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Review Essay
Holocaust Memory in Polish Scholarship

by

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Tomasz Majewski and Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, eds. *Pamięć Shoah: Kulturowe reprezentacje i praktyki upamiętnienia* [Memory of the Shoah: Cultural Representations and Practices of Commemoration]. Łódź: Officyna, 2009. 934 pp.

Martyna Rusiniak. *Obóz Zagłady Treblinka II w Pamięci Społecznej (1943–1989)* [The Annihilation Camp of Treblinka II in Collective Memory (1943–1989)]. Warsaw: Neriton, 2008. 107 pp.

Zofia Wóycicka. *Przerwana Żałoba: Spory wokół pamięci i upamiętnienia nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady w Polsce 1944–1950* [Ruptured Mourning: Polish Debates about Memory and Commemoration of Nazi Concentration and Annihilation Camps in Poland 1944–1950]. Warsaw: Trio, 2009. 416 pp.

Commemoration of the Holocaust, scholar Halina Taborska recently argued, has entered a new stage in Poland. For more than a decade after communist rule ended in 1989, politicized slogans remained on many Holocaust memorials and other forms of commemoration, remnants of the period "when politicians and ideologues, the ruling powers and the ruled, artists and administrators accepted a definitive version of events as true and obligatory," she wrote in a collection of articles. Only in recent years has Holocaust commemoration sought to grapple with the "falsified semantic expressions" of Holocaust memory and to depoliticize commemoration in the public sphere.[1]

If remembering the past includes efforts to understand that past, then recent Polish-language scholarship on Holocaust memory in Poland is part of the development that Taborska describes. Polish scholars, building on recent decades of research in Poland and elsewhere reconstructing the history of the Holocaust, are increasingly examining how Poland's postwar politics, together with the country's specific relationship to the genocide as the location of the largest sites of mass

1. Halina Taborska, "Obszary Zagłady" [Regions of Annihilation], in Majewski and Ziedler-Janiszewska, *Pamięç Shoah*, 19.

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murder, shaped memory of this past in Polish society. Works of history, sociology, art history, architecture, and other fields have investigated how experiences specific to Polish society during and after the Second World War influenced the ways in which the Holocaust has been remembered—and not remembered—in Poland both officially and among the public, sometimes in tandem and sometimes in tension with each other. The resulting evolution of Holocaust memory in Poland over more than six decades is the focus of three recent Polish-language works: a study on postwar commemoration at Nazi concentration and death camps in Poland, a monograph on the memory of Treblinka, and a wide-ranging collected volume of articles from a conference in Łódź.

As with much Polish-language scholarship on the Holocaust since the early 1980s, recent research on Holocaust memory and commemoration is part of a newly politicized dialogue even as it seeks to depoliticize memory. The stage in Holocaust commemoration in Poland to which Taborska refers is, to a significant degree, an outgrowth of the public discussion that began a decade ago with the publication of Jan Gross's book about the murder of the Jewish residents of the small town of Jedwabne by their non-Jewish neighbors in July 1941.[2] Gross's study and a subsequent investigation by scholars in Poland about other incidents of anti-Jewish violence by non-Jewish Poles at that time, describing a wartime past in which Poles were not only victims but also, at times, perpetrators, challenged the self-perception of Poles and their memory of the war. The ensuing public debate has led to a reassessment of the history of the Holocaust in Poland among some scholars and segments of Polish society.

The research by Gross and other scholars also underscored the need to understand in more depth the tensions between history and memory and the impact of postwar politics on the two. The conflict between officially sanctioned memory and the memory preserved informally within a particular community rose to the surface during the debate over Gross's book, which focused attention on the falsified history preserved in the local communist-era monument in Jedwabne.

Yet the official sanctioning of a more accurate representation of the past, including a new monument erected in the aftermath of the debate over Jedwabne, continues to face opposition from some parts of Polish society. The contentious debates over Jedwabne, followed by subsequent works by Gross and others about pogroms in early postwar Poland,[3] prompted some Polish scholars and members of the public to reject this scholarship and hardened their insistence on a nationalist view of this past. As a result, the last decade has witnessed a polarization in both scholarship and society about Polish–Jewish relations before, during and after the war. As Jan Grabowski noted in a recent article, scholars

2. Jan Gross, *Sąsiedzi. Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny: Pogranicze, 2000). Published in English as *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

3. Jan Gross, *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006); Anna Cichopek, "The Cracow Pogrom of August 1945: A Narrative Reconstruction," in *Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath*, ed. Joshua Zimmerman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 221–38.

