Zuzanna Dziuban (ed.)

The »Spectral Turn«

Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire

From:

Over the last decades, studies on cultural memory have taken a »spectral turn« and have explored the potential of haunting metaphors for addressing past instances of violence that affect present cultural realities. This book contributes to the discussions on haunting by enquiring into its culturally and historically located modality: the emergence of the figure of the Jewish ghost in contemporary Polish popular culture, literature and critical art. Gathering contributions from an interdisciplinary group of scholars, it locates this new interest in Jewish ghosts on the map of other Polish (and Jewish) ghostologies and seeks to explore their cultural and political functions in the Polish post-Holocaust imaginaire.

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Content

Introduction: Haunting in the Land of the Untraumatized

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THE SUBSTANCE OF GHOSTS

Ghosts are made of ectoplasm; the ectoplasm is made of tears and coal dust. At least, so proclaims the narrator of Joanna Bator's novel *Dark, Almost Night* [*Ciemno, prawie noc*, 2012]. And ghosts permeate the Polish post-in-dustrial city of Wałbrzych, where the novel's protagonist, Alicja Tabor, re-turns after a long voluntary exile. She engages with the town's violent pre-sent, defined by murder, sexual abuse, and religious and political fanaticism – and with its violent past, burdened with the World War, ethnic violence, the Holocaust, and the postwar redrawing of borders between Poland and Germany. Alicja encounters the ghosts of her long-dead relatives, of famous historical figures, of former German inhabitants of the town, as well as »Jew-ish ghosts« of victims of the Nazi concentration camps. The latter, red-eyed and almost invisible, emerge from forests and knock on the windows of Polish houses; the protagonist feeds them crumbs of bread strewn on a win-dowsill. The substance of ghosts populating Bator's book seems to render them homogeneous, yet they are anything but. Some are desired, some are seen as threatening, and others, such as the Jewish ghosts, remain virtually unsensed and unseen, relying on pity and care extended to them by the living. The ghosts' historical provenance, but even more so their ethnic, national, and religious differences, is what differentiates them from one another. The ›Jewishness‹ of Jewish ghosts establishes them as distinct from the other

ghosts haunting Alicja, her former hometown, and, perhaps, Poland in its entirety.

In *Dark, Almost Night*, the Jewish ghosts play a marginal, if not ornamental, part. They act as lingering reminders of Nazi wartime crimes and the postwar resettlement of various minority groups – merely another layer of the town's troubled and troubling history. Even more, the ghosts of Holocaust victims are there to testify to Alicja's exceptional sensitivity, her ability to respond affectively and with altruistic care to a presence nobody else is able or willing to observe. Indeed, this care cuts against the grain of dominant sentiments shared by Wałbrzych residents, meticulously documented in the novel: their nationalism, xenophobia, persistent and omnipresent antisemitism, and fixation on Polish martyrdom and victimhood, and, thus, their exclusive attention to the »Polish ghost«. And Polish ghosts are in abundance, there are many to choose from; they are the dead conjured up by Polish Romantic poets, and the dead of more recent violent conflicts, of the Second World War, of the 1940 Katyń massacre, and of the failed Warsaw Uprising of 1944. These ghosts are entrenched in Poland's culture and imagination, their position secured by tradition and identity work structured around attentiveness to one's own dead.[1] To attend to the ghost of the Other is altogether different; a ›truth‹ that Alicja's attitude at once counters and reaffirms.

Alicja is far from alone in her encounters with the Jewish ghosts, however. In fact, such ghosts – in increasing numbers – roam a broad realm of Polish culture, literature, and theory. The figure started to emerge even before 1989, as interest awakened in the Jewish past in Poland, and proliferated after the Polish transition to a market economy and democracy in the 1990s; the past decade has witnessed a boom of narratives – artistic, literary, cinematic – featuring Jewish ghosts in their encounters with Poles, very much

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1 On the position of ghosts in Polish culture in general, and the Romantic tradition in particular, see, for instance, Janion (2006). For an analysis of the ghosts of those who perished in the 1944 Uprising, see Napiórkowski (2014). The ghosts of Katyń appeared recently in the movie *Smoleńsk* (2016), a politically compromised thriller about the plane crash which in 2010 killed 96 leading Polish politicians, including the then president Lech Kaczynski, on their way to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Katyń massacre in Russia. The film casts the accident as a calculated attempt on the life of the Polish president, and aimed at a matyrological interpretation of his death.

alive and contemporary. Often, the ghostly presence structures the entire plot, unlike in *Dark, Almost Night*. This is the case, for instance, in Andrzej Bart's 2008 novel *Fabryka Muchołapek* [The Flytrap Factory], Tadeusz Słobodzianek's drama *Our Class* (2010 [2009]), Sylwia Chutnik's play *Muranooo* (2011), Igor Ostachowicz's novel *Noc Żywych Żydów* [Night of the Living Jews, 2012], and Marcin Wrona's movie *Demon* (2015). These Jewish ghosts are sensed and seen. They possess, fall in love, and tell their stories about ordinary life in prewar Poland – and sometimes about violent death in the Holocaust. In the near-total absence of Jewish communities in post-Holocaust Poland, the Jewish ghosts are gaining ground, becoming the subject of theoretical writing and a part of the cultural imaginaire.[2]

The »Spectral Turn«: Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire is, at once, a demonstration and an interpretive exploration of this phenomenon. The book follows the figure of the Jewish ghost over various moments in recent Polish history and across realms of cultural production, popular imaginings, and theory. Establishing the aesthetic and affective politics of the ghostly as a subject of multiperspective and multidisciplinary inquiry, it asks about the position of Jewish ghosts in shifting cultural attitudes toward the Holocaust and the ›Polish-Jewish past‹ (and present), and about their role, which is as much representational and symbolic as it is political and ethical. As the volume spotlights the growing prominence of Jewish ghosts in Polish popular and academic culture and considers it against the background of present-day memory and identity work, it argues that the substance of ghosts is more dense and complex than tears, coal dust, and ectoplasm. Alicja did not get it right.

This recognition is informed not only by the close readings of Jewish ghosts collected in this volume, but also by other analyses of the »spectral turn« unfolding across geographies and cultures. Already in 2002, Robert Luckhurst addressed such a turn taking place in British literature or, better yet, in the genre of London Gothic. In 2004, in *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination*, Jeffrey Weinstock proclaimed its advent in the United States. »Our contemporary moment is a haunted one« (Weinstock

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2   Imaginaire is considered, after Charles Taylor, as an amorphous repertoire of images, stories, normative notions, and mechanisms of culture that underlie social life and organize experience and »the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others« (2004: 23).

2004b: 3), he wrote, commenting on a proliferation of ghostly figures and narratives of haunting in literature, cinema, art, and academia. The global and transcultural reach of the spectral turn was established some years later by Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren. In *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (2010) and *Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2013a), they gathered articles evidencing its performative force around the globe as it cuts through scientific imagination, artistic practices, and routines from everyday life. Discarding traditional stances that cast ghosts as supernatural entities, projections of a troubled psyche, or merely signifiers of specific literary or filmic modes or genres, the spectral turn named the ubiquity of dispersed and polyvocal vocabularies of haunting permeating the present day. More important, it (re)established the figure of the ghost as a subject of critical study. Ghosts and haunting were to become influential and inter/transdisciplinary concepts, addressed not merely as (literally) ephemeral psychological or ontological epiphenomena – like the ›ectoplasm‹ floating around at the 19th-century spiritual seance – but *as ghosts* in all their complexity: representational, affective, and political. This is the conceptual trajectory we, too, follow in this volume.

The roots of this approach can be traced back to the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1994 [1993]). It was there that Derrida radically reconceptualized the ghost (the specter) as a problem of the humanities, instantiating an important shift in its position in the field of theoretical reflection: from the margins to the center, or from a narrowly conceived generic marker to a theoretical idiom travelling through and between disciplines (Peeren 2014: 9). Suspending the ontological question of whether the ghost exists, Derrida established it as a deconstructive figure, as a figure of otherness and an agent of alterity moving between and destabilizing established dichotomies and ontological certainties. A transitional entity, located between life and death, present and absent, existent and non-existent, visible and invisible, material and immaterial, real and imagined, present and past, the ghost came to destabilize existent metaphysical and epistemological orders, orders of knowledge and power, and all instances of stability, sameness, homogeneity, and the self-same (Wolfreys 2002: 11). But Derrida also constructed the ghost as *real* and thoroughly political. Haunting, he wrote, »belongs to the structure of every hegemony« (1994 [1993]: 37). Intrinsic to

social life itself, it rests upon and testifies to hegemony's inherent violence but also to its inherent incompleteness. Thus, ghosts and haunting pertain equally to epistemological and political planes – they speak to and about erasures, exclusions, and invisibilities inherent to every social order, and to the (after)effects of repressive configurations of power.

