Armenians and hundreds of thousands of other Christian minorities in the Anatolian peninsula during the First World War has been compared to the Holocaust countless times. This was particularly the case in past decades, when comparing the Armenian genocide with the Holocaust was a way for the former to gain recognition and find its place within Western memory culture. The list of examples would be too long; suffice to mention the British Channel 4 documentary “The Hidden Holocaust,” aired in

⁵¹ Linda Melvern, “History? This Film Is Fiction,” *The Observer* March 19, 2006.

⁵² Nick Hughes in Piotr A. Cieplak, “The Rwandan Genocide and the Bestiality of Representation in *100 Days* (2001) and *Shooting Dogs* (2005),” *Journal of African Cinemas*, 2/1 (2010): 49-64 (59).

July 1992 as part of the *Secret History* series. Even in the title, the documentary established a parallel between the two events; this theme was repeated frequently during the course of the program, for example when Robert Fisk defined it the “first Holocaust of the 20th Century.”

But the same is also true of much more recent products and debates. One specific case is that of the novel and film *La masseria delle allodole*, translated as *The Skylark Farm* (novel) and *The Lark Farm* (movie) and their impact in Italy, the home country of the author of the novel Antonia Arslan and the directors of its film adaptation, the Taviani Brothers, in the early 2000s.⁵³ These are semi-fictionalized accounts of Arslan’s family experience during the genocide. The novel and the film represented a first encounter with the Armenian genocide not just for large sections of the public but also for a sizable section of opinion formers. The reception of the film merged with domestic and international political issues of the day, including the divide between left and right, debates about Turkey’s inclusion in the EU, Europe’s supposed Christian roots, and the alliance with the Bush administration (issues also touched upon in the contribution by Garofalo in this issue).

The Holocaust paradigm was deployed on both sides of this fray. One way to put forward the genocide narrative was to assimilate it to the Holocaust. Thus, newspaper reviews of the film commented that the Young Turks “scientifically planned the total solution [*soluzione totale*] to the Armenian question,”⁵⁴ or that the prejudices against the Armenians were the same ones harbored by the Nazis against the Jews.⁵⁵ At the same time, the Holocaust comparison was at times used to undermine the “genocide” claim. This was the case of Sergio Romano, who in a column adopted the dubious argument that since the Holocaust was somewhat worse, then that of the Armenians was “just” a tragedy.⁵⁶ The main proponent of the Holocaust analogy was, perhaps surprisingly, the author of the best-selling novel Antonia Arslan herself. In a series of interviews, she drew explicit parallels between, among others, the Special Organization (the Young Turk Central Committee’s paramilitary extension) and the SS, as well as between the deportations of Armenians to the Syrian desert and

⁵³ Antonia Arslan, *La masseria delle allodole*, (Milano: Rizzoli, 2004); Id., *Skylark Farm* trans. Geoffrey Brock, (London: Atlantic, 2008); Paolo Taviani and Vittorio Taviani, *La masseria delle allodole*, (The Lark Farm, 2007).

⁵⁴ Claudia Morgoglione, “Le immagini-shock del genocidio armeno nell’ultimo film dei fratelli Taviani,” *La repubblica*, March 19, 2007.

⁵⁵ Giuseppina Manin, “Gli armeni dei Taviani,” *Corriere della Sera*, February 14, 2007.

⁵⁶ Sergio Romano, “La Turchia e gli armeni: i massacri e il diniego,” *Corriere della Sera*, November 30, 2007.

the “Final Solution.”⁵⁷ In order to stress the importance of the Armenian genocide, Arslan herself as well as a host of commentators defined it, *lie Fisk*, as the first genocide of the 20th century.⁵⁸ In other words, the novel and especially the film were then set up to be read through the lens of the Holocaust.

