



MY POYLN

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ABSTRACT

The note of MY POYLN was written as an introduction to a planned photography book regarding a Jewish past that is cleansed from its erstwhile meaning, desolated, and mourned. The thrust to research and photograph a former time grew slowly, over many years. My reading of the Holocaust is one of grief about the denial of the past (and a more humane future) and the lost cross-ethnic, rich culture. That theme I follow in writing and photography—next to my more normal concerns relating to more mundane matters—see: www.4mat.ch.

Keywords: Photography, Holocaust and its reception, historiography, family history, biography

FOKUS

Die Notiz über MY POYLN schrieb ich als Einführung zu einem geplanten Photobuch, das eine jüdische Vergangenheit dokumentiert, die in ihrer früheren Bedeutung gesäubert, verwüstet und betrauert wird. Der Tenor, eine Vergangenheit zu erforschen und zu photographieren, wuchs über manche Jahre hinweg. Mein Lesen des Holocaust ist eines der Trauer, über eine verlorene, ethnisch-übergreifende, reiche Kultur, und über eine Verleugnung der Vergangenheit (und einer humaneren Zukunft). Dieses Thema verfolge ich schriftlich und photographisch—neben meinen normaleren Anliegen bezüglich weltlicherer Themen—siehe: www.4mat.ch.

Stichworte: Photographie, Holocaust und dessen Rezeption, Historiographie, Familiengeschichte, Biographie

BORN JUST BEFORE WORLD WAR II, without papers, I grew up in Switzerland. My parents were stateless, and traveling was costly after the war, and I barely left my antagonistically assigned sheltered environment before I reached adulthood and secured a Swiss passport. Before I was sixteen, in the summer of 1954, HASHOMER HAZAIR, a Jewish-socialist youth organization to which I belonged, organized a trip to Israel to experience life in a Kibbutz, and I was able to participate. We travelled to Genoa by train, boarded a small vessel, and arrived a week later in Haifa. After three weeks in the holy land, we boarded another small vessel headed for Naples, and the train lead us back to Zurich.

I barely recall this trip, partially because I had fallen ill, suffering from fever and diarrhea and spending a great deal of time sleeping. During the ride back from Naples to Zurich I slept almost the entire stretch, only to wake up in Göschenen where the rain was splashing against the window panes of our compartment. Outside I saw the station that epitomized, in a strange way, an architecture I associated henceforth with railway or military installations and Swiss vernacular. Slowly I developed a bipolar view of objects or settings which seemed familiar or to my liking, and artifacts or cultures that appeared strange, foreign: both may emerge as attractive.

When I turned twenty, in the fall of 1958, I moved to Ulm in Germany to enroll at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* (hfg), a small and new experimental institution with a focus on design¹. For me the mental journey to Ulm was far longer than the five hours needed to reach the destination [Herbst, 2006]. One had to take the electric to Romanshorn, board a ferry to Friedrichshafen to cross the Lake of Constance, and continue the ride in a train drawn by a coal-fired steam engine. That German train looked different: its construction was olden and heavy, it had seats or compartments reserved for the invalids, and it smelled of cigarette butts and sweat drenched wool. Arriving in Ulm one was greeted by the stench of sausages: the passengers were spilled into a town of drab buildings that had lost their stucco during the shelling of World War II. The modern architecture of the new school (built in 1953), designed by Max Bill [Meister and Meister-Klaiber, 2018] and located outside the city proper, next to a former fort that had been used as a local Nazi concentration camp, just accentuated this bi-polar vision.

After stations in Ulm, Dortmund, Zurich and London, I resumed studies in the US (1965). I was offered a teaching assistantship in architecture at the University of Oregon, and because of my interest in regional planning, I enrolled as a graduate student in sociology and mathematical economics. I was wondering why G-d had sent me there and I spent most of my first year in Eugene pondering that question—until I realized how wonderful a place it was. Americans in London had warned me of the US and had given me a copy of Peter Blake's 'God's Own Junkyard' [Blake,

1964], and next to Eugene, in Springfield, I was exposed to my first strip development along Route 126. From then on I knew the origin of pop art.



During my early years, POYLN was not on my conscious horizon. I was a person whose parents had moved to Western Europe, and it was clear that I understood myself to be a Jew of Eastern origin. It was not an era when Jews were welcome in the place where I was born, the immigration police made that clear every time we had to extend the validity of our papers², and even Western Jews appeared to have their reservations. I learned early on that the radio broadcast around noontime was sacred, sacrosanct, and I internalized the voices, the specific melodic inflections of the prominent Nazis during their speeches to the masses, that were blaring from the loudspeaker. But I was living in the present and I prepared myself for the future, and only gradually did I learn the important connexion that binds the past to the future.

The first pictorial encounter with the Holocaust I had relatively late, that is, when I saw Erwin Leiser's strong documentary *Mein Kampf* (1960) that was shown in a movie theater in Zürich³: people in the audience broke down at the first local showing of this documentary; I myself had never before seen such footage, due to the fact, perhaps, that I had just started to watch movies (with their introductory news reels). While in Ulm, I bought the Stroop report [Wirth, 1960] in a facsimile edition and Adler's *Theresienstadt* [Adler, 1955; Herbst, 1962], but my consciousness regarding the Holocaust grew only slowly⁴. I had loose contact with obvious Nazis⁵, I was assigned books to read that were authored by Nazis⁶, and only much later, when I delved deeper into epistemology and started to investigate higher education systems (that is, after 1988), did I really learn that the past is bound to foreshadow the future.



Around 1970, after my studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1966–70), and when I had joined the faculty of the University of Virginia, I discovered the photographs of the Farm Security Administration collection stored at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. I do not recall any longer how I had found this pictorial record of American life and what had prompted my interest. But I do remember my days perusing this treasure, I own several silver prints that I had obtained then, and my library contains a fair number of volumes that pertain to

Roy Stryker, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, Arthur Rothstein, and others. Although my interest in photography can be dated back to my Bar Mitzvah when I found a Brownie camera among my presents, my real interest in photography, I presume, dates from these days⁷.

Having left Charlottesville (since my mentor there had died from a heart attack and the new interim chairman of the department discontinued my contract), I joined an engineering firm as an economist and planner and was eventually assigned to accompany a large development project in the Shemankar region of Nigeria (in 1977). This was my first stay in Africa, the mission lasted three months, and my impressions were deep. I recall a trip from Shemankar to Lafia to visit the market there, and I pondered how I could transmit back home the impressions that were constantly bombarding my brain: the view from the back seat of our Land Rover, the pounding we had to suffer because of the state of the laterite pathway we travelled on, the heat, the noises, the smells, the people and animals on the road, the dust in the air. It was this foray that had fostered my renewed desire to document, to photograph with some consistency.

