



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Introduction: Traces of Terror, Signs of Trauma

van der Laarse, R.; Mazzucchelli, F.; Reijnen, C.

*Published in:*

Versus : quaderni di studi semiotici

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

van der Laarse, R., Mazzucchelli, F., & Reijnen, C. (2014). Introduction: Traces of Terror, Signs of Trauma. *Versus : quaderni di studi semiotici*, 119, 3-19.

#### **General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

#### **Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

*UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<http://dare.uva.nl>)*



Francesco Mazzucchelli, Rob van der Laarse and Carlos Reijnen<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Traces of Terror, Signs of Trauma

### Abstract

The article introduces a collection of articles about the spatialization processes of memory of war in contemporary Europe. It is divided in three parts. The first part proposes a transdisciplinary perspective, which includes semiotics, to tackle the relations between space, heritage and cultural memory and to analyse memory narratives conveyed by places. An approach based on the investigation of “terrscapes” (places with a high density of traces) is proposed. The second part delves on the notion of terrscapes, focusing on the meaning of “terror” and on the shift of paradigm in European politics of memory after 1989. The third part deals with the European space of memory, questioning the possibility of construction of a shared European memory narrative on XX centuries wars. Last paragraph summarizes the contributions of the volume.

### Keywords

cultural memory, spatial turn, Europe, places of memory, war



## 1. Space and memory: toward a transdisciplinary approach



After a recently published special issue devoted to the “politics of memory” (TraMe 2013), *Versus* delves again into the rich field of memory studies, this time reversing the approach. While on that volume the selection of contributions was “methodological” (how semiotics can deal with such concepts as collective and cultural memory and what kind of analysis it can produce), this time we opted for a thematic criterion, choosing a subject that is at the same time theoretical and analytical. We now focus on the relation between space and memory, namely the symbolic dimension in the processes of spatialization of collective memories of war in Europe. The objects under investigation in the articles here presented are museums, memorials, monuments, exhibitions, mediatic representation of spaces and places but also landscapes or simply segments of spatial environments that play a role in the shared reminiscences of a community. Though, in this volume, the topic will not be tackled solely from a semiotic approach but from different theoretical angles, including also literary and cultural studies, forensic archaeology, history, cultural geography, museology. This multiplication of points of view is not aimed at offering

<sup>1</sup> Francesco Mazzucchelli, University of Bologna francesco.mazzucchelli@unibo.it; Rob van der Laarse, UvA University of Amsterdam, VU University Amsterdam laarse@uva.nl; Carlos Reijnen, UvA University of Amsterdam c.w.c.reijnen@uva.nl



a mere collection of diverse possibilities of handling these themes, but rather at finding and producing a common ground of communication and translation among perspectives which sometimes perceive each other as distant and not compatible. Memory studies are, by definition, interdisciplinary, because of the complexity and multi-layering of the processes involved in collective and cultural memory: this volume aspires to stimulate a trans-disciplinary dialogue and debate able to produce new sets of adequate tools that prove adequate to investigate the complex ties linking collective remembrances and the spatial environment in which they are expressed or manifested.

Hence, such miscellaneous positions have, in this issue, a lot in common. Two main elements, as said, emerge: the spatial approach and the focus on the semiotic/symbolic aspects. The spatial approach is not a novelty: in the last decades, also the field of memory studies has been experiencing a “spatial turn”.<sup>2</sup> From Pierre Nora’s *lieux de memoire* (although his notion did not exclusively refer to the spatial environment), the practices of *mise en scene* of collective memory in public spaces of commemoration (such as museums, memorials, monuments, etc.) have been object of study from different approaches. Moreover, places of memory, museums, memorials and monuments are becoming more and more a domain of struggle among competing political and ideological interests, in which politics of memory is expressed and applied and where the “official version” of the representation of past and identity is at stake. Memory which is today represented and recalled in such places is often traumatic, being linked to war or occurrences of political, cultural and ethnic violence. If it’s true that collective memory is also an ideological (auto-) representation of identity, the role of the so called “traumatic memories” in processes of representations of collective identities seems to be predominant today. Additionally, places of memory are also a collective and cultural “trend”, as testified by the increasing practices of heritage tourism and mediatisation of memories in the age of visualization and digitalization.

In this volume we delimited the field, asking the authors to focus expressly on a specific class of “memory places” that, following the conceptualization by Rob van der Laarse (van der Laarse 2013a), have been named *terrorsapes*, to pinpoint those places “where terror, political or state-perpetrated violence has happened or was prepared – seeking to understand both what happened as well as how the space-times of terror are collectively remembered or forgotten”.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, more than anywhere else, the dynamics of spatialisation of memory have led

<sup>2</sup> As reference to the relation between space and collective memory see J. Assmann (1992), A. Assmann. (1999); Nora (1984). For a phenomenological approach, see Ricoeur (2000); for an interesting reflection on the spatial turn on historiography (and some suggestion of disciplinary contaminations), see Schlögel 2003).

<sup>3</sup> From the website of Terrorsapes project: <http://www.terrorsapes.org/about-us.html>

to conflicts and reactions when affecting sites where historical events of mass violence did actually take place, transforming ordinary landscapes into *terrascapes*.

