Postmemory, Unsayability and the Return of the Auschwitz Code[1]

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His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skywards. This storm is what we call progress (Benjamin, 1999: 249).

Introduction

Giorgio Agamben (1999) begins his study of the political significance of the extermination of the Jews of Europe for contemporary society by stating that thanks to a series of rigorous studies, among which Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1979) occupies a central place, 'the problem of the historical, material, technical, bureaucratic, and legal circumstances in which the extermination of the Jews took place has been sufficiently clarified'. However, when it comes to the significance, discursive, ethical, political, moral, of the extermination, 'not only do we lack anything close to complete understanding; even the sense and reasons for the behaviour of the executioners and the victims, indeed very often their very words, still seem profoundly enigmatic' (Agamben, 1999: 11). In this introduction I add my voice to the voices of those, such as Agamben, Zygmunt Bauman, and Saul Friedländer, among others, who crave a glimpse of such understanding.

One of the central debates on the politics of Shoah representation, inspired by Theodor Adorno's (1949) (often misunderstood) dictum that writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric, and fuelled by some survivors,

who insist that only survivors are entitled to speak about the Shoah, is the question of the (im)possibility of speech, or discourse, about the Shoah. The debate has often been presented in binary terms, with, on one side of the debate, those (like, for instance, George Steiner, 1969: 165) who argue that the best response to the Shoah is silence. While studying the Shoah indeed includes the temptation to succumb to a Foucauldian 'archaeology of silence' (Foucault, 1967: xi), such archaeology of silence is itself an order, an organised language, a project, a syntax, a work, as argued by Derrida (1978: 25–6). As Agamben suggests, 'the relation … between language and the archive demands subjectivity as that which in its very possibility of speech, bears witness to an impossibility of speech' (Agamben, 1999: 146).

On the other side of the sayability-unsayability debate stand those (like, for instance, Paul Celan, 1968, and Lawrence Langer, 1975), who argue, as Adorno himself did later (1962), that surrendering to silence would be a surrender to cynicism and by implication, to the very forces that created Auschwitz in the first place. According to Agamben (1999: 157), who examines the philosophical, historical and linguistic roots of testimony to conclude that the only 'complete witness' is he who cannot bear witness – the *Muselmann*,

> those who assert the unsayability of Auschwitz today should be more cautious in their statements. If they mean to say that Auschwitz was a unique event in the face of which the witness must in some way submit his every word to the test of an impossibility of speaking, they are right. But, if, joining uniqueness to unsayability, they transform Auschwitz into a reality absolutely separated from language, if they break the tie between an impossibility and a possibility of speaking that, in the Muselmann, constitutes testimony, then they unconsciously repeat the Nazis' gesture… . Their silence threatens to repeat the SS's scornful warnings to the inhabitants of the camp, which (Primo) Levi transcribes at the very start of *The Drowned and the Saved* (Levi, 1989: 11–12).

Needless to say, discourse is impoverished in the face of the historical event; yet an 'archaeology of silence' is not sufficient, nor is it ultimately possible, despite the understandable tendency to regard the Shoah as 'unspeakable', and respond to it with silence, as many survivors have for many years.

If it is fitting to ask questions about the inappropriateness of writing poetry after Auschwitz – Adorno himself went further when he said that 'all post-Auschwitz culture, including its urgent critique, is garbage' (Adorno, 1973: 367) – questions must also be asked about the appropriateness of the Shoah as an object of theoretical discussions (Friedländer, 1992a: 1), or, differently put, about the 'barbarity' of writing footnotes after Auschwitz (Hilberg, 1988: 25). I concur with Saul Friedländer that, although we are dealing with an event that tests conventional conceptual and representational categories, an 'event at the limits', the Shoah must be accessible to representation and interpretation. Zygmunt Bauman reminds us that, as the Shoah was 'born and executed in our modern

rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement' (Bauman, 1989: x), it is relevant to the main themes of sociological inquiry, as 'an outcome of a unique encounter between factors by themselves quite ordinary and common'. Every 'ingredient' of the Shoah – rationality, technology, bureaucracy and state violence – was 'normal', in the sense of being fully in line with everything we know about our European civilization. However, what turned the 'Final Solution' into an 'event at the limit' was precisely that it was a 'most radical form of genocide encountered in history: the wilful, systemic, industrially organised, largely successful attempt to totally exterminate an entire human group within twentieth-century Western society' (Friedländer, 1992a: 3). As Agamben (1999: 28) says, 'what happened in the camps is an extermination for which it may be possible to find precedents, but whose forms make is absolutely senseless'. Survivors, he reminds us, are also in agreement on this: 'even to us, what we had to tell would start to seem unimaginable' (Antelme 1992: 3); 'All the attempts at clarification … failed ridiculously' (Améry, 1980: vii; see also Friese, in this volume, on the inability of language to cope with 'that world').

Beyond the sayability versus unsayability crisis, a further crisis in representation is the tension between historical 'facts' and interpretation, or the dilemma of historical relativism versus aesthetic experimentation in the face of the need for 'truth', on the one hand, and the problems raised by the opaqueness of the events and the opaqueness of language, on the other. This dilemma also necessitates considering the implications of constructing various historical narratives about Nazism and the Shoah, providing the facts are not falsified. These include the existence (or non existence) of limits to literary and artistic representations of the Shoah, and the contradictory implications of specific approaches, such as humour,[2] to such renditions (Friedländer, 1992a: 4).

Historical accounts have their own limits. Hilberg positions 'facts' versus 'narratives' by saying that despite the 'success' of his own historical accounts of the Shoah, 'historiography itself is a kind of fiction' (Hilberg, 1988: 273). Friedländer further argues that despite the unparalleled amount of historical investigation engendered by the catastrophe, the Jewish world is (still) awaiting a redeeming myth, and in the meantime, 'literary fiction serves as a temporary surrogate' (Friedländer, 1992b: 43). Due to the extreme character of the events, even the professional historian, according to Friedländer (1992b: 44–9), faces a series of defences when attempting to deal with the extermination. These defences include, firstly, massive denial, as evidenced by the late 1980s German 'historians controversy', when the new awareness of the 1960s German student generation shielded many from the specificity of the Nazi past. The second defence Friedländer calls 'splitting off', where historicising National Socialism left the role of 'Auschwitz' unmentioned. Thirdly, a growing fragmentation in the representation of the Nazi epoch brought about a disintegration of the

study of Nazism into discrete, specialised and unrelated domains and so understated 'the ''already well known'' facts of mass extermination and atrocity'. The fourth defence relates to the historical and testimonial discourse of the victims, where, after fifteen to twenty years of latency, the silence, which did not exist inside the survivor community itself, was maintained in relation to the outside world and was often imposed by the shame of 'telling a story that must appear unbelievable and was, in any case, entirely out of tune with surrounding society'. This silence was accompanied by a more sustained silence of postwar Jewish intellectuals: with the obvious exception of Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno and Salo Baron, 'Auschwitz' as such – not other facets of Nazism – seemed out of bounds'. In 1992, Friedländer was able to say that 'historical interpretation by Jewish historians is still caught between hasty ideological closure (such as the 'catastrophe and redemption' theme) and a paralysis of attempts at global interpretation … this evaluation applies also to my own work' (Friedländer, 1992b: 51).