While writing and photographing over years, my skepticism regarding our possibilities to transmit experiences has grown, in spite of the many attempts to do just that. The movie and TV industries have made a business of this, and there are photographers who think they are capturing the truth. But in fact, we appear to be in a position to communicate only to those who already share our values or paradigms [Kuhn, 1962]. We dwell in our own circles where we know how to interpret concepts, language and cultural codes. We generally do not engage in a discursive culture, except when it pays off in a public showdown: it would be too time consuming and too costly emotionally. Once a stance solidifies, around the age of thirty perhaps ('Don't trust anybody over 30', as Jack Weinberg is said to have said), it is very difficult to recalibrate a political position, an aesthetic orientation, a scientific stance. Those who have apparently converted from an early leftist to a later rightist conviction—or, as former Nazis, from the right to the left—may not have done this at all: in all likelihood, they remained opportunists.

I have read about—and written on—photography, and my own photography is guided by an attempt to show and to share. I do not think I differ in this respect that much from other photographers—or from writers for that matter: that is not what distinguishes my photography from mainstream or fashion. Rather, it is the subject matter and the message behind it. I concentrate on the vernacular; I pay attention to craft, to the choice of materials; I would want to show the overlooked, the marginalized, the ordinary, would like to convey details in order to magnify, to enhance the object. If I might name contemporary photographers whose

work I regard to be guided by a similar spirit, I might name Robert Adams or Gabriele Basilico.



As I review my photography, I note a few recurrent themes. My early photography can be subsumed primarily under the term of documentary photography⁸, and my later photographic endeavor focused on landscapes, vernacular architecture, and Jewish sites⁹. I had photographed my first Jewish cemetery around the age of eighteen in Endingen (with a lent Rolleiflex); and I resumed this practice in the 1990s, starting with cemeteries in the Alsace region (where forbears of dear friends of ours were from) and continued to pursue that focus in Southern Germany, in Vienna, Budapest, Trieste, or Venice. As I grew older, and as I developed in my role as a father, my own position as a Jew solidified and, for some reason, I became enchanted by these material witnesses and remnants of Jewish culture [Herbst, 2019, 2020].

Cemeteries have their own charm, impart their own stories, and it is interesting—and telling, revealing—how the living bury their dead. I think it was in Lagos, in the 1970s, where the desire grew to document this form of communication and afterlife (a desire that remained unconsumed). Jewish cemeteries, however, tell a different story, serene in many ways but frequently also troubling, sad, and lost. Having photographed Jewish cemeteries in Western Europe I continued to pursue this in POYLN¹⁰, first in Eastern and Central Poland and subsequently in Western Ukraine: a search for traces of a culture that has vanished, been destroyed, *à la recherche du temps perdu* [Proust, 1913]. I had grown up in a secular environment, I consider myself an agnostic, but I noticed that my Jewishness became stronger as time went by and my pursuit of this topic must be seen in the context of that mourning and longing.

My formal retirement from my former professional activities helped to develop new foci. My family (on both sides) has its roots in POYLN, and in 2005 I visited, together with our youngest daughter Rebecca, Poland. I and Rebecca have previously been to Poland (but not together), and this was now the first visit to concentrate on photography, to photograph Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, SHTETLEKH and landscapes (in Warsaw, Białystok, Białowieża, Orla, Kotzk (Figure 4), Szczepieszyn, Zwierzyniec (Figure 14), Józefów (Figure 3), Lesko, Rymanów (Figure 15), Grybów, Nowy Sącz, Tarnów, Kraków, Milejczyce, Sandomierz). In 2014, Jacqueline (my wife) and I had planned to fly to Kiev (Київ), rent a car, drive to Lviv (Львів), and visit places of former Jewish life that we would find along the way. But then the Maidan uprising had taken place and we cancelled



Figure 1: Cemetery in Łódź, in 2016 (the mass grave is next to the cemetery).



Figure 2: Cemetery in Łódź, in 2016.

the trip. The following year (in 2015), Jacqueline and I visited Kraków, the hometown of my grandmother, and photographed Jewish cemeteries there—but also Auschwitz and Birkenau. The next year (2016), I served as a session chair at a conference in Łódź, and at that occasion I had the opportunity to photograph Litzmannstadt's¹¹ large Jewish cemetery (Figures 1 and 2).

In the fall of 2018, we undertook a renewed effort to visit the Western Ukraine. We spent some time in Lviv (in part to celebrate my 80th birthday), but organized a driver with a car for the subsequent round trip that took us to Yavoriv (Jaworów, Яворів), Nemyriv (Немирів — Figure 5), Zhovkva (Żółkiew, Жовква — Figure 6), Busk (Буськ), Burstyn (Бурштін), Ivano-Frankivsk (Івано-Франківськ), Horodenka (Городенка — Figure 7), Zabolotiv (Заболотів — Figure 9), Sniatyn (Снятин — Figure 8), Chernivtsi (Czernowitz, Чернівці — Figure 10), Kutu (Кути), Kosiv (Косів), Deliatyn (Делятин — Figure 11), Rakhiv (Рахів), the Chornohora and Uholka-Shyrokyi Luh forests (Figure 12), Solotvyno (Солотвино), Vilkhivtsi, Khust (Хуст), Mukachevo (Мукачево), Drohobych (Дрогобич — Figure 13)—and back to Lviv airport.



Figure 3: Cemetery in Józefów, in 2005.



It was an emotionally demanding and strenuous trip. I had no idea what to expect. For some years now I had researched online archives that have become accessible, and occasionally we even visited places in Poland where we hoped to find information that could provide us with some insight regarding the fate of my family. But I couldn't find much.

Part of my family on my mother's side is well researched, because her father, Salomon Rubinstein, born in Żółkiew, was a descendent of rabbis whose line Geni can trace back to the sixth century (or beyond). Before we undertook our photography trip we visited the 'Museum of Ethnography and Arts and Crafts' in Lviv that contains also a Jewish section, and we found a wonderful rendition of the famous synagogue of Żółkiew¹² we planned to visit in a couple of days, a hand-colored drawing evoking the grandeur of that structure (and the associated community), with the (Hebrew) inscription 'The SHUL of the holy community of Zalkwa [Żółkiew], may G-d's will build [Jerusalem], amen—built in the year



Figure 4: The former residence of Rav Menakhem Mendel Morgenstern (1787–1859) in Kotzk (Kock), in 2005.

5441 [1681], written and painted by NETHANIEL MENAKHEM LYKHTER, writer and MOHEL, in Lvov in the year 5651 [smudged date, i.e. possibly 1891]¹³ (Figure 6).

But the remaining family on both sides is traceable only marginally; most individuals remain lost beyond the information that was handed down to me from my parents. In particular, this pertains to the family of my father Gerson. GERSHN, as my mother called him, was born in Jaworów at the end of 1894. When he was in his late teens, that is, around 1913, he had moved to Stuttgart, to be joined by his older brother WIGDOR (born in 1888) a year later. In Stuttgart the two were collecting and selling furniture, paintings, watches, mirrors, and dowry products. August 1914 the two were called to be conscripted (by the Austrian government), and to evade the draft my father ‘bought’, in the fashion of Jaroslav Hašek’s ‘Švejka (The Good Soldier Svejk)’, a hepatitis. After a renewed draft Gerson fled Germany, crossing the border to Switzerland without any baggage¹⁴. My father was not known to report much, to tell about his youth, his upbringing and his parents who had run a fur business. He claimed to have had no other schooling than the KHEDR, the Jewish primary school. WIGDOR must have returned to Jaworów where he eventually perished¹⁵: we have notes of his sent to us in 1940 and 1941.