The notion of *terrascapes* recalls a debate currently taking place in semiotics as well: recently, in some semiotic surveys, a distinction has been made between *ex novo*-built memorials and memorials built in sites of massacre, terror or violence (Violi, 2012; Mazzucchelli, 2010; see also Pezzini 2011). Patrizia Violi, introduced the notion of *trauma site* in semiotics to indicate those places that are “characterized by a specific semiotic trait: an indexical link to past traumatic events” (Violi, 2012: 37) and that “exist factually as material testimonies of the violence and horror that took place there” (*ibidem*). The notions of *trauma site* and *terrandscape*, as defined respectively by Violi and van der Laarse, have several affinities with concepts as *traumascapes* (Tumarkin 2005), *heritagescape* (Garden 2006), *memoryscape* (Appadurai 1996; Nuttall 1992; Phillips & Reyes 2011).

*Terrascapes* are, then, places with a “high density” of historical traces, which are susceptible of being monumentalized, transformed, restored, dilapidated, destroyed: in other words, memorialized or consigned to oblivion in different ways. A *terrandscape* is also a site that is itself a trace, a material testimony of the violence that took place there. These considerations raise questions – relevant from a semiotic perspective – about the symbolic status of such spatial signs and texts and, more generally, on the relations between a semiotics of culture and memory (Demaria 2006, Lorusso 2013) and a semiotics of space.<sup>4</sup> The mechanisms of “translations” between the discourse of history, the discourse of memory (Nora 1984, 1989, Ricoeur 2000) and other forms of “discourse” in related interdiscursive domains (such as politics, mass media, international justice, religion, academia...); the role of collective traumas in shaping cultural memories; the semiotic potential of space as a medium to express, but also “record”, transmit and communicate, shared memories; the way social practices and performances (of commemoration, tourism, education) transform and re-semantise places of memory: all of these are just some of the themes discussed in this issue and are reconceptualised by a productive feedback between semiotics and other disciplines.

The very point where the contributions converge is the notion of *narrative*, and the focus on the narrative dimension of politics of memory through space. The narrative dimension of *terrascapes* gets more complex with the appearance of their constitutive element: the trace. How memory “is told” through space and especially “spaces with traces”? Indeed, different solutions of monumentalisation, preservation, transformation of sites linked to violent historical events (determined by diverse assemblages and transformations of traces) are able to convey

<sup>4</sup> See Greimas 1976, Hammad 2006.



different narratives of memory. But how and to what extent traces limit the possible interpretations and resist “radical rewritings” of memories “contained” in space? Indeed, from a semiotic point of view, the trace is a peculiar sign with a double face. Imprints (such as the imprints left by historical events), in fact, are not signs, but according to Umberto Eco, objects which *may* become a sign, assuming all its characteristic, including the fact that they can lie (Eco 1975).<sup>5</sup> A trace, to draw on the words of Pierre Nora, is always *entre histoire et memoire* (Nora 1989): on the one hand it is a relic of a past time, on the other hand it may be transformed and assume a “value” for a community, through a work of narrative transformation and reconfiguration which turn a place where something happened in a spatial narration of that event. So, operations on traces<sup>6</sup> (wiping, hiding, (re)-discovering, forging, counterfeiting) and their narrative assemblages affect the ideological uses of memory, including their uses and abuses.<sup>7</sup> A semiotic approach with its analytical set of tools, deeply rooted in narratology, can help to look at this set of problems, unpacking the “black box” of narrativity, a notion today largely widespread in memory studies but sometimes used in an unclear or problematic way.

## 2. Terrorscape and the politics of memory

This publication builds on the *Terrorscape* research project on the transnational memory of totalitarian terror and genocide in postwar Europe.<sup>8</sup> In connecting memory and space, the concept of “terrorscape” reflects, for the interdisciplinary team who worked on this project, a common ground for innovative approaches to the study of the origin, meaning and context as well as the traces, afterlife and memory of modern European terrorscape. It has surrounded with weary suspicion not only the mostly biased, partisan national histories of the European nations, but also the invented traditions that transformed these histories into public performances: all that history and lived heritage proved so useful in building up mutually exclusive national or ethnic identities, and fuel

<sup>5</sup> According to Eco, semiotics is the “discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie” (Eco, 1975: 7).

<sup>6</sup> From this point of view, oblivion is not the contrary term of memory and it is not simply related to erasure of traces nor memory is merely related to their preservation: ideological and political uses and abuses of oblivion as well as of memory are the semiotic result of a dialectic between conservation and deletion of traces. See Mazzucchelli 2013, Mazzucchelli, Vitale 2014.

<sup>7</sup> For a semiotic reading on abuses of memory (with regard to the Holocaust), see Pisanty 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Terrorscape project funded by NWO, NIAS, Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork and AHRC. It was hosted by CLUE (VU University, Amsterdam) and NIAS. For more information see <http://www.terrorscape.org/>



the mutual enmities that connect Verdun, Auschwitz, and Srebrenica.