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who promote a "nationalist" version of Polish history and the Holocaust have "found a powerful ally in the Institute of National Remembrance," some of whose publications on Polish–Jewish relations have repeated prewar and wartime antisemitic stereotypes. Grabowski cites in particular a 2006 collection of articles on the pogrom in Kielce in 1946, which, he notes, "draws our attention to the fact that the 'battle for memory' in Poland rages on, that historical truth is its prisoner, and that the attitude toward the 'Jewish question' tells us more about the present political views of the authors than about the post-1945 realities."[4]

Recent research on Holocaust commemoration in Poland must therefore be seen in the context of a cyclical relationship between scholarship and public perceptions of the past. Politicization has created layers of postwar memory and history: the communist government's manipulation of representations of the past; a nationalist view of this history, strengthened by communist suppression of Polish national expression; efforts by intellectuals to address Polish–Jewish relations in the context of anticommunist opposition in the 1980s; and renewed debate in the political context of contemporary Poland.

Taborska is not the first scholar to herald the start of a new stage in which representations of the Holocaust in Poland (of which scholarly studies can be considered a part) begin to overcome the communist-era politicization of the issue. In an introduction to the 2001 English translation of Barbara Engelking-Boni's *Holocaust and Memory*, the historian Gunnar S. Paulsson wrote that the volume was part of a new period in Polish-language scholarship on the Holocaust in Poland and was relevant to both Polish historiography as well as the broader field of Holocaust studies. Engelking-Boni, according to Paulsson, is "a Polish author writing for a Polish readership, to be sure, and her work is interesting as an example of the new scholarship of post-Communist Poland . . . her work also has universal interest and significance." He wrote further, echoing Taborska's more recent comments, that "[w]ith the end of Communism . . . has also come the end of the distorted rhetoric, both Communist and anti-Communist, that disfigured the debate over Polish–Jewish relations for so many years."[5]

That Taborska heralded the beginning of a new, depoliticized stage of commemoration nine years after Paulsson noted a similar new beginning in Holocaust scholarship points not only to the continued politicization of the issue, particularly following the debate over Jedwabne, but also to the slow process by which scholarship reaches the public sphere. The intervening decade has seen the field of both Holocaust studies and Jewish studies grow into maturity in Poland, and in many

4. Jan Grabowski, "Rewriting the History of Polish-Jewish Relations from a Nationalist Perspective: The Recent Publications of the Institute of National Remembrance," *Yad Vashem Studies* 36, no. 1 (2008): 268. Grabowski notes that the article by Bożena Szaynok, a respected expert on the Kielce pogrom, is an exception to the nationalist perspective of the other articles in the Institute of National Remembrance volume. See Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom* (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2006).

5. Barbara Engelking-Boni, *Holocaust and Memory: The Experience of the Holocaust and Its Consequences. An Investigation Based on Personal Narratives*, ed. Gunnar S. Paulsson (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2001).

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ways, in Poland more so than elsewhere, the blossoming of Holocaust studies is intertwined with memory of the wartime past, involving a Jewish population whose destruction and physical absence shadow the Polish landscape.

Two works have provided the foundation for recent studies of Holocaust memory in Poland. The first is Michael Steinlauf's *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust*, published in English in 1997 and in Polish in 2001.[6] Steinlauf situates his study in the context of Polish–Jewish relations before the war, Polish society during the Second World War, and postwar Polish politics. He incorporates into this work the emergence of Holocaust memory not only within Polish society at large, but also among Jews and their descendants who remained in Poland.[7]

The second foundation for recent Polish-language studies on Holocaust memory is James Young's work on Holocaust memorials and memorialization more broadly. Several scholars, including most of those reviewed here, have situated their studies either explicitly or implicitly in dialogue with Young's characterization of the "art of public memory" as involving "the activity that brought memorials into being, the constant give and take between memorials and viewers, and the responses of viewers to their own world in light of a memorialized past—the consequences of memory."[8]

In a way that is different from the mainstream of the field, recent Polish-language scholarship on Holocaust memory is part of the internal discussion relating to the country's coming to terms with the past of antisemitism within Polish society before, during and after the Second World War. This discussion is itself part of greater attention in scholarship to the blurred boundaries between perpetrator and bystander during the Holocaust in Europe more broadly. Recent Polish-language scholarship on Holocaust memory, including the works reviewed here, can be seen as part of this process of "coming to terms with the past" in Poland.

6. Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); *Pamięć nieprzyswojona. Polska pamięc Zagłady* [Unassimilated Knowledge: Polish Memory of the Holocaust], trans. Agata Tomaszewska (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Cyklady, 2001).