Despite being one of the few films produced to this day on the Armenian genocide, *The Lark Farm* achieve only limited international success. The Armenian genocide is still in search of its landmark work, its *Schindler’s List* or *Hotel Rwanda*.⁵⁹ One exception could have been *Ararat* (dir. Atom Egoyan, 2002), which however proved too complex to be appealing to large masses. It is the story of a group of people whose lives revolve around the making of a traditional historical epic film about the Armenian genocide. Egoyan’s film is, among many other things, a sort of anti-epic historical drama (an anti-*Schindler’s List*). Egoyan has explicitly stated in interviews that the film that is being made within the film, the mimetic, emotionally charged realist period drama, is precisely the film he did not want to make. There are also clues in *Ararat* that confirm this view. Instead, *Ararat* is a film about the trappings of memory and denial. In a sense, Egoyan has bypassed the epic drama phase in which the Holocaust paradigm is strongest, and has produced instead a work that is as thought-provoking as it is esoteric for a mass audience.⁶⁰

This leaves us with a series of unanswered question: is the Holocaust paradigm, despite its shortcomings, a pre-condition for situating a genocide close to the center of society’s memory culture in this first part of the 21st century? Will the more improvised, at times positive, at times strained forms of intersection presented in the first part of this introduction prevail over the more sustained

⁵⁷ Roberto Carnero, “Arslan: ‘Le armene? Pazienti tessitrici contro il genocidio,’” *L’Unità*, September 5, 2004; Serena Zoli, “La mia dolce Armenia prima del diluvio,” *Corriere della Sera*, April 8, 2004.

⁵⁸ Giuseppe Distefano, “Intervista ai Taviani: gli armeni? Un pezzo di memoria cancellata,” *Il Sole 24 Ore*, March 20, 2007; Zoli, “La mia dolce Armenia.”

⁵⁹ Time will tell if *The Promise* (dir. Terry George, 2016) can fulfil that role.

⁶⁰ On *Ararat*, see at least Georgiana Banita, “‘The Power to Imagine’: Genocide, Exile, and Ethical Memory in Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat*,” in *Film and Genocide*, 87-105; Lawrence Baron, “Holocaust and Genocide Cinema: Crossing Disciplinary, Genre, and Geographical Borders,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 28/4 (2010): 1-9; Helke Heckner, “Screening the Armenian Genocide: Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat* between Erasure and Suture,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 28/4 (2010): 133-145; Jonathan Markovitz, “*Ararat* and Collective Memories of the Armenian Genocide,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20/2 (2006): 235-255; Devin O. Pendas, “Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat* (2002) and the Critique of Diplomatic Reason,” in *Through a Lens Darkly: Films of Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and Atrocities*, eds. John J. Michalczyk and Raymond J. Helmick, (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 38-47.

and problematic aspects of the adoption of what we called here the Holocaust paradigm? What is the discursive relationship between the Holocaust and other tragic past and present events, or indeed looser discourse of contemporary politics, culture and memory? These are some of the themes developed by the articles presented here.

Six Studies

The six articles in this issue of *Quest* are designed to offer a broad and inclusive approach to the question of Holocaust intersections as laid out in this Introduction. As we have here discussed cases ranging from New Zealand, Poland and France to Australia, Rwanda and Armenia, the articles range over a variety of different geographical and national arenas in Europe, from Britain to Lithuania, from Serbia to Italy. Given the origins of *Quest* as a journal and the range of expertise of the editors of this special issue, it was decided to dedicate particular attention to the case of Italy, in a concerted attempt to adapt to the complexities of the Italian case some of the most interesting recent research and methods of an ‘intersectional’ kind, in ways that perhaps have not been fully attempted before. We also deliberately encouraged an open understanding of the kinds of intersections or what Duncan here, following Rey Chow, calls ‘entanglements,’ which might bring Holocaust ‘talk’ into contact with other discourses and representations in early 21st-century Europe. The six articles look variously at literature and its intersections with sites of memory (Vervaeet); at groups, associations and communities and their identitarian politics as they cross borders from one memory constituency to another (Peretti); at how old and new media grapple with forms of communication and representation of events, memories and their politics (Duncan, Garofalo); at education and its impact on public, civic discourse (Critchell); and at developments in scholarship, theory and academic study as it interacts with and reflects inter-governmental dialogue (Allwork). Taken together, these articles do not aim to offer comprehensive coverage in regional or conceptual terms, but to give a strong sense of the importance of this transversal approach for understanding the shifting ground of the Holocaust’s present-day status and value.

