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"Ensuring that the memory and the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten lies at the heart of Britain's values as a nation." (Britain's Promise to Remember, 2015)

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'Ensuring that the memory and the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten lies at the heart of Britain's values as a nation.' (*Britain's Promise to Remember, 2015*)

A discussion of British narratives of the Holocaust in the twenty-first century.

Lydia Souter

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to show that a self-aggrandising British national narrative of the Holocaust was established in 1945, developed throughout the twentieth century and persists in present day commemorative and pedagogical activity. This is not only in spite of the apparent transnationalisation of Holocaust memory since the early 2000s, but has more recently been an explicit rejection of Europeanised memory projects, reflecting the political split from Europe in the 2016 Brexit referendum. In the literature review, I outline the relevant material that has been developed in the field of history and memory studies, as well as key analytical approaches to studying memorials, museums and education. Section I then addresses the unique trajectory of British Holocaust engagement, supplementing existing research using the memory theories of prosthetic memory¹, multidirectional memory² and political memory³, as well as Prosono's distinction between metaphysical and historical memory.⁴ Having established the significant changes in public and political understandings of the Nazi genocide, this dissertation then addresses the role of the Holocaust within 21st century policymaking internationally. A confrontation of the Europeanised narrative of the Holocaust set forth during the 2000 Stockholm International Forum and resultant Stockholm Declaration with post-Brexit, commemorative activity shows that the Holocaust has remained a central tenet of explicitly national identity-building. The case studies that form the basis of this analysis include the permanent Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, Holocaust Memorial Day events in 2005 and 2016 and the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and its supporting documents. From this analysis, it is evident that a narrative of the Nazi genocide that casts past and present British national structures and identities in a positive light not only dominated throughout the twentieth century, but continues to exist in post-2000 memory work. Furthermore, this narrative has come to the forefront in the 2010s, reflecting the state's rejection of the European Union marked by Brexit.

¹ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004).

² Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³ Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016)

⁴ Marvin Prosono, "The Holocaust as a Sacred Text: Can the Memory of the Holocaust be Tamed and Regularised?", 2001 <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-1-349-66019-3_159.pdf> [Accessed 10 June 2019].

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

Signed:LYDIA SOUTER.....

Date:.....21/09/2020.....

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Introduction

In this thesis, I argue that a specifically British, positive memory narrative of the Holocaust was established in 1945 and has developed throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. I contend that this nationally oriented memory narrative has persisted in twenty-first century Holocaust commemorative activity in spite of the apparent transnationalisation of Holocaust memory supposedly triggered by multinational remembrance initiatives at the turn of the century. The project builds on the extensive research previously conducted into British responses to the Jewish refugee crisis during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Such work has highlighted the emergence of a myth that places Britain the heroic nation in the face of Nazism and fails to fully represent that national experience of the Holocaust. In the first section I take this notion as my starting point, using theoretical concepts drawn from memory studies to gain a further insight into how a narrative of the Holocaust has formed and been developed that casts Britain in a favourable light.

The memory theories that are particularly useful to this analysis are Aleida Assmann's "Political Memory", Alison Landsberg's "Prosthetic Memory" and Michael Rothberg's "Multidirectional Memory". I consider the interactions between these memory forms in three key moments of British engagement with the Nazi genocide: the reports of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen; the development of a cultural understanding of the Holocaust from the 1960s to the 1980s; and the rapid growth of political interest in Holocaust commemoration and education in the 1990s. Analysing these key moments using a memory studies framework helps to account for the ways in which a particular memory of the Holocaust has developed and eventually come to form a cornerstone of British national identity since 1945.

Having discussed the unique trajectory of British engagement with the Holocaust and some of the processes by which the national memory was formed, in the second section I consider the impact that this particular narrative has had on twenty-first century

commemorative activity. After the millennium, representing, researching and teaching about the Holocaust was increasingly viewed as a matter for international co-operation as opposed to being the remit of individual nations. The creation of multinational remembrance organisations and agreements, such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the Stockholm Declaration, has been commonly interpreted as a sign that Holocaust memory itself has ceased to be confined to national boundaries. More recent studies have, however, challenged the perception of the Holocaust as a universally understood event, suggesting that while outwardly countries may appear to contribute to globalised narratives, there is often an implicit adherence to national political needs and priorities.