7. Several Polish scholars have subsequently taken up study of connections between Holocaust memory and identity among Jews who remained in postwar Poland, which was also the focus in part of Engelking-Boni's *Holocaust and Memory.* The sociologist Malgorzata Melchior, for example, focuses on the role of the Jewish past and Holocaust survival among Jews who survived on the "Aryan side." More recently, Joanna Wiszniewicz's eloquent book of oral histories from the generation of Holocaust survivors' children in postwar Poland centered around the anti-Jewish campaign in Poland in 1968 and the subsequent Jewish emigration wave, addressing the complications of survivors' wartime memory as experienced by their children. See Malgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a Tożsamość: Polscy Żydzi ocaleni "na aryjskich papierach. Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* [Holocaust and Identity: Polish Jews Who Survived with Aryan Papers. An Analysis of Biographical Experience] (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2004); and Joanna Wiszniewicz, *Życie przecięte. Opowieści pokolenia Marca* [Life Cut in Two: Stories of the March Generation] (Sękowa: Czarne, 2008).

8. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

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A massive collection of articles published in 2009, titled *Pamięć Shoah: Kulturowe reprezentacje i praktyki upamiętnienia* [Memory of the Shoah: Cultural Representations and Practices of Commemoration], which includes the article by Halina Taborska cited above, exemplifies the ways in which Polish scholarship has evolved in connection with "official" and private memory of the Holocaust. Sixty-five of the volume's eighty-one articles were presented in 2003 at a conference in Łódź, just before the sixtieth anniversary of the deportation of Jews from the city's ghetto to death camps. The interdisciplinary conference was organized in conjunction with a gathering there of Holocaust survivors for the city's commemoration of the ghetto's liquidation. That these efforts to return Łódź's Jewish population to Polish memory took place not on the fiftieth anniversary of the ghetto deportation, but on its sixtieth, underscores the shift in public and scholarly discussions of the Holocaust in the intervening decade, particularly after the prolonged debates over the pogrom in Jedwabne.

The editors of the volume that developed from that conference, Tomasz Majewski and Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, express a theme in their introduction that ties together much of recent public and scholarly interest in the Holocaust and Jewish history in Poland: addressing a "dichotomy between places of emptiness and oblivion, on one hand, and of the evocation of those not present and an attempt to recall their fate, on the other hand."[9] They describe their goal as examining both concrete and theoretical considerations of Holocaust memory and commemoration. Most of the articles are brief, none exceeding twenty-five pages (except for Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, a section of which is included in Polish translation) and some much shorter, so that the volume provides not in-depth studies but rather a glimpse of issues and research that Polish scholars are currently undertaking on Holocaust memory. Consistent with the expertise of the editors, who are on the faculty of the Institute for Literary Theory, Theater, and Audiovisual Art in Łódź, most articles are in literary studies, sociology, philosophy, art and architecture, and film studies, although the volume also contains a handful of historical studies rooted in archival research.[10] The inclusion of reflective works on memory of the Holocaust written by nonscholars, including public figures, artists, and writers,[11] creates a dialogue underscoring the mutual influences of "popular" or public memory and scholarly writing about the past.

9. Taborska, "Obszary Zagłady," 19.

10. See, for example, Pawel Spodenkiewicz, "Chaim Rumkowski jako mowca" [Chaim Rumkowski as a Speaker], 121–32, and Monika Polit, "Elementy języka propagandy w Kronice getta łodzkiego" [Elements of the Language of Propaganda in the Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto], in Majewski and Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Pamięc Shoah*, 133–47.

11. For example, Henryk Grynberg, "Holocaust jako nowe doświadczenie literackie" [The Holocaust as a New Literary Experience], in Majewski and Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Pamięc Shoah*, 741–52; and Father Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel, "Żydzi-Chrześcijanie: dwie pamięci" [Jews-Christians: Two Memories], in Majewski and Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Pamięc Shoah*, 555–67. Grynberg is a Polish Jewish writer who survived the Holocaust as a child and defected to the United States in 1967. Weksler-Waszkinel is a scholar and a Catholic priest who was born Jewish in 1943 and raised by a Christian family.

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An implicit goal of the volume is to situate work on, and in, Poland in dialogue with Holocaust memory studies more broadly. This approach is incorporated into its overall structure, which alternates between sections focusing on Poland and sections exploring similar issues in other countries. The collection is divided into nine parts: "regions of the Holocaust," with short studies on commemoration at camps and ghettos in Poland; the Łódź ghetto; public discourse about the Holocaust from early postwar to the contemporary period, mainly outside Poland; public discourse about the Holocaust in Poland; philosophical and theoretical texts; a section titled "Experience of Memory, Experience of Emptiness," with theoretical texts and case studies on the architecture and art of Holocaust museums and exhibits; and a section each on art, literature, and film of the Holocaust.