Figure 5: Cemetery in Nemyriv, in 2018.



Figure 6: Synagogue in Żółkiew, in 2018.

These notes date from the period of the Soviet occupation. In the first of the two short notes, dated 21 February 1940, WIGDOR states that his family was fine and remarks that he had written before but had not received an answer. The second note is dated 29 January 1941; he apologizes for having been silent that long and mentions a ‘brother Shulim’ who would—eventually—give us the reason for their silence; and again, he asks for a response from my parents. I do not recall that I knew these notes before the death of my parents and, hence, did not ask for their recollection regarding possible responses. My mother normally was a conscientious correspondent (e.g. with her brother in Palestine who had emigrated to Haifa in 1933), and it is possible that her letters did not reach Jaworów. The other possibility, that my parents did not respond, would be hard to swallow¹⁶.

My father was the eleventh—and last—child of his parents KIVA LEYB HERBST and JUDES SCHILLINGER. With the exception of my uncle WIGDOR, I did not know the names of my father’s siblings, but in recent years ‘Jewish Records Indexing of Poland’ published birth (and death) records. We knew that one brother of my father was sent to America because he supposedly started a relation with a SHIKSE, but I did not know his name (until 2005)¹⁷: it was JAKOB JOSEF (1880). According to passenger lists at Ellis Island he immigrated to the US after arriving in New York,

on board the *Großer Kurfürst* coming from Bremen on 14 June 1905 (his nationality was recorded as Austrian and Hebrew; his last place of residence was Jaworów; he was single and 25 years of age). Three siblings of my father must have died as children (SHIME (female, 1874–74), PSAKHJE (male, 1877–1878), and JAKOB MOZES (1875–79)); and the remaining six mentioned in ‘Jewish Records Indexing of Poland’, together with parents and nuclear families, have perished: MATL (female, 1871), HERSH MOSES (1884), ROZA (female, 1882), WIGDOR (1888), CHAJA (female, 1890), and PAJA (female, 1892). I could not find a record for a SHULIM (which would indicate, if such a person had existed, that my father would have been the twelfth child, not the eleventh). Brother SHULIM [peace] was a code name, a reference to future information once peace would reign again¹⁸. The last reported—indirect—contact we were supposed to have had with my uncle JAKOB JOSEF in the US was in the late 1930s.

Under the name of AKIVA LEYB HERBST, born 1856, we find two birth records in Jaworów: one with a father’s name of Moses (house # 179), and the other with the name of Wolf (house # 41). Because the siblings of GERSHN listed above are all tied to house # 179), I assume that Moses Herbst is my great-grandfather (and I am named after him: MOYSHE). AKIVA LEYB himself had a sister in house # 179): LYA (female, 1853). But



Figure 7: Cemetery and mass grave in Horodenka, in 2018.



Figure 8: Cemetery in Sniatyn, in 2018.



Figure 9: Cemetery in Zabolotiv, in 2018.

there were other Herbsts associated with house # 179, fathered by MANES: LEYB (1853), TEME (female, 1869), and FEYGA (female, 1870); and there were Herbsts associated with house # 179 who were fathered by Wolf: ISAAC (1852), KHAJA (female, 1864), SHMUEL MEYER (1871); there is even a GERSHON HERBST (1849) associated with house # 179 (and listed as homeowner); lastly, there are Herbsts whose house in Jaworów differs or is not mentioned. WOLF is likely the brother of MANES. What I gather from these listings is that AKIVA LEYB HERBST fathered his first child, MATL, at a very early age (around the age of fifteen or sixteen); I could not find a record of my grandmother, JUDES SCHILLINGER.

There were a range of families in Jaworów with whom the Herbsts were associated through marriage: Druk, Poll, Schillinger, Deutscher, Barsam, Fuks, Erlbaum, Altschuler, Bartel, Dam, Zigler.



1951 my father was given one of the first YIZKOR-books: ‘Swastika over Jaworów’ (YUDENSTADT YAVOROV: DER UMKUM FUN DI YAVOROVER YIDN) by Samuel Druck [1950]¹⁹. Eventually I realized that my father was in the possession of this publication, and it must have moved—after my father’s death (1974) or after that of my mother (1988)—to my brother SHLOYME and eventually to me. I have tried a number of times to read it, but I was unable to absorb more than a few pages, and I never made real progress: too painful was what I would read. The book is bilingual: originally written in Yiddish and loosely translated into English, and my Yiddish is poor. But even the English narrative I could not read. In fear, I scanned the book for possible collaborators or helping hands, and could not find family among them. The fate of my people lingered on. I recall that I related the story of my relatives to dear friends of ours, perhaps three decades ago during a dinner conversation and in response to a normal question regarding family matters, and I suddenly broke out in tears. This I had never encountered before. It was perhaps the first time that I had related this story to non-Jewish friends, and I myself was amazed to realize that I, not a young person any longer at that time and somehow familiar with these events since my youth, was that emotionally captivated.



1 September 1939, a few days before my first birthday, the Nazi invasion of Poland had started. When we google now that date we are reminded of W.H. Auden’s poem with that date as title:

September 1, 1939

I sit in one of the dives
 On Fifty-second Street
 Uncertain and afraid
 As the clever hopes expire
 Of a low dishonest decade:
 Waves of anger and fear
 Circulate over the bright
 And darkened lands of the earth,
 Obsessing our private lives;
 The unmentionable odour of death
 Offends the September night.

...

We have to scroll down fourteen items before W.H. Auden gives way to the first historical reference: ‘World War II officially began on 1 September 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland’. Ten days later, German patrols reached Jaworów followed by German troops the following morning. The mishandling of Jews was immediate. It didn’t take one day, ‘Swastika over Jaworów’ reports, before the synagogue stood ablaze, dynamited, books burned amidst the brawl of the Nazi bystanders and local non-Jews. When the Gestapo reached Jaworów two days later, jeering Germans played with Jews the way cats play with mice: Jews were mocked, heads and beards were shaved, people beaten to death, two Jews were buried alive. That first Nazi occupation lasted two weeks, because under the Soviet-Nazi agreement (of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact)²⁰, Jaworów was to fall under Soviet rule.