I explore this critique of globalised Holocaust memory further with particular reference to the fluctuations in British understandings of the Nazi genocide during the twenty-first century. I analyse the ways in which the representation of the Holocaust has transformed in line with the political shift marked by the 2016 Brexit referendum in relation to a host of pedagogical and remembrance projects, including Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), the Imperial War Museum's (IWM) permanent Holocaust Exhibition, and the plans for a new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre (UKHMLC). There is a clear departure from the narrative of the Holocaust purveyed in the 2000 Stockholm Declaration in more recent commemorative projects. This indicates that the positive national self-understanding developed and consolidated throughout the twentieth century has not only persisted in spite of twenty-first century Europeanising projects, but is now a central plank of British Holocaust remembrance as British political discourse has become increasingly isolationist.

Literature Review

This project fits within the subjects of history, memory studies and research into formal and informal Holocaust pedagogy. It also explores the intersections between these three areas, for example considering the ways that dominant memory narratives may conflict with historical realities. Here I present the key texts that have had an impact on: historical studies of the Holocaust; approaches to Holocaust representation; existing literature on memory; critical interpretations of transnational understandings of memory. I also introduce the case studies that will form the basis of my analysis of present-day British Holocaust representation.

Historical Studies of the Holocaust

Britain's experience of the Holocaust has been subject to much scrutiny since the 1990s. One of the most influential studies of Britain's response to the plight of Jews attempting to escape persecution in Nazi-occupied Europe is Tony Kushner's *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (1993). In this work, Kushner counters previous discussions of Britain's role in the war which tended to land at one of two extremes; while some presented an unambiguously positive narrative of British heroism, others argued that Britain's reluctance to prioritise rescue attempts was tantamount to collaboration with the Nazis.⁵ Instead, Kushner contends that British policymaking and popular responses to reports of state-organised antisemitic violence in Europe was informed by an adherence to liberal ideological values. The prevalence of this ideology limited Britons' capacity to truly comprehend the extent of Nazi violence as the epitome of *illiberal* phenomena⁶. Not only that, but the idea of individual freedom conflicted with the nature of Jewish cultural identity, meaning that there was widespread, antisemitic

⁵ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p.1.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.18.

suspicion of Jewish communities even when there was sympathy for their plight at the hand of the Nazis.⁷ Yet conversely, one of the British Government's main concerns that prevented the admittance of greater numbers of refugees in the 1930s was that a higher Jewish population in Britain would foster domestic antisemitism, which again conflicts with concepts of equality. It was not only antisemitism that prevented greater numbers of Jews from being allowed entry into Britain, then, but ironically, also the fear of antisemitism. With this ideological explanation established, Kushner presents a more nuanced picture of Britain's response to and experience of the Holocaust, rationalising instances when the government failed to act whilst also highlighting the role of individual activists, in particular Eleanor Rathbone, and independent organisations in helping Jewish refugees.

A similarly even-handed approach is taken by Louise London in her book *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (2000). London's investigations into British policymaking and public responses to the Nazi genocide highlight instances of genuine humanitarian concern on the part of the British public and government, but also give due attention to instances where national political and economic priorities or antisemitic stereotypes meant that the government withheld support. She also emphasises the fact that official policies were not always adhered to by officials, and that there were some people who campaigned throughout the war for more compassion to be shown to Jewish refugees. Overall, London finds that the British wartime government's response to Jews fleeing Nazism was characterised by self-preserving policymaking and an effort to avoid taking responsibility for the refugee crisis. For example, following the ferocious attacks on Jews in 1938 during *Kristallnacht* and following the *Anschluss* with Austria, visa requirements were reintroduced, enabling only "desirable" refugees to be granted entry to Britain.⁸ Those hoping

⁷ Ibid, p.272.