Larissa Allwork’s article takes as its departure point the author’s work done in preparation for her important monograph *Holocaust Remembrance between the National and the Transnational: The Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the International Task Force* (2015). In particular, the article investigates some of the shortcomings of trauma theory as put forward by

scholars like Cathy Caruth, identifying trauma in the unspoken in narratives such as Holocaust testimonies. In so doing Allwork advocates for the adoption of a revised form of trauma theory. Drawing on the work of Richard McNally and Joshua Pedersen, Allwork claims the signs of trauma can be found in the texts themselves, rather than in their lacunae, and that trauma can therefore be spoken by survivors and in part deciphered.

Kara Critchell explores the politics of Holocaust memorialization by examining the intersection of education, commemoration and national identity in 21st Century Britain since the inaugural Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001. In her article, Critchell analyses the close relationship between Holocaust commemoration and education specific of the British context. Moreover, she illustrates how Holocaust commemoration in institutionalized spheres have intersected with contemporary cultural discourse surrounding questions of civic morality, immigration and the memory of other genocides. In her contribution, Critchell argues that the way in which the Holocaust has been indelibly associated with these issues has both implicitly and explicitly connected Holocaust discourse to contemporary debates on what constitutes British identity in the 21st century. In turn, these highly domesticated narratives of the period are often used to promote a self-congratulatory notion of British identity and supposed exceptionalism.

Derek Duncan offers a first case-study analysis of Italian intersectional memory, showing how the current crisis of Mediterranean migration and wider waves of migration from Africa and the Middle East, which has shaken European politics, institutions and values of solidarity to the core, have become entangled in the media with the tropes of representation of the Shoah. Whilst aware of the risks inherent in this process, Duncan suggests, through a reading of migrant literature and film, that it can create a viable space for interrogating also other hidden histories and memories, such as the colonial past.

Luca Peretti's article touches on a similar pattern of intersection, between Italian memory and other traumatic collective memory discourse on genocide, concerning in particular Armenia, Rwanda and the Romani, but he brings to bear an important focus on community memory, its strengths and its inevitable conflicts. Specifically, he works with the Jewish community of Rome and its internal and external positions regarding museums and other memorial projects, underlining the key importance of associations, groups and communities for the practical processing of memory and for the creation of dialogue and intersection.

Stejn Vervae't's contribution uses two recent Serbian novels and a film to examine the deeply charged intersections between the legacy of the 1990s Balkan wars in the former Yugoslavia and its plural intersections with memories and

legacies of Nazism and the Holocaust. This arena adds a crucial geo-cultural dimension to the issue, since it is at least arguable, as noted above, that the violence and trauma of those recent wars were at the origin of a profound shift in memory frameworks and in the sense of the modern relevance of the Holocaust in Europe. Vervaeet suggests that the works he analyses create a prism (using a metaphor akin to Luca Peretti's idea of 'kaleidoscopic' memory), through which both these looming and complex events can be seen anew.

Finally, Damiano Garofalo investigates the ways in which the Holocaust intersects with other past and present tragedies in coverage of the commemorations of the Day of Memory since its inception in 2001 across RAI, the public television service in Italy.. By focusing in particular on the popular political talk show *Porta a porta*, Garofalo's article illustrates how the inclusion (or lack thereof) of references to events other than the extermination of the European Jews was often influenced by immediate political concerns, such as for example the 2003 USA-led invasion of Iraq. At the same time, the article shows how other historical genocides, including the Armenian genocide and the *Porajmos* are establishing themselves as a feature of television programming for the Day of Memory.

* * *

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Robert S. C. Gordon is Serena Professor of Italian at Cambridge University. He has published widely on the Holocaust survivor and writer Primo Levi, as well as on the field of Holocaust memory in Italy and the wider world. His books

include *Primo Levi's Ordinary Virtues* (2001), *The Holocaust in Italian Culture 1944-2010* (2012), and (as co-editor) *Holocaust Intersections. Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millennium* (2013).

Emiliano Perrà is Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Winchester. His research interests focus on Holocaust and genocide memory. He is the author of *Conflicts of Memory: The Reception of Holocaust Films and Television Programmes in the Italian Press, 1945 to the Present* (2010).