During the years of the Soviet rule (1939–41), the Jewish population of Jaworów had swelled to 3,000 souls, including refugees from Western Galicia. In the summer of 1941, Nazi Germany broke that Soviet-Nazi accord, and in the wee hours of 25 June 1941, German troops reoccupied Jaworów again, to be enthusiastically greeted by locals. Immediately, a Jewish council was to be formed, one of these devilish measures that the Nazis mastered²¹, and five days later a list of 150 Jews was issued that were to be liquidated. A culture of wild, untamed, criminality broke loose that was not guided by bureaucratic servility, following orders, as was claimed after the war, but by sadistic activities, ‘lewd sport’. After the formation of Jewish councils, that was the second critical feature the Nazis employed: the use of the mob.

The Nazis formed three labor camps (Jaktorów, Lacki-Wielki, and Płuhów) in the vicinity of Jaworów that served as good substitutes to concentration camps and to the death camp Bełżec, where those were sent who could not—or not any longer—be used as laborers. Nazi labor camps

often had a dual purpose: to exploit the forced labor in sectors that were judged to be vital for the war economy; and to dispose of human beings (in the sense of extermination camps) as long as laborers were still available in sufficient numbers. In this way, labor camps acted as economic units along the path to destruction; and apart from the mundane justification of such camps, Jews served as game.

After the passover holidays of 1942, the Nazis ordered the destruction of Jaworów's Jewish cemetery. People starved, the daily miseries were indescribable. In reading 'Swastika over Jaworów' now for the first time, I wondered about the details, the reported names of victims and perpetrators, the information sources of the YIZKOR-book, but some Jews were in a position to escape to the surrounding woods, were able to join groups of partisans, and after the Red Army had reoccupied Jaworów on 20 July 1944, were in a position to report to a commission that was set up to investigate the atrocities of the Germans²². Four hundred families from Jaworów perished, among them also my kin²³.



One YIZKOR-book is dedicated to Horodenka, a place we visited (Figure 7). Published a good dozen years later than the account on



Figure 10: Cemetery in Chernivitsi, in 2018.

Jaworów, it documents community life and contains accounts of survivors: Mayer Sukher, Reuben Prifer, Chaim Karl Kaufman, Etyl Frieberg, Yehoshua Vermut, Yehoshua Nudelman, Moshe Blazenstein, Peretz Vizling, Moshe Schuchner, Yatke Kiehl-Piekarek, Zvi Reiss, Shaindel Yugerman Alfert, and others. Survival was due to a number of factors, both personal and social, but luck appeared to have played a dominant role. Survivors were ears and eyes of a Holocaust that took place not only in the dedicated—well-known—extermination camps of Auschwitz, Birkenau, Treblinka, Bełżec, Sobibór or Chełmno, but in the communities themselves²⁴.

The slaughter was assisted by deceiving the desperate, simple greed guided the butchery, and bribing was offered as a means to expedite the transfer of wealth. An aura of quasi-legality was created to streamline and cover-up a criminality of monstrous dimensions: the Jewish council was even ordered to pay for the bullets the Gestapo needed to kill 2,400 of the Jewish community (sic)²⁵! The greed of Nazis and locals had the effect, as Peretz Vizling reports [pp. 383–384], that:

the first casualties were the poor-folk who didn't possess anything worth selling. Next were the Jews who were unfortunate enough to believe they [would] be saved, upon being hidden by their [Ukrainian] peasants and



Figure 11: Cemetery in Deliatyn, in 2018.

essentially signing over all of their possessions, which the peasants swore to hide for them. These trustees knew from the first how they would get rid of the Jews so that the few rags they possessed would become theirs. If the rescuers didn't slit the throats of the Jews, they had their neighbors do it; then they shared in the[ir] wealth.

And Peretz Vizling continues,

Surprisingly, most of the saviors were poor Polish and Ukrainian families who helped with no expectations at all. They did it just from the goodness of their hearts.

Locals joined in the frenzy to disown and kill their neighbors; in fact, they—with exceptions—became instrumental in the pursuit of the Holocaust. Chaim Karl Kaufman, a—protected—dentist of Horodenka²⁶, reports on the first *Aktion* (taking place 4–5 December 1941) ordered—or at least condoned—by SS-commander Hans Hack [pp. 361–362]. That *Aktion* was not a local event but affected Eastern Galicia in its entirety. The course of events became infamous through the label *Blutsonntag* (bloody Sunday)²⁷, referring to the massacre in Stanislau (Stanisławów, now Ivano-Frankivsk), 12 October 1941, with more than ten-thousand victims²⁸.

As Chaim Karl Kaufmann notes [pp. 361–362]:

When the trucks arrived at the pits, [...] officers and Gestapo [...] with machine guns and submachine guns [...] were sitting in the shade by a table laid out with food and drink. There was an orchestra playing. The Gestapo then ordered the Jews out of the trucks [...]. They then had to get undressed, except for their underwear, [...] go into the pits [...] and were shot by the Gestapo. And so the bodies of thousands of dead and dying were piled up in the pits [...].

All through the massacre, officers and Gestapo were sitting by the tables, eating, drinking, laughing, and amusing themselves. The sounds of the orchestra mixed with the sounds of the machine guns and screams of the victims. The following day, ten[s] of peasants from the area were recruited to cover the pits with dirt. They reported that even a day after covering the pits with dirt, one could still see some motion.

The picture evoked by Chaim Kaufman reminds me of the photographs found in the family album of Karl-Friedrich Höcker, a deputy of Richard Baer (the commander of Auschwitz), with their focus on normality and frivolity—next to the abyss.



Figure 12: Uholka-Shyrokyi Luh primeval beech forest, in 2018.



There is a revisionist—Judeo-Bolshevik (*Żydo-Komuna*)—narrative which claims that the anti-Jewish sentiments among locals after the second German occupation was due to the Jewish cooperation with Soviet forces (1939–41) [Pohl, 1997]²⁹. This narrative has a history [Yonas, 2004], going back to World War I and the Russian Revolution [Hanebrink, 2018]. It is true that one can observe an affinity between Jewish longing and leftist ideas [Bloch, 1959; Mendelsohn, 1997; Polonsky, 2017; Jacobs, 2017], but the implicit claim that socialism (and the Soviet system) and Judaism go hand-in-hand, or that Jews were the primary carrier of violence against locals during Soviet rule, is ill-directed (and presumably antisemitic)³⁰. The fact that violence against Jews in general (after 1941) is adjudged by the violence of some (during 1939–41, namely of Jews as Jews, and not as communists); or that violence of Jews against Nazis (homicide, after the liberation of the concentration camps) is equated with deliberate murder of Jews by Nazis, points to the anti-semitic narrative.

Kai Struve [2015] states that this ‘Judeo-Bolshevik’ narrative had played a central role not only in the post-World-War-II revisionist reception of the Holocaust but also during the events (of 1941) themselves. If Jews were not seen to be directly involved in the Soviet system, they were at least viewed

as having profited from the regime change (1939–41) in that they had lost, under Soviet rule, their historical role as a dominated ethnic group. In this way, they now ‘competed’ with the nationalistic aspirations of local non-Jews and, in particular, with representatives of the ‘Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists’ (OUN), and actions against Jews were also seen in the context to reestablish the old—submissive—order, or to fight a presumed ‘biological base’ [p. 675] of the Soviet system (a fight which was founded on centuries’ old anti-Judaism and subsequent anti-Semitism and racism).