⁸ Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.63.

to escape Nazi-occupied Europe had to prove that they could contribute to the British economy without worsening existing issues of unemployment; that they would not be a financial burden on the state; and that they only planned to stay in Britain on a temporary basis.⁹ This mostly meant either working as domestic servants, or receiving financial support from the Anglo-Jewish community, refugee organisations or family members already living in Britain. On top of this, Jews who were able to assimilate within British culture were given preferential treatment, hence the government's agreement to initiatives such as the Kindertransport, during which 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children were allowed entry.

Ultimately, London concludes that although Britain did undoubtedly miss numerous opportunities to intervene or enact rescue missions to save European Jews, 'the additional lives saved would have been numerically marginal.' However, the minimal difference such opportunities would have made to the overall death toll was not behind the British government's failure to act; instead London states that 'weak though the prospect of saving Jewish lives may have been, the will to pursue such risks was significantly weaker'. As such, London follows Kushner's reasoning that the British wartime government's failure to intervene in the Nazi genocide was generally due to domestic ideological factors, concerns or prejudices as opposed to a sense of helplessness in the face of Nazi brutality.

In addition to the commonalities in their analysis of Britain's responses and attitudes to the Jewish refugee crisis of the 1930s and 1940s, Kushner and London also share the contention that a dominant narrative of the Britain and the Holocaust was formed throughout the twentieth century that does not accurately represent the national experience of the event. Kushner declares that although there is a wealth of information revealing the extent of public and state awareness of the Holocaust, Britain and the other western liberal democracies have not been 'ready for a radical reappraisal of their roles in the war – roles that had already become

⁹ Ibid.

mythologised'.¹⁰ Similarly, London argues that 'the British record has been obscured by selective memories over Britain's war-time role. The myth was born that Britain did all it could for the Jews between 1933 and 1945'.¹¹ While these studies present historical facts that contrast with the dominant national narrative of the Holocaust in Britain, they do not explain the processes by which this narrative has been formed and consolidated.

The volume *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (2013) provides a helpful starting point for my analysis of the rift between Britain's experience of the Holocaust and the pervasive narratives of national heroism. This work not only re-evaluates Britain's role in the Holocaust, questioning the narrative of unassailable national heroism, but it also considers the ways in which this memory was formed and has been consolidated from 1945 to the first few years of the twenty-first century. The volume is organised in four sections, focusing on the responses to witnesses of the Nazi mass murder immediately after the war, the media's representation of the Holocaust in the twentieth century, exhibiting the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum (IWM), and national Holocaust commemoration.¹² The contributions to this volume help to account for the formation and consolidation of a particular British national memory throughout the twentieth century, and explore some of the ways that this narrative has persisted in spite of multinational remembrance projects at the turn of the twenty-first century. However, this volume does not account for the significant realignment of Holocaust engagement brought about by unprecedented socio-political shifts in Britain that resulted in and from the 2016 Brexit referendum. I aim to expand this discussion using the memory models outlined below to further analyse the development of British Holocaust memory in the twentieth century. Through focusing on the ways in which

¹⁰ Kushner, p.12.

¹¹ London, p.13.

¹² Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

this has persisted in national commemorative events, and in formal and informal pedagogical institutions following the break from the EU signalled by Brexit, I argue that British Holocaust consciousness in the twenty-first century continues follow an existing tradition of prioritising a positive national narrative.

Existing Literature on Memory

Historians' identification of a rift between Britain's historical experience of the Nazi genocide and its aftermath and the dominant narratives developed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries can be explained by the theoretical insights of memory studies. Astrid Erll has identified three waves of memory studies since the discipline first emerged in the early twentieth century.¹³ The first wave was characterised by an understanding of memory that centred on individuals and social groups. The work that triggered the initial engagement with memory in social terms was Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* (1952), which popularised the notion that memories can exist externally to the individual. According to Halbwachs, an individual's understanding of events, even those experienced in total isolation, is dependent on their interaction with the wider social milieu.¹⁴

Though the concept of collective memory gained some initial traction, it was relatively stagnant until the 1980s, when French historian Pierre Nora adopted collective memory as a mechanism to study national identity and memory, marking the advent of the second "wave" of memory studies.¹⁵ Nora expanded on Halbwachs' concept of collective memory in a collection of three volumes titled *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1992). He contended that

¹³ Astrid Erll, "Travelling Memory", *Parallax*, 17.4 (2011), 4-18
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2011.605570>>.