Following Derrida, and applying his abstract conceptualizations of haunting to a vast array of specific contextual and historical experiences of political/symbolic/economic violence – mostly those articulated through the medium of literature and art – scholars across the humanities and social sciences have reclaimed ghosts as consequential ›objects‹ of intellectual interest and investigation. In the fields of cultural and political theory, sociology, literary criticism, and memory studies, the spectral turn provided conceptual tools for theorizing the aftereffects of violence and repression, and a set of metaphors to expand the analytical scope of studies on the social, political, and cultural processes of exclusion, dispossession, and erasure. The ghosts, a metaphor of multiple valences, have been conceived as figures of displacement, as figurations of dispossessed subjects (Peeren 2014), or as symptoms of the »past gone awry« (Kriss 2013: 25). Focusing on the question of *why* and *how* ghosts operate, most studies have, therefore, not retained strong ties with Derridean readings of the specter in terms of the messianic, the past promise and the (im)possible future, and demanded that it speak and deliver a more or less clear and intelligible message. This is especially the case in the field of memory studies, the main bridgehead and most productive territory of the spectral turn, where, more often than not, the ghosts are of those who have disappeared or perished and, as such, sustain a complex relationship between the past and present, the living and the dead, that requires a slant attuned to the contextual and specific. They speak to and about what ›really‹ happened (and still happens). They are figures of particular (and peculiar) historicity and sociality, like the Jewish ghosts whose haunting of contemporary Poland this volume addresses.

Indeed, responding to the transcultural conviction that »only certain categories of the dead return to torment the living: those who were denied the rite of burial or died an unnatural, abnormal death, were criminals or outcasts, or suffered injustice in their lifetime« (Rand 1994: 167), memory research has entangled the subject of ghosts with the historical, social, and political. Transferred conceptually from the realm of individual to collective memory, ghosts have become thoroughly social (Gordon 2008 [1997]), communal

(Brogan 1998), and public (Bergland 2000), a means to address a broad array of experiences of political violence – colonization, racial and ethnic discrimination, dictatorship, state terror, war, social and cultural exclusion, forced disappearance – allowing their disturbing aftereffects to be traced in contemporary realities (Gordon 2008 [1997]; Assmann 2011, 2014; Brogan 1998; Blazan 2008; Etkind 2013; Schindel 2014; Bergland 2000). Critiquing existing structures of knowledge that remain blind to the continuous, if unobtrusive, agency of the past, the engagement with ghosts has exposed the very notion of linear and progressive history as contingent on, produced within, and sustaining specific relations of power. As the lingering traces of historically situated instances of violence, especially those that operate beneath the surface of received (dominant) narratives of the past, ghosts make visible the processes of erasure, repression, and marginalization that constitute a seemingly shared history. But, within this »unfinished business« model of haunting, they also demand redress: justice, proper burial, memory, ›truth‹, or healing.

And yet, it is precisely the particular historicity and sociality of ghosts that demands that each one be approached in its specificity – an intuition conveyed in Alicja's differentiation between the numerous ghosts haunting her Polish hometown and their varying abilities to threaten or console, to be seen by her and others. Accordingly, we ought to apply existing theoretical and analytical models with caution. Already in his pioneering article on the spectral turn, Luckhurst argues against the all-encompassing dynamics of the turn and the »generalizable economy of haunting« (2002: 534) and calls for attention to be paid to the particularity of ghosts. Similarly, the authors of *Spectralities Reader* (Del Pilar Blanco/Peeren 2013b) propose that spectral readings should be differentiated and multiplied, and that they acknowledge the contextual differences in the backgrounds of the ghosts they fathom so that the spectral turn may retain its explanatory force. Existing theoretical frameworks, they posit, can conceal rather than illuminate the complex reality of ghosts, especially when projected onto other empirical contexts.

There is, after all, an essential difference between ghosts that arrive to solve some unfinished business by telling their stories and those who seek bloody revenge. Reactions to the presence of ghosts can also vary dramatically: some ghosts are feared, others long awaited; some are intentionally summoned, others exorcised or chased away. If the specificity of ghosts demands new theoretical models, so too does the material reality of haunting.

Accounting for the generative loci of ghosts becomes the most sensitive response to the *how* and *why* of their presence. And it is precisely the fact that »not all ghosts are the same«, and that they »can have various functions, meanings, powers and effects, depending on their precise characteristics, context and name« (Peeren 2014: 12), that generates innovative theoretical framings, which in turn create the spectral turn, and not the other way around.[3] This pertains also to the turn proclaimed in this volume: gathering divergent voices and analytical slants on Jewish ghosts in Poland, it argues that ghosts require readings resonant with, and giving justice to, their spatio-temporal, representational, and political specificity.

In this specificity rests the original contribution of this book to the broader landscape of contemporary theorizations of ghosts and haunting – in its attentiveness to a particular type of ghost, the Jewish ghost in post-Holocaust Poland, constructed through a situated theoretical lens. The way this task is undertaken varies across chapters, depending on the disciplinary and analytical positionality of the authors. Alina Molisak moves beyond or below dominant theorizations of ghosts and haunting to account for the particular cultural and religious traditions from which these ghosts emanate: a specific tapestry of Polish Romantic and Jewish tradition, translating into an aesthetic and ethical project of mediumship and mediumistic writing, of speaking with and on behalf of the dead. Aleksandra Ubertowska and Roma Sendyka locate their examination in the specificity of the Holocaust, and entangle ghosts with its troubled spatialities and materialities in Poland, and with questions

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3   Interestingly, the metacritical distance to the language of »turns«, which I share
     with Peeren and del Pilar Bianco, is rendered operational, in their view, through
     the very figure of the ghost, whose uneasy ontological status and unsettling un-
     predictability mirror the destabilized structure of the strong humanistic paradigm.
     In this way, the ghost can provide a model for a differently constructed weak par-
     adigmatic coup in humanistic reflection. »The ghost […] could inaugurate an al-
     ternative logic of the turn as something not necessarily definitive or revolutionary
     in the sense of radically new. Instead of demanding a distancing, the twists and
     turns of haunting manifest as a layering, a palimpsestic thinking together, simul-
     taneously, rather than thinking against or after. […] The spectral turn may be read
     as a turn to the spectral, but also as the spectralization of the turn – its unmooring
     from defined points of departure, notions of linear progress, and fixed destina-
     tions.« (Del Pilar Blanco/Peeren 2013b: 32)

around the aesthetic and affective, posed from post-anthropocentric positions. The remaining chapters engage directly with the political particularity of Jewish ghosts and the role they have come to play in the Polish post-Holocaust imaginaire: Why do these ghosts appear (today)? What functions do they perform, and in whose interest? Whom do they haunt, why, and to what effect? What does their presence say about contemporary memory and identity work and about shifting cultural attitudes to the Holocaust? What do we stand to gain or lose from the unfolding of the spectral turn in contemporary Poland?

These questions are all the more pertinent in the Polish context, because those ghosts, indeed, differ considerably from other haunting figures running through the globalized spectral turn. Elsewhere, there is a straightforward link between the ghosts of minority groups – who use haunting to reclaim their collective past, rendered invisible by the dominant culture – and social and political critique. In Poland, by contrast, the ghosts belong to multiple groups laying claim to victimization, some of which themselves othered and victimized Jews. Thus the link between haunting and critique is troubled, if not reversed, in the case of the ghosts of Jews in Poland, who fell victim to German genocidal violence but were, too, subject to exclusion, discrimination, and violent dispossession by Poles. Against the field's conceptual neglect of, even blindness to, the experiences of anyone other than the victims, this book examines instances of haunting along collectivized, exclusionary lines, thus providing a passageway to (or a projection of) the obliterated experience of the Other. It is for this reason that, throughout the introduction, I use the terms Poles/Polish and Jews/Jewish. It is possible to resort to framings such as Polish Jews or Jewish and non-Jewish Poles, and, in this way, to evince the non-essentialist, civic definitions of national belonging. The terms ›Jews‹ and ›Poles‹, instead, give voice to dominant and deeply internalized exclusionary national self-definitions of non-Jewish Poles. As Henryk Grynberg bluntly puts it, not without irony, in *Monolog polsko-żydowski* [Polish-Jewish Monolog, 2003: 48], »In Poland, a Pole is not one who considers themselves a Pole, but one who is considered to be a Pole. Equally, a Jew is not someone who considers themselves a Jew, but who is considered a Jew. And under no circumstances can one be the one and the other.« The same logic, it seems, pertains to Jewish ghosts.

