Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* –

The Malleability of Cultural Memory

Spring 2006
Introduction to Cultural Memory

Adeline Singer

I) Holocaust Memory: Changing Frames

On December 6th 2006, Claude Lanzmann, on the invitation of the French Consulate in Israel, visited the Bezalel Art Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He presented his movie *Sobibor*, "a sidearm of his project Shoah", as he termed it. Comprised of material not used in Lanzmann's opus magnum, the film focuses on the uprising in the death camp Sobibor on October 14th 1943. The Bezalel auditorium was completely filled. Yet during the screening, people began to display disinterest, first by speaking and then by leaving the room *en masse* before the question and answer session had started. *Sobibor*, made in a style similar to *Shoah*, from witness accounts and without archival material, apparently left no great impression on the young Israeli students.

Over 20 years ago, Lanzmann's movie *Shoah* premiered in New York. The *New York Times* featured an article in which a journalist interviewed those in line to watch the newly released film. Headlined: "New Holocaust Documentary Draws Motivated Audience", the reporter described how each moviegoer had a special reason for subjecting him or herself to the nine and a half hour long epic:

> "Yet while some came to learn and others so they would never forget, there seemed to be another element. It was that by simply hearing more and learning more about the Holocaust they would be able to fill – however tentatively – the gaping emptiness of not being able to understand how such atrocities could have happened."[1]

The Israeli students I observed are undoubtedly a unique case, given their intensive exposure to forms of Holocaust remembrance in schools, the army and other social

[1] New York Times, Ocotober 24th 1985, p. C21.

institutions.[2] Nevertheless, it does not seem farfetched to claim that their reaction in comparison to the observations made by the *New York Times* journalist 21 years ago, it signifies a turning point in the memorialization of the Holocaust. Ultimately, as Aleida Assmann writes, every generation develops its own attitude toward the past and refuses to let earlier generations impose their perspective on them.[3] Consequently, the Holocaust memory of the third and fourth generations following the Second World War fundamentally differs from that of earlier generations. The increasing distance between their moment and the events of the second World War has impacted the process of "communicative memory." Furthermore, the generation which is currently reaching adulthood has been exposed to an institutionalized form of Holocaust memorialization.

According to Jan Assmann, communicative memory lasts three to four generations, approximately roughly 80 to 100 years.[4] This form of embodied memory is marked by informality and is generated through daily, interpersonal interactions. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur describes this intergenerational dialogue as

> "an intense experience that contributes to widening the circle of close relations by opening it in the direction of a past which, even while belonging those of our elders who are still living places us in communication with the experiences of generation other than our own."[5]

In the last 20 years, the dimension of communicative memory of the Holocaust has been shrinking as its immediate eyewitnesses die. In response, the communicative memory space is being overtaken by cultural memory:

---

[2] See: Feldman Jackie, Individuelles Leid und Staerkung der Nation. Nichtkosmopolitsches Gedenken in Israel. Mittelweg 36, 5/2005
[3] See: Assmann, Aleida 2006, p. 27
[4] See: Assmann, Jan 2005, p. 56
[5] Ricoeur, Paul 2004, p. 394

> "Während das sozial Gedächtnis eine durch Zusammenleben, sprachlichen Austausch und Diskurs hervorgebrachte Koordintation individueller Gedächtnisse ist, beruht das kollektive und kulturelle Gedächtnis auf einem Fundus der Erfahrung der von seinen lebending Trägern abgelöst ist und auf materielle Datenträger übertragen ist."[6]

The gap of 20 years between the premier of *Shoah* in New York and the presentation of *Sobibor* in Jerusalem marks a decisive period of transition between communicative and cultural memory. In 1985, when Lanzmann's earlier movie was released, cultural memory of the Holocaust was in the making. *Shoah* innovated a new sort of oral history; movie spoke to people who who had grown up knowing the Holocaust only as a familial and a national taboo. As Raul Hilberg states, it was only in the 1970's that the memory of the Holocaust became part of collective remembrance in the American-Jewish community.[7] The same holds true for the memorialization of the Shoah in Israel, which had been repressed as a shameful aspect of Jewish history during the early days of the State.[8] Mechanisms of repression were also at work in Germany. Uwe Timm describes the "Unfaehigkeit zu Trauern" of the post war years as follows:

> "Fast alle haben weggesehen und geschwiegen, als die jüdischen Nachbarn abgeholt wurden und *einfach* verschwanden, und die meisten schwiegen abermals nach dem Krieg, als man erfuhr, wohin die Verschwundenen verschwunden waren."[9]

When Lanzmann began to film *Shoah* in 1975, the professional memorialization of the Holocaust just begun. The Holocaust was still far from achieving what Bernhard Giessen termed the "mythologization of the trauma"[10]. Lanzmann wanted to show the continuous presence of the Holocaust in contemporary society. In *Shoah*, the ordinary

[6] Assmann, Aleida 2006, p. 34
[7] See: Hilberg 2003, p. 1133
[8] See: Segev 2000, p.155f
[9] Tim, Uwe 2003, p. 106
[10] Giessen, Bernhard 2004, p. 141.

next-door neighbor could be a victim, a bystander or a Nazi perpetrator. The wooden wagons were still pulled through Poland by steam engines as in the days of the death transports; old people who profited from the confiscation of Jewish property continued to live in houses that had belonged to Jewish families. In 1985, *Shoah* erased the boundaries between past and present.[11]

In this essay, I will argue that the passage of time has historicized *Shoah* as well. Without doubt, the film remains part of the cultural memory of the Holocaust, yet the frame within which it is currently perceived is different than it was 21 years ago. Today, *Shoah* is embedded in a global Holocaust culture that Natan Sznaider and Daniel Levy have described as the "Universalisierung des Bösen"[12]. According to both scholars, the Holocaust has been fused with the American cultural industry: "Für die meisten Menschen wird die Erinnerung an den Holocaust Teil eines Freizeit Programms."[13] In contrast to "Holocaust Puristen," Sznaider and Levy consider the commercialization of the Holocaust as a positive contribution to a cosmopolitan form of remembrance. Commercial representations allow for identification and engender sensitivity among the younger audience for "gegenwärtiges menschliches Handeln und Fühlen".[14] Independent of one's agreement with Sznaider's and Levy's assessment, it is indisputable that globalization, increasing internet access, Hollywood movies and television productions have transformed the cultural apparatus in terms of which we remember the Holocaust.

I will first summarize the historical understanding of the Holocaust that informs Lanzmann's movie. Following this, I will turn to the mnemo-techniques Lanzmann

[11] See: Hellig, Jocelyn 1998, p. 57
[12] Sznaider, Levy 2001, p. 149
[13] Sznaider, Levy 2001, p. 154
[14] Sznaider, Levy 2001, p. 157

utilized to locate the Holocaust in the present of the mid-1980's. Finally, I will analyze the shift in memory frames that has transformed *Shoah* into a historical document which is disconnected from the present. In order to engage in these questions, I am using will employ Paul Ricoeur's concept of the "hermeneutic circle," Jan and Aleida Assmann's theory of "cultural memory," and Harald Welzer's idea of "social memory". I maintain that "Shoah" provides us with a unique opportunity to investigate the intersection of cultural and social memory.

II) The Ideology of Memory in *Shoah*

Lanzmann's movie is ideologically and factually influenced by Raul Hilberg's three-volume work: *The Destruction of the European Jews*, which develops a functionalist interpretation of the Holocaust. Hilberg describes the annihilation of European Jewry as an evolutionary process made possible by the combined efforts of administrative organs, industry and government, coupled with collective indifference.[15] Hilberg's analysis resembles Hannah Arendt's argument for a "banal evil" which was created through a bureaucratic mechanism that enabled perpetrators of violence to transfer their guilt feelings onto their superiors.