¹⁴ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.84.

¹⁵ Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen, "Introduction", in *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), p.8.

memories can exist in external sites or realms, including monuments and memorials, literature, or even individuals that come to represent an event.¹⁶

The second wave of memory studies has been shaped by a general perception of memory that typically follows a national paradigm. Aleida Assmann has explored the formation and development of Holocaust memory with reference to her four formats of memory: political memory, social memory, cultural memory and individual memory.¹⁷ Breaking down memory into these four forms enables an analysis of remembrance and educational projects, taking into account political motivations as well as social and cultural precedents for remembrance. Though Assmann is clear that these concepts can be applied to any national context, the work can nonetheless be considered part of the second wave of memory studies because of her assumption that these memory forms will ultimately operate within national boundaries.

Assmann's term "political memory", which refers to the memory transmitted through state organisations and initiatives, is particularly useful for my discussion of British Holocaust memory. It is homogeneous and institutionalised, presenting a top-down narrative of the past that serves political needs.¹⁸ National institutions, policymaking and annual events provide an opportunity for nations to 'transform certain historical myths by dictating the ways in which they are processed, interpreted and appropriated'.¹⁹ This statement quite clearly links to London's and Kushner's contention that a mythical narrative of British wartime actions has evolved since the end of World War Two.

¹⁶ Pierre Nora, "Pierre Nora: *from Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire*", trans. by Marc Roudebush, in *Theories of Memory: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p.146.

¹⁷ Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp.19-23.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 23.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.25.

Though the Holocaust is undoubtedly central to German national identity and memory culture, it has increasingly come to be seen as a transnational event with transnational implications. The development of multinational Holocaust remembrance initiatives in the early 2000s can be understood as the catalyst for this shift towards the transnational considerations of memory, marking the advent of a third wave of memory studies. Perhaps the most influential memory theory of this period was Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider's "cosmopolitan memory".²⁰ This term refers to a memory form that emerges at the interface between local and global memories, and 'involves a tension between national memories and memories that emerge from a global context to permeate that national framework without nullifying it'.²¹ In this process, a memory of past events can be integrated into ostensibly unrelated contexts, enabling local memories to be interpreted through a global frame of reference. By Levy and Sznaider's reasoning, a cosmopolitan memory of the Holocaust has been developed that acts as a 'touchstone for a disorientated, de-territorialised humanity searching for moral clarity amid constant uncertainty'.²²

A second pivotal text belonging to the third wave of memory studies is Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation* (2009). Building on Levy and Sznaider's analysis, Rothberg presents the capacity for Holocaust remembrance to facilitate the articulation of other traumatic or problematic pasts. He asserts that memory is 'subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing'²³, allowing the memory of the Holocaust to become a reference point in seemingly unrelated debates. This is an insightful analytical approach, as it enables both the

²⁰ Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Cosmopolitan Memory: The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. by Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

²¹ Ibid, p.131.

²² Ibid, p.24.

²³ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p.22.

existing precedent for narratives of the Holocaust and the contemporary socio-political context to be taken into account.

The realignment of the field of memory studies from the national to the transnational is outlined in the volume *Memory Unbound: Tracing the Dynamics of Memory Studies* (2017), edited by Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeuelen. This work charts the transition of conceptualisations of memory from being tied to particular social groups and locations, to being untethered and able to move through different physical forms and national contexts. They organise memory theories into the categories of ‘transcultural, transgenerational, transmedial and transdisciplinary drifts’.²⁴ The transmedial movement of memory is a central notion to Alison Landsberg’s theory of “prosthetic memory”. In *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (2004), Landsberg argues that engagement with past traumatic events through immersive mass media, in particular television and films, enables individuals to take on a “prosthetic memory” of the event, altering ‘political outlooks and affiliations and also motivat[ing] political action’.²⁵ Prosthetic memory can thus help to shed further light on the ways in which British audiences were subconsciously directed towards particular political narratives of the Holocaust at the end of the Second World War.