The otherness of Jewish ghosts, performatively established in *Dark, Almost Night*, along with many other works contributing to the spectral turn in

Poland, and interpretively unpacked in the chapters gathered in this volume, has its roots, of course, in the reality of the living, predating the Holocaust, shaping its aftermath, and cutting deep into the contemporary moment (Cała 1995 [1992], 2012; Michlic 2006; Banasiewicz-Ossowska 2007; Jeziorski 2009; Janicka/Żukowski 2016; Matyjaszek 2018). A growing body of research has exposed the scale and scope of prewar antisemitism, the complicity of Poles in the Holocaust, and the dynamics of anti-Jewish violence in its aftermath, all of which have contributed to a virtual absence of Jewish communities in contemporary Poland (Gross 2001 [2006], 2006; Engelking 2003, 2011; Grabowski 2004, 2013 [2011]; Tokarska-Bakir 2018; Engelking/Grabowski 2018; Żukowski 2018). The turbulent debates surrounding historical discoveries of the last decades that challenge established readings of the positionality of Poles vis-à-vis the Jewish minority and, more specifically, the Holocaust (Forecki 2010, 2018; Polonsky/Michlic 2004; Tokarska-Bakir 2004; Gross 2014; Janicka 2014-15), constitute a natural background for the readings of the Jewish ghosts in this volume. The book engages, too, with the interest in the history and culture of Jews in Poland that has been growing since 1989 (Gruber 2002; Meng 2011; Lehrer 2013; Lehrer/Meng 2015; Waligórska 2013), in tension but also in uneasy correspondence with the post-1989 surge of ethnonationalism. It is important to note the continued popularity and political legitimacy in Poland of nationalism, antisemitism, and violent and exclusionary cultural mechanisms, evidenced by the government enacting criminal sanctions for statements implying Polish participation in the Holocaust, by anti-refugee protesters burning an effigy of a Jew, and by many subtler everyday practices and discourses (Wiszniewicz 1997; Zgliczyński 2008; Cała 2012; Keff 2013; Forecki 2018).

The question about how the contemporary »haunted moment« figures in this complex cultural and political configuration underlies this book and constitutes a subject of dialog between the chapters. While all, in one way or another, address the historical dynamics of othering, discrimination, and violence that affected (and constructed) Jews in Poland, the authors differ in their readings of the substance, ›origins‹, and cultural and political work performed by the Jewish ghosts: Are they markers of intensified sensitivity of exceptional individuals such as Alicja in *Dark, Almost Night*? Do they signify a transformative readiness to embrace Jewish otherness and rework exclusionary constructions of ›Polishness‹? Are they figures of guilt and/or

regret? Of traumatic memory? Or, conversely, do they speak to the haunting continuity of othering and violence – *as in life, so in death*?

The »Spectral Turn«: Jewish Ghosts in the Polish Post-Holocaust Imaginaire accounts for the many voices and understandings of the complex, evasive reality of ghosts in Poland. Moreover, this introduction, and indeed the rest of the book, is organized so as to reflect shifting trajectories in the production of, and interpretive involvement with, Jewish ghosts in Poland: from engagements with the representational, aesthetic, and affective politics of ghosts to their particular political positioning; from readings locating ghosts in the broader horizon of Holocaust art, literature, and theory to theorizations developed from within the empirical and material reality of haunting. This organization works along a specific analytical directionality – towards an understanding of ghosts that disentangles them from questions of *memory* and *trauma* and entangles them directly with questions of *order*, *power*, and *hegemony*. The next section examines the position of Jewish ghosts on the map of concepts and approaches constructing the Holocaust and its aftereffects as a source of ghosts – whether they haunt in Poland or elsewhere. I draw from a body of work that articulates the recent upsurge of Holocaust-related ghosts in the trauma-theoretical framework that constitutes a background for Polish readings of the Jewish ghosts through conceptual lenses of (post)memory and trauma. From there, working closely with contributions by Konrad Matyjaszek, Elżbieta Janicka and Tomasz Żukowski, and myself, I propose a different reading of Jewish ghosts, one attuned to power relations underlying and shaping the ghostly presence, and the structural continuity of those power relations through the present day.

GHOSTLY AFTERLIVES OF THE HOLOCAUST

The history of ghosts roaming literature, and their cultural role as a literary or narrative device is long. Introduced to cause surprise, fear, or doubt, to signal hesitation or incredulity, their presence has traditionally been associated with a set of reading and writing protocols and a cluster of thematic concerns distinctive to certain literary and filmic modes or genres: the gothic and neo-gothic, magic realism, and horror (Del Pilar Bianco 2012: 22). As figurations of the clash and/or of the blurring of boundaries between the real and the supernatural, the mimetic and imaginary, ghosts have been read as

markers of – but have also been confined to – specific literary and representational traditions, often established as escapist, popular, ›low‹. It was a (re)theorization of ghosts through the broader problem of representation and representability, thinkability and unthinkability, and the ethical implications of the project of discursively and imaginatively framing the Holocaust, that led to the emergence of ghostly figures in Holocaust writing, to which it had remained, for a long time, largely immune.

After all, as the recent publication *The Fantastic in Holocaust Literature and Film* (Kerman/Browning 2015) reminds us, the »move away from the tradition of documentary realism that has so long dominated artistic responses to the Holocaust« (Wolfe 2015: 8) and the resulting attempt to embrace explicitly fictional strategies is a relatively new phenomenon. At first, this development drew fierce and discouraging criticism, and it still attracts some disapproval today. Nevertheless, over the last two or three decades, objections against figurative and imaginative engagements with the Holocaust – famously raised by Berel Lang and Elie Wiesel – have gradually lost their ability to »police generic and aesthetic boundaries within Holocaust literature«, as nicely phrased by Paul Eisenstein (2015: 85). It has become a prevalent strategy in Holocaust representation to break free, structurally and semantically, from the ›mimetic obligation‹. The multitude of Jewish ghosts that appears in contemporary Polish novels, films, and dramas finds its share of unreal, magical, and fantastic counterparts within the vast realm of international Holocaust cultural production. Let it suffice to mention W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* (1997), Joseph Skibell's *Blessing on the Moon* (1997), David Grossman's *See Under: Love* (2002 [1986]), and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated* (2002).

The aesthetic turn towards supernatural codes and the experimentation with formal strategies and thematic motifs in antirealist fiction is, according to some scholars, dictated by the nature of the events to which they respond. Ghosts are complex articulations of the cultural and historical specificity of the realities with which they engage. In *A Fantastic Tale of Terror*, Kirsten Mahlke points out the structural correspondence between the »fantastic reality« of state terror in 1970s-1980s Argentina, responsible for the production of the ghostly figure of the disappeared, and the uncanniness inscribed in every effort to translate the experience into realistic representations (2012: 195-212). The fantastic narrative – conceptualized through Tzvetan Todorov's seminal work *The Fantastic* (1975 [1970]) – is, in Mahlke's view,

better suited than any other representational mode to conveying the reality of long-lasting terror and the perpetuated lack of closure caused by enforced disappearance. Anne Hegerfeldt, making a clear connection between aesthetic recourse to the codes of the supernatural and the empirical realities of man-made violence, locates the experience of the Second World War, and specifically of the Holocaust, at the center of this phenomenon (2005: 56-61). After the Holocaust, Hegerfeldt claims, »reality itself has become incredible, inconceivable, fantastic«:

In supernaturalizing cruel events, the texts express a stunned incredulity about the state of the world, implying that the idea of such things actually happening exceeds – or should exceed – the human imagination. […] Therefore, far from denying the reality of such events, the fantastic tone conveys a heightened sense of despair over the fact that, tragically, they are only all too possible. (Hegerfeldt 2005: 61)