One of the collection's important contributions is an examination of Holocaust memory through studies of locations that have not been at the forefront of scholarship. Although the volume contains new scholarship on previously studied areas such as Auschwitz and the Warsaw ghetto, the editors also bring together research on Łódź—a key focus, in connection with the conference—as well as on Holocaust memorial projects in Lublin and other locations.

Emphasis on the local landscape in the section on Łódź as well as in other sections points to the specific perspective that scholars in Poland can bring to study of the Holocaust and Holocaust memory in contemporary society, exploring the impact of local contexts on the physical manifestation of memory and its absence. In an introduction to the Łódź section, Majewski, the volume's coeditor, characterizes the commemorative activities and the conference proceedings as a "relocalization of memory," in which "the mythologizing of space meets with the realities of the topography of Lodz." He describes the fate of a hospital building from the Łódź ghetto as an example of the interactions between what he describes as "local forgetting" and "universal remembering." By the 1980s, according to Majewski, the former hospital building was on the verge of collapse, "forgotten by the city authorities and by the residents of Lodz." The building's gate was taken to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, "transformed into an element of universal memory of the Holocaust" as a "condition for preserving memory."[12]

The section on Łódź in this volume, as well as most of the other sections, does not directly address challenges posed by wartime and postwar antisemitism in Poland to the preservation of memory of the Holocaust. Only in the fourth section, titled "On [non] memory of the Holocaust," does the volume discuss Holocaust memory more explicitly in connection with Polish–Jewish relations. That section's introduction, by Włodzimierz Mich, paints a significantly more pessimistic view of Holocaust memory in Poland than the rest of the volume does. Based on the seven articles in the section, Mich concludes that "most Poles do not have sufficient knowledge of the Holocaust," and that what Mich refers to as the "co-responsibility" of some Poles in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust is still not accepted by the majority of Polish society.

12. Tomasz Majewski, "Litzmannstadt Ghetto," in Majewski and Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Pamięc Shoah*, 117–18.

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An article by Ewa Wolentarska-Ochman in this section, titled "The Illusory Cleansing of the Memory of Polish–Jewish Relations in the Decade after the Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe," explores the obstacles to challenging existing memory of the Holocaust in Polish society. She argues that the "cleansing" of Holocaust memory in Poland is not possible because "collective" Polish memory concerning Polish–Jewish relations does not exist. Her reasoning is that there are no concrete "memory sites" around which "collective memory" is shaped. No postwar trials of collaborators took place in Poland, according to Wolentarska-Ochman, and no films provoked discussion about the Holocaust as took place in France, Germany, and the United States. "National" places of memory in Poland in the form of museums or memorials addressing Polish–Jewish relations and the Holocaust as a whole, she argues, do not exist.

Wolentarska-Ochman concludes that without these "memory sites," a national discussion about Polish–Jewish relations, both positive and negative aspects, could not find concrete form. Even though she subsequently points to the beginning of discussion in the 1980s about Polish–Jewish relations and the Holocaust and cites more recent books, exhibitions, and films that have begun to create a "collective memory," her argument nevertheless dismisses the importance of developments in the past three decades. The showing of the film *Shoah* in Poland in 1986, for example, which sparked discussion of the more negative aspects of Polish–Jewish wartime relations, weighs against this argument; furthermore, postwar trials, such as that of Nazi officials at Auschwitz in Poland in 1947, did take place in the early years after the war. True, recently opened and long-established museums in Poland dedicated to Jewish history and the Holocaust do not refer almost at all to the more difficult "bystander" issues in Poland, including the role of non-Jewish Poles as perpetrators of violence against Jews. But neither do most such forms of commemoration in France, Hungary, or Romania address similar wartime issues in those countries.

Yet other aspects of Wolentarska-Ochman's article are an important contribution to analyzing memory and commemoration of the Holocaust in Poland. She notes that only a slim segment of the population is aware of, and accepts, scholars' findings that some non-Jewish Poles collaborated in anti-Jewish violence. Wolentarska-Ochman further points to the lack of desire among Polish society more broadly to remember the Holocaust, which she sees as an obstacle to creating a "collective memory." Perhaps the most interesting aspect of her analysis is her conclusion that focusing on local and unofficial efforts at Holocaust commemoration, without involvement by the national government, would help remove Holocaust memory from the realm of politics. Such commemorations, however, are inevitably shaped not only by memory of local events but also by nationwide politics.