As well as contributing to an analysis of turning points in Britain’s memory of the Holocaust independently, it is also interesting to see how these memory forms have intertwined. For example, political memory can be used to address the intentions behind reports of concentration camps at the end of the war, while prosthetic memory can explain the way in which this was mediated to the public and integrated into individuals’ sense of self. Similarly, what may appear to be a multidirectional memory, such as the representation of subsequent

²⁴ Bond, p.5.

²⁵ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2004), p.24.

genocides during Holocaust memorial events, can be ultimately understood in terms of political memory. By addressing the intersection between these memory forms, I am able to add a new dimension to existing discussions of British Holocaust memory, and consider the reasons why it has been made a central feature of British national and political discourse in the twenty-first century.

Critical interpretation of transnational understandings of memory

The dominant trend in “Third Wave” memory studies, that of viewing memory as beyond physical, national boundaries has more recently been called into question. Larissa Allwork has put forward three key criticisms of Levy and Sznajder’s “New Cosmopolitan” reading of the IHRA and the SIF: first, recent research has revealed far more Jewish remembrance of the Holocaust in the immediate post-war period than accounted for by Levy and Sznajder; second the role of institutions such as the EU and the UN in the IHRA and the SIF as well as 1990s restitutions movements was far more complex than previously assumed; and third the weaknesses of existing international organisations in the face of contemporary genocides is underplayed.²⁶ Her analysis highlights the importance of ensuring that current projects are anchored in practical measures to confront societal injustices rather than being restricted to rhetoric or performative acts of engagement with the past.

The potential co-existence of two narratives of the Holocaust – one that reflects “cosmopolitan values” and one that responds to particular national political needs²⁷ – is further demonstrated by Stefan Van der Poel’s analysis of the “memory crisis” that has emerged between Western and Eastern European nations since the integration of the latter into the EU

²⁶ Ibid, p.140.

²⁷ Stefan Van der Poel, "Memory Crisis: The Shoah Within a Collective European Memory", *Journal of European Studies*, 49.3-4 (2019), 1-15, p.11.

in 2004. Though the focus of this article is the divide between Eastern and Western European countries' memory of the Holocaust, his analysis does raise some interesting points that should also be considered within the British context. The difficulty of transposing a cosmopolitan narrative of the Holocaust onto Eastern European countries' understanding of the past may be considered as an example in extremis of the issues encountered when trying to establish any transnational collective memory.

A similar criticism of the dominant cosmopolitan or transnational reading of the SIF has also been explored with particular reference to British remembrance in the first few years of the twentieth century in *Britain and the Holocaust* (2013). For example, Andy Pearce's chapter explores the ways in which post-2000 remembrance projects that ostensibly belong to the globalised body of commemorative activity in reality perpetuated longstanding, nationally focused tropes. With particular reference to Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), Pearce shows that the 'transnationalisation of Holocaust memory must still be analysed in the contextual framework of individual nation states'.²⁸

Allwork's and Van der Poel's challenging of the affixation of the term "Cosmopolitan" to early twenty-first century remembrance policymaking, and Pearce's analysis of British commemorative activity in the 2000s provides a starting point for discussions of present-day British Holocaust memory. Due to the time of their writing or their geographical focus, these works did not have the opportunity to consider the impact of significant social and geopolitical shifts that have occurred in Western Europe during the 2010s. Of particular relevance in the British example is the rising sense of popular and political Euroscepticism that culminated in the 2016 Brexit referendum and decision to leave the European Union (EU). In light of this

²⁸ Andy Pearce, 'Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day: Inculcating "British" or "European" Holocaust Consciousness', in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, ed. by Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.204.

transformation, I contend that this initial focus on British heroism not only did not diminish following the global memory initiatives in the early 2000s, but has intensified and become more overt as Euroscepticism and isolationist policies have taken firmer hold on British political discussions in the 2010s.