> "Denn so wie das Recht in zivilisierten Ländern von der stillschweigenden Annahme ausgeht, daß die Stimme des Gewissens sagt: " Du sollst nicht töten, gerade weil voraussgestzt ist, daß des Menschen natürliche Begierden unter Umständen mörderisch sind, so verlangte das 'neue' Recht Hitlers, daß die Stimme des Gewissens jedermann sagte: "Du sollst töten" […]."[16]

Hilberg emphasizes that the anti-Jewish measures taken before the "Endlösung" did not have to be invented by the Nazis. Rather, the NSDAP could rely on ancient

[15] See: Hilberg, Raul 2003, p.1060
[16] Arendt, Hannah 2004, p. 245,6

mechanisms of Christian anti-Semitism which prevailed throughout Europe.[17] Furthermore, Hilberg argues that the Holocaust did not end with the defeat of the Nazis. Hatred for the Jewish people continued to linger in the hearts and minds of the people. The Allies, for instance, expressed indifference toward the Jewish people's fate by refusing to acknowledge the Holocaust as a specifically Jewish genocide. The lax judicial treatment of the Nazi perpetrators also exemplified for Hilberg the persisting insensitivity of the allies towards Holocaust survivors.[18]

The most apparent ideological intersection between historian and filmmaker is the attempt to create a specifically Jewish account of the Holocaust. The movie title שואה is the Hebrew word for Holocaust and sudden devastation. Still further, at the beginning of the movie's textbook, Lanzmann quotes Isaiah 56:5: "I will give them an everlasting name. The same biblical verse gives the name יד ושם to the Israeli Holocaust Memorial. In consequence, all the victims in Lanzmann's movie are Jewish.

In accordance with Hilberg's analysis, Lanzmann regards the Holocaust as unprecedented.[19] In an interview published in *L'Express* in 1985, he rejects all comparisons and fictional representation of the Holocaust. Nine years later he underlined his opinion by suggesting that there is a "ring of fire" around the Holocaust. The Holocaust is sacred and represents Jewish suffering. Thus, it should not be rendered as a universal trauma.[20] Concomitantly, Lanzmann rejected Steven Spielberg's film

[17] see: Hilberg, Raul 2003, p. 1-13
[18] see: Hilberg, Raul 2003, p.1141-1171
[19] See: Garton Ash, Timothy, New York Review of Books, Vol. 32 # 20 December 19th 1985
[20] See: Hellig, Jocyline 1998, p.61, 67

Schindler's List. In his mind, the movie creates a fictional presence "where there can only be absence".[21]

Lanzmann's approach to the Holocaust represents a pure form of remembrance, one which has changed significantly over the past 20 years. Bernhard Giessen describes this transformation as follows:

> "Today the Holocaust has acquired the position of a free-floating myth or a cultural icon of horror and inhumanity […]. It is not a particular German problem anymore – every person can refer to it, regardless of his or her origin or descent."[22]

In this respect, *Shoah* exemplifies a particular form of collective remembrance; it is an artifact of cultural memory. In referring to the Halbwachsian theory of *memoire collective*, Jan Assmann describes the function of memory as reconstructive:

> "Die Vergangenheit vermag sich in ihm nicht als solche zu bewahren. Sie wird fortwährend von den sich wandelnden Bezugsrahmen der fortschreitenden Gegenwart her organisiert."[23]

Today, Lanzmann appears to some intellectuals as a stoic defender of linear, old-fashioned narrative. In the mid 1980's, however, he was considered avant-garde. When the movie was released in 1985, it touched upon or perhaps even created a "Zeitgeist" of remembering. Several reviewers remarked that Lanzmann diminished the boundaries between past and present in an unprecedented way:

> "Using the exact opposite of Brecht's "alienation effect," Lanzmann succeeds in eliminating the distance between past and present. In so doing, "he wanted to aid the human conscience to never forget, to never accustom itself to the perversity of racism and its monstrous capacities for destruction.'"[24]

---

[21] Elssaeser, Thomas 1996, p. 147
[22] Giessen, Bernhard 2004, p. 143
[23] Assmann, Jan 2005, p. 41,42
[24] Garton Ash, Timothy, New York Review of Books, Vol. 32 # 20 December 19th 1985

Today, *Shoah* is perceived in the context of the vast production of cultural memory about the Holocaust. For an audience used to a range of representations of the Holocaust in memorials, television shows, documentaries and history books, *Shoah* may no longer serve this temporal "eliminating" function. Paul Ricoeur, for instance, doubts that the "moralizing elitism" of Charles Lanzmann touches an audience:

> "Viewers need not only to be made intellectually aware – a la Brecht and Lanzmann - of the horrors of history; they also need to experience the horror of that suffering as if they were actually there."[25]