Five years later, Friedländer attempts to resolve the dilemma of representation by linking the experiential and the historical, and insisting that 'the only concrete history that can be retrieved remains that carried by personal stories'. In the introduction to the first volume of *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, he suggests that his personal Shoah history 'cannot avoid a measure of ''transference'' *vis-à-vis* this past. Such involvement of necessity impinges upon the writing of history. But the historian's necessary measure of detachment is not thereby precluded, provided there is sufficient self-awareness' (Friedländer, 1997: 5–6).

The crisis in historical representation is addressed by Bauman, who, in his seminal book *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), questions the belief that the movement of human history always spells progress, and points to the 'proverbial puzzlement of historians who reportedly complain that, however hard they try, they cannot understand the most spectacular episode of the [twentieth] century' (Bauman, 1989: 212).

Despite this reported confusion – due, according to Bauman, to our difficulty to accept that the concept of history itself is untenable – and despite the caution about banalisation, the study of the Shoah has produced more scholarly works, survivor testimony projects, commemorative projects, and works of fiction and art, than any of the other 'spectacular episodes' of modernity. One example which demonstrates the uncanny representational link between past and present, and between history and politics, is Costa Gavras's film *Amen*, which premiered in the 2002 Berlin Film Festival. The film, which aims to tell the 'new story' of the conspiracy of silence between the Vatican and the Nazis, is based on *The Representative*, Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 play. The film's release was set to test, yet again, the limits of representation: 'Controversy was guaranteed the minute posters for *Amen* appeared. Posters hanging in Berlin's Potsdamer Platz, adjacent to the site of Hitler's bunker, show a red swastika with the bottom leg as

an extended line. It takes only minutes to realise that it is a swastika/crucifix hybrid… . The shocking logo has had the desired effect, and *Amen*, an examination of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust, is the talk of the Berlin Film Festival' (Scally, 2002: W4).

Another central debate is the issue of continuity versus contingency, presented, on the one hand, by Fackenheim's (1984) conceptualisation of the Shoah as 'a unique, epoch-making event that has irretrievably changed forever our trust in human nature', and on the other hand by Bauman's (1989) insistence that 'the Holocaust was not a novum in history but the outcome of the technological rationalism of modern society and the attendant normative socialisation of modern subjects'.[3] While Fackenheim argues that after Auschwitz the memory of the historical resistance of the victims provides the only remnant of human hope, Bauman – while welcoming Fackenheim's belief that ethical rationalism has been fatally compromised as a consequence of its complicity in the catastrophe – believes nonetheless that the study of the Shoah clears the ground for a new postmodern ethics, founded on Levinas's ethical phenomenology of the face-to-face (Bauman, 1993; Gorman, 2000: 49).

I am in complete agreement with Bauman's thesis that the Shoah must be treated 'as a rare, yet significant and reliable, test of the hidden possibilities of modern society' (Bauman, 1989: 12). However, the recurring use of the Shoah as a metaphor – for example during the 1991 Gulf War (Zuckermann, 1993), during the post September 11 'war against terrorism' and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and in relation to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict – brings me to suggest that in the plethora of narratives competing for our attention in the interpretation and re-interpretation of contemporary events, the Nazi extermination, more than any other modern historical event, has been internalised as, perhaps, the only 'unique, epoch-making' metaphor. The recourse to it is irretrievably, and continually, testing our trust in human nature, but also 'probing the limits of representation' (Friedländer, 1992a). More specifically, because in Auschwitz, as argued, among others, by Habermas, 'something happened, that up to now nobody considered as even possible…' and since 'Auschwitz has changed the basis for the continuity of the conditions of life within history' (Habermas, 1987: 163), Auschwitz – quite apart from its historical significance in the annals of the Nazi extermination, and despite the fact that Auschwitz the camp is in the process of physically crumbling (Leibovich-Dar, 2002: 20–6) – has become a euphemism, a metaphor, a code.

Discussing the term 'holocaust', derived from the Latin *holocaustum*, and the Greek *holocaustos* ('completely burned'), Agamben (1999: 28–30) points to the essentially Christian semantic root of the term, used by Church fathers to translate the complex sacrificial doctrine of the Bible. Agamben traces the migration of the term from the naming of Christ's sacrifice on the cross as a holocaust, into a more metaphorical sense –

including in polemics against the Jews, and referring to the massacres of Jews – and argues that the term is a *euphemism* – 'the substitution of a literal expression with an attenuated or altered expression for something that one does not actually want to hear mentioned' – which, as such, always involves ambiguities:

> In the case of the term 'holocaust', the attempt to establish a connection, however distant, between Auschwitz and the Biblical Olah and between death in the gas chamber and the 'complete devotion to sacred and superior motives' cannot but sound like a jest. Not only does the term imply an unacceptable equation between crematoria and altars; it also continues a semantic heredity that is from its inception anti-Semitic (Agamben, 1999: 31).

I would suggest that 'Auschwitz' – and by extension 'holocaust', with capital H, but also 'Shoah', a euphemism employed, according to Agamben, by the Jews to indicate the extermination, implying a notion of divine punishment (Isaiah 10: 3) – are all such euphemisms, standing for 'something that one does not want to hear mentioned'. While Agamben refrains from using the term 'Holocaust', I and contributors to this collection use the terms 'Holocaust' and 'Shoah' interchangeably.

Contributors to this collection discuss the significance of the Shoah as 'categorial murder' (Zygmunt Bauman), its role in the formation of contemporary identities – German, east European, Jewish or Israeli (Christine Achinger, Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, Esther Fuchs), silence and unsayability during Nazi times (Heidrun Friese), the personal consequences of the legacy of the Shoah for survivors (Janina Bauman) and for the 'second-generation' (Esther Fuchs, Ronit Lentin), artistic representations of the Shoah (Yosefa Loshitzky), the political, ideological and professional implications of Shoah historiography (Philip Spencer, Ruth Linn, Dalia Ofer), and Holocaust denial (Michael Shafir).