Kai Struve describes the ‘homicidal euphoria’ [p. 676] or the ‘spectacle of horror’ [p. 674] (my translations) that accompanied various *Aktionen*, but he also seems to be strangely conservative (if not revisionist) when it comes to counting numbers of victims: he mentions roughly 11,000 victims (at most) [pp. 668–670] for the summer of 1941. Timothy Snyder [2015] posits somewhat a different view:

Age old antisemitism cannot explain why pogroms began precisely in summer 1941 [...]. [P]ogroms were most numerous where Germans drove out Soviet power, and the obvious material fact that the instigation of pogroms in such places was explicit German policy [...] In the occupied USSR, the killing of Jews began immediately upon contact with German forces [...] In the occupied Soviet Union, the killing of Jews took place in the open air, in front of the population, with the help of young male Soviet citizens [...] This unprecedented mass murder would have been impossible without a special kind of politics [p. 150].

that is, without a basic—Nazi—intention. And:

In 1941, in the doubly occupied lands, Germans directed the experience of Soviet occupation against Jewish neighbors [p. 151]. [In formerly Soviet occupied territories] people had escaped death or deportation by collaborating with the Soviets, and were thus [...] eager to purge their own past by collaborating again [p. 152]. [...] [I]nsofar as locals sided, or pretended to side, with Nazi policies towards Jews, they were cleansing themselves of their own past. German ignorance of the politics of Soviet rule and occupation created a certain opportunity for locals to exploit Germans. As a result, the murderous politics that emerged was a joint creation of Germans and locals [...] The politics of the greater evil was a common creation at a time of chaos [p. 153].

This narrative, that is, the focus on a prominent role of locals in the Holocaust and the abuse of an invented Judeo-Bolshevism, is a phenomenon that has only recently been swept into the foreground [Hanebrink, 2018], replacing or complementing earlier narratives with their foci on a Nazi elite, on anti-communism as such (without the Judeo-Bolshevistic connexion), or on character aberrations or eliminationist anti-Semitism of ordinary Germans.



Figure 13: Cemetery and mass grave in Drohobych, in 2018.



As a social scientist and higher education researcher, and as a Jew, I am actually astounded to observe discussions that are way overdue, taking place some seventy years after the end of World War II. I wonder about this situation and ponder about my stance in the search for a lost world, or how to bereave this loss in the context of current atrocities. I am not alone in this sorrow. The topic of the Holocaust engulfed me in my post-professional life; and it may resonate now because of my conviction that the forces, the human and societal predilections that lead to the Holocaust, are still traceable. I am not a member of the humanities who had chosen such a topic naturally, as a professional speciality. Rather, I have focused on my family history, and once I delved deeper into that topic, I found it increasingly strange to see how the Holocaust was recalled by media, scholars and governments; I am startled—and angered—by the way some well-known authors and major magazines deal with the issue; and I am bewildered by the seeming confinement of current historical research.

Rita Horwàth [2011] [Friedman, 2011] discusses memorial monuments and YIZKOR-books as two ways to pay attention, to commemorate, to remember the Holocaust. Memorial monuments in the common sense

are not my domain—and not my primary focus—to recall and to grieve, for I fear the bad taste, the *Kitsch*. Monuments of physical form, and restorations for that matter, ought to be handled with great care, and my experience would indicate that, in most cases, commemoration is easily misguided, stripping the site in question—the synagogues, the cemeteries, the grave sites—of their dignity. YIZKOR-books, on the other hand, may have been written to commemorate, but they were also authored to document, calling on the subsequent generations, as Horwath states, ‘to rise to the challenge of developing the hermeneutic tools necessary to enable them to receive the transmitted information’ [p. 478]. I use photography to commemorate.

YIZKOR-books were authored in the aftermath of the Holocaust, mostly in the first dozen years after World War II³¹, and their impetus was a natural one, driven by a desire by many to recall, to provide evidence, to document—and not primarily to commemorate; memorial monuments commemorating the Holocaust, on the other hand, are a much more recent phenomenon. YIZKOR-books are not another form of a statue or a monument; they are oral history, recollections, or history told by laypersons; and they should be seen, to follow Horwath’s call above, as a rich source for historical research³². This, however, they appear to fail to do: they do not serve as major sources in a historiography of the Holocaust; they remain underused, even shunned, and that the corpus of that vast material has not been systematically researched, is hard to understand and ought to be critically analyzed³³.

The current research focuses on the notion that the Holocaust is more than Auschwitz and that local perpetrators played a major role, a notion I agree with. However, the chain of overlapping events—from anti-Judaism, to anti-Semitism and racism, to discrimination and disfranchisement, to expropriation, looting and killing, to industrial extermination—is not yet properly understood. In particular, the recoding of law which had taken place in an exceedingly short time after the Nazi takeover in 1933, the part which moral codes, opportunism and law obedience performed and perform in the conduct of citizens, and the roles institutions play in human conduct, need to be better understood: the trail leading from reasonably well-balanced societies to their complete derailment.



When my wife and I visited Jaworów in the fall of 2018, we could not find a trace of Jewish life; had we stayed longer, and had I researched the matter better, we might have found fragments of the past. But we found remains of a lost world elsewhere during our trip, and the questions that

posed themselves referred to the role this heritage plays in today's times: this was my notion during the photographic explorations in Poland³⁴, and it remained my stance during the Ukraine trip. I recall the invitation to a European conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania, a few years ago, and when I had read the references to the various touristic sights that the (international) organizers had listed, the cathedrals, the shrines and monasteries, and no hints regarding a Jewish past, in the sense of an active ignorance, of looking the other way, I decided not to participate. It is this negation of Jewish culture and life, that disregard for one's own deeds during World War II, this secondary SHOAH (so to speak), this nationalistic form of neglect, that guides my anger³⁵.

During our Ukraine trip, I could not distance myself from the impression that the past was seen as a burden, to be forgotten, not a part of the present to be cherished³⁶, a kind of cultural amnesia³⁷. Perhaps it was even a dream come true, as Leon Botstein [1991, 13] had termed it, namely, to get rid of an ethnic group which was seen, in my words, 'dispensable, not needed' [Herbst, 2016]³⁸. Clearly, people have other things on their mind than to muse about how history unfolds; and much of the past they are happy to leave behind³⁹. This affects people's tomorrow, the time interval, over which they take information into account to guide their actions: the present—and the self—loom strong⁴⁰. The general tendency is to disregard both future and past. The poor and the addicted neither look back nor ahead because survival counts, and the successful are in the same position because their being is satisfying enough. Our cultures appear to wallow in the now, unable to reflect nor to guide. But if a future is not consciously built, the past may lose its meaning, and the tomorrow may eventually not redeem our existence.