Tough for most of today's politicians Europe's dynamic transnational space seems solidly rooted in the peaceful attraction of a common market and a cultural idea that proclaims uniquely "European values" of humanism, democracy and citizenship, the case can be made that the wars and mass terror that characterized half of the twentieth century – coined as "the Age of the Extremes" (Hobsbawm 1996) and "a Century of Camps" (Bauman 1995)<sup>9</sup> – was the defining experience that inspired a former generation of post-war statesmen to prepare the current European process of integration. For the geopolitical and cultural conditions that produced the destruction, terror and fear of the years between 1914 and 1989, and more particular the period between the early 1930s and the 1960s, seem not to have ended with the Fall of the Berlin Wall.

Post-1989 Europe witnessed a double paradigm shift with regard to the heritage and memory of the twentieth century world wars. In the first place, after a period of commemorating the Second World War by national war monuments and museums, Auschwitz and other WWII terrorscape have become critically important icons of modern European identity (Van Vree 1995, van der Laarse 2013) and the recognition of the Holocaust operates from a Western-European perspective as a moral entry ticket to "Europeanism" (Assmann 2012), both for the new European member states and for new migrant communities. As a result the Stockholm Declaration of 2000 became a new paradigm for transnational memory – and hence identity – politics. It declared that "the magnitude of the Holocaust, planned and carried out by the Nazis, must be forever seared in our collective memory", and that the international community shared a solemn responsibility to fight the evils of "genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia."<sup>10</sup> In the wake of Stockholm many European states established Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27th, the day that Auschwitz was liberated. After the shock of the Srebrenica massacre (1995) many hoped for a truly united, humanistic and peaceful Europe founded on the negative birth myth of "Auschwitz, never again!" (Van der Laarse 2013)

Yet the redefinition of Europe's cultural space as an answer to the return of the horror of ethnic conflict and genocide at the frontiers of "Fortress Europe", was soon challenged by the Western War on Terror after the events that occurred on September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington as well shortly thereafter in London and Madrid. This undermined the hope for peace as well as the universal globalization of the Holocaust paradigm. The real threat, however, was the geopolitical turn in European

<sup>9</sup> See also Mazower 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Stockholm Declaration (January 2000). International Forum on the Holocaust. <http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/about-the-itf/stockholm-declaration.html> (accessed January 26, 2013).

politics after the eastward enlargements of the European Union in 2004 (the Baltic countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and 2007 (Bulgaria and Rumania). This challenged the idea of a “Holocaust-centered European mnemonic community” (Kansteiner 2006) within the EU itself, as shown by the rapid rise of a fear of Islam and a populist criticism of multiculturalism, the emergence within “old Europe” of Euroscepticism after the 2004 and 2007 expansions, and in the newly admitted countries the legacy of communist dictatorship and totalitarian rule began to undermine the self-imposed “western” narrative of guilt and regret (Barkan 2000; Olick 2007), so closely related to the Holocaust paradigm. Thus on the one hand, the policies of official forgetting, which had shaped the attitude to pasts marked by fascist rule and/or civil war in Southern and Eastern European countries, began to unravel by including new types of European and colonial mass terror into the Holocaust paradigm,<sup>11</sup> while on the other hand the geopolitical turn stimulated a rethinking of the Holocaust, or better said a culmination of holocausts, as the outcome of an interacted, mutually escalated policy of terror in the Polish, Ukrainian and Belarus ‘bloodlands’, where Nazism and Communism clashed for over a decade (Snyder 2010, Samang 2010).

What is terror? Few words have been used more to describe and analyze the politics of violence ever since Robespierre’s invention of *la Terreur* (1703-1794) up to Stalin’s ‘Great Terror’ (1934-1940), a term coined in 1968 by the American historian Robert Conquest with reference to the Jacobins reign of Terror.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to terrorism, the closely related second buzzword to describe political violence, that defines actions of revolutionary groups or persons against a state, terror may be defined as a modern kind of state-perpetrated, organized or supported policy of violence against groups or persons purged from societies as “enemies of the people”.<sup>13</sup> Unlike terrorism, terror seeks for an optimal media effect; it works in secret, isolated, in hidden places as well as in hidden expressions. Terror is not directed against the state, but uses the state for a maximizing of effect and power. Even though often related to revolutionary regimes governed by parties with a terrorist origin, terror is meant to defend the interest of many against a few, instead of the other way around. As supposed “counter-revolutionaries”, the enemies

<sup>11</sup> See Verbeeck 2001, Aguilar 2002, Baer 2011, Olusoga & Erichsen 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, inspired by Robespierre’s policy of *la Terreur*, the term “Great Terror” was introduced by Robert Conquest in 1968 as the title of a book, later revised as *The Great Terror. A Reassessment* (Conquest 1990). The earlier concept of “The Great Purge” showed that most attention before that went to Moscow trials of party officials instead of the use of mass terror, or “repression” as the Soviet authorities named the purge of “counter-revolutionaries” from the party organizations and state apparatus.