Politicising the implications of the extermination as 'received history' (Young, 2000), or 'postmemory' (Hirsch, 1997), this introduction attempts to fathom the discursive legacy of the Shoah, and Auschwitz, for present day politics, by positing a series of interrelated proposals. The most urgent proposal is that the 'Auschwitz code', invoked in relation to all 'unspeakable' catastrophes, does not help us remember the Shoah and its victims, but rather erases that memory, as do other representations, including Shoah photographs, but also history itself. Since the Shoah has discursively overshadowed all other modern cataclysms, the second question is whether the Nazis have succeeded not only in annihilating large proportions of the Jewish, Roma, homosexual and other entities, but also in populating our collective and individual imaginations with indelible images, which have impoverished our vocabulary so that every catastrophe becomes a holocaust. While this process is perhaps understandable in relation to European calamities[4] – my third question is whether this preoccupation is also tenable when comparing like with not like, in the equation of, say, Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden, or Yasser Arafat, with

Hitler. Does this point not only to the further impoverishment of our Western imaginations, but also to the West attempting to colonise the imaginations of the majority world through buying wholesale into Huntington's (1993) dubious 'clash of civilizations' thesis during the ongoing 'war against terrorism', urging the postcolonial majority world to dichotomise between itself and the West, just as the West has been doing in relation to Islam? Another issue I will touch on in this regard is contemporary antisemitism, evoked by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict post September 11.

This introduction, and the collection as a whole, is part of an ongoing reflexive academic process, since, as Young (2000: 11) argues, academics 'have remained curiously blind to our own instrumentalisation of memory, to the ways an entire academic industry has grown up around the Holocaust' (see also Finkelstein, 2000). I conclude by asking, following Agamben, whether, because, as Primo Levi says, Auschwitz has never ceased to take place, because we are all implicated both in 'still being here' and in the shame of being a subject, and because, as Hannah Arendt (1993: 13–14) says, 'this should not have happened. Something happened there to which we cannot reconcile ourselves', we are compelled to keep excavating the meaning of the Shoah, while all the time evading the gaze of the *Muselmann*.

Postmemory and Received History

This is 1914 or 1939. The world isn't ever going to be the same again (Rose, 2001: 19).

There are no extenuating circumstances for the Manhattan and Pentagon holocausts, any more than there are extenuating circumstances for what happened to Europe's Jews, and others, sixty years ago (Myers, 2001: 17).

Nazi and Muslim extremist demons overlap. 'World Jewry' has survived the last world war as a Great Satan. Its headquarters have shifted from Moscow to New York. … (Buruma, 2001).

In his study of second generation Shoah memorials (2000), James Young notes that for many members of the second generation it is impossible to 'remember' the Shoah outside of the ways it was passed on to them fifty years later. Young posits second generation Holocaust art as denoting a 'vicarious past', and deriving from a 'received history', in the absence of first-hand knowledge of the events themselves: 'our experience of the Holocaust is photographs, films, books, testimonies … a mediated experience, the afterlife of memory represented in history's after-images: the impressions retained in the mind's eye of a vivid sensation long after the original, external cause has been removed' (Young, 2000: 3–4).

Grappling with the after-image of the Shoah in relation to children of survivors, Marianne Hirsch (1997: 22) posits the concept of 'postmemory',

albeit 'with some hesitation, conscious that the prefix "post" could imply that we are beyond memory'. Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection: it is 'a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated, not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. … . Postmemory characterises the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated'. Postmemory is not 'absent memory', or the 'gaping black hole of the unmentionable years'.[5] Not empty or absent, postmemory is obsessive and relentless and 'as full or as empty, certainly as constructed, as memory itself' (Hirsch, 1997: 22).

Writing about the inability to proceed from Shoah past to post-Shoah present, Langer posits 'common memory' as opposed to 'deep memory'. Common memory 'urges us to regard the Auschwitz ordeal as part of a chronology, (freeing) us from the pain of remembering the unthinkable'. Deep memory on the other hand, 'reminds us that the Auschwitz past is not really past and never will be' (Langer, 1991: xi). Attempting to combine both kinds of memory, and to build a coherent self founders on the 'intractable return of the repressed and recurring deep memory' (Friedländer, 1992b: 41).

No society can 'remember' the extermination outside the discourses used to narrate, or 'memorise' it. The Shoah has been 'remembered', 'forgotten', 're-interpreted', and 'historicised' in different historical periods and different social and political climates. However, judging by the huge proliferation of representations, the Shoah has clearly left traces of 'deep memory' beyond individual 'received history'. Linking the experiential and the historical, Friedländer (1992b) proposes a historiography that integrates common and deep memory, reminding readers that this history is being told by someone in a particular time and place, gesturing both to the existence of deep memory and to its capacity to deliver that memory. Working through entails, for the historian, 'the imperative of rendering a truthful account as documents and testimonials will allow *without giving in to the temptation of closure*' (Friedänder, 1992b: 52, emphasis in the original).

There is a palpable contradiction between, on the one hand, the ultimate inability of discourse – verbal, written, or photographic – to help us never to forget (though it is not clear whether this means forgetting the event itself, or its received after effects), and, on the other, what Rosenfeld (1985) terms the unending 'fascination of abomination'. Popular fiction that invokes Hitler not only 'draws extensively upon Nazi symbolism' and revives antisemitic fantasies; it also exploits 'the savage horrors of the Holocaust', using, among other means, an abhorrent pornography of violence, 'itself the germ of an emerging erotics of Auschwitz'. The Holocaust

after-images are both received history and obsession, as Auschwitz became part of the characteristic landscape of twentieth-century history (Rosenfeld, 1985: 48–55).

In his essay on kitsch and death, Friedländer (1982) uses psychoanalytic theory to fathom why Nazism and the Holocaust, though past and gone, continue to haunt us through ever-increasing expressions, in history, literature, fine art, film and television. While immediately after the war Nazism became a symbol of evil, in the 1960s the Nazi image changed in the West. Hitler, who became part of the entertainment industry, 'simultaneously haunts and defies the contemporary imagination, which, with respect to the whole Nazi past, seems drawn between a willed forgetfulness and a kind of mythologising memory' (Rosenfeld, 1985: xx). Positing a 'new discourse' on Nazism – developed on an emotional, imaginary, rather than a theoretical level – Friedländer points to a kind of aesthetic titillation, borne out of the association of Nazism with death. Not everyday, banal death, but rather ritualistic, stylised, aestheticised death; and our contradictory attraction to it enables us to digest the horrific past. Just as Hitler hypnotised the German masses, Nazism – a dark mixture of kitsch and death – continues to fascinate us today, even as we are repelled by its evil horrors. Moreover, Friedländer argues that exorcising the past does not mean being ready to face the past, but is rather a confrontation and the evasion of confrontation at the same time, which conceals the unbearable part of that past.