Approaches to Holocaust Representation

The memory theories introduced offer a greater insight into the impact of Holocaust education and remembrance on individuals' identification with national and international communities. This insight can be further expanded by taking into account the various methodological approaches to representing the Nazi genocide. Explorations into Holocaust pedagogy – whether that be in formal educational settings, in national projects or in independent initiatives – have drawn out a conflict between the history of the Holocaust, and its perceived capacity to inspire change in the future and present world. Debates surrounding how best to represent and discuss the Nazi genocide came to a head in the late 1980s in what has come to be known as the *Historikerstreit*. As has been summarised by Ian Kershaw, at the centre of these debates was the question of whether it was possible to study the Holocaust using the same historical methods as with other events.²⁹ The *Historikerstreit* saw a re-evaluation of existing engagement with the history of the Holocaust, and disrupted narratives that had tended to result in an oversimplified understanding of how Nazism had taken hold in Europe, seeing the period isolated from a standard historical chronology.³⁰

Nicolas Kinloch built on the arguments first put forward in the *Historikerstreit* in his evaluation of the purpose of teaching the Nazi genocide in British secondary schools. Kinloch

²⁹ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, The Germans, And The Final Solution* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp.286-7.

³⁰ Ibid.

criticises the tendency for the Holocaust to be reduced to abstract moral lessons, leading it to function primarily as a ‘piece of crude social engineering’.³¹ Attempting to impart moral lessons via Holocaust education is, according to Kinloch, not only inappropriate, but also ineffective, as students’ behaviour will be determined by their own worldview and moral code outside of the classroom.³² Instead, he calls for history teachers to prioritise the historical realities of the Nazi genocide, teaching students what happened, who it happened to and why. It is only when its ‘quasi-mystical associations’³³ are removed that teaching about the Holocaust in secondary schools is appropriate.

The different approaches to Holocaust education first outlined in the *Historikerstreit* and later evaluated by Kinloch have been organised into two categories by social scientist Marvin Prosono. Prosono argues that there are two kinds of Holocaust: the “historical Holocaust” refers to the specific events between 1933 and 1945, while the “metaphysical Holocaust” is concerned with metaphorical representations that position the Holocaust as a touchstone of moral identities and debates.³⁴ Whereas the former encourages an assessment how the events of the Holocaust have impacted contemporary systems and structures, the latter is grounded firmly within questions of individual identity, moral values and behaviours.³⁵ Prosono’s classification of these two forms of Holocaust engagement shines a light on the reasoning behind contemporary engagement with and representations of the Holocaust.

Prosono’s analysis can be related to discussions of sacrality in Holocaust representation that are addressed in Avril Alba’s analysis of memorial sites. Alba outlines the ways in which

³¹ Nicolas Kinloch, "Learning About the Holocaust: Moral or Historical Question", *Teaching History*, 93, November 1998 (1998), p.45.

³² Ibid, p.46.

³³ Ibid, p.46.

³⁴ Marvin Prosono, "The Holocaust as a Sacred Text: Can the Memory of the Holocaust Be Tamed and Regularised?", 2001 <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-1-349-66019-3_159.pdf> [Accessed 10 June 2019].

³⁵ Ibid.

symbols of religious sacrality are integrated into secular Holocaust memorial spaces, facilitating the development of redemptive, though problematic, narratives of past and present national actions.³⁶ Prosono's distinction between the metaphysical and the historical Holocaust is an important addition to such discussions of commemoration as it can help to identify the intentions behind public representations of the Holocaust.

While a historical representation provides the facts of the past and can indicate, to a degree, *how* the Nazi genocide was possible, Kushner's, London's and Sharples' projects have all shown that this will not always be a favourable narrative for present day British purposes. As such, it is unlikely that a purely historical approach would be found in state-organised Holocaust remembrance projects. Conversely, a metaphysical approach to Holocaust representation can guide individuals to draw more commendatory conclusions about national identities and present-day realities. If this is the ultimate form that Holocaust commemoration will take, then it is vital to consider who has determined the "lessons" to be taken from the past, and how they will be used to alter perceptions in the present and future. Understanding whether the Holocaust is being represented in historical or metaphysical terms is important because it can help to uncover the focus of and intentions behind various forms of Holocaust remembrance and education.