In his hermeneutic model, Ricoeur describes the text's autonomy from the original intention of its author through the act of interpretation. Every text implies a historical context. Therefore, the meaning of the text is initially dependent on the historical context of the author, secondarily on the discursive milieu in which the text was created and finally, on the present circumstance of the interpreter. This "hermeneutic circle" places the contemporary reader in the midst of an ongoing dialogue between text and context. For the present-day viewer of *Shoah*, this dialogue has progressed considerably from Lanzmann's original moment of composition. The contemporary audience views a different film from the one he intended, and their act of viewing is, in part conditioned by Lanzmann's own cultural achievement.[26]

III) The Integration of the Past in the Present of *Shoah*

The shift in discursive frames is visible not only in the differing reactions of the audience, but also in the architecture of the film itself. By tracking the techniques by which Lanzmann represents the past event of the Holocaust within the film's present, it may be possible to understand how he authorizes a particular mode of remembrance

[25] Ricoeur Paul in: Kearney, Richard 2004, p. 107
[26] Kearney, Richard 2004, p. 29 - 31

which will in time come to encompass both the historical event and the film itself. The movie captures the memorialization of the Holocaust in Poland before the fall of the Iron Curtain yet it also traces the forms of communicative remembrance in cultural memory that will be impossible when all "Zeitzeugen" are gone.

Lanzmann integrates the past in multilayered ways. Primarily, he shows his three main groups of actors: perpetrators, victims and bystanders, as still active in 1985. Perpetrators such as the SS Unterscharfführer Franz Suchomel reside in suburban areas, another former SS guard taps beer in a local beer cellar. These are everymen. But not so the victims. In contrast to the forgetful present tense of the perpetrators, theirs is an ongoing relationship with the past sustained by painful remembrance. [27] Lanzmann also implicates contemporary German industry in the destruction process. He demonstrates that the trucks of the company "Saurer," which provided the first gassing wagons in Chlemno, are still present on German streets, and that Krupp factories are still producing steel.

Shoah presents in great detail images of the remnants of the death camps in Poland. Such sites have an important function for remembrance. Aleida Assmann considers places of history an intermediary between the present and the past: "Wir können auch sagen sie sind Gedächtnismedien; sie verweisen auf eine unsichtbare Vergangenheit und halten den Kontakt zu ihr aufrecht."[28] Lanzmann uses this bridge to the past in order to create a particular experience for the viewer. He brings the victims, or their narration to the places of destruction, Treblinka, Auschwitz, Sobibor and Belzec. He charges the present landscape, in which there is hardly any trace left of the Holocaust,

[27] See: Felman, Shoshana 1994, p. 103
[28] Assmann, Aleida 2006, p. 331

with the memories of the victims and thus transforms forests and rivers into witnesses to trauma.

Another important Leitmotif of *Shoah* that symbolizes the continuing presence of the Holocaust is the unfettered anti-Semitism of contemporary Polish society. One of the most revealing examples of its persistence is the scene in which Lanzmann interviews a group of Poles in front of the church in Chelmno where the Jews were gathered before their deportation. One of the villagers relates a horrible tale:

> "The Jews were gathered in a square. The rabbi asked an SS man: 'Can I talk to them?' The SS man said yes. So the rabbi said that around two thousand years ago the Jews condemned the innocent Christ to death. And when they did that, they cried out: 'Let his blood fall on our heads and on our sons' heads.' Then the rabbi told them: 'Perhaps the time has come for that, so let us do nothing, let us go, let us do as we're asked.'"

Another village women embroiders in more details from the blood libel scene of the gospel of Matthew:

> "So Pilate washed his hands and said: Christ is innocent and he send Barnabas. But the Jews cried out: 'Let his blood fall on our heads'."[29]

Even the film's cinematography underlines the never-ending horror of the Holocaust. Within the film, trains are stopping at train stations that bear the names of death camps, just as they did during the Second World War. The only thing that seems to have changed is the load the wagons are carrying. In the final scene of *Shoah*, Lanzmann shows the wheels of a train in Poland turning as the screen turns black. The message is unequivocal: The Shoah will continue indefinitely.