The Łódź volume, on the one hand, and a recent study by Zofia Wóycicka about commemoration at Nazi camps in Poland in the first postwar years, on the other hand, portray opposite ends of a prolonged process, or a series of related processes: the early formation of Holocaust memory and contemporary efforts to recover this memory, separated by four decades of memory's partial suppression and manipulation under a communist regime. Martyna Rusiniak's book on

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memory of Treblinka in Polish society from the earliest postwar years through the end of communism, meanwhile, explores both the beginning and the middle of this process, from 1945 through 1989.

Early public discussions about how to represent wartime experiences, and the impact of these debates on commemoration at Nazi concentration and death camps, is the focus of Wóycicka's 2009 study, *Przerwana Żałoba: Spory wokół pamięci i upamiętnienia nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych i zagłady w Polsce 1944–1950* [Ruptured Mourning: Polish Debates about Memory and Commemoration of Nazi Concentration and Annihilation Camps in Poland 1944–1950]. Wóycicka places her work within the broader theoretical framework of memory studies, but questions the degree to which previous models of studying how memory groups shape narratives of the past apply to postwar Poland. In authoritarian states, she writes, restricted public discussion of the past does not reflect private memory, so that "official" representations of the past result not from "interactions among members of a given society" but from the politicization of memory.[13] In order both to access a more "authentic" early memory of the Holocaust as well as to understand its later politicization, Wóycicka focuses on the second half of the 1940s, when public discussion on commemoration was relatively freer than after the consolidation of a Stalinist regime at the end of 1940s.

While for James Young "national memory" of the Holocaust "varies from country to country, political regime to regime,"[14] Wóycicka emphasizes commonalities in early postwar commemoration across political and geographic borders, in addition to analyzing political and wartime factors specific to Poland. She focuses in particular on comparisons between commemoration at camps in Poland with those in Germany, drawing on recent German historiography on the subject. Wóycicka argues that the Holocaust was not yet a political taboo topic in early postwar public discussion in Poland, and rivalry between "Polish memory" and "Jewish memory" was part of open debates over commemoration at Nazi camps from the earliest postwar period. Museums and memorials included reference to Jewish victims, though on a modest scale.

Wóycicka's emphasis on the existence of Holocaust memory in early postwar Poland, challenging the prevailing view that this memory began to emerge only in the 1960s after the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem and the Six-Day War in Israel, dovetails with other recent research on Holocaust memory in other countries. Hasia Diner, for example, has found that Jews in the United States were discussing, reading about, and memorializing the Holocaust in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, addressing not only an internal Jewish audience but also the American public at large.[15] Samuel Moyn's book about what he terms the "Treblinka Affair," about a debate following publication

13. Woycicka, *Przerwana Żałoba*, 20.

14. Young, *The Texture of Memory.*

15. Hasia Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Hasia Diner, "Post-World-War-II American Jewry and the Confrontation with Catastrophe," *American Jewish History* 91, nos. 3–4 (2003): 439–67.

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of Jean-François Steiner's book on Treblinka, makes a similar argument about France in 1966, before the Six-Day War.[16]

Wóycicka's study is divided into two sections. The first explores early discussions of wartime experiences in public forums such as newspapers and literature, analyzing the works mainly of intellectuals. The section then turns to the Polish organization of former prisoners of Nazi camps, which included mainly Polish political prisoners, as well as the Jewish organizational leadership as "memory groups" that sought to influence commemorative projects. The second section analyzes the monuments, museums, and other forms of commemoration that came to fruition at the former camp sites. The analysis in both sections draws not only on newspaper articles and other publications, but also on a wide range of archival sources as well as two interviews conducted by the author.

The museums at Auschwitz and Majdanek are a particular focus of the second part of Wóycicka's study. Majdanek, the first liberated camp, was more significant in public discussion early on than in later years and was soon overshadowed by Auschwitz. The active role of former Polish political prisoners who were survivors of Auschwitz, including postwar political leaders such as Józef Cyrankiewicz, in discussions over commemoration was a factor in this shift, according to Wóycicka, and the group that these camp survivors established formed the museum's leadership and developed its exhibitions. The result was a focus on Polish political prisoners at Auschwitz, co-opting to a certain degree the experiences of Jews who comprised more than 90 percent of those killed there. At the same time, she notes, Birkenau, known as "Auschwitz II" and the location of the extermination camp where the victims were almost entirely Jewish as well as Roma and Sinti, was not entirely overlooked in early commemoration, although these efforts were on a much smaller scale than at Auschwitz I and sometimes employed Christian symbols.