<sup>13</sup> Even though traced back to Robespierre’s reign of Terror, terror and terrorism are in Anglo-Saxon literature often seen as synonyms, with meanings changing in different periods as swings of the pendulum instead of fundamentally different in meaning (Hoffmann 2006: 1-42).

of the people were supposed to be also enemies of *history*, accused of threatening the virtue of equality, the will of God, or that of the nation. As such, terror could be conceived as the twentieth-century outcome of modern Europe's longing for purity (van der Laarse et al. 1998). But it was the fusion with totalitarianism that transformed the political use of terror into a permanent instrument for exercising state power in Mussolini's Italy, Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany. New state organizations, like the NKVD and the SS, exercised systematic power to concentrate, imprison and destroy whole populations and competing elites in the interest of economic progress, territorial expansion, or the utopian hope for the ending of history. In addition to pogroms and massacres, "terror famines" (Conquest 1986; Berkhoff 2005)<sup>14</sup>, the "terror societies" of the Nazi ghetto- and camp system (Sofsky 1999; Benz & Distel 2006) and the Gulag slave labor camps (Adler 2001), as well as the ethnic and spatial cleansing operations of the German-Russian "total war", produced an unrivaled homogenization of populations both in the home countries and in the occupied territories (Rudling 2012), so that the past literally had become another country.

The *Terrorscapes* project aimed to contribute to our understanding of European new topography of memory and processes of memory making, which includes forgetting and the negotiation of contested memories between different (ethnic) groups and nations. Carrying the echoes from one of the few Dutch nouns that shaped a worldview, *landschap* (landscape), the term "terrorscapes" indicates both the spatial and man-made aspects of the traces we survey, and our visual perception of them as places of terror. For landscapes are mindscapes (Lofgren 1999), and what we perceive as a "guilty landscape" – to use the famous expression of the Dutch artist Armando for the site of absence of the former concentration camp Amersfoort,<sup>15</sup> that anticipated Claude Lanzmann's "spatial" representation of loss and silence in *Shoah* (1985) – is the indexical link of such "places of pain and shame" (Logan and Reeves 2009) to past traumatic events (Violi 2012). As, in our approach, we seek to understand both what happened as well as how it has been collectively remembered, instrumentalized, or silenced and forgotten, the term terrrorscapes seemed more appropriate than its psychological equivalent "traumascape" (Tumarkin 2005). For the "politics of trauma" (Withuis and Mooij 2010; Alexander 2012) concern not only the emotions of survivors, but also (and more and more) the commoditized experiences of postwar generations, consuming the past by visiting places. Trauma in

<sup>14</sup> Strongly biased though ground-breaking, Conquest 1986, and for the same region ten years later focusing on another famine and perpetrator, Berkhoff, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> It was the title of Armando's series of paintings of the demolished camp Amersfoort in the early 1970s, and inspired the VPRO TV documentary of Armando and Hans Verhagen, *Geschiedenis van een plek* (1978).



that sense has become the mnemonic outcome of a mediatized “politics of terror and loss” (Kaplan 2005) in the “Age of Postmemory” (Hirsch 2012; Van der Laarse 2013).



### 3. A European space of memory?

Memories of terror are by no means a strictly European phenomenon. Commemoration of terror – state perpetrated or organized by other groups – can be seen throughout history and across the globe. In fact, colonialism and two World Wars have even produced forms of global memory. A spatial approach to memories of terror, as proposed in this issue, is obviously not limited to Europe. However, there are some specificities to the European terrorscape that justify a focus on Europe.

First of all, European narratives and practices of commemoration have become influential models for memories of terror throughout the world. In fact, tendencies of a connection between discourses of universal human rights and memory (Levy and Sznajder 2010) have roots in Europe. The universal human rights discourse predominantly feeds from representations of the Holocaust, and is therefore strongly connected to Europe. In recent years, of course, we see attempts at integrating other, non-European forms of terror and violence into this discourse, mainly as a result of postcolonial approaches to memory.

Secondly, and more importantly, memories of terror in Europe are intertwined with new events of violence and terror. Not only are the causes and events of the First and Second World Wars strongly interconnected, but this holds true even more so for the second half of the twentieth century, most notably in the Yugoslav Civil Wars. Places of terror have not remained passive witnesses of crimes, but have invited new forms of violence. This again is not necessarily exclusively European, but specific for Europe is that these events have become constitutive elements of European politics and of deliberate attempts at constructing a collective European memory. The post war process of European integration, with the European Union and its predecessors and the Council of Europe or the OSCE, has been the center, though not sole locus, of this development. This process has been largely revolving around concepts of solidarity and reconciliation (Guisan 2011)

Interestingly the construction of a European narrative has also produced conflict and contestation. The places of memory that are discussed in this issue have all participated in the contestation of memories of terror. This has caused them to remain undisclosed or oppositely to become hegemonic places of memory. As has been stated before the core of the narrative of European and to a lesser extent also global memory has been representations of the Holocaust. The visibility of places of memory and

the interpretations of their relevance has been largely dependent on the opportunities of these places of reference to the Holocaust paradigm. The landscape of memory is highly hierarchical.