Holocaust history, Friedländer (1982) goes on to argue, rather than help us remember, actually removes us from the historical facts by its very rational use of language; and this very rationality distances us and protects us from the unbearable Nazi past. Like dreams, Holocaust discourses signify the return of the repressed – a repressed history, a past which is deeply hidden inside us, emanating from the coexistence of modernity's need for a sense of order and the erotic allure of violence and death. The historian of the Nazi epoch needs, above all, to be self aware, requiring a reflexive commentary, which must be clearly heard. Such reflexive commentary can protect against this distancing of Shoah history from the historical facts only by integrating the 'mythic memory' of the victims within the historical representation of this past, without it becoming an 'obstacle' to 'rational historiography': '*working through means confronting the individual voice*', and 'ultimately means testing the limits of necessary and ever-defeated imagination' (Friedländer, 1992b: 53–4, emphasis in the original).

Just as rational history distances us from the facts of the past, images also work against remembering, as Hirsch argues in relation to Shoah photographs, which are one way through which 'received history', or 'postmemory' works. Holocaust photographs often serve as shorthand representations of the whole crime: 'if we see emaciated figures behind barbed wire, we ''see'' the Holocaust' (Achinger, 1999). However, Hirsch argues that the profusion of visual Holocaust images, while extraordinarily powerful, 'have silenced us verbally, impairing the symbolic instruments

that might have enabled us to process the apocalyptic events of our century' (Hirsch, 1997: 24). Moreover, she argues, after Barthes (1981), that Holocaust photographs as 'leftovers' and 'fragmentary sources' do not recall the past or facilitate the work of mourning, but rather block memory, and quickly become a counter-memory.

Susan Sontag, in a self critique of her *On Photography* (1997), in which she argued that 'while an event known through photographs certainly becomes more real than it would have been if one had never seen the photographs, after repeated exposure it also becomes less real', posits the menu of horrors 'by which we are corrupted and to which we gradually become habituated' as a founding idea of modernity (Sontag, 2003: 5). Arguing that 'image-glut keeps attention light, mobile, relatively indifferent to content', and that the disgust and pity invoked by viewing horrific war photography 'should not distract you from asking what pictures, whose cruelties, whose deaths are not being shown', Sontag goes on to say that positing war as a televised 'nightly banality', suggests there is no real suffering in the world. In fact, she insists, there are hundreds of millions of television watchers who are far from inured to what they see on television and who 'do not have the luxury of patronising reality'. Analysing a photograph (of a vision after an ambush of a Red Army patrol, near Moqor, Afghanistan, winter 1986) by Jeff Wall, titled 'Dead troops talk', Sontag hauntingly asks why the dead should be interested in our gaze; after all, 'we', who have not experienced what they went through, don't understand (Sontag, 2003: 6).

Holocaust (or war) photographs, a confirmation of death, promote forgetting, through the onlooker's very knowledge that the people in the photographs did in effect die a horrible death. But even death was not 'proper' in Auschwitz. What took place in the camps was not death, but something infinitely more appalling: 'people did not die; rather corpses were produced. Corpses without death, non-humans whose decease is debased into a matter of serial production' (Agamben, 1999: 71–2). Is it this degradation of death, which constitutes the specific offence of Auschwitz – since death in Auschwitz was not 'proper death' – the main reason for our ongoing obsession with trying to fathom its meaning?

According to Bauman (2000: 15), the Holocaust continues to live life as a ghost, 'since its prophecies are not quite self-fulfilling, but they do fulfil – render plausible – the prospect of a world in which the Holocaust may never stop being prophecised, with all the deleterious and disastrous psychic, cultural and political consequences which such prophecy is bound to bring forth and propagate'.

The 'Auschwitz Code' Revisited

I think that in some ways Saddam Hussein follows in Hitler's footsteps (Amos Oz, cited in Zuckermann, 1993: 76).

'The Bushes tour Auschwitz, where the evil he evokes is manifest' (*New York Times* headline, cited in Foden, 2003: 7).

Unlike the Vietcong, the Taliban have little popular support. In fact, they appear to have boiled down almost to their equivalent of Hitler's SS (Quinn, 2001: 17).

Welcome to our concentration camp. What the Germans did to us, we'll do to you (Sergei, IDF officer, cited in Levy, 2002: 16).

Bauman doubts the possibility of exorcising the ghost of the Holocaust, because 'being possessed means seeing the world as one-dimensional' (Bauman, 2000: 15). This possession, and the view of the world as one-dimensional, are illustrated by Moshe Zuckermann's (1993) notion of 'cultural memory' as a *code*, which allows us to conceive the inconceivable precisely because memory itself remains inaccessible. The euphemism 'Auschwitz' also means allowing the historian to face the dilemma which, according to Lyotard (1988), we try to escape in the face of 'Auschwitz':

The silence that surrounds the phrase 'Auschwitz was the extermination camp' is not a state of mind, it is a sign that something remains to be phrased which is not, something which is not determined (Lyotard, 1988: 56–7, cited in Friedländer, 1992b: 52).

Just as the survivor cannot afford to remember the horrors of her Shoah past in her everyday existence, so too the collective tends to replace 'collective memory' – complete with ceremonies, images, rituals and memorials – for the actual memory of the catastrophe.[6] But while the individual survivor has no option but to repress the memory of the horrors so as to avoid madness and to be able to live after the Nazi hell, the collective has a vested interest in repression, so that the memory of that hell does not pollute the 'new page' it wishes to turn in constructing its history. Zuckermann is not speaking here about denying the actual historical event, but about the attempt to expel the Shoah from our consciousness by reducing it to a set of ideological codes (Zuckermann, 1993: 21). The ideological use of memory serves different purposes for different collectives, but everywhere the Shoah is transformed into a political ideology, a code: the Shoah myth replaces the Shoah itself.

Zuckermann's book *The Holocaust in a Sealed Room* analyses the inappropriate equation of Saddam Hussein with Hitler in the Israeli press during the 1991 Gulf War. In preparation for and during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, U.S. President George W. Bush made similar comparisons between Nazi and Iraqi 'evil'. Considering that 'American arms produce most of the terror and murder that American arms must, in time, be borne against', the argument that Bush's good-evil Manicheism is 'so clearly the view of a reformed alcoholic' (Foden, 2003: 7) is chilling.