The layers of politicized wartime memory in Poland make straightforward conclusions difficult, and Wóycicka's nuanced analysis respects these complications. In several places she challenges the work of Jonathan Huener in his study of commemoration at Auschwitz.[17] Huener argues that the museum's narrative is rooted partly in the Polish Romantic tradition, emphasizing Polish suffering and resistance while marginalizing Jewish experiences. Wóycicka, however, points to both ideological and pragmatic factors that led the Auschwitz museum to largely exclude Birkenau, including the sturdy brick buildings at the concentration camp that were more appropriate for exhibitions than the wooden barracks at Birkenau (placing the museum at the concentration camp, however, did not necessarily have to involve a de-emphasis on the Jewish identity of the vast majority of those killed at Auschwitz). Although Wóycicka emphasizes more so than Huener the presence of Jewish victims in commemoration at Auschwitz,

16. Samuel Moyn, *A Holocaust Controversy: The Treblinka Affair in Postwar France* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press; Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005).

17. Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945–1979* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

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however marginalized, her work does not dispute the marginal nature of this inclusion, and her analysis in fact seems to agree with and expand on Huener's study more often than she disagrees with it.

Wóycicka dedicates a separate chapter to an early commemorative project at Treblinka that never came to fruition, analyzing both the debates surrounding the project's planning and the iconographic symbols in which competing Polish and Jewish representations of camp experiences would have found concrete form had this version of the memorial been built. Even into the early period of Stalinism in Poland, when public forms of religious expression were not politically viable, Polish and Jewish groups were planning a memorial at Treblinka that emphasized the victims' Jewish identity and employed religious symbolism. Only in 1964 was a different monument at Treblinka, partly in the form of a symbolic graveyard, completed.

Unlike at Auschwitz and Majdanek, each of which consisted of both a death camp where the victims were almost entirely Jewish and a concentration camp where most non-Jewish Poles were imprisoned, Treblinka and the two other camps that were constructed specifically as death camps (Bełżec and Sobibór) remained almost entirely empty in the first postwar years, as did Chełmno, which was the first camp where Jews were killed by gassing.[18] Wóycicka attributes the absence of commemoration at these four camps only partly to the Jewish identity of nearly all of those killed there, however. She also cites the very small number of survivors from these four camps, which, together with Jewish emigration in the early postwar years, led to the absence or negligible size of a "memory group" associated with them. A further factor was the postwar Polish Jewish leadership's focus on a monument to the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which represented resistance and heroism rather than the suffering and victimhood symbolized by the Nazi death camps. Yet as with the museum at Auschwitz and in public discussions about wartime commemoration, the early plans for a memorial at Treblinka underscored the presence of the Holocaust, however marginalized, in the public sphere even into the early part of the Stalinist period.

At the same time, these early plans for a memorial at Treblinka point to the inability in the early postwar years to find forms of commemoration appropriate to the Holocaust, in Poland and elsewhere, according to Wóycicka. The planned memorial, she argues, failed to convey either the unprecedented nature of the crimes or the vast number of victims (though one can debate whether any memorials, even "counter-memorials" emphasizing not an unchanging physical object but rather the viewer's experience of the memorial, have since succeeded in doing so, and whether this is possible). The design for the first planned Treblinka memorial called for traditional forms of art using symbols from Jewish sources—the

18. Although there was no concentration camp attached to these death camps, as there were at Auschwitz and Majdanek, there were small work camps where prisoners mainly produced materials to keep the annihilation camp "operating," such as repairing shoes and clothes for guards and other officials. Thus "Treblinka II" in Rusiniak's title refers to the annihilation camp, while Treblinka I was the work camp.

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Star of David, a menorah, the Decalogue—which, in Wóycicka's analysis (differing from Rusiniak's), are nevertheless rooted in Christian conceptions of Judaism, since they are symbols that would be most "obviously Jewish" to a Christian audience rather than conveying a "Jewish" interpretation of the Holocaust.

Wóycicka's broader argument about this never-built memorial—that its symbolism conveyed a Christian interpretation of suffering that gave a redemptive meaning to martyrdom—reflects a challenge to Holocaust commemoration specific to Poland: Despite the involvement of the postwar Polish Jewish leadership in plans for the memorial, Treblinka existed in a country whose surviving Jews were mainly rebuilding elsewhere, so that its immediate audience was mainly a Christian one. Wóycicka argues that such Christian symbolism in commemoration at death camps where the victims were almost entirely Jewish was motivated by a natural expression of the Polish Catholic way of remembering the dead rather than an intentional effort to co-opt or deny the specific fate of Jews during the war.