Although rarely acknowledged to date, the articulation of the »stunned incredulity about the state of the world«, in fact, predates fictionalized engagements with the Holocaust and permeates the corpus of survivors' testimonies, which often resort to the unreal and the ghostly as a way of conveying an immediate experiential and affective response to the war and the postwar reality. The language of haunting pervades many accounts in which Jewish survivors narrate their wartime fates as well as their encounters with destroyed homes and vacated ghettos, their estranged and de-realized sense of haunting (dis)continuity in the old urban spaces immediately after the Holocaust. These accounts give voice to the depth of alienation felt by the survivors, their intense loneliness, their despair in the face of the irreversibility of the damage, the sensation of »surrounding strangeness« accompanying visits to »cities without Jews« described by Yekhiel Kirshnbaum (1998: 261), the numbing »astonishment and horror« translated into the sense of sheer absurdity recounted by Jacob Pat (1947: 69). »Whenever you turn, there are memories and shadows of your relatives«, wrote Jakob Rosenberg (in Borzmińska 2007: 232). For Yakov Handshok, every square and every house was filled with »the terror of Jewish souls hovering in the air« (1998: 262-266).[4] The »spectralization of the real«, a term coined by Colin Davis (2007:

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4   A set of ghostly metaphors is introduced in Natalia Aleksiun's article on Jewish
     survivors in Eastern Galicia in the immediate aftermath of the war, perhaps the

101), cogently frames the particular kind of attentiveness to reality induced by loss of homes, loss of loved ones, and shattering of whole communities and ways of life that rendered post-Holocaust landscapes as unreal and inhabited by the specters of an irreversibly vanished past.

This ghostly imagery finds a counterpart in another one, also derived from Holocaust testimonies, that depicts survivors themselves as ghosts, the living dead. In her contribution to this volume, Molisak writes of Jewish survivors as »hovering between life and death«, casting the post-Holocaust subjectivity as inherently marked and haunted by death – of others and of oneself. This condition is rooted in the paradoxical ontological status of those doomed to extermination yet living on, in the experience of the Holocaust as a passage through one's own death, so powerfully described by Jean Amery (1980 [1966]: 3). But haunting also speaks to the »radical difference« and »inaccessibility« of survivors' experiences (Molisak), which exceed our, and their, imagination; to the burden of carrying within them their own liminal experiences and the experiences of those who did not return; and to the ›impossible‹ status of the subject. This dual status of Holocaust survivors – doomed to being ghostly by the groundlessness of their own survival and simultaneously inhabited by the ghosts of others – found its way into the writings of Amery, Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Jorge Semprun, and also Henryk Grynberg and Hanna Krall (whose prose Molisak analyzes). Elsewhere, Alexandra Ubertowska introduced the notion of auto(tanato)graphy to capture the specificity of such auto›bio‹graphical writing, locating at its core the experience (or fiction) of one's death, which transforms the subject into a »specter, ghost, ›hologram‹ of the author-survivor« (2014: 76), who never (fully) returns from the camps, killing sites, forest, or hiding place. This mode of writing, too, predates contemporary imaginary engagements with the Holocaust; it articulates, moreover, the experience of its direct and immediate victims and conveys their despair, trauma, loss, and grief.

The translation of this mode of writing into imaginative framing of the Holocaust has taken place in the works of the second and third generation of descendants of Holocaust victims. Not experienced directly but rather mediated through inherited stories and images, through one's own sensitivities and affects, the trauma of the Holocaust has become the subject of

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first to explicitly embrace ghosts in theorizing the experiences of those who survived the Holocaust (2013).

»postmemory«, as theorized by Marianne Hirsch (2008; 2012): a memory inherently vicarious, inventive, and diasporic, oscillating around the absent and inaccessible. Postmemory is articulated, first and foremost, on a personal level, in physical and imaginative acts of return performed by relatives of survivors to the sites of former Jewish life. Driven by a nostalgic longing for familial pasts and »desire for roots«, as is famously the case in Hirsch and Leo Spitzer's *Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory* (2011), these ›returns‹, too, cast post-Holocaust landscapes as haunted (cf. Hirsch/Miller 2011; Ubertowska and Sendyka in this volume). In this case, it is not the arrival at the limits of imagination that the victims experienced, so much as the »haunting continuity« of irrevocably transformed ancestral hometowns, »emanating both seductive recollections of lost home and frightening reminders of persecution and displacement« (Hirsch/Spitzer 2010: xx), that populates post-Holocaust landscapes with ghosts; in this case, ghosts speak, too, of loss, grief, and transgenerational transmission of trauma.[5]

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5 In her contribution to this volume, Sendyka reminds the reader about another ghostly dimension identified by Hirsch and Spitzer – the postmemorial returnees themselves figure as ghosts to the members of the local, non-Jewish population. In *Ghosts of Home*, Hirsch and Spitzer write that visitors »like us, searching for traces of this history, appeared like ghostly revenants or haunting reminders of a forgotten world: we unsettled the present by refusing to allow the past to disappear into oblivion« (2010: xx). In Sendyka's interpretation, this insight foregrounds the role of descendants and researchers (Hirsch and Spitzer are both), or perhaps anyone affected by the Holocaust, as »screens for spectral existence« carrying within themselves the ghosts of the dead. We are dealing here with a postmemorial reproduction of the dynamics described by Molisak (survivors haunted by the ghosts of those who did not survive), often theorized in the scholarship on the transgenerational transmission of trauma (cf., for instance, Schwab 2010). I place emphasis instead on the dynamics of othering and belonging conveyed by the quote. The postmemorial returnees position themselves against non-Jewish residents of the town who refuse to remember its Jewish past. In my contribution to this volume, without referring to *Ghosts of Home*, I expand on this idea, framing the figure of the living Jew returning to the hometown of her ancestors not so much, or not only, as a threat to actively embraced forgetting, but as a threatening Other willing to reclaim her misappropriated property – as a double of the figure of the Jewish ghost in Poland.

The literary and artistic incarnations of this postmemorial sensitivity, too, revolve around the notion that although the experience of the Holocaust remains unknowable, stories can imaginatively approximate and respond to the trauma it inflicted. In this vein, Anne Whitehead frames post-Holocaust literary encounters with the ghostly and the fantastic in the generic terms of »trauma fiction« (2004), thereby transgressing the *either/or* logic of the realist/antirealist debate around the problem of the (un)representability of the Holocaust.[6] For Whitehead, it is precisely the suspension between the real and imaginary introduced by ghost stories and fantastic occurrences that best speaks to the elusive nature of traumatic experience. Building upon the psychoanalytic insights of Cathy Caruth (1996) and Dominick LaCapra (1998, 2014 [2001]), she interprets the haunting quality of spatial and temporal disruptions pervading Sebald's *Austerlitz* or Michael's *Fugitive Pieces* as exemplary literary devices aimed at »mimicking […] forms and symptoms [of trauma]« (Whitehead 2004: 3).

Whitehead's reading offers a novel analytical response to the ever-increasing movement away from documentary realism and towards traumatic realism in fictionalized survivors' accounts and in works of the second and third generations. In *Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature: Troping the Traumatic Real*, Jenni Adams (2011) goes further, examining the emergence of a diverse and thoroughly international corpus of Holocaust literature, captured through the conceptual frame of magic realism. Defined broadly in terms of the coexistence of two incompatible or contradictory ontological codes – whereby the latter (magic) serves as an essential, though often subversive, counterpart of the former (real) – the magic realist mode of narration epitomizes, according to Adams, the problems faced when approaching the Holocaust in the »post-testimonial era«:

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6   An in-depth and already classic investigation of the various facets of realism and antirealism in Holocaust studies is found in Michael Rothberg's *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (2000). In the same book, Rothberg proposes an original category of »traumatic realism« in reference to testimonial literature. Its transfer to the realm of postmemorial fiction is crucial for both Whitehead and Jenni Adams.

The very contradiction inherent in the magic realist ontological dynamics – the irruption of the unreal into a historically embedded and ontologically realist frame – necessarily problematizes issues of history, language, and reference. (Adams 2011: 21)

As such, it yields a particularly productive narrative and imaginary apparatus for the representatives of second or third generations struggling to come to terms with the traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors – experiences which they themselves were obviously spared. From this perspective, the turn towards the unreal, the supernatural, and the magical, though traditionally associated with escapist trajectories in literature, facilitates in the novels of Foer, D.M. Thomas, and Andre Schwarz-Bart a critical narrative and dialogical self-positioning towards the »postmemorial other« (Adams 2011: 73). Imaginative investments – drawing from Jewish folk mythology, fairy tales, or the grotesque – mediate and negotiate encounters with the (inaccessible) reality of trauma.