Zuckermann's broader argument is that since it is impossible to remember the Shoah as concrete reality, and Auschwitz as a concrete, routinised death factory, all that is left is to remember the Shoah as a paradigm for

the human condition, a matrix which symbolises the perpetual threat to humanity. If 'the Shoah is the most extreme objectification of the relationship between murderers and murdered, between perpetrators and their victims, by symbolising the apex of oppression', then particularistic lessons (such as the Israeli-Jewish imperative that 'it' would 'never again' happen to 'us') negate the universalist edict about the sanctity of human life: 'people who use the excuse ''my logic was burnt in Auschwitz'' as a justification for acts of oppression, … damage the very memory of the victims' (Zuckermann, 1993: 28–30). In other words, Zuckermann argues, in line with Young and Hirsch, that representations of the past bring about the erasure of the past from our memory, rather than its commemoration.

Taking Young's argument about 'received history' from the individual to the political, I propose that telling and re-telling the Shoah has been employed not only in order to construct a particular kind of memory, but also to justify certain acts, perhaps because no other lexicon is available to the Western imagination to narrate catastrophe. Thus, in the case of the state of Israel, the Auschwitz code is routinely employed to justify the Israel versus the diaspora dichotomy, and, more chillingly, the ongoing excesses of the occupation, as the examples below demonstrate.

In using the 'lessons of Auschwitz' in shaping its politics, Israel has never remembered the Shoah (Zuckermann, 1993: 28). One painful recent example of the extreme uses of the 'Auschwitz code' was the suggestion, during the second year of the al-Asqa Intifada, by a senior Israel Defence Forces (IDF) officer that, in order to conquer a Palestinian refugee camp or the Nablus Casbah without casualties (I presume he meant Israeli casualties), he had to also study how the German army put down the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Commenting on this, *Ha'aretz* journalist Amir Oren said that other officers said similar things and that their deliberations point to wider dilemmas, such as the appropriateness of using German reparation funds: 'military aid, and if so, which (submarines from the fleet of Reichsadmiral Dönitz – no; aid from defence minister Franz Joseph Strauss for the nuclear plant in Dimona – yes)' (Oren, 2002: B6).

Israel does not have a colonial past, but, according to Israeli writer Itzhak Laor, 'we do have our memory of evil. Does this explain why Israeli soldiers stamped ID numbers on Palestinian arms? Or why the most recent Holocaust Day drew a ridiculous comparison between those of us in the besieged Warsaw Ghetto and those of us surrounding the besieged Jenin refugee camp?' (Laor, 2002).

Though most Israelis are extremely uncomfortable with any comparisons with the Shoah, the Auschwitz code resurfaces in everyday confrontations between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians. According to the Palestinian human rights activist Abed al Ahmad, who was administratively detained without charge in May 2002 for the fourth time, just as he was planning to marry his Jewish-American lawyer fiancée, an IDF officer named Sergei said to a group of Palestinian detainees in the Ofer detention

camp, having made them sit on the floor for sixteen hours, blindfolded and tied: 'Welcome to our concentration camp. What the Germans did to us, we'll to do you. What we experienced, you will experience. Then you can look for another nation to torture as we shall torture you'. The IDF spokesperson denied it happened and at the same time condemned any such utterances; comparisons are indeed blood curdling (Levy, 2002: 16).

Exploiting the Shoah to justify the Israeli occupation is a contested topic. While rejecting the comparisons of Nazi behaviour with Israeli behaviour in the occupied territories, the Israeli commentator Yair Sheleg justifies using the term 'Nazi evil' to describe other people's behaviour: 'after all, we Jews are interested, for instance, in having fundamental Islamic plans of extermination described in Nazi terms in order to create the required shock' (Sheleg, 2003a: B1). Covering a highly contested tour of Auschwitz of a group of Palestinians citizens of Israel in May 2003, Sheleg deems the tour 'a success': 'it seems that the Arabs who took part in the tour constitute a real alternative – even an opposition, circuitous and understated as it may be – to the nationalistic policis of the tone-setters among Israel's Arabs in recent years' (Sheleg, 2003b: 63). According to this (Israeli) nationalist interpretation, it is up to the Islamic/Palestinian other to internalise the lessons of the Shoah, while Israel is not only exempt, but is also called upon to invoke the Shoah to justify its occupational politics.

In Germany the Shoah poses ongoing questions about guilt, blame, collusion, perpetration and the impossibility of commemorating absence. By making comparisons with East Germany's communist past, and by the universalist commitment to a human rights discourse, West Germany, according to Zuckermann, 'normalised' its Nazi past (Zuckermann, 1993: 36). Speaking about his novel *The Reader* (1997), in which actual illiteracy becomes a metaphor for the Third Reich's moral illiteracy, Bernard Schlink comments on his generation's attempts to come to terms with their parents' role in Nazi crimes: 'In '68 we had the ambition to deal with all this. But what we have to live with is that there is no solution' (Wroe, 2002: 6).

Despite having become 'commercialised, metaphored out of reality, glamorised, … severed off from the historical fact', the Shoah, according to child survivor poet Irena Klepfisz, 'was not an event that ended in 1945 – at least not for the survivors. Not for me'. Raging at the 'mainstreaming' and 'dilution' of the Shoah, Klepfisz wants to yell: 'You're fucking around with my pain, with my real pain, my real life. Forget the metaphor. Think about reality' (Klepfisz, 1990a: 64–6).

Beyond the 'Holocaust life as a ghost', one must ask whether the dualism of the (alluring) dream of total power and the fear thereof, which characterises our ongoing fascination with Nazism and the Shoah (Friedländer, 1982) also entails a need to go on representing the world as a 'clash of civilisations', which returns us to the metaphorical world of Nazism whenever our world order seems threatened. In the aftermath of

the September 11 2001 bombing, there is a link between racialisation and 'othering' processes involved in the war on terrorism in Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq, and in the Middle East conflict, and the inadvertent return to the metaphorical world of Nazism and the 'Auschwitz code' as a central euphemistic discourse.

Racialisation and the 'Clash of Civilizations'

> When you think Taliban, think Nazis. When you think Bin Laden, think Hitler. And when you think 'the people of Afghanistan' think 'the Jews in the concentration camps' (Ansary, 2001).

> The values that the terrorist attacked last week were human rights, democracy and the rule of law … they are the same values that inspired the British left in the 1930s to fight fascism in Spain and oppose appeasement of the Nazis (Hain, 2001).