Currently the dominant Holocaust paradigm is being questioned, both from a global perspective and, more relevant for this collection of research, from within Europe. The rethinking and reorganization of Europe after the fall of communism has triggered counter movements against the Holocaust paradigm that will potentially result in yet another understanding of European places of memory. This new dimension in European memory is also intimately intertwined with geopolitics (Bottici & Challand 2013). The end of communism in Eastern Europe renders an exclusive focus on the Second World War in the approaches to European memory obsolete. Since 1989, Central and East Europeans have brought new attitudes toward discourses about Europe. In the first decade after communism this was largely limited to a more cultural and moral approach to the European community (e.g. Václav Havel), but more recently this has been transformed in a call for recognition of communist past.

The most powerful rejection of the Holocaust paradigm from Central and Eastern Europe was the presentation of the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism in 2008. The declaration was signed by a vast list of prominent Central and East European politics and intellectual, many of them with solid reputations as opposition against communist oppression. The declaration included an explicit call for an equal approach to Nazi and Communist forms of totalitarianism, more concretely for the 'recognition that crimes committed in the name of Communism should be assessed as crimes against humanity'. Parallel to this political manifestations of this call for recognition of communist crimes in most countries of the region new museums about the communist past were installed, of which many presented communist crimes and predominately equal to Nazi crimes or at least intimately related. The Museums of Occupation(s) in Riga and Tallinn, and particularly the House of Terror in Budapest are paradigmatic examples. The declaration also called for a installation of a European platform of European Memory and Conscience in order to bring the communist past to attention on a European (EU) level. The platform is most active in Central and Eastern Europe and within EU circles, though its politicized nature prevents it from finding EU funding


Interestingly the competition between East and West in Europe about the content of a new narrative European memory both questions and reinforces the Holocaust paradigm. On the one hand the universality and exclusivity of the Holocaust is minimized by the comparison with Communist totalitarianism. Not only are the Holocaust and Nazi terror deprived of their unicity, but consequently, they are also historicized. On the other hand, and this is relevant for the spatial approach to memory that we propose here, the representation of communism and the

place of communist terror that are commemorated seem to be strongly influenced by representations of the Holocaust. Also in representations of communism there is a prominent focus on genocide, camps, barbed wire and violence that is systemic. Indicative of the Holocaust inspiration is also the lack of representations of ideology in the memory of communism.


Ultimately memories of terror are not strictly European, but terror in Europe has produced a European space of memory. This is hardly a tactile or stable space of memory, but is continuously contested and redefined. The place of terror that we study in this issue are the building stones of this contestation and redefinition.

#### 4. The articles in this issue

Although the contributions to this volume vary substantially both in theoretical approach and analysed objects, there are many links and cross references that connect all of them, as already pointed out in the previous pages. The main interrogations, in all the essays, regard the symbolic nature of traces and their uses in different spatial configurations to convey narratives of memory.

In the first contribution of the volume, Gerry Kearns proposes an engaging analysis of the spaces of Auschwitz's Nazi camps system through a comparison between the site of the *Monowitz* camp (one of the three camps who composed the Auschwitz's camp system) and the words of Primo Levi, who described it in his works as an inmate of *Monowitz*. The "pretext" for his reflection is a survived shed from *Auschwitz-Monowitz* camp, today abandoned in a precarious state near a farmhouse (and so falling outside the official monumentalization of *Auschwitz museum*). Using an approach which mixes a phenomenological approach to those remains – which recalls the recent "experiment" by Didi-Hubermann, *Écorces* (Didi-Hubermann 2011) –, a careful analysis of the "spatial ideology" of the camp and a literary analysis of the works of Primo Levi, Kearns reflects on the materiality which contributed to give form to the Holocaust and on the symbolic nature of the camp-shed as a sign. Drawing on Peirce's classification, the shed can be surely considered an *index*, inasmuch as "physical evidence" of the Holocaust; nevertheless, it functions also as an *icon*, a synecdoche with an iconic power (which reveals itself in the "Holocaust effect" signalled by phen, quoted by Kearns?). The shape of the sheds of the Nazi camps, with their seriality, functions then as a plan of expression of the Nazi designed genocide: a perverse product of modernity, to use Kearns' words, a "murder machine within the wider planned economy of the Nazi empire", whose deviant topology is interpreted by the "literary translation" by Levi. The analysis goes on focusing especially on the performativity of Nazi (spatial and verbal) language, seen as a constitutive element of the spatial structure of the camp.