Conceived as culturally and historically specific modes of Holocaust representation, both trauma fiction and magic realist Holocaust narratives, as conceptualized by Adams, share a common ›traumatic core‹ not only with the extensive body of Holocaust cinema – which for some time now has embraced the fantastic, magical, unreal, absurd, and grotesque as representational codes (cf. Elm/Kabalek/Köhne 2014; Kerman/Browning 2015) – but also with a broader corpus of contemporary literary works. In a recent publication, *Haunted Narratives: Life Writing in an Age of Trauma* (Rippl et al. 2013), the proliferation of trauma narratives permeated by »uncanny phenomena, personified or atmospheric« (Kriss 2013: 21) is ascribed, on the one hand, to the violent legacy of the 20th century, and, on the other, to the workings of the transgenerational transmission of trauma (cf. Fuchs 2010). This understanding of trauma as more than a purely individual psychological category – characteristic also of the above-mentioned readings by Hirsch, Whitehead, and Adams – allows the authors to establish an uneasy link between the aftereffects of political violence and their mediations in a range of cultural representations.

This trajectory resonates, in fact, with broader theoretical figurations of the Holocaust as a cultural and historical trauma that resists incorporation into the realm of perception and representation (cf., for instance, Caruth 1996; Felman/Laub 1992; LaCapra 1998; 2014 [2001]; Rothberg 2000). The discourse of loss, grief, and trauma, employed to articulate the complex

experiences of Holocaust survivors and their immediate descendants, translates into redefinitions of the larger cultural landscape. Intimately entwined with the issues of thinkability, imaginability, and representation, this discourse gives voice to the shattering of a wider universe of meaning. It describes the »spectralization of the real« that undermines, or altogether destroys, existing modes of ordering the world and defies traditional attempts at narration and representation. But theorization of the Holocaust as a cultural and historical trauma also speaks to a deep crisis of confidence – on the existential, ethical, and political plane – in the validity and durability of any intransgressible frames of permissibility/impermissibility with respect to the human animal, which were so dramatically breached during the Second World War and the Holocaust. In this, the (often contested) diagnoses of the irrevocability of disturbance in the political, moral, symbolic, and aesthetic order(s) brought about by the Holocaust, cast the world after the Holocaust as inherently post-traumatic (LaCapra 2014 [2001]: 115). LaCapra, who casts this post-traumatic condition as a structural condition of contemporary culture and an ethical imperative, writes:

In more metaphoric terms, one might suggest that the ghosts of the past – symptomatic revenants who have not been laid to rest because of disturbance in the symbolic order, a deficit in the ritual process, or a death so extreme in its unjustifiability or transgressiveness that in certain ways it exceeds existing modes (perhaps any possible mode) of mourning – roam the post-traumatic world and are not entirely ›owned‹ as ›one's own‹ by any individual or group. If they haunt a house (a nation, a group), they come to disturb all who live – perhaps even pass through – that house. How to come to terms with them affects different people or groups in significantly different ways. (LaCapra 2014 [2001]: 215)

Bridging cultural theory and the procession of literary, cinematic, and artistic ghosts and »uncanny phenomena«, LaCapra's metaphor entails a broadening of the impact of the Holocaust beyond survivors and their immediate descendants; the trauma is, as it were, democratized. In this way, the postmemorial paradigm expands to analytically cover a broader body of work and cultural production: across cultures, nations and groups, the trauma of the Holocaust and the disturbance or shattering of the symbolic order find articulation in the codes of the ghostly, the unreal, and the supernatural.

This assertion runs through several chapters collected in this volume. In her contribution, Ubertowska constructs a number of contemporary Polish novels populated with Jewish ghosts as instances of post-traumatic literature operating through a variety of spectrological tropes and motifs. Although Ubertowska focuses her analysis on another set of works, including the paintings of a Polish Jewish artist and Holocaust survivor and Jonasz Stern and Zygmunt Miłoszewski's literary thriller *Ziarno Prawdy* [The Grain of Truth, 2011], and employs Derridean conceptualizations of haunting (far removed from those proposed by LaCapra or Hirsch), the trauma-theoretical paradigm remains the underlying premise. It extends to the field of critical theory adopting a »spectral lens« on the Holocaust, to artistic practice struggling with and against intimate experiences of violence and dehumanization, and to recent Polish literature dealing with the persistence of antisemitic prejudices, unpacked by Ubertowska through notions of anachrony, seriality, materiality, and post-anthropocentric assemblage. Sendyka, too, characterizes the generalized trauma of the Holocaust as a syndrome whose effects are felt across national and cultural lines. Drawing from affect theory and the post-anthropocentric paradigm, she grounds her argument in what LaCapra frames as a »deficit in the ritual process«: the presence and affective resonance of human remains not naturalized by burial and active remembrance (at the former Nazi camps in Poland and in the cities destroyed during the war) inform a body of contemporary Polish literature and art, and translate into various scenarios of haunting and encounters with Jewish ghosts. It is only at the end of her chapter that she asks the reader to consider whether there is a difference between the postmemory of the descendants of the victims and that of their Polish counterparts.

This question is implied in LaCapra's framing of the post-Holocaust world as post-traumatic: the ghosts are not »owned«, he writes, but affect different groups or nations differently. This is perhaps best articulated in the recent scholarship on the ›German trauma‹ of the Holocaust and its ghostly afterlives. It rests on recourse to the concept of *Tätertrauma* – the trauma of the perpetrators (Giesen/Schneider 2004) – employed to convey the essential difference between the trauma of Nazism's victims and the psychological, cultural, and political effects of the Second World War on non-Jewish Germans, especially those effects that resulted from involvement in the extermination of Jews. In the words of Andreas Kraft, who traces its spectral aftereffects in contemporary German fiction,

the collective perpetrators' trauma differs from the victims' trauma insofar as it is not brought about by the existentially threatening experience of mortality: the perpetrator is […] traumatized by their very deed, when in retrospect they realize that the act performed in an exercise of sovereign authority to exert power is, in reality, a crime. (2014: 154)

The shattering of the symbolic order lays bare the crime for what it really is and results in a »stunned incredulity« about oneself and the order that rendered the »deed« permissible and legitimate. And yet, argues Kraft, this has never been the experience of the immediate perpetrators of the Holocaust, who remain unable to see their deeds from the fundamentally altered cultural and political framework embraced by subsequent generations. Consequently, their descendants must also operate within a cultural universe haunted by the legacies and residues of National Socialism (and its configurations of power), which for decades were subjected to silencing and othering, and externalized by the demonizing of individual perpetrators. In this case, transgenerational transmission implies the inheritance of an excess of structural dynamics of violence one cannot and does not want to accommodate. The trauma of the perpetrators reverberates as a trauma that is not.[7]

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7   In their classic work, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (1975 [1967]), psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich provide a different conceptualization of German trauma, locating it in the war defeat and Hitler's death, the loss of a strong structuring figure. Yet another interpretation is offered by Gabriele Schwab (2010), who adopts the theory of the transgenerational phantom proposed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1986 [1976]; 1994 [1978]). Schwab writes about traumatic secrecy resulting from the German perpetrators' repression or denial of crimes, covering up of shame, disregarding their own inhumanity, and »emotional silencing of the Holocaust« (2010: 17). The ghostly economy of traumatic secrecy, she asserts, operates not only within familial frameworks but also at the level of the cultural unconscious; the encrypted trauma of the Holocaust, just like passed-down family secrets, lives on through phantoms haunting individuals, public life, and the practices of transgenerational writing. Here, paradoxically, it is the fact that the Holocaust has not shattered the symbolic order but remains the subject of repression that invests it with a traumatizing potential.