Historians have a stake in dividing world history into eras and phases. Huntington (2001) posits a new phase in world history in which the main source of conflict will not be ideological or economic, but rather cultural. In a post Cold War world, 'the cultural division between western Christianity and Orthodox Christianity and Islam has re-emerged' (Huntington, 2001: 4). Huntington's thesis has been enthusiastically adopted by Western politicians and the media as part of its twenty-first century war against Islamist terrorism. Such a clash, Western commentators claim, has also been eagerly adopted by Bin Laden and his networks (Steinberger, 2001: 28). Charactersing the conflict as civilizations clashing homogenises both 'the West' and 'the rest', and resonates with binary Nazi racialising constructions.

The Shoah is a central post-September 11 discourse, as the media quotations I use in this introduction indicate.[7] In an internet article, the Afghan-American writer Tamin Ansary (2001) separates Bin Laden and the Taliban from the rest of Afghanistan, an argument often made, and rejected, by post war Germans for whom the Nazis victimised, first and foremost, Germany itself (see Achinger, in this volume). Ansary's 'when you think Taliban, think Nazis. When you think Bin Laden, think Hitler. And when you think ''the people of Afghanistan'' think ''the Jews in the concentration camps'' ' illustrates the inability, by Western and non-Western commentators alike, to progress beyond the discursive reign of the Shoah in our collective imaginations.

However, comparisons between Bin Laden and Hitler, or between the Israelis, or the Palestinians, and the Nazis, pose serious questions, not only about the limits of comparability, but also about current conflicts as '*lieux de mémoire*' (Nora, 1996), created, according to Pierre Nora, 'by a play of memory and history'. Invested with a 'symbolic aura', *lieux de mémoire* 'can function to block the work of forgetting' (Nora, 1989: 19; cited in

Hirsch, 1997: 22). I would argue that the recurrent use of the metaphorical language of the Shoah is part of its erasure.

Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, Antisemitisation

> Mr Sharon said, 'don't repeat the terrible mistake of 1938 when the enlightened democracies of Europe decided to sacrifice Czechoslovakia for a temporary solution. Do not try to placate the Arabs at our expense … Israel will not be Czechoslovakia' (Goldenberg, 2001).

Another way of dragging the extermination into contemporary debates is the renewed Jewish preoccupation with the Shoah, kindled by post-September 11 manifestations of antisemitism. According to a poll conducted at the end of October 2001 by the World Jewish Congress, 57 per cent of Israelis thought antisemitism was more prevalent now than ten years ago (Salpeter, 2001: A5). *Ha'aretz* journalist Eliahu Salpeter cites a *The New York Times* article by Jonathan Rosen who writes of the threat of Islamic antisemitism and the spurious claim that it was Jews who planned and executed the bombing of the Twin Towers: 'I grew up with the idea that I am living in a post-Shoah world, and I am finding out that it is more and more like the world on the eve of the Shoah'. In November 2001, Salpeter wrote that French Jews were at their lowest since the Nazi occupation, with 150 acts of racist violence against Jewish people and institutions, including 43 arson attacks on synagogues since the September 2001 bombing. Swiss Jews also felt threatened by Muslim Fundamentalist antisemitism: 'Zigi Feigel, the honorary president of the Zurich community, said last month in a Jewish communities convention, that ''for us Jews, Hitler has not yet died''' (Salpeter, 2001: A5).

Several articles in the Israeli and European press have equated, yet again, anti-Zionsim with antisemitism. *Ha'aretz* cites a *Le Monde* article on French Jewish fears of the new antisemitism: the French Jewish academic Esther Ben Bassa is quoted as saying: 'Recently all that interests them (French Jews) is antisemitism and the Shoah, even the young are fascinated by the burning of Jews in Auschwitz, and Judaism is linked in their minds only with the Shoah, as if there was nothing else. I blame Jewish leaders who for years had fanned the flames of the Shoah and antisemitism … First the Jews re-found religion; then they made the Shoah the focus of worship; and now they are having nightmares about concentration camps under the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs Elysèes' (Ben-Simon, 2002: B9).[8]

Ha'aretz also reported the 'new British antisemitism', naming *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and the BBC, as 'wittingly or not, stoking the inferno of antisemitism'. Greville Janner M.P., a former president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, accused *The Guardian* of being 'viciously and notoriously anti-Israel'. *Ha'aretz* lists the 'left-liberal media' as well as

Britain's two million Muslims as being lumped together by worried British Jews. Commenting on the accusations, a *Guardian* editorial (2002: 21), while agreeing that after September 11 there was a troubling 'lowering of barriers' inhibiting antisemitism, urges the un-lumping of the legitimate critique of Ariel Sharon's policies and the duty to guard British Jews against antisemitism. Rabbi David Goldberg, writing in *The Guardian*, acknowledges the seriousness of the charges 'less than sixty years after the Nazi Holocaust', yet joins the editorial writer in calling for a 'sense of proportion':

> We do ourselves a disservice if we cry 'antisemite!' with the same stridency at a liberal commentator who criticises the Israeli army's disproportionate response to terrorist outrages, and at a National Front lout who asserts that the Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a genuine document; if we try equally vehemently to silence a Holocaust denier and proven liar like David Irving, and the ideologically leftwing Tom Paulin, who last year wrote an angry and not very good poem that compared Israeli soldiers to Nazis (Goldberg, 2002: 20).[9]

Post September 11 antisemitism has been dubbed 'the new antisemitism'. According to The International Council Against Antisemitism, convened by Israel's deputy Foreign Minister Rabbi Michael Melchior, the 'new antisemitism' targets not individual Jews, but Jewish collectivities, including the state of Israel. While similar to the 'old antisemitism' in manifesting itself in arson attacks and daubings against synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, the target is no longer Jews as a foreign minority, since most of it is carried out by Muslims, themselves a hated minority in Europe, and the context is the violence in the Middle East. Melchior too resorts to the Auschwitz code: 'Auschwitz did not begin with Auschwitz. Not that we are talking about the same thing, but Auschwitz too began with the delegitimisation of the Jews, moved on to their de-humanisation and ended with their demonisation'. Furthermore, Melchior, who says he has no problem with strong political criticism of Israel, and who opposes Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, argues that the coverage of the conflict feeds the hatred: 'When people are constantly fed with images of Israeli tanks and planes attacking Palestinian cities, and of the destruction in Jenin, it affects their position… . And the fact that the Jewish people, thank god, is not helpless as in the past, and that the state of Israel knows how to use force, adds to the hostility' (Sheleg, 2002: 5).