Wóycicka's interpretations, as with the other works reviewed here, would be deepened by more direct analysis of the connection between antisemitism and Holocaust memory in postwar Poland, which the authors refer to only in general terms. Polish–Jewish relations, which had worsened between the world wars, had continued to deteriorate after the outbreak of the Second World War. Complications to these relations between September 1939 and June 1941 were particularly significant in that just before the beginning of mass murder, the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland (as well as the Baltic states and parts of Romania) had reinforced the stereotype of *Żydokomuna*, roughly translated as "Judeo-communism," which blamed Jews for communism. Intertwined with this deterioration was the marginalization of the fate of Polish Jewry among the concerns of the Polish government-in-exile, though with exceptions, such as the mission of the Polish courier Jan Karski, which conveyed information about the genocide to the Allies.[19] The "bystander" issue more broadly—which can be framed as how far Jews were part of the "universe of obligation" of surrounding society, not only in Poland, to use Helen Fein's term[20]—continued into the postwar period, when places of mainly Jewish death were marginalized in commemoration. The broad interest of certain segments of contemporary Polish society in the Jewish past and the Holocaust, including among the scholars here, can be seen as part of a retroactive inclusion of Jews in this universe.

Wóycicka's work indirectly addresses this issue, in a tentative way, through her discussion of tensions between "Polish" and "Jewish" memories beginning in the earliest postwar years, in connection with commemorative plans at Treblinka and other camps. The concept of competing memories is also the starting point for Martyna Rusiniak's study of memory of Treblinka, *Obóz Zagłady Treblinka II w*

19. See David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939–1942* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

20. The term is from Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

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Pamięci Społecznej (1943–1989) [The Annihilation Camp of Treblinka II in Societal Memory], whose analysis expands on Wóycicka's discussion. Although most of Rusiniak's work also does not directly relate commemoration to the impact of antisemitism, she states from the start that there are not two separate "national" memories of the Holocaust, referring presumably to "Polish" and "Jewish" memory. "[H]uman memory," she argues, "is one and connected with individual experiences, as well as by events of a general nature as well as by the politics conducted in a given moment by state authorities."[21] One can challenge this statement; after all, the memory and perspective of individuals are shaped in part by how different groups, whether national, ethnic, or religious, experienced events; certainly Jews and ethnic Poles experienced the Second World War in largely different ways. It is possible to read Rusiniak's assertion, however, as an attempt, though perhaps not explicit, to include retroactively the fate of Jews, as Polish citizens, in the obligations of the Polish state.

The works by Wóycicka and Rusiniak overlap but with different methodologies, time frames, and scope. Wóycicka's is in part an intellectual history, placing early postwar Holocaust memory in Poland within the theoretical framework of "memory studies" and rooted in Polish, German, and to some degree English-language historiography. She focuses on the discussions and debates of writers, state authorities, and prisoner groups that sought to influence the place of Treblinka and other Nazi camps in the memory of Polish society.[22] Rusiniak's work, by contrast, which begins with the Nazis' liquidation of the camp in November 1943 following a prisoners' uprising there, is a social history and to some extent a micro-history of one site. She builds mainly on Polish historiography and explores both how state authorities shaped memory of Treblinka through propaganda as well as how everyday life influenced memory of the camp within Polish society.

Both Wóycicka and Rusiniak challenge the idea that the Holocaust was absent in Polish memory of the Holocaust and emphasize the politicization of wartime memory, while also pointing to the marginalization of memory of Treblinka and other experiences of Jewish death. Yet the different time frames of their studies lead to somewhat different conclusions. Wóycicka emphasizes the consensus that discussion of the Holocaust was for the most part taboo after the earliest postwar years, particularly during the Stalinist period, whereas Rusiniak's traces the continuation of memory of Treblinka throughout the postwar decades. Rusiniak's argument is rooted partly in a different source base, drawing not only on archival documents and public discussions, but also on Polish propaganda directed at Polish society in their everyday lives: guidebooks, school textbooks, encyclopedias, films, and even postage stamps. Whereas Wóycicka analyzes

21. Rusiniak, *Obóz Zagłady Treblinka II w Pamięci Społecznej*, 8.

22. For a more detailed study of the main group of former political prisoners of the Nazi camps in postwar Poland and its role in shaping commemoration at the former camps, see Joanna Wawrzyniak, *ZBoWiD i pamięć drugiej wojny światowej, 1949–1969 [ZBoWiD and memory of the Second World War, 1949–1969*] (Warsaw: Trio, 2009). [ZBoWiD stands for Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację (Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy).]