Magdalena Waligórska's contribution to this volume explores the distinctive ›Polish trauma‹ of the Holocaust. Ascribing the fantastic, uncanny, and grotesque in Polish cultural production to a collective trauma, she asserts that this trauma »is not that of Holocaust survivors, but one derived from what we could term a ›postmemory of witnesses‹, and is a specifically Polish one«. The forms this postmemory takes (as per Sendyka's rhetorical enquiry) are bound to reflect, therefore, the distinctive position occupied by Poles vis-à-vis the Holocaust, established here as that of witness or bystander (more on this below). Locating her reflection in the context of recent historical debates pertaining to the involvement of Poles in the genocidal violence and dispossession of the Jews, Waligórska acknowledges that the Polish postmemory of the Holocaust differs from the postmemory of the victims' descendants. The Jewish ghosts in Poland, she argues, speak of the shame and guilt embraced by (some) Poles after the 1989 transition, on the one hand, and, on the other, they articulate anxieties of the majority about the fate of properties misappropriated during the war (Grabowski/Libionka 2014; Leder 2014). But they also heal, absolve, and offer redemption, allowing those sentiments to be domesticated or put to rest. While the content of Polish postmemory is cast as contextual and specific, the structure through which it operates mirrors that of Jewish traumatic inheritance. Waligórska bases her argument on Hirsch's assertion, which establishes postmemory as a »structure of transmission« and not an »identity position« (Hirsch 2008: 114) – in other words, if descendants of victims inherit trauma from their ancestors, this can also take place in other transgenerational contexts.

But the indiscriminate transfer of the Holocaust-related notion of trauma and postmemory to other contexts, including post-Holocaust Germany and Poland, is a subject of growing concern and criticism. This resonates in Kraft's interpretation of *Tätertrauma* as uninheritable because of its deficiency. Gabriele Schwab, too, in her *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, expresses some unease about applying the trauma-theoretical framework to the legacy of perpetrators: »[…] there seems to be something almost obscene in discourse that looks at the effects of the war and the Holocaust on Germans in terms of trauma«, she notes (2010: 13). While Schwab manages to overcome her unease (redirecting the concept so as to address the defensive silencing of the Holocaust in German culture), this seems increasingly difficult for scholars working in the Polish context; Janicka is its most pronounced critic (Janicka 2014-15; cf.

Chmielewska 2016; Matyjaszek in this volume). The resistance against traumatic readings cuts, here, across epistemological, ethical, and political planes. In metatheoretical terms, it corresponds to broader objections against framing historical processes in a category of trauma that leads to their dehistorization and depoliticization: the magnetization of trauma by discourses of unrepresentability, unthinkability, and unimaginability relegates to the background the historical and contextual, the political and the social (cf. Bevernage 2012; Craps 2010).

But this resistance to talking about Polish trauma of the Holocaust also more narrowly reflects a growing body of research on the Polish realities of the Holocaust and its symbolic, cultural, and political ›effects‹ on Poles – findings that plead for critical revision of received concepts and theories, for attunement to their ability to conceal rather than to illuminate, to their capacity to exclude, marginalize, or invisibilize (and, thus, to produce a new set of ghosts). Janicka and Matyjaszek (who draws from Janicka in his contribution to this volume) base their criticism on the dominant conceptualizations of this trauma as a »trauma of the witness«. It is in these terms that Raul Hilberg's notion of bystandership, appurtenant to the victim-perpetrator-bystander triad (1992), was received in Poland. In recent years, also this figure of the passive, disengaged, indifferent witness/bystander (Błoński 2008 [1987]) has been denounced in light of research on dominant attitudes towards the Jews and wartime anti-Jewish violence, which cut deep into the postwar period in Poland (Gross 2014; Janicka 2014-15).

Yet, paradoxically, it was precisely the reality of postwar violence and the question of how antisemitism could have survived the Holocaust that gave rise to the first, highly influential interpretation of the Holocaust as a Polish trauma. This notion was introduced by Michael Steinlauf (1997; cf. Janicka/Steinlauf 2014-15) and testified to his struggle to accommodate the results of his research on the postwar responses to the Holocaust in Poland: the Holocaust was welcomed, cheered by some; it was blamed on the Jews; its outcomes, both material and social, appreciated; in its aftermath, people identified as Jews were still subjected to physical, symbolic, economic and structural violence; they were murdered, robbed, refused equal treatment by lower-level state administration, ostracized, and resented for being too visible in the higher echelons of power (Steinlauf 1997). This dynamic remained unchallenged and unchanged to the extent of effectively resisting the equalizing policies of the state socialist government, the first one to grant the Jews

fully equal legal status in Poland and to officially combat antisemitism.[8] Building a false symmetry between two radically different experiences of the Holocaust, Steinlauf attributed this violence to »massive, traumatic exposure to death« resulting from »witnessing« the Holocaust and the shattering of the universe of meaning (1997: 53-61). If it was not acute traumatization by the Holocaust that drove Poles to exercise violence on a radically diminished Jewish minority, then what could it be? Of course, lack of traumatization could be the answer.

But Steinlauf's conceptualization took hold of the discursive realm of Holocaust studies in Poland as a legitimate framing of the experience and positionality of witness-bystanders. With time, its empirical grounding in early postwar violence wore off, bringing the notion closer to the theorizations of post-traumatic culture as structurally affected by the Holocaust or by the transgenerational transmission of trauma (cf. Bojarska 2007; Fabiszczak/Owiński 2013; Kowalczyk 2010; Ziębińska-Witek 2011). As the idea migrated, the factual contours and contents of the Polish experience of the Holocaust often could not bear the weight of trauma constructed as a disturbance in the symbolic order or as a structure of inheritance. The experience of the Holocaust lost its historical complexity and specificity. It is clear and ›commonsense‹ that the Poles were traumatized, but less clear what they were traumatized by. The Holocaust mutated into an empty signifier of ›trauma‹.

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8   The last statement does not belong to Steinlauf's argumentative repertoire – in fact, he sees the imposition of state socialist rule as a major obstacle on the road to accountability for this dynamic of violence (due to state-imposed repression of the memory of the Holocaust and promotion of the Polish-struggle-and-martyr-dom oriented politics of memory). But this was not necessarily the case: In the years immediately after the war, the newly established Polish government left ample room for the Jewish community to mourn and commemorate its loses (cf. Wóycicka (2013 [2009]). So when, by the late 1940s, the hegemonic narrative about the war was crystalizing – universalizing the experience of ethnic Poles and erasing the specificity of the Jewish war experience – it made political use of, and fed upon, the omnipresent popular antisemitism and the ubiquitous lack of empathy for the Jews. In the longer run, the state, viewed as alien and repressive by most Poles, also resorted to (ethno)nationalism and anti-Jewish sentiments to seek legitimacy.

Unpacking the trajectory of the concept from its inception to the present day, Matyjaszek demonstrates, therefore, that traumatic readings have the ability not only to occlude the complex reality of ghosts but also to invisibilize the continuity of cultural codes and the violent mechanism of culture that stood behind Polish involvement in the Holocaust and postwar violence, and that still reverberate in divergent realms of cultural (and knowledge) production. If the symbolic universe was not shattered, the dynamics of othering and violence, too, lives on. And it is exactly this troubling continuity – unacknowledged, silenced, often denied – and not traumatization by the Holocaust that might give rise to the ghosts haunting contemporary Poland.

FROM *POST-TRAUMATIC* TO *POST-HOLOCAUST*

The notion that haunting exposes lingering power structures, speaking to and about the effects of repressive configurations of power and exclusionary mechanisms of culture, rather than about memory and trauma, guides the Derridean reading of the specter. It has also found its way into theorizations of hegemony and normative violence proposed by Judith Butler – different from Derrida's reading but harmonizing with it nonetheless. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004; cf. 2000; 2010), Butler writes about the spectral excess that haunts cultural, and thus also epistemological and political, frames considered as »boundaries that constitute what will and what will not appear within public life, the limits of the publicly acknowledged field of appearance« (2004: xvii). Hegemony governs »what ›can‹ be heard, read, seen, felt, and known« (ibid: xx), and what will remain silent/silenced, invisible/invisibilized, unseen and unsensed, but it also fragments people into multiple identities and works through hierarchical structures that privilege some and dispossess others. In this reading, then, hegemony operates at the level of ontological claims that define what counts as reality, whose life is real and whose is not, and that sets the scene for differential valuation of human life, for exclusion and dehumanization; perhaps, the primary source of the spectral excess.