Case Studies of British Holocaust Commemoration

The material introduced above provides the historical and theoretical framework on which I base my analysis of British engagement with the Holocaust in the twenty-first century in Section II. The case studies that make up this analysis include national memorial sites and

³⁶ Avril Alba, *The Holocaust Memorial: Sacred Secular Space*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

museums, pedagogical initiatives and commemorative ceremonies. Firstly, I consider the ways that these manifestations of Holocaust memory in twenty-first century Britain continued to reflect positively on the national experience of the Holocaust during the 2000s. Then, by comparing the narratives in the 2000s to those during the 2010s, I argue that this national focus has become all the more explicit in light of shifts in the political landscape signalled by the 2016 Brexit referendum.

There is a significant body of research covering the representation of the Nazi genocide within formal educational settings. Kinloch's aforementioned evaluation of approaches to Holocaust education appeared amidst a growing effort amongst educational specialists to determine the best way to teach secondary school pupils about the Nazi genocide following the introduction of mandatory Holocaust education in the first National Curriculum. Ian Gregory has highlighted the symbolic significance of the Holocaust as the epitome of humans' capacity for evil, and calls for the development of Holocaust education that is grounded in historical facts that can 'act as the bedrock'³⁷ for discussions of further acts of discrimination. Similarly, Stuart J. Foster and Keith A. Crawford discuss the ways in which curricula emulate societal ideologies and concerns, indicating how national identities and values, and international political relations and rivalries are inculcated in school textbooks' representations of the past.³⁸

The inculcation of formal Holocaust education with the introduction of the National Curriculum has long been identified as a turning point for British political Holocaust consciousness. Pearce has conducted extensive research into the processes that led to the development of compulsory Holocaust education in British secondary schools, and how it has been transformed by changes in the national leadership. He argues that the issues in Holocaust

³⁷ Ian Gregory, 'Teaching about the Holocaust: Perplexities, Issues and Suggestions', pp.49-61, in *Teaching the Holocaust: Educational Dimensions, Principles and Practice*, ((London: Continuum, 2000), p.55.

³⁸ Stuart J. Foster and Keith A. Crawford, *What Shall We Teach the Children? International Perspectives on School History* (Greenwich: Information Age Publishing, 2006).

education are reflective of the more general shortcomings of Britain's particular national memory of the Holocaust.³⁹ Pearce has also identified a more recent expectation for teaching and learning about the Nazi genocide to take on a commemorative role, as an age approaches in which there will be no more living Holocaust survivors.⁴⁰

In this thesis, I consider the issues identified in formal Holocaust education in relation to a host of informal pedagogical initiatives, including memorials, museums and commemorative events. Using the examples of the IWM's permanent Holocaust exhibition, the televised annual HMD commemoration ceremonies, and plans for a new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre (UKHMLC), I am able to determine the impact of British political events in the 2010s on manifestations of Holocaust education and remembrance.

The dominant metaphysical approach to in-school Holocaust education can also be identified in the narratives promoted by museums, such as the IWM. This is certainly not an exclusively British phenomenon, but is instead part of an increasing tendency for museums to operate within more emotional and moral frameworks. The tendency for museums to take on this morally orientated role has been identified by Paul Williams in his study of memorial museums from all over the world. Williams contends that since the early 2000s there has been 'an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts'.⁴¹

Tom Lawson's review of the initial iteration of the IWM's Holocaust exhibition also reveals that manifestations of Holocaust education in Britain instituted and developed in the 2000s continued to promote a positive national narrative that distanced Britons from the horrors

³⁹ Andy Pearce, "The Holocaust in the National Curriculum after 25 Years", *Holocaust Studies*, 23.3 (2017), 231-262 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2017.1296068>>.