[29] Lanzmann, Claude 1995, p. 89, 90

IV) The Structure of Memory in *Shoah*

In *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, Aleida Assmann generates a typology of the mechanisms and motifs of memory. According to Assmann, memory is structured by forces such as dichotomies between victim and perpetrator, questions of collective guilt and remembrance, trauma and the forgetting of trauma. [30] I would suggest that Lanzmann's *Shoah* integrates these same themes into a linear narrative of the process of destruction.

The most prevalent theme in *Shoah* is to bear witness. According to Shoshana Felman, "Shoah is also a film about the relation between art and witnessing, about film as a medium which expands the capacity for witnessing."[31] In order to record the testimonies, Lanzmann utilizes what Nietzsche described as the mnemotechnique of pain. "Man brennt etwas ein, damit es ihm Gedächtnis bleibt: Nur was nicht aufhört weh zu thun, bleibt im Gedächtnis […]"[32]. Lanzmann aims to lead the mind of the protagonists back to the death camps. In the case of Simon Srebnik, one of the two only survivors of the Chelmno camp, Lanzmann literally takes him back to the place of his suffering. Srebnik is introduced in the first scene of the movie as the boy who used to stand in a boat on the river Narew every day, singing soldier melodies for the SS men. He was kept alive because of his extraordinary voice. More than thirty years later, Lanzmann poses the now middle aged Srebnik in a boat on the river singing the songs that still haunt him.[33] "Der Körper des Gefolterten und Traumatisierten ist der bleibende Schauplatz der

[30] See: Assmann, Aleida 2006, p. 62ff.
[31] Felmann, Shoshana 1994, p. 91
[32] Nietzsche, Friedrich 2005, p. 50
[33] The role of Nazi songs in *Shoah* deserves special attention. Lanzmann's use of old Nazi songs deconstructs their original meaning by integrating them into the narrative of the Holocaust. The recollection of songs is a traditional means of cultural memory. Its reframing in "Shoah" is particularly provocative.

verbrecherischen Gewalt und damit zugleich das <Gedächtnis> dieser Zeugen."[34], writes Aleida Assmann.

Several times over the course of the movie the witnesses are overcome by their emotions. At these moments, Lanzmann persists even when the pain seems to overwhelm his interviewee. One of the most intense scenes in the film is the testimony of the barber Abraham Bomba who used to shave off the hair of the Jews on their way to the gas chambers in Treblinka. Lanzmann shot the scene in Bomba's barbershop in Israel. While cutting a customers hair, he remembers how one of the fellow barbers at Treblinka saw his wife and child on their way to the gas chambers. Suddenly, Bomba is unable to continue. Lanzmann nevertheless insists: *"Go on, Abe You must go on. You have to."* The barber responds: "I can't. It is too horrible. Please." Yet, Lanzmann keeps insisting: *"We have to do it. You know it."*[35] While Bomba tries to hide his tears, the camera rests on him relentlessly until he has fulfilled his obligation as a surviving witness. In this sense, Lanzmann and his interviewees are what Avishai Margalit terms the "paradigmatic moral witness […] who ascribes intrinsic value to his testimony no matter what the instrumental consequences of it are going to be."[36]

Lanzmann, who refers to himself as obsessed, was on a mission against forgetting. One of the critics in *L'Express* went so far as to describe the film as a "monument against forgetting".[37] The complete destruction of evidence for the Holocaust was a major goal of the Nazis; Lanzmann considered it a moral calling to preserve the memory of the Holocaust against all odds. The *New York Review of Books* framed

[34] Assmann, Aleida 2005, p. 90
[35] Lanzmann, Claude 1995, p.107
[36] Margalit, Avishai 2002, p. 167
[37] See: Garton Ash, Timothy, New York Review of Books, Vol. 32 # 20 December 19th 1985

Lanzmann's achievement as a sort of resurrection from nothing: "Re-created out of nothing — no, out of less than nothing, out of nothingness, le néant, as Lanzmann himself says. There were not even the ashes."[38]

Lanzmann approaches the perpetrators with similar precision. Using long interviews and secret cameras, he extracts recollections from former SS men and Nazi officials who refuse to remember even when confronted with evidence. "*You don't remember those days?"* Lanzmann asks Dr. Franz Grassier, deputy of the Nazi commissioner of the Warsaw Ghetto: "Not much," he responds, "I recall more clearly my prewar mountaineering trips than the entire war period and those days in Warsaw […]"[39].