The mourning regarding the disappearance of a culture lingers on⁴¹: the loss of HEYMISHKEYT, of all the things one associates with belonging—the warmth, the wit, the language, the customs, the SEYKHL—, and the anger *vis-à-vis* that rejection. The realignment of boundaries, the associated homogenization of nations and the concomitant separation of cultures within the European continent (and beyond) that have emerged from the aftermath of World War II⁴², the focus on nation-states and *Leitkulturen* (i.e. guiding or lead cultures)⁴³, and the reemergence of anti-semitism, nationalism and right-wing parties corrupt democracies and the functional role of majorities⁴⁴. This cataclysm does not only affect the Jewish world: it affects all; it changed moral codes and civilizations; it fostered ethnic cleansing, forced migration, and wars after World War

II; it promulgates one's own view and interests, not the discourse, the interchange; it moved crudeness to the core instead of embracing the periphery by the center; it leads to an intellectual deprivation in many fields; and it serves nationalism and self-righteousness⁴⁵.



MY POYLN has moved. It is not found any longer in the STETLEKH Yiddish writers talk—or KLEZMORIM sing—about; not in the courts of Warsaw, not in Belz, not in Chelm, nor in the coffee houses of Lemberg. The Yiddish BLETLEKH with their wonderful typographies, stories, poems or drawings, do not exist any longer—but the small Brazilian printing presses, the so-called 'cordel chapbooks', with their exquisite woodcuts, are vanishing as well, not because their authors or publishers were strangulated, starved, executed, gassed or shot, but because the world has changed.

Drohobycz or Czernowitz, Vilna or Odessa, Kiev or Skvira, Uman or Zhitomir, Shepetovka or Ushomir, Rovno or Kremences, Belaia Tserkov or Proskurov, they may enter our consciousness when we recall the birthplace of some author or TZADIK, when we hear of a Klezmer or poetry festival. Those akin to the scholars and artists of POYLN we bewail, they may not exist any longer, and if they do, not in the same places, it seems⁴⁶. Fortunately, locations have sprung up to replace the old settlements: Kansas City, New York or New Jersey, Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv.



In such a context, the questions that have to be answered regarding a photo essay on Jewish sites relate to conveying not primarily images of the referent, the various cemeteries, landscapes, mass graves or synagogues, but to transport a stance as well. Contrary to common notions, photographs do not speak for themselves: they require narration, interpretation, in particular when there is a mismatch between photographer and viewer⁴⁷. Photography is not a substitute for text (and vice versa), but a complement, a different mode of expression. With text it is far easier to express a stance that the reader may—or may not—accept. With photography (and art in general), the relation between author and viewer is much more ambiguous and, hence, complex. Art needs to be appreciated in order to be embraced, internalized, and this appreciation is perhaps a form of intuition with a base in acculturation.

A photo essay alone, pretty much without text, should be seen as an opportunity to indulge, to explore, to match the photographs with one's

own internal images [Boulding, 1961], and to reject the pictures if necessary. For the author of a photo essay, decisions regarding the subject matter, the means and technique of photography will have to be taken. For many authors⁴⁸ the choices of technique and subject matters go hand in hand, and thus it was in my case: my photographic approach and the selection of topics coevolved over decades. I focused on sites that portray Jewish culture, a culture of the past whose disappearance we might follow with anguish and, hence, only occasionally did I photograph mass graves or killing sites: I stuck with the German dictum, *Schuster, bleib bei deinem Leisten*⁴⁹. Ever since I consciously saw old Jewish cemeteries, I was captivated by their serenity and beauty, and the more I had the opportunity to document such places, the more I was taken in by a common stylistic syntax that appeared to guide the burial sites in various locations, from Rosenwiller and Hohenems to Prague, Kraków, Łódź and Nemyriv. I loved the frugal appearance of the grave sites, the wonderfully crafted stones, the symbolic scenery of a past, perhaps because these appealed to my own spartan aesthetic orientation.

I rarely photographed in color, and I was—and am—doubtful whether color photography is suitable in the present context. The photos that I



Figure 14: Zwierzyniec forest, in 2005.

found on the internet before we undertook the trip do not convey the reality, or my view thereof, as it presented itself to me. Color photos have their place, as many fine photographers using this medium have shown [Herbst, 2019]. The Ukraine in particular is an Eldorado for photographers, for color photographers in search of the faded, the opaque, the dilapidated, the historical, hunting for signs or typographies, for architectures, vernacular or those of the Soviet era [Shore, 2015], but my grief regarding POYLN cannot be evoked by this medium: it is too tacky or garish, or simply too alluring, pretty. Hence, I naturally used my old approach, black & white—*analog*—photography⁵⁰.

But even black & white analog photos offer a broader spectrum of choices, in particular regarding the negative format: small-format versus large-format photography⁵¹. Small-format—i.e. low definition—negatives may gloss over the details, but most documentary photography since World War II used that kind of photography, including the most cherished artists of that genre (Robert Capa, Werner Bischof, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank), because it is fast and impressionistic. Some photos we would not want to see being taken in a high definition mode, for instance those of the piles of dead corpses at



Figure 15: Synagogue in Rymanów, in 2005.

Nazi concentration camps taken after their liberation. In other cases, however, we may depend on more visual information to evoke the past—or the presence dealing with that legacy. Hence, in my photo essay on POYLN I use large format, high definition photography that requires time and contemplation on my part, and provides detail for the viewer: it comes closest to conveying a reality that represents my inner views⁵².

To conclude MY POYLN, my lamentation, I include a poem by Itzik Manger [Gal-Ed, 2016, 252]⁵³:

TSU MAYN BRUDER

DER OVNT IN DER FREMD TROGT A KOYTIK HEMD,
UN A VUND IN HARTS, VOS KEYN DOKTOR KEN NISHT HEYLN,
VOS ZOL IKH ZOGN, ZINGEN UN DERTSEYLN,
VEN ALTS IN MIR IZ TSERTRETN UN FARSHEMT?

VU BISTU VU BISTU ITST, MAYN BRUDER,
DI VOS HOST MIT MIR GELITN UN GESHTREBT,
IN EYNEM MIT MIR KHALOYMES OYSGEVEBT,
VOS BIN IKH ON DIR? A SHIPL ON A RUDER! ...

DER OVNT IN DER FREMD FARKLINYET ZIKH MIT TRERN,
UN GROYS UN TROYERIK ZENEN ALE SHTERN,
DI BSURA-BRENGER FUN MAYN VUND UN VEY.

OYF DI VERBES FUN MAYN HEYM-LAND SITSN TRIBE SOVES,
ZEY HITN DI KVORIM FUN MAYNE OVES,
MAYN YIDISHN TROYER IBERN SLAVISHN SHNEY ...

To my Brother

The eve far away wears a dirty shirt,
& a wound in the heart which no doctor can heal.
What shall I say, sing & recount,
when all within me is trampled & mortified?

Where are you, are you now, my brother,
you who has suffered & striven with me,
dreams woven together,
what am I alone? A barge without an oar! ...