It is in these terms that Butler conceptualizes normative violence cutting through the cultural but also the political, material, and affective realms: dehumanization renders certain lives unnotable, unworthy, and unreal. It produces subjectivities and subject positions that hover outside ethically,

affectively, and politically saturated frames of the thinkable and unthinkable, the permissible and impermissible. Such subjects, argues Butler, are essentially deconstituted and derealized. They are »neither alive nor dead«, they are »spectrally human« (2004: 33-34). This does not mean, however, that they altogether disappear; rather, their spectrality renders them excessive (from within the hegemonic order). As such, they are susceptible to physical, economic, structural, and symbolic violence, made thinkable, permissible, and legitimate, since harm inflicted upon a derealized life is not considered violence. In the hegemonic order, after all, this life is already established as unnotable and unworthy, as disposable (in both meanings of the term). In this way, the various wrongs and forms of violence inflicted upon those subjects merely deliver »the message of dehumanization that is already at work in the culture« (Butler 2004: 34).[9]

The dynamics of normative/conventional violence run through many, if not all, instances of political violence, and often underlie the everyday, seemingly mundane aspects of social life. It is a daily reality of dispossessed and expendable people and populations. (Butler locates it in the analytical

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9   In Poland, Butler's *Precarious Life* has been employed previously in discussions of the afterlives of the Holocaust in Polish culture, specifically the notion (un)grievability, designating some lives as worthy and some as unworthy of grieving. It is also in these terms that Grzegorz Niziołek captures the affective and symbolic economy structuring responses to the Holocaust in Polish postwar theater, writing about a grief that was not: »Mourning must assume loss, yet Polish experiences testify rather to the existence of an excess of affects, difficult to discharge, securing the impossibility of perceiving the Holocaust in terms of loss […]. [The Holocaust] did not unleash the feeling of loss and lack, but rather that of regained balance« (Niziołek 2013: 137). Here is yet another argument against considering the Polish response to the Holocaust as trauma. But Butler's conceptualization of the spectrally human could also shed new analytical light on postwar anti-Jewish violence by capturing the dynamics behind the survival of antisemitism in post-Holocaust Poland that troubled Steinlauf so much. Butler writes that, as »neither alive nor dead«, those who are unreal »have a strange way of remaining animated and need to be negated again (and again) […], since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness«. She adds: »Violence renews itself in the face of this apparent inexhaustibility of its object.« (Butler 2004: 33)

context of the so-called war on terror and other wars waged by the USA but also of exclusions still suffered by queer people and those living with HIV/AIDS; many others could be added). Like Derridean haunting, it is a generalizable social phenomenon inherent to social life, not yet ready to part with abusive systems of power. This dynamic, with important contextual and structural differences, has shaped the experiences of colonization, of slavery, of racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination across various social and political contexts, of genocides, of wars, and of state terror, producing and enacting spectrality among the living – a generative ground for contemporary ghosts.

To view those ghosts through notions of memory (and trauma), of the troubling aftereffects of suffering endured in the past, of recovered knowledge about past violence and injustices, of access to marginalized and silenced experiences of the past, is, as I have shown, predominant in cultural theory and memory studies. Yet Butler's theorization of spectrality and normative violence suggests that there might be a more complex link between the hegemonic making (and undoing) of spectralized living and the procession of ghostly figures roaming literature, art, and theory. In this view, ghosts testify to the troubling continuity of othering and dehumanization still »at work in the culture«; it is not so much an *event* (or series of events) and its immediate (and mediated) experience that give rise to the ghosts but rather the ongoing presence of the frames that effectuated – and continue to effectuate – hierarchization, exclusion, dispossession. Those frames can, and often do, outlast the context of the event and outlive the spectral humans subjected to ›conventional‹ violence; they can also be summoned, time and again, (re)invented and put to work. Thus it is not the past that produces ghosts but the present, drawing from the (unreworked and unresolved) past. It might be that colonization, slavery, and the Holocaust are historically over and denounced, but they *live on* through repressive configurations of power and violent mechanisms of culture so long as those configurations have not been revoked or transformed (cf. also Trouillout 1995: 146-147). The spectral humans become stubbornly present ghosts.

This intuition resonates, too, in Gordon's theorizations of ghosts and haunting, notwithstanding her own insistence on framing haunting in terms of memory (2008 [1997]: 22). In a work that, in its own way, brought ghosts back to the field of the human and social sciences, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and Sociological Imagination*, Gordon locates the ghost, again

constructed as a social force, in the horizon of modernity and its forms of violence (slavery, torture, forced disappearance, capitalist exploitation). Haunting, of which the ghost is »empirical evidence« (Gordon 2008 [1997]: 8), is given many names in the book: it is an experiential modality, a particular mediation, memory and countermemory, a cultural experience, a »sensuous knowledge«, a structure of feeling. But what we also learn about ghosts is that they »hate new things« (ibid: xix), that they cling to the conditions that gave rise to them, that they are not of the past at all but of the present. Haunting, writes Gordon, »is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in the everyday, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance) or when their oppressive nature is denied […]« (ibid: xvi). She adds:

Ghosts are characteristically attached to the events, things, and places that produced them in the first place; by nature they are haunting reminders of lingering trouble. Ghosts hate new things precisely because once the conditions that call them up and keep them alive have been removed, their reason for being and their power to haunt are severely restricted. (Gordon 2008 [1997]: xix)

If it is not memory (and trauma) that produces ghosts but the unacknowledged or denied durability of cultural, political, and economic configurations, orders, and frames, then ghosts require a different set of readings – sometimes critical *re*readings of their existing and obdurate framings. This is the task I undertake in my contribution to this volume, which opens the section in which Jewish ghosts haunting contemporary Poland are reconfigured through notions of order, hegemony, and power, loosening links with the postmemorial paradigm. Following Gordon, but also engaging polemically with certain assertions underlying her conceptualization of ghosts and haunting, I ask what exactly it means for ghosts to haunt, and whether all ghosts are, in fact, invested with this ability. Are ghosts indeed the »empirical evidence« that haunting is taking place? Or, instead, can the »conditions that call them up and keep them alive« also restrict their power? This power is, in *Ghostly Matters*, associated with the ability to intervene in and refashion the hegemonic order within which the haunting unfolds. Observing that ghosts have varying capacities to haunt, I argue that their presence can just as well act as evidence of the order's strength and stability, and can even contribute to sustaining and perpetuating it. This, again, has much to do with

the contextual specificity of ghosts, as well as with the positionality of the haunted towards the ghosts and their position inside or outside the order.

My analysis centers on a particular type of ghost – the figure of the dybbuk, a possessive spirit from Jewish mythology – in its various artistic, literary, and cinematic renditions in Poland since the late 1980s. I look, specifically, at Andrzej Wajda's 1988 staging of a classic of prewar Yiddish theatre, An-Sky's *Dybbuk*, at its 2003 reinterpretation by Krzysztof Warlikowski, and, finally, at Marcin Wrona's movie *Demon* (2015). My reading aims to challenge the firmly established framing of the dybbuk (as much by the authors themselves as by the critics of their work) as a figure of memory, in particular of Polish memory about Jews, and moreover memory cast as traumatic; a figure that bridges the impassable hiatus between presence and absence, present and past, living and dead, but also Self and Other.[10] Instead, returning to the meaning of the figure predating, and subversively challenging, its appropriated Polish readings through the notions of memory and trauma, I situate the dybbuk in the frame of a tale about a temporarily threatened but almost invariably restored order. In this frame, the question of power relations between the living and the ghosts becomes central, along with means to appraise the ghosts' transformative force: Do Polish dybbuks unveil or disavow, perpetuate or transform configurations and orders that called them into being? Has a dybbuk instantiating change arrived in Poland or is it still to come?

The interpretive direction closely binding the proliferation of Jewish ghosts in Poland with normative, hegemonic violence and with its unacknowledged and denied durability is even more pronounced in Matyjaszek's chapter. Although he does not refer to Butler but to Derrida, he traces the ghosts back to repressive ideologies that produced them and force them to reappear. Matyjaszek applies Derrida's notion of hegemony and spectrality to capture the dynamics of Polish national(ist) identity politics after the 1989 transition to a market economy – structured around capitalism,

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10 The figure of the dybbuk runs, too, through Molisak's contribution to this volume. Her interpretation has a different directionality to mine and establishes the dybbuk as a figure of mediumistic writing performed by Polish Jewish authors, Krall and Grynberg, themselves survivors of the Holocaust. In this, it also differs from the conceptualizations constructing the dybbuk as a figure of Polish memory about Jews.