The essay by Patrizia Violi focuses on a different case: while Kearns reflects upon a material trace, questioning it to explain more, on the one hand, of the Nazi ideology and, on the other hand, of the “political potential of memory” of traces, Violi takes in consideration the “actualization” of such potential, examining the way traces are *enunciated* in different museums, founding diverse discourses of memory. The objects under investigations are here, indeed, the most typical instances of monumentalized traces: trauma sites, that is, according to the definition of Violi, museums dealing with traumatic events. The author, who already theorized in other writings about the indexical nature of traces and their integration in memorial places, concentrates on different “modalizations” of the trauma represented in museums. Looking at different examples of memory museums (*Tuol Sleng Musuem* in Phon Pem, Cambodia, Oradour sur Glane in France, *Terrorhaza* in Budapest, *Risiera di San Sabba* in Trieste, *Yad Vashem* in Jerusalem), Violi outlines a typology of enunciation strategies which allows her to provide a semiotic interpretation of a general trend on contemporary museography: the experiential turn. The *Model Visitor* inscribed today in memory museums is an “experientialist visitor”, who, rather than being informed, is brought to “have an experience” through the space of the museum. According to Violi, museums are then redefining themselves from informative to performative spaces, which may result in a *Disneyfication of memory*. But contemporary “traumatic museums” differ depending on the way they depict the trauma, through mimetic or anti-mimetic discursive strategies. So, for instance, the obsessive preservation of *Tuol Sleng Museum* or of Oradour sur Glane, which “freezes” the places in a precise historical moment (as an infamous detention centre for Tuol Sleng and as a place of a Nazi massacre for Oradour) follows a strategy of re-enacting of the trauma. To the contrary, *Risiera di San Sabba* in Trieste, which underwent an intervention of a “creative restoration” with the insertion of two high concrete walls in the entrance, aims to affect visitors emotionally, conveying a sense of claustrophobia, expressing a non-mimetic strategy of “emphatic involvement” of the visitor. Other devices of museum experience are then discussed and analysed, such as strategies of emphatic involvement which tend to mimic the trauma (as the simulated bombing in the *Museum of Allied Landing* in Catania), or strategies of metaphorical experience (as in the abstract memorialisation of the *Children’s Holocaust Memorial* of *Yad Vashem*).

On the same line, also Csaba Szilagyí addresses the problem of the opposition between informational strategies *versus* performative strategies of museum spaces, taking under examination an institutionalized place of memory: the *Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial*. Szilagyí underlines how the Memorial is structured as a space with  one-dimensional narrative in contrast to the conflicting and competing narratives that inform the Srebrenica massacre’s *commemorative arena* (which, on the contrary,

makes the site a “competing-memories place”). Then he describes an unconventional exhibition organized in the memorial by the Open Society Archive in Budapest. The aim of the exhibition was to offer a critical and scientific representation of the event, obtained through the display of documents and evidences coming from forensic surveys. The language of forensic archaeology was then employed as a means to produce a different (and neutral?) narrative which challenged the ethno-nationalistic narratives coming from Bosniak and Serb-Bosnian groups. In a way, this exhibition seems to contradict the trend identified by Violi in the previous article: the exhibition was generous in providing information about the massacre and its historical context, using a scientific approach. Nevertheless, also this particular exhibition did not avoid a strategy of experiential involvement of the visitor: as Szilagyi says, the visitor’s engagement was guaranteed by “self-discovery devices”, through which the visitors performed the “exhumation” themselves, in a simulated space of excavation. Moreover, an emotional engagement was foreseen through the use of audiovisual material with testimonies of survivals and victims (a strategy of trauma re-enacting?). In any case, the exhibition shows how the appearance of new techniques of historical investigation and new forms of archives introduced by forensic archaeology are opening new possibilities also for a critic communication of traumatic memory, able to challenge ethno-nationalistic discourses that sometimes are hegemonic in this kind of conflicting “commemorative arenas”.

Also Patrick Naef tackles an issue already touched by Patrizia Violi: the *Disneyfication* of memory and trivialization of traumatic events. The case analysed by Naef is *Stalin World*, a theme park in Lithuania which proposes a history of the Soviet era, whose declared aim is to show the brutality and absurdity of Soviet political system. After a critical discussion of the concept of terroscapes considered in the light of touristification, Naef analyses through the lens of anthropology the management of Soviet heritage in Lithuania, enlightening a strategy of trivialization of traumatic memories related to gulags and Soviet period through a process of touristification which recurs to irony. “Stalin World” is an open air museum that collects statues and artefacts coming from Soviet historical period in reconstructed typical architectures (such as cultural centres, gulag, etc.). So we are in front of a paradoxical form of *heritageization* (monuments destined to be destroyed due to a *damnatio memoriae* are instead preserved) which is based on the tension between the traumatic memories expressed by the site and the leisure elements which exorcize that trauma recurring to irony and derision of the past. The merging and overlapping of terroscapes characteristics with *leisurescapes* features become then a way to deal with a collective trauma.

In her essay, Cristina Demaria elaborates on the role of cinema as a technology of memory, exploring its relation to traumatic memories through the analysis of a documentary by Philip Scheffner, *Halfmoon*

*Files, A Ghost Story*, based on the story of a camp, for Muslim prisoners-of-war during World War I, that was turned into a site for anthropometric research and propaganda. Before this movie, Wünsdorf, the city near Berlin where the camp was housed, was not a recognized “terrorscape”: Demaria explores the intertextual and intratextual strategies of the movie which contributed to reinterpret the colonial trauma in First World War and connected it to a redefined place of memory, eventually producing it. Hence, this article intervenes on the debate on *prosthetic memories* (Landsberg 2004), exploring the role of “cinematic places” in shared post-memories (Hirsch 2012) and the way they “intervene [...] in the gap/border/intertwining between events, experience and representation” (De Maria, *infra xxx*). The way images and cinematic images participate in transforming a landscape in a memoryscape is interesting also with regard to the terrrorscape approach, which looks at the actual sites where the commemorated event happened (and at their current conditions): what are the differences between those movies/documentaries staged on the site “as it was”, trying to recreate it, or “as it is”, with all the alterations occurred through time? How these choices alter the process of transformation of a space to a place brought about by the film?