Equating anti-Zionism with antisemitism and the Shoah with present day politics is, however, hugely problematic. As the Israeli peace activist Yehudith Harel, a bereaved mother and daughter of survivors, cautions, we must not use the Shoah in opposing Israel's policies, as 'neither Arafat nor Sharon are Hitler and neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians are Nazis' (personal email communication, January 2002). Irena Klepfisz, a staunch supporter of the Israeli peace camp, writes that comparing the Israelis with the Nazis nullifies the Holocaust: 'If Israelis or Jews are really Nazis, then the murder of six millions of their parents and grandparents is not so tragic after all' (Klepfisz, 1990b: 130).[10]

However, a few months later, Harel wrote to a correspondent who insisted on the uniqueness of the Shoah:

> The Holocaust has at least two major consequences. One, that human beings, even the most civilized ones, can become monsters, given the 'right' social, economic and political circumstances. Two: our prime moral duty is to admit that we (Israelis) are not better than others, that we are mortals and as such we are as vulnerable as others. Given the 'right' circumstances, a Holocaust can happen again – everywhere – on our hands too, and therefore our duty is to see to it that it never happens again to anyone and anywhere. I cannot see the difference between a racist Nazi German screaming 'Juden Raus' or burning a Jewish Shop, and the racist Hadera gang beating up the Arabs on the beach, burning several times the Shwarma shop of a guy from Umm El Fahem who had a business in Hadera, forcing him to sell his business to a Jew… . or writing graffiti of 'Death to the Arabs' … (Harel, personal email communication, July 2002).

Writing about the world after Jenin, Laor argues that Israelis 'look to punish anyone who undermines our image of ourselves as victims. Nobody is allowed to take this image from us … . When a cabinet minister from a former socialist republic compared Arafat to Hitler he was applauded. Why? Because this is the way the world should see us, rising from the ashes […] it seems that what we have internalised of the memory of the Holocaust is that any evil whose extent is smaller is acceptable' (Laor, 2002).

While pointing to the German tendency to maintain support for the state of Israel as part of working through the Nazi past, and acknowledging that antisemitism can be disguised as anti-Zionism, Zuckermann warns against the 'antisemitisation' involved in the ideological conditioning of the memory of the Shoah in an unconditional support for Israel and Zionism (Zuckermann, 1993: 327, n. 45).

Several questions must be asked in relation to the current re-invocations of the memory of the Shoah and its victims. Does putting the Shoah at the centre of Jewish fears after September 11, understandable as they may be, mean remembering the Shoah, or rather minimalising its memory? The more general questions raised here are how the Shoah can be remembered without being 'memorised', in the sense of 'learning by rote', and employed whenever the world is short of 'catastrophic' metaphors. And how the Shoah should be commemorated as a process, in which the reasons for remembrance are specifically and reflexively spelt out, as James Young stipulated as a condition for joining the *Findungskommission* to select the finalist for the Berlin 'Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe':

> Are [the reasons for building the memorial] redemptory, part of a mourning process, pedagogical, self-aggrandising, or inspiration against contemporary xenophobia? To what national and social ends will this memorial be built? Just how compensatory a gesture will it be? How antiredemptory can it be? Will it be a place for Jews to mourn lost Jews, a place for Germans to mourn lost Jews, or a place for Jews to remember what Germans once did to them? (Young, 2000: 197).

Conclusion: Postmemory, Academic Reflexivity, and the Gorgon

> We will not understand what Auschwitz is if we do not first understand who or what the *Muselmann* is – if we do not learn to gaze with him upon the Gorgon (Agamben, 1999: 52).

> However the war may end, we have won the war against you, none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world will not believe him. There will perhaps be suspicions, discussions, research by historians, but there will be no certainties, because we will destroy the evidence together with you. And even if some proof should remain and some of you survive, people will say that the events you describe are too monstrous to be believed … . We will be the ones to dictate the history of the Lagers (Levi, 1989: 11–12).

The Shoah is an 'event without witness' (Felman and Laub, 1992: 232), in the double sense that it is impossible to bear witness from the inside (of death) and there is no voice for the disappearance of voice, and from the outside – since the 'outside' is by definition excluded from the event (Agamben, 1999: 35). Agamben's central argument, following Levi, is that only those who have drowned, who have lost their humanity, who have gazed upon the Gorgon, can bear witness, but that we cannot bear to gaze at them, therefore that their testimony is inaccessible. Levi writes that 'we, the survivors, are not the true witnesses … we survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority; we are those who by their prevarications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the Muslims, the submerged, the complete witnesses … we speak in their stead, by proxy' (Levi, 1989: 83–4).

In conclusion, I link postmemory, academic self-reflexivity and implication in perpetuating the persistence of the 'Auschwitz code', and the central question of the unsayability of the extermination.

Like James Young, I too grew up 'playing' with the Holocaust. Not lightheartedly, but 'in the obsessive earnestness of children trying to work through a family's trauma' (Young, 2000: 42). Like for the boy Momik, in David Grossman's *See Under Love* (1986), who keeps the 'Nazi beast' in the cellar in order to tame it, a whole world of 'received' images – in my case about Transnistria, the ghettos and camps to which the Jews of Bukovina and Bessarabia, including several members of my family, were exiled by the Romanians during the war – populated my childish imagination, even though the Shoah was never spoken about, yet was a constant presence (Lentin, 1989; 2000).

My work keeps bringing me back to ultimately unanswerable post-memorial questions. And my obsession continues. In December 2001, I visited Berlin for a conference. Ironically – an irony lost on most of the participants – the conference took place in Wannsee, site of the political

architecture of the 'Final Solution'. Berlin is always fascinating in the way it overlays history at every turn, offering a glimpse – via diverse everyday acts of commemoration and forgetfulness – of a postmodern reconstruction of the discontents of modernity. At the entry to the Wittenbergplatz U-Bahn station a very ordinary sign exhorts passers by never to forget, listing the concentration camps, headed by Auschwitz, a word-visual which always arrests the gaze despite the banality of the metal sign. This city – where postmodern architecture quotes and re-quotes historical sites (for example, the glass dome of the new Reichstag building, which quotes the old Reichstag glass dome, re-quoted, inverted, in the Lafayette Department store) – makes me wonder, to quote Young, 'how does a city "house" the memory of a people no longer "at home" there? How does a city like Berlin invite a people like the Jews back into its official past after having driven them so murderously from it'? (Young, 2000: 152).

Extending the question to a nation, a world, we need to ask questions about remembrance and forgetting, about representation and commemoration as political acts of incorporating, without seeking closure and redemption, the lessons of the Shoah in a post-Shoah world. How does a post-Shoah world accommodate and re-member absence? And how do we avoid quoting and re-quoting the Shoah, often in inverted form? Is an aesthetic obsession with fascism a reflection on fascism or an extension of it?