Lanzmann also demonstrates the collective ignorance and hence collective responsibility of the German and Polish bystanders. Mrs. Michelson, the wife of a Nazi school teacher, stands for the majority who watched but did not intervene: Lanzmann asks: *"Did you see the gas vans?"* Michelson's response indicates her active avoidance of the truth during the extermination of the Jews:

> "No… Yes from the outside. They shuttled back and forth. I never looked inside; I didn't see Jews in them. I only saw things from the outside – the Jews' arrival, their disposition, how they were loaded aboard […]".[40]

Finally, Lanzmann captures the trauma that has befallen the victims. Itzak Zuckerman one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising tells the director: "Claude, you asked me for my impression. If you could lick my heart, it would poison you."[41] Lanzmann had created not only a narrative of the Holocaust but also an almost ideal-

[38] Garton Ash, Timothy, New York Review of Books, Vol. 32 # 20 December 19th 1985
[39] Lanzmann, Claude1995, p. 162
[40] Lanzmann, Claude 1995, p. 71
[41] Lanzmann, Claude 1995, p. 182

typical schematic of the structure of remembrance. More specifically, he preserved the memory structure of a particular point in time.

V) The Interdependence of Cultural and Social Memory

Claude Lanzmann was one of the first directors to use filmed testimonies in order to create a cultural memory of the Holocaust. In subsequent decades, the moral obligation to bear witness has become a dominant feature of Holocaust memorialization. Between 1994 and 1999, Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation collected more than 49,000 interviews of survivors[42] and Israel's new Holocaust Memorial Museum in at Yad Vashem installed video screens in every section of its exhibition on which *Zeitzeugen* narrate their personal history. The Shoah Foundation and Yad Vashem claim, in a fashion similar to Lanzmann, to preserve memory for future generations. Thus, I propose that *Shoah* can provide us with evidence for the malleability of cultural memory and its interdependence with "social memory" in a manner relevant for other oral history projects. In analyzing *Shoah*, we can establish an interaction between cultural memory and social memory.

Harald Welzer defines social memory as:

> "Interaktionen, Aufzeichnungen, Bilder und Räume, und zwar solche die im Unterschied zu ihrem Auftreten im kulturellen und kommunikativen Gedächtnis nicht zu Zwecken der Traditionsbildung verfertigt wurden, gleichwohl aber Geschichte transportieren und im sozialen Gebrauch Vergangenheit symbolisieren."[43]

As has already been indicated, Lanzmann locates the Holocaust in the present of 1985. Naturally, he captures landscapes as well as the clothes of the witnesses and the furniture they live in the course of this emplacement. This "noise" mixed in with the

[42] http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/vhi/
[43] Welzer, Harald 2001, p. 16

testimony may be classified as objects which are not intended to convey history. Yet with increasing distance between the making of the film and the viewing of it, these objects begin to bear historical significance. In Welzer's terms, a "historischer Assoziationsraum" is created.[44] From the perspective of an audience in the 21st century, as in the case of the students at the Hebrew University, the testimony does not represent the presence of the Holocaust in contemporary society any longer, rather it shows the traces of the time that has passed. In terms of Ricoeur's hermeneutic circle, the students exist within a different frame of reference and enter into dialogue with the film at a different point in time.

Even more evident is the interdependence between social and cultural memory in case of the "Sauer" vans that Lanzmann used to symbolize the presence of the past on German highways. These van have not been produced since 1982, therefore the image loses its meaning for the younger audience.

Another striking example for the traces of time visible in *Shoah* are the images of Poland before the fall of the Iron curtain. Horse wagons drive on the streets and the old trains lack any sign of modernization. From today's perspective, images of the rural areas such as Chelmo and the capital Warsaw stem from a different moment. In the meantime, Poland has become a member of the European Union and Warsaw has undergone a massive renovation and rebuilding processes. Hence, *Shoah* has become a historical document of communist Poland and the manner in which people thought about the Holocaust under Soviet rule.