Intertextuality is also the focus of Taja Kramberger’s essay, though it is an intertextuality between spaces considered as texts, interconnected in a *semiosphere*. Drawing on a historic methodology mixed with a spatial approach, Kramberger sketches out the topography of Nazi terror in Trieste during the occupation. The links between *topoi* of terror sites (such as the extermination camp in *Risiera di San Sabba* and *Kleine Berlin* in the inner city) shape a network which has a semiotic coherence, defining the Nazi *semiosphere*. The semiotic universe established by Nazi in Trieste, according to the author, had its own practices, rituals, codifications, borders: this *semiosphere* gave form to the actual space of the occupation. It is noteworthy how in this spatial cosmology – which inverts the social structure of democratic societies – oblivion, instead of memory, plays a driving role, since this symbolic system was designed to erase (traces of crimes, for instance) rather than preserve, showing an interesting dynamics between a visible surface and a hidden organization.

The last contribution, by Elena Monicelli, brings in the volume an “in-the-field” perspective. Monicelli talks about *Monte Sole*, a site close to the former *Gothic Line* in Second World War where a heinous Nazi massacre against civil population took place in 1943. The site is today a place of commemoration, and the author of the article is one of the coordinators of the *Peace School Foundation* housed there. Monicelli retraces the vicissitudes which lead to the establishing of the *Peace School*, describing the conflict between different discourses of memory and the clashes between individual, collective and political valorisations of the site. These dynamics are well explained in the process of institutionalisation of the memory of the place, whose main stages (the initial commemorations in

the municipality of Marzabotto, a nearby town, and then the establishment of *Historical Park of Monte Sole*) are described in details in the article, along with the evolution of the forms of remembrances and practices. The author concludes with interesting considerations about the educational role of similar institutions and of collective memory in general, claiming a pivotal responsibility for the research in history and memory: while collective and institutionalized memories tends to create rigid narratives nourished by rhetoric and stereotypes, research applied to collective memory should foster a democratic human rights culture, “opening” the narratives also to contrasting voices and producing inclusive, polyphonic and pluralistic spaces of discussion where the “work of memory” could balance the “duty of memory”, to use Todorov’s words quoted in the article.

## References

- ADLER, N.  
2001 *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System*, Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- AGUILAR, P.  
2002 *Memory and Amnesia. The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*, New York-Oxford: Berghahn.
- ALEXANDER, J.  
2012 *Trauma: A Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity.
- APPADURAI, A.  
1996 *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- ASSMANN, A.  
1999 *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. München: CH Beck.
- 2012 *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gedächtniskultur?*, Wien: Picus.
- ASSMANN J.  
1992 *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München: Oscar Beck.
- BAER, A.  
2011 “The void of the Sapharad. The memory of the Holocaust in Spain”, in *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, n. 12 (1), pp. 95-120.
- BARKAN, E.  
2000 *The Guilt of Nations. Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- BAUMAN, Z.  
1995 “A Century of Camps”, in *Life in fragments. Essays in postmodern morality*, Cambridge: Blackwell publisher.
- BENZ, W.; DISTEL, B. (EDS.)  
2005 *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager. Bnd. 1. Die Organisation des Terrors*, München: C.H. Beck.
- BERKHOFF, K.  
2004 *Harvest of Despair. Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule*, Cambridge/London: Belknap Press.
- BOTTICI, C.; CHALLAND, B.  
2011 *Imagining Europe. Myth, Memory, and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- CONQUEST, R.  
1986 *The Harvest of Sorrow. Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1990 *The Great Terror. A Reassessment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DEMARIA, C.  
2006 *Semiotica della memoria. Analisi del postconflitto*, Roma: Carocci.
- DIDI-HUBERMANN, G.  
2011 *Écorces*, Paris: Editions de Minuit.
- ECO, U.  
1975 *Trattato di semiotica generale*, Milano: Bompiani (Eng. Trans. *A theory of semiotics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).
- GARDEN, M.-C., E.  
2006 "The Heritagescape: Looking at landscapes of the Past", in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, n. 12, 5, pp. 394-411.
- GREIMAS, A. J.  
1976 "Pour une sémiologie topologique", in Greimas, A.J. *Sémiotique et sciences sociales*, Paris: Seuil.
- GUISAN, C.B.  
2011 *A Political Theory of Identity in European Integration*, Oxford: Routledge.
- HAMMAD, M.  
2006 *Lire l'espace, comprendre l'architecture*, Limoges: Pulim Geuthner.
- HIRSCH, M.  
2012 *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- HOFFMANN, B.  
2006 *Inside Terrorism. Revised and expanded edition*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- HOBBSAWM, E.  
1996 *The Age of Extremes. A History of the World 1914-1991*, New York: Vintage Books.
- KANSTEINER, W.  
2006 *In Pursuit of German Memory. History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
- KAPLAN, E.A.,  
2005 *Trauma Culture. The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, London: Rutgers.
- VAN DER LAARSE, R.  
2013a "Beyond Auschwitz. Europe's Terrorspaces in the Age of Postmemory", in Silberman, M.; Vatan, F. (Eds.), *Memory and Postwar Memorials. Confronting the Violence of the Past*, New York: Pgrave Macmillan, pp. 71-92.
- 2013b *Nooit meer Auschwitz? Erfgoed van de oorlog na Europa's eeuw van de kampen*, Amsterdam-Hooghalen: Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork.
- VAN DER LAARSE, R.; LABRIE, A.; MELCHING, W. (EDS.)  
1998 *De hang naar zuiverheid. De moderne cultuur van Europa*, Amsterdam: Maklu.
- LANDSBERG, A.  
2004 *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- LEVY, D; SZNAIDER, N.  
2010 *Human Rights and Memory*, Penn State University Press.
- LOGAN W.; REEVES, K. (EDS.)  
2009 *Places of Pain and Shame. Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'*, New York/London: Routledge.
- LOTMAN, J. M.  
1985 *La semiosfera L'asimmetria e il dialogo nelle strutture pensanti*, Marsilio: Venezia.
- LORUSSO, A.U  
2013 "Introduzione", in *Versus*, n. 116, pp.
- MAZOWER, M.  
1998 *Dark Continent: Europe's 20th century*, New York: Knopf.