The eve far away is chocked in tears,
& large & sad are the stars:
They tell of my wound & woe.

On the wallows of my homeland roost bleary owls,
 they tend our fathers' graves,
 my Jewish grief covering the Slavic snow ...

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NOTES

- 1 The hfg was founded in 1953, to be closed by a regressive government in 1968. For a history of the hfg, see René Spitz [2002].
- 2 My parents remained stateless, my father for a lifetime; and my mother, having immigrated to Switzerland with her parents around 1903, lost her Austrian papers when she had married my father (in the late 1920s), became stateless, and was 80 when she eventually secured her Swiss passport (on the instigation of her sons).
- 3 *Studio 4*, today *Filmpodium*.
- 4 In 1958, the *Kunstgewerbemuseum Zürich* was showing Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man*, an exhibit I saw, with pictures taken also from the Stropo report; see Herbst [2019].
- 5 Particularly in Dortmund at the *Sozialforschungsstelle der Universität Münster*.
- 6 A glaring example is Gottfried Feder [1939], the author of *Die Juden* and *Kampf gegen die Hochfinanz* [Feder, 1934, 1935]. In those days, the internet did not yet exist (to check things), research on the matter was in its infancy, our school library was poorly stocked, and teachers and students thought that they were progressive, convinced that they had left behind the abyss and confident enough to design a humane world. But there was also—still, we should note—a fair amount of ignorance, of naiveté, and a wrong faith in German scholarship and academia, even pride, that was underlying this stance; perhaps, there was even the belief that a scientific statement can be—or should be—separated from its author (a notion which can only be upheld, I presume, in the fields of mathematics and physics).
- 7 I did receive a fine grounding into photography and darkroom practice during my studies at the *Hochschule für Gestaltung* through Christian Staub and Wolfgang Siol.
- 8 Using Nikon and Widelux cameras.
- 9 Using Sinar and Cambo Wide cameras.
- 10 An area which loosely refers to the Second Polish Republic (1922–39) and covers large regions of today's Poland, as well as parts of Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine.
- 11 The old German name for Łódź.
- 12 Żółkiew was a famous Jewish printing center, along those in Prague, Lublin, Kraków, and Amsterdam; see: https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Printing_and_Publishing/Printing_and_Publishing_before_1800.
- 13 Translated from the Hebrew by Avihu Yona. Omer Bartov [2007, 188] lists 1692 as the year of the completion of the synagogue.
- 14 His departure from Stuttgart is dated 1 July 1916, but his official arrival in Zürich is recorded already on 28 June 1916.
- 15 Regarding Wigdor's departure from Stuttgart I have no information, but he is registered 1928 in Jaworów again as a shop owner (according to the 'Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine' in Lviv).
- 16 Fear regarding their uncertain—legal—status in Switzerland could have played a role (a fear that I readily sensed as a child); or the fear to be asked for help in a situation where they themselves felt helpless.
- 17 Our daughter Rebecca had researched the history of my family.
- 18 Such coded notes were not that uncommon. A friend of ours reports of a doomed relative of his who had written from Sziget to his grandfather: 'We have not seen cousin LEKHEM [bread] for some weeks'.

- 19 *YIZKOR* (commemorative) books started to be issued after World War II. By now, there appear to be more than 1,000 such books written, some of them focussing on the same community. Over 700 such publications can be found in US public libraries.
- 20 Signed in Moscow on 23 August 1939.
- 21 The Nazis also formed councils of the local—non-Jewish—population.
- 22 Deposited in the archives of the Jaworów Jewish Historical Commission (JJHC), Krakow.
- 23 There are other *YIZKOR* books. The digital (online) collections of the New York Public Library lists 755 such references. Take, for instance, the book on Zabłotów (Zabolotiv) [Schechter, 2017 (1949)], a place we had visited. This *YIZKOR* book, 'A City and the Dead', does not only recall the destruction of Zabłotów and its Jewry but also portrays its (former) residents that counted (just before World War I) roughly 2,000 Jewish residents (the Jewish community was a bit smaller than that of Jaworów with roughly 2,400 members). 'A City and the Dead' contains chapters (by Avraham Keish) covering various professions and lists more than 300 individual (short) biographies, providing a picture of Zabłotów on occupational patterns, income opportunities, education, and emigration (before World War II). With regard to destruction, it parallels the account of Jaworów. Another example of a *YIZKOR*-book is that on Stryj [Kudish, 1962 (2018)] (a town we had passed by). Roughly 'fourteen thousand Stryj Jews perished, and a similar number from the surrounding province. In 1944, when the town was liberated, there were in town about twenty Jews, who had been hidden by Christians' [p. 496].
- 24 Roughly half of the six million Jews who had perished lost their lives in the vicinity of their homes. When we visited Horodenka, we talked to an eyewitness of a mass shooting at a site I photographed, a person a few years older than I, living next to this site: he was a child when that shooting, that *Aktion*, took place.
- 25 Report by Moshe Blazenstein [pp. 374–375]. Regarding his survival, Blazenstein writes: 'A[n] Ukrainian named Hanet Osadtchuk took me to his house. In the day I hid in the cellar and by night I slept in the hut near the stove. This man had only one room and that was both kitchen and bedroom. He treated me like an angel—especially in light of the fact that I couldn't pay him [...] a four year-old boy brought my food and it is worth noting that he was able to keep his secret' [pp. 376–377].
- 26 Because he was used to serve the Nazis. One of his patients was the (new) Gestapo commander Feddich (a replacement of commander Doppler): 'Feddich came to me for treatment for a bridge for his teeth. I prolonged the end of the treatment because I knew that once he was done, Feddich would kill me [...]. I postponed the end of the dental work as long as I could while I arranged a safe hiding place for my family and me. At the end of November 1942, I escaped together with my family to a village and we hid in a bunker in the backyard of one of the peasants. After we escaped in Horodenka, only seven Jews remained in town; of them, only one survived [...]. We hid in that bunker from 27 November 1942 to 27 March 1944, the day the Red Army entered Horodenka.' [p. 363].
- 27 *Blutsonntag* (bloody Sunday) is a label which refers to a range of historical events, from British repression in Ireland (1887) to attacks on civilians in Lithuania (1991).
- 28 SS-commander Hans Hack must be Johann Hans Josef Hack, called Hans Hack, *Kreishauptmann* of Horodenka (August 1941 to April 1942). Dieter Pohl [1997, 153]) alludes to the possibility that Hack was not in accord with the mass shooting and that another SS-commander with the name of Asbach, responsible for the district of Brzeżany, ordered that massacre. Against Asbach ran a charge (StA Kiel 2Js 753/65) that was closed in 1976. In the case of Hack, the charge of the city of Darmstadt (ZStL 208 AR-Z 277/60) was closed 26 March 1969. However, Pohl reports [p. 81] there were indications that Hack had seized Jewish property. Hack, like Asbach, was never convicted and died 1978 in Klieve (Germany), fifteen years after *SEFER* Horodenka was published in Tel Aviv in 1963.