Catholicism, anti-communism, and ideologies of collective Polish victim-hood – and the country's repositioning in the context of European memory culture centered on the Holocaust. The non-material, bodiless »non-sub-jects«, the Jewish ghosts, the ghosts of the victims of the Holocaust, are un-derstood here, in line with Dylan Trigg's »phenomenology of ghosts« (2012), through material realities of haunting. But Matyjaszek also shifts at-tention to the question of the uses and usability of Jewish ghosts for contem-porary Polish identity work. Ghosts, he writes, are not merely products of hegemonic violence, but are also conjured up to serve the needs of those whom they come to haunt. Moreover, the stakes are high, as the ghosts are »irreplaceable for legitimizing the haunted [hegemonic] groups in their heg-emonic status«. In this reading, there is nothing transformative about Jewish ghosts. Instead, their presence casts Polish nationhood as haunted and trau-matized, and thus becomes a source of various symbolic and political gains: the invisibilization of Polish involvement in the Holocaust and in wartime and postwar dispossession of the Jews, and the authorization of particular visions of Poland and Polishness. Disposability is the ghosts' defining fea-ture.

But this disposability is cast, too, as historically and structurally grounded in the conditions producing the positionality of Jews vis-à-vis the Polish majority long before and during the Holocaust. Matyjaszek traces its origins to the dynamics of othering, exclusion, and antisemitic violence shap-ing Jewish life in Poland: the unequal access to rights, social resources, and spaces (universities, state administration, army); the direct and indirect dis-crimination; and, finally, Polish complicity in the Holocaust and violent dis-possession of the Jews during and after the war. The violent mechanisms of culture that lay down conditions for the existence (and death) of the living are perpetuated through those that form the reality of the ghosts:

The structural connection between the present appropriation of a non-corporeal ghost and the historical appropriation perpetrated on a Jewish victim of antisemitic repres-sion *de facto* make the contemporary summoning of victims' ghosts an uncritical reen-actment of mechanisms of violence present in former periods of Polish history, in-cluding the Holocaust itself.

Matyjaszek's interpretation speaks directly to the one proposed in the closing chapter of the volume. In a meticulous close reading of the 2008

documentary *Po-lin: Okruchy Pamięci* [Pol-lin: Scraps of Memory], Janicka and Żukowski unpack in detail how this »uncritical reenactment« is performed in a work cast, by filmmakers and reviewers alike, as a new, ›reconciliatory‹ take on the Jewish past in Poland. The acclaimed and repeatedly award-winning film, although created in the wake of historical revelations about wartime and postwar anti-Jewish violence, constructs a nostalgic account of prewar »Polish-Jewish coexistence«: contemporary Poles narrate their benevolent memories about the absent Jews, conjured up by archival footage from the 1930s. The film is populated with figurative ghosts; ghosts muted and trapped in the Polish narrative, which is selective, self-congratulatory, blind to its own violent mechanisms, and which reproduces, time and again, a hierarchical and discriminatory distribution of spaces and roles while rendering this discrimination invisible.

The conceptual lenses through which Janicka and Żukowski read *Po-lin* are »posthumous inclusion« and »philosemitic violence«, notions designed to convey the dynamics behind a broader set of discourses and practices from recent decades (cf. Janicka/Żukowski 2016). In the context of discussions about the Polish-Jewish past, these discourses and practices have attempted to reconfigure Polishness as liberal, (formerly) multicultural, and inclusive, and yet remain structurally unable to escape discriminatory frames, »sometimes despite the best intentions«. The posthumous inclusion, »which the living apply to the dead […], performed by the majority on the minority, by the group thus far excluding on the excluded group«, takes the form of philosemitic violence which casts Jewish ghosts – phantasmatized and exoticized, if not altogether invented – in roles designated by Poles. Objectifying the dead to the point where they become props for majority's identity work, we have ourselves presented and narrated back to us through the figure of the Jewish ghost.

It is in these terms that one could, in fact, reread Alicja's encounters with the Jewish ghosts in *Dark, Almost Night*. Those ghosts are summoned to differentiate Alicja from the xenophobic and nationalistic crowd, to testify to her exceptionality and empathy. This characterization is enhanced by the parallel drawn, perhaps unintentionally (which would render it even more striking), between the wartime past and the present day. The novel constructs the Jewish ghosts as victims of the Nazis, yet the relationship between Alicja and the spectral figures draws directly from the imagery of real ›encounters‹ between Poles and Jews in testimonials and historical scholarship. The

contemporary setting of the novel serves as a mirror-image of past events. Then, as now, »tormented souls« knocked on the windows and doors of Polish houses, »asking for a glass of water, piece of bread, sheet of paper, and a pencil« (Bator 2012: 87-88). Then, as now, a few particularly sensitive and courageous individuals resisted omnipresent antisemitism and extended a helping hand to Jews, who, during the Holocaust, were hunted by the Nazis but also, as we know today, were denounced and murdered by the Poles. Only a few Poles provided the persecuted Jews with food or shelter, sometimes putting their own lives at risk. Their exceptional deeds are honored by the title of the Righteous Among the Nations.

Since the late 1960s, as a cultural and political construct, the category of the Righteous has played a central role in Polish narratives about the Holocaust structured around the notion of bystandership but also of the exceptional scale of altruism on the part of Polish helpers, which is evoked to invisibilize the scope of complicity of Poles in the genocidal violence against Jews (Tokarska-Bakir 2013; Forecki 2016, 2018). Appropriating the position of a Righteous for Alicja, the novel does not critically intervene in this narrative; instead, it uses the narrative to draw distinctions between Poles along political lines (far-right versus liberal) and also along class lines: Wałbrzych is a poor, provincial, post-industrial town of the type perhaps most affected by the 1989 transition; Alicja is a journalist from the capital and, thus, enjoys a higher symbolic status. The novel thus implicates and instrumentalizes the ability or inability to see the Jewish ghosts in the processes of social and cultural hierarchization; it accounts for divisions and antagonisms that cut through Polish society in the contemporary »haunted moment«. It is not a trauma of the Holocaust that produces Jewish ghosts in *Dark, Almost Night* but their objectifying disposability, the uncritical reenactment of the »mechanisms of violence present in former periods of Polish history« and spectrality between and among the living.[11]

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11 The cultural work performed by Jewish ghosts in Bator's novel comes down to the elevating of the self-image through projected responsiveness to suffering, helplessness, vulnerability of the ghosts/the Jews. In the prose of Igor Ostachowicz (2012), Sylwia Chutnik (2014), and Andrzej Bart (2008), analyzed in other chapters of this book, Jewish ghosts, too, almost invariably rely on protection, ›hospitality‹, and care from the Poles. This translates into constraints imposed on

What insights, then, does the »spectral turn« provide into the Polish post-Holocaust imaginaire – a frame ordering what is heard, read, seen, felt, and known? Ghosts signal »lingering trouble«, argues Gordon, and thus cast the imaginaire as troubled by images, normative notions, and mechanisms of culture that render violence against the (ghostly) Other permissible and thinkable. It is in this sense that the eponymous notion of the post-Holocaust could be elevated to the level of a concept replacing those of the post-traumatic or postmemorial. The ›post‹ in LaCapra's theorization of post-traumatic culture speaks of a caesura imposed by an event that resists incorporation into the realm of perception and representation, of the shattering of the order beyond repair. But, perhaps more importantly, it speaks to continuity, to the force the experience of the event exerts on what comes afterwards, to the aftereffects, lingering traces, »haunting continuity« of trauma, rendered manifest through nightmares, flashbacks, and acting out. According to Hirsch, the ›post‹ in postmemory »signals more than a temporal delay and more than a location in an aftermath. Postmodern, for example, inscribes both a critical distance and a profound interrelation with the modern; postcolonial does not mean the end of the colonial but its troubling continuity.« (Hirsch 2008: 106) The ›post‹ does not, therefore, stand for an irreversible end but, instead, a tenacious presence of what could have been considered past but, in fact, continues to have tangible and intangible impact.

What the concept of post-Holocaust would convey, in turn, is a »troubling continuity« of longstanding, violent and violence-generating distinctions, of the dynamics of othering and exclusion not shattered by the Holocaust. But here, again, there is a lesson to be learned from the theorization of ghosts proposed by Gordon: unlike trauma, she writes, haunting is distinctive in that it unfailingly delivers a message that there is »something-to-be-done« (Gordon 2008: xvi).

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their ability to haunt. Elsewhere, I consider the potential of some of those works as a critical practice (Dziuban 2014).

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