- MAZZUCHELLI, F.  
 2010 *Urbicidio. I sensi dei luoghi tra distruzioni e ricostruzioni in ex Jugoslavia*, Bologna: Bononia University Press.
- 2013 "(Post-)Urbicide. Reconstruction and Ideology in Former Yugoslavia Cities", in Gonçalves Miranda R., Zullo, F. (Eds.), *Post-Conflict Reconstructions. Re-Mapping and Reconciliations*, Nottingham: Critical, Cultural, Communications Press.
- MAZZUCHELLI, F.; VITALE, M.R.  
 2014 "La restauration des architectures monumentales dans l'après-guerre entre conservation, transformation et effacement des traces du passé. Une comparaison entre perspectives sémiotiques et théories architectoniques", in Alonso Carballes, J.; Wells, A.D. (Eds.), *Traces, Empreintes, Monuments, quels lieux pour quelles mémoires? - De 1989 à nos jours*, Limoges: Pulim.
- NUTTAL, M.  
 1992 *Arctic Homeland: Kinship, Community and Development in Northwest Greenland*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- OLUSOGA, D.; ERICHSSEN, C.W.  
 2010 *The Kaiser's Holocaust. Germany's forgotten genocide*, London: Faber & Faber.
- NORA, P.  
 1984 *Les lieux de mémoire*, Paris: Gallimard.  
 1989 "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", in *Representations*, n. 26, pp. 7-25.
- OLICK, J.K.  
 2007 *The Politics of Regret. On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility*, New York-London: Routledge.
- PEZZINI, I.  
 2011 *Semiotica dei nuovi musei*, Roma: Laterza
- PISANTY, V.  
 2012 *Abusi di memoria. Negare, banalizzare, sacralizzare la Shoah*, Milano: Bruno Mondadori Editore.
- PHILLIPS, K.R.; REYES, G.M.  
 2011 *Global Memoryscapes. Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- RICOEUR, P.  
 2000 *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris: Seuil.
- RUDLING, P.A.  
 2012 "Terror and Local Collaboration in Occupied Belarus. The Case of the Schutzmannschaft Battalion 118. Part Two: War Criminality", *Historical Yearbook*, n. 9, pp. 99-121.
- VAN SAMANG, F.  
 2010 *Doodgewone woorden. NS-taal en de Shoah*, Leuven:
- SCHLÖGEL, K.  
 2003 *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit: Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, München: Carl Hanser Verlag.
- SNYDER, T.  
 2010 *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, New York:
- SOFSKY, W.  
 1999 *The Order of Terror. The Concentration Camp*, Princeton:
- TUMARKIN, M.  
 2005 *Traumascapes*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press.
- TRAME (EDS.)  
 2013 "Politiche della memoria", *Versus*, special issue on "Politiche della memoria. Uno sguardo semiotico", n. 116.
- VERBEECK, G.  
 2001 "In de schaduw van Auschwitz en de Goelag Archipel. De Historikerstreit", in P. Dassen & T. Nijhuis (Eds.), *Gegijzeld door het verleden. Controverses in Duitsland van de 'Historikerstreit' tot het Sloterdijk-debat*, Amsterdam: 23-42

VIOLI, P.

2009a “Ricordare il futuro. I musei della memoria ed il loro ruolo nella costruzione di identità culturali”, in *ElC. Rivista online dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Semiotici*, available on [www.ec-aiss.it/](http://www.ec-aiss.it/)

2009 “Architetture della memoria. Il Memorial Hall di Nanjing”, in *Versus*, n. 109-111.

2012 “Trauma Site Museums and Politics of Memory”, in *Theory, Culture & Society*, n. 29 1; pp. 36-75.

VAN VREE, F.

1995 *In de schaduw van Auschwitz. Herinningen, beelden, geschiedenis*, Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij.

WITHUIS, J.; MOOIJ, A. (EDS.)

2010 *The Politics of War Trauma. The Aftermath of World War II in eleven European Countries*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