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articles by intellectuals in early postwar publications, Rusiniak's work uses the press to access more factual information about commemorative ceremonies and other events connected with Treblinka, though the latter also uses some literary works focused on Treblinka.

Rusiniak reconstructs in great detail the process by which the memorial at Treblinka came into being, both the earlier version that was not built and the one that was actually constructed. She analyzes the role of international politics in the realization of the memorial plans, although access to funds for the project also helped to determine the timing. While the architectural competition for the second project took place in 1955, the final decision to construct it was made only in 1961, during Cold War political polemics relating to war-crimes trials in West Germany and in the same year as the Eichmann trial in Israel. The inscriptions on the various parts of the Treblinka memorial were tightly controlled by political authorities in Poland, Rusiniak notes, but the architects had relative freedom in artistic expression. The resulting memorial is a vast, symbolic graveyard of thousands of stones with the names of the towns and cities whose residents were killed there.

A particular emphasis of Rusiniak's work is memory of Treblinka among the residents in the area immediately near the camp. Seeking to connect the postwar fate of the camp site to its wartime history, she argues that the postwar phenomenon of nearby residents searching for gold ostensibly buried there and for belongings the victims left behind was connected with the particular "bystander" role of residents near camps. Some of these residents had been forced to help with the camp's functioning and in the process benefited from trade of the belongings of those murdered. Rusiniak draws on testimonies taken down in the 1970s as well as on films and written memoirs. Jan Gross's controversial *Złote Żniwa* [*Golden Harvest*], recently published in Polish and scheduled in English in 2012, is more critical. Gross argues that non-Jews in Europe benefited materially from the murder of Jews, and, like Rusiniak, he documents that peasants near Treblinka dug for gold in human remains. But Rusiniak has concluded that a photograph Gross describes as depicting such a scene shows individuals preserving the terrain after the war.

Rusiniak's introduction hints at the dual role of Polish researchers of the Holocaust and Jewish history: that of a scholar and as a member of Polish society. She notes that her sources included an interview she conducted with her grandmother, who lived in the immediate vicinity of Treblinka during the war. Most other residents whom she sought to interview were reticent to discuss their wartime experiences near Treblinka. Certainly one should be wary of analyzing scholarship based on the personal background of its author, and Rusiniak does not emphasize her personal connection to the history, nor does she refer to it in the introduction or elsewhere as motivating her scholarship. However, reference to an author's personal relationship to the history about which he or she writes occurs frequently enough in recent works on the Holocaust by Polish scholars that the issue seems relevant for understanding the motivations of some of those seeking to overcome the marginalization and politicization of Polish memory of the Holocaust. Jacek Leociak, in a work about documents in the Ringelblum

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archives of the Warsaw ghetto, perhaps states this connection most directly: "The Warsaw district of Muranów (or in other words, the area of the former ghetto) is my childhood home," he wrote. "I do not know whether I could have written this book without direct experience of this unique place."[23]

Work by these scholars also underscores the importance of studying memory of the Holocaust not only to analyze how the past is remembered, but also to deepen our understanding of the past that this memory seeks to represent, as well as its prewar context. In Poland and other European countries, the place of the Holocaust in the memory of the Second World War illuminates in part the place of Jews within a particular society before the war, which affected wartime relations between Jews and non-Jews and therefore had an impact on processes of the Holocaust itself, for example as one of numerous factors affecting differences in survival rates. This history in turn helps place the Holocaust within the broader sweep of modern Jewish history; the presence, and absence, of the Holocaust in commemoration of the Second World War reflects in part both the successes and failures of Jewish integration in the nation-states of modern Europe.

Returning, then, to the connections between research on Holocaust memory and contemporary Polish politics, debates among scholars and in the public over Polish–Jewish relations during and after the Second World War can be seen in part as a manifestation of the continued discussion over the nature of the Polish state, between those who see Poland as an integral part of Europe and those who lean toward a more inward-looking, nationalist perspective. The process of "coming to terms with the past" of the Second World War and the Holocaust is necessarily politicized, in Poland and elsewhere, shaped as much by historical investigation as by contemporary politics, as Grabowski notes. Taborska, whose remarks began this review, acknowledges this continued politicization of Holocaust studies, including Holocaust memory, despite her assertion of a new, depoliticized stage of Holocaust commemoration: "Where are the newly established histories and inscriptions leading us toward," she asks. "Is it definitely toward a more complete truth?"[24]

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23. Jacek Leociak, *Text in the Face of Destruction: Accounts from the Warsaw Ghetto Reconsidered*, trans. Emma Harris (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 2004), introduction.

24. Taborska, "Obszary Zagłady," 19.

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