- 29 See in this regard also the critical assessment of Mariana Hausleitner [2016] [Geissbuhler, 2016].
- 30 The proportion of Jews who held leftist ideas in (ninety-seven) Polish towns (1936) amounted to roughly ten percent [Polonsky, 1997; Mendelsohn, 1997, 184], and were, presumably, not that different from the corresponding proportion of the population at large; and the number of Jews who participated in violence must have been small. Eliyahu Yonas [2004, 84] reports a strong underrepresentation of Jews in the municipal Soviet of Lvov (during Soviet rule).
- 31 Horwath [2011] lists examples of YIZKOR-books issued after World-War I and 1943.
- 32 Modern information scientists and linguists have created fields such as ‘topic modeling’ or ‘natural language processing’ as means to analyze vast corpora of data. These techniques are currently also used in the field of biology (and they could be used by historians).
- 33 C.P. Snow [1959] published an influential observation on the ‘Two Cultures’ (natural sciences versus humanities), pointing to a schism within the sciences. This schism appears to be quite alive, in spite of fashionable talks about inter- or trans-disciplinary approaches within the various sciences. In the case of research on the Holocaust, it clearly is dysfunctional.
- 34 This notion I pursue for some time now, e.g. in book reviews or in an (as yet unpublished) essay on *Gelebter Holocaust* (a reflection on the reception of the Holocaust after World War II in Germany).
- 35 An anger which is shared by Omer Bartov [2007], for instance. In Germany and Austria one can observe a culture initiated early 1990 to set *Stolpersteine* (‘stumbling blocks’, cobble stones) in order to recall the former Jewish members of a neighborhood. There are many ways to fight disregard that have become fashionable after the *Historikerstreit* (1986–87) and Martin Walser’s infamous *Paulskirchen*-lecture in Frankfurt (11 October 1989).
- 36 At the time of our trip the 9th International Poetry Festival ‘Meridian Czernowitz’ had taken place (7–9 September 2018); the fact that, among intellectuals and artists, the past may live on does not contradict my impression.
- 37 The term may have referred once to a ‘severance of past language, customs and human relationships, [as] a necessary prerequisite to [an] oppressed state’ as experienced by Blacks and Jews [Fabio, 1966], but I use it here to denote the severance between ethnic groups which once had lived a neighborly—perhaps even symbiotic—side-by-side. There is, however and luckily, some form of learning from history; see in this respect, e.g. <http://www.lvivcenter.org>.
- 38 The times when cities like Lviv, Warsaw, Chernivtsi, Budapest and Prague were intellectual centers have long passed, and the thought of a possible complicity in their demise is outside the mental framework of most.
- 39 There is, of course, another focus, not addressed here, namely the presentation of Germans as victims (and not as perpetrators): the sinking of a military transport ship ‘Wilhelm Gustloff’ by the Soviets 1945 (with 9,400 casualties); the bombardment of the city of Dresden by the Allies early 1945 (with 25,000 casualties or more); the displacement of millions of ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe after World War II; et cetera. This offsetting of deeds is not what I am after: I mourn not the dead as such or primarily; I grieve about the disappearance of a world, of multi-ethnic civilizations that were replaced by self-righteous nations and cultures that appear not to suffer from the Final Solution.
- 40 On Monday, 15 April 2019, a fire broke out in the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral that badly damaged the church. The consternation in the media was immense, and in no time millions of Dollars were donated to reconstruct the cherished monument. The contrast to other fires—and to the neglected memorials I pay attention to—could not have been greater.

- 41 Vital (pre-World War I) records of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire are a manifestation of the existence of a multi-ethnic world. These records distinguish between nationality (e.g. Jewish) and citizenship (e.g. Austrian). This multi-cultural (multi-ethnic) composition of Eastern Europe is characteristic for the Austrian-Hungarian Empire (and beyond), and it was destroyed through World War II and the subsequent focus on nation-states (and nationalism), endangering democracies (and perverting majority rules).
- 42 Soviet practice, which had belittled, negated or fought ethnic, religious or nationalistic cultures, also plays a role [Polonsky, 2017].
- 43 The German term once referred to agriculture. The use of the term in the field of humanities came later on, first in the context of a discourse on religion, and subsequently with regard to a discussion on Islam and immigration.
- 44 The new populism, both in Europe and the US, is one sign of this development.
- 45 The new flows of immigrants (everywhere) clearly undermine the desire for homogeneity, and these call for a reflection on global social policies.
- 46 Some Jewish artists or scientists have survived in the former Soviet union, of course, and there exist new generations who have not emigrated (permanently).
- 47 Roland Barthes [1980] interprets photography in his *La chambre claire* on the basis of a triangle of relations pitting photographer versus viewer, photographer versus object/subject, and object/subject versus viewer; interpretations become necessary when these relations are not synchronous. For instance, the Nazi photographers of the Strop report of the Warsaw ghetto [Wirth, 1960], the photographs of which were contained in the catalogue of the famous 'The Family of Man' exhibit curated by Edward Steichen [1955], did see their subjects—and their own photographs—differently than most people do today [Herbst, 2019].
- 48 But not necessarily for contemporary photographic professionals.
- 49 A cobbler should stick to his last.
- 50 There are many confusions regarding the appropriateness of styles or techniques. Eisenstein's masterpiece, the silent film 'Battleship Potemkin', was subsequently synchronized with recorded recitations, and this completely destroyed Eisenstein's dramatic art of film cutting. Recently, the Auschwitz Museum (<https://facesofauschwitz.com/>) has started to colorize their photographs (taken by Wilhelm Brasse) in a false attempt, a travesty in fact, to 'humanize' the inmates, in 'bringing a more haunting, lifelike quality to the images'. Does one need color photography to humanize (sic) the inmates of Auschwitz? Is this the world we live in? One argument in favor of colorization claimed that had the Nazis had access to color film, they would have photographed the inmates of Auschwitz in color (Kodachrome was introduced in 1935, and Agfacolor in 1932; see in this respect also Loewy and Schoenberner [1990]).
- 51 35 mm films or 6×6 cm negative format versus 4×5 inch negatives or larger.
- 52 Up to a few years ago, I was using Polaroid 55 PN 4×5 inch negatives. After the demise of Polaroid, I switched to Ilford FP4 Plus 120 roll film, using a Horseman camera back (6×12 cm, six negatives per film roll) in a vertical position (and mounted on a Cambo Wide with a Schneider Super Angulon 65mm lens). In this way I would photograph panoramas, shifting each (vertical) picture by 20 degrees: pictures 1, 3 and 5 would form one triptych, and pictures 2, 4 and 6 a second. During the Ukrainian excursion described herein, roughly 200 such triptychs were exposed (over a time-span of three weeks).
- 53 Itzik Manger was born in Czernowitz (1901). This poem was written 1942 in London. The Yiddish transcription (from the Hebrew to the Latin alphabet, following YIVO norms), and the English translation from the Yiddish, are my own.