After Auschwitz, art, and history, cannot supply an answer; indeed, after the Shoah there can be no closure, no 'Final Solutions' to the question of representation. Reflecting on my own preoccupation, I must include myself in the questions posed above. I too am not a disinterested party in this debate, like Friedländer, who includes himself when he said in 1992: 'for almost fifty years now, despite so much additional factual knowledge, we have faced surplus meaning or blankness with little interpretive or representational advance' (Friedländer, 1992b: 51).

Fifty-eight years after the defeat of Nazism, Israeli society has difficulty separating the annihilation of a third of the Jewish people from its present-day politics, and German artists have difficulty separating Shoah monuments from their fascist past: 'a monument against fascism would have to be a monument against itself, against the traditionally didactic function of monuments, against their tendency to displace the past they would have us contemplate – and finally, against the authoritative propensity in monumental spaces that reduces viewers to passive spectators'(Young, 2000: 96). Is therefore 'countermonument', which would not do the memory work for us, the only method of commemoration?

Just as Benjamin's flâneur turns his back to the crowd even as he is propelled and swept by it, so his 'angel of history', who looks at nothing but the expanse of ruins of the past, is blown backwards into the future by the storm of progress (Arendt, 1999: 19).

I can identify two main challenges in relation to the various representations of the Shoah for the twenty-first century as presented by contributors to this collection. The first is to keep the Shoah past in our sights while keeping a close watch on how we discursively employ that past in imagining the future. The continuous use of the 'Auschwitz code', its discursive political evocation in relation to present-day conflicts, and the racialising reality for present-day refugees, as well as the West's other 'others', are omens of the shape of memory, counter-memory, and post-memory for the twenty-first century.

The second challenge is more complex, and concerns both our ongoing obsession with the extermination and the 'Auschwitz code', borne, I would suggest, following Agamben, out of our shame in the face of the victims and survivors, and the resultant, albeit contradictory, conviction about the unsayability of the extermination. Theorising the conjunction and disjunction between living beings and language, Agamben (1999:130) contributes to the discussion of the (im)possibility of bearing witness to Auschwitz ('the place where …') by suggesting not that silence is impossible because it can only be conveyed in the event of discourse, but that the witness – to the 'event without witness' (Felman and Laub, 1993) – stands in the non-place of the Voice, in the relation between living being and speaking being which has the form of shame.

Seeking to fathom the unspeakability of Auschwitz, Agamben proposes that the survivor bears witness on the basis of the impossibility of speaking and his testimony cannot be denied. At the same time, rather than reducing the experience of the Jews during their genocide to a set of discourses, he uplifts discourse to the level of the event of its taking place, thus interrogating the possibility of accounting for Auschwitz as remnant, which he does not interpret as numerical, but rather as the whole Jewish people who, since Biblical times, have posited themselves as remnant. Primo Levi's phrases 'I bear witness for *the Muselmann*' and '*the Muselmann* is the whole witness' articulate the possibility of speech solely through impossibility, and, in this way, mark the taking place of language as the event of a subjectivity.

Friedländer does not offer redemption or closure, far from it, but rather a 'lesson' of sorts, when reminding us that considering the Shoah as an exceptional event or as belonging to a wider historical category does not affect the possibility of drawing from it a universally valid significance. The reverse, however, is not true: 'No universal lesson seems to require reference to the Shoah to be fully comprehended […] even if new forms of historical narrative were to develop, or new modes of representation, […] the opaqueness of some ''deep memory'' would probably not be dispelled' (Friedländer, 1992b: 54–5). Representing the Shoah for the twenty first century must bear in mind our shame in the face of those who have reached bottom, and the resultant inadequacy of all attempts to remember.

Notes

1. My thanks to Prof Norbert Finzsch of the Institute of Anglo-American History, the University of Cologne for his assistance in bringing this material to the attention of German audiences.

2. The debate as to 'who can laugh at Hitler' was conducted differently in the U.S. and in Germany in relation to the Broadway musical 'Hogan's Heroes': 'perhaps humour offers Americans a lighter, more liberating perspective than that available to Germans, for whom the Hitler period continues to be a source of a complex of deep emotions'. On the other hand, the musical offered some Germans, not used to laughing at the past or at themselves, a way of confronting their past, and liberated them from the homogeneous image of their fathers, not all of whom were evil; some indeed were jokers and clowns (Cowell, 2001: B11). Roland White (2001) discusses humorous Bin Laden websites – another interesting link of humour and terror. See also Loshitzky, in this volume.

3. In his *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust* (2002), Dan Diner explicitly rejects the view, expressed by Bauman, but also by Gotz Aly and Suzanne Heim, that the Holocaust was the product of modernity more than of the contingencies of German history and European antisemitism (Herf, 2002).

4. As Achinger (1999) argues regarding the equation of Milosevic with Hitler.

5. Which is how Nadine Fresco, on the basis of her work with children of survivors, describes the silence that swallows up the survivors' past (Fresco, 1984: 417–27). Nava Semel (in Lentin, 2000) refers to the 'black hole' in her mother's Shoah biography.

6. See Nava Semel's argument about the stifling of 'intimate memory' in favour of 'ceremonial memory' in Israeli society (Lentin, 2000: 50–1).

7. Pearl Harbor was another major discourse; see, for example, Whitacker, 2001.

8. On the other hand, MRAP, the French *Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples*, has condemned attacks by pro-Israel Jewish people on their premises, because of the organisation's support for peace in Palestine: 'MRAP deplores the invocation of antisemitism against organisations which defend the peace process in Palestine. Such instrumentalisation of antisemitism and the Shoah, for political and religious ends, inevitably leads to the banalisation of antisemitism' <http://www.mrap.asso.fr/mrap>. I am indebted to Alana Lentin for this information.

9. Commenting on Kosmin and Iganski's 'Britain's institutional Judeophobia' (2003), the Israeli Zurich-based journalist Shraga Eilam points the finger at political Zionism: 'This formulation makes it clear that we are dealing with a new chapter of a pro-Zionist swinging of the known judeophobic bludgeon in order to silence the highly needed and legitimate critique of the Israeli war crimes […] Thus the Zionists, their willing executioners and collaborators, who are now mainly responsible for the increase of anti-Jewish feelings and expressions, try at the same time to profit from this development. They even use the growth of anti-Israeli feelings (because of the Israeli war crimes), which is accompanied by a rise of anti-Jewish attitudes (mostly because of the broad and active Jewish support for the Israeli wrongdoings) as additional justifications for the criminal Israeli politics and for crashing the critique' (Eilam, email communication).

10. The over-preoccupation with antisemitism also tends to obscure the fact that after September 11 it was Muslims and Arabs who were racialised and targeted (see, for example, Chrisafis, 2001 on the growing violence against Muslims

in Britain, and Abdo, 2001, on post September 11 violence against Arabs in North America).

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