[44] Welzer, Harald 2001. p. 17

VI) Conclusion: The Boudaries of Cultural Memory

It exceeds the framework of this essay to assess how exactly *Shoah* is perceived by a generation that was socialized after the momentous events at the close of the 20th Century. Despite this, we can at least establish the malleability of cultural memory. The paper has attempted to demonstrate that in only two decades, the frame of reference within which we view *Shoah* has been fundamentally altered. Awareness of the plasticity of cultural memory points to the boundaries of current oral history projects that attempt to engender cultural memory out of the operations of communicative memory. Despite the efforts of museum curators and filmmakers to generate an authentic experience of the horrors of the Holocaust, they inevitably fail to construct the intensity of a living eyewitness telling his or her personal story. The filmed eyewitnesses will necessarily slip into the past. The changing social memory, or simply the certainty for the viewer that the filmed witness is no longer living will to a certain degree alter the material and disconnect it from the present moment. Hence the shift of memory frames visible in Lanzmann's movie demonstrates that the Holocaust might not be forgotten, but that the memory of future generations will be different from what the designers of Holocaust memorials, imagine it to be.

In light of this essay I propose to use *Shoah* in future research projects as a reference category in order to track changes in the framing of memory over the last two decades. The case of *Shoah* may provide insight in two ways. First, the movie could be used to established how young people perceive its undercurrent of "social memory". We may ask how close "Shoah" remains to them today and whether they still feel that the

Holocaust is part of the present. Such a study could also approach the issue of how the by-product "social memory" is related to the perception of cultural memory.

Secondly, *Shoah* provides ample material for comparing the memory of the Holocaust in the 1980's in Poland to contemporary post-Soviet Poland. Questions that could be raised in such a comparative analysis are include: "How do people in Poland remember the Holocaust today, when most of the eyewitnesses are dead?" "Is there indeed a 'cosmopolitan form of remembrance?'" "How do young Poles locate the Holocaust within the framework of their national identity?" And "how has ~~the~~ time transformed ~~the~~ places of remembrance such as the rural Chlemno or the capital Warsaw?"

This research project could deliver empirical data sufficient to develop the theoretical concept of cultural memory further, establishing particular changes in the framing of memory that took place not only in transition from communicative memory to cultural memory, but also during the major ideological changes which attended the fall of the Soviet empire.

VII) Bibliography

Assmann, Aleida. (2006). Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses. München: C.H. Beck.

Assmann, Aleida. (2006). Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik. München: C.H. Beck.

Assmann, Jan (2005). Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen. München: C.H. Beck.

Arendt, Hannah (2004). Eichmann in Jerusalem. Ein Bericht von der Banalität des Bösen. München: Pieper Verlag.

Elsässer, Thomas. (1996). subject positions, speaking positions. In: The Presence of History. Ed. Soback, Vivian. New York: Routledge.

Felman, Shoshana. (1994). Film as Wittness. In: The shapes of Memory ed. Hartman, Geoffrey. Cambridge Mass.: Blackwell.

Giessen, Bernhard (2004). Triumph and Trauma. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Garton Ash, Timothy, New York Review of Books, Vol. 32 # 20 December 19th 1985.

Jocelyn Heillig. (1998). Recalling the Holocaust. Lanzmann's Shoah and Spielberg's *Schindler's List.* In: Literary Responses to the Holocaust 1945 – 1995. Ed. Gitay Yehoshua. San Francisco: International Scholars Publication.

Hilberg, Raul (2003). The Destruction Of The European Jews. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kearney, Richard (2004). On Paul Ricoeur. The Owl of Minerva. Burlington: Ashagate.

Kleiman, Dena. New Holocaust Movie Draws Motivated Audience. New York Times. Oct. 24th 1985, p. C21.

Lanzmann, Claude (1995). Shoah. The Complete Text of the Acclaimed Holocaust Film. Da Capo Press: USA.

Margalit Avishai. (2002). Ethics of Memory. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Levy, Daniel, Sznaider Natan (2001) Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (2005). Zur Genealogie der Moral. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Ricoeur, Paul (2004). Memory, History, Forgetting. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Segev, Tom (2000). The Seventh Million. The Israëlis and the Holocaust. New York: Owl Book.

Tim, Uwe (2003). Am Beispiel meines Bruders. Koeln: Kiwi.

Welzer, Harald (2001). Das Soziale Gedächtnis. Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.

Internet Sources

http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/vhi/