⁴⁰ Andy Pearce, *Remembering The Holocaust in Educational Settings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

⁴¹ Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007), p.8.

of the Holocaust.⁴² It is worth noting that this review was written prior to the publication of Levy and Sznajder's discussion of cosmopolitan Holocaust memory in the global age. Therefore, Lawson does not attempt to locate the development of the site within the broader network of Pan-European policymaking, thus enabling the positive national narrative to appear all the more clearly.

Rebecca Jinks has more recently analysed the ways that the contents of the Holocaust exhibition interact with and differ from the representation of other contemporary atrocities covered in the museum. Jinks reiterates Lawson's criticism that 'while the visitors are encouraged to draw strong moral lessons, the exhibition does stop short of making explicit the implications of the Holocaust for today's Britain, and the visitors themselves'.⁴³ This indicates that the issues first outlined by Lawson have lingered in the decades that followed. Though Jinks' does take into account the institutional shifts in the IWM since 2003, she does not consider the impact of increased British Euroscepticism in the last five years. I am able to expand upon the issues raised by Jinks and Lawson, contending that the implicit British focus they identify has now come to the forefront.

The tendency to present British historical actions in a positive light is also identifiable in Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) remembrance ceremonies. Pearce contends that HMD 2001 'can be put forward as a case study par excellence of how the transnationalisation of memory must still be analysed in the contextual framework of individual nation states'.⁴⁴ I expand Pearce's discussion in relation to the ceremonies held prior to Brexit in 2005 and in the

⁴² Tom Lawson, "Ideology in a Museum of Memory: A Review of the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 4.2 (2003), 173-183 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760412331326168>>., p.176.

⁴³ Rebecca Jinks, "Holocaust Memory and Contemporary Atrocities: The Imperial War Museum's Holocaust Exhibition and Crimes Against Humanity Exhibition", in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.145.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.204.

midst of Brexit debates in 2016. An analysis of these events, with reference to John E Richardson's four "metafunctions" reinforces Pearce's contention that ostensibly transnational memory work should be considered in terms of its relationship to specific national contexts.

As well as investigating the changes in existing institutional representations of the Nazi genocide in twenty-first century Britain, I also explore the narrative presented in the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre (UKHMLC) and its supporting document *Britain's Promise to Remember* (2015). The UKHMLC can be also related to Williams' analysis of memorial sites, and Alba's discussion of sacrality in memorialising the Holocaust. Through an analysis of its organisers' understanding of the Holocaust's relevance to the contemporary political structures, it becomes clear that the UKHMLC will promote an unambiguously positive narrative of British actions in the Second World War, and national responses to contemporary crises. It thereby explicitly rejects Europeanising representations of the Holocaust, as is particularly evident in the language used in *Britain's Promise to Remember*. An analysis of the design, location and contents of the UKHMLC as well as its supporting documentation reaffirms my argument that British Holocaust memory in the 2010s has seen the development of an overtly positive narrative of the Holocaust that contradicts apparent efforts to consolidate a collective, Pan-European memory narrative of the Nazi genocide.

Summary

As the breadth of this literature review suggests, the Holocaust has occupied an increasingly large area of academic study since the twentieth century. Exploring the consolidation of a national self-perception since 1945 and the ways in which it contrasts with the historical realities of Britain's experience of the Holocaust is important, because it reveals that this positive narrative is not a recent phenomenon but has shaped British national identity and memory since the end of the Second World War. British engagement with the Nazi past has

continued to revolve around this perception of Britain as the heroic nation in the war – a perception that has been consolidated through formal and informal education, and in national remembrance events during the 2000s. This thesis then argues that the representation of the Holocaust in present-day Britain further promotes a positive national narrative, reflecting the shift towards isolationist policymaking signalled by the Brexit referendum. The perceptible prioritisation of British national needs conflicts with the presentation of Holocaust memory as evidence of transnational memory within recent memory theories. Instead, an exploration into British memory work reveals that although there may be a rhetorical shift towards the transnational, ultimately national priorities continue to take centre stage.

Section I: Britain and the Holocaust 1933-1999

In their research, Kushner and London have both shown that British responses to the Holocaust were not, as current political rhetoric might suggest, characterised by empathy and hospitality. In the following, I use memory studies theories to explore the ways in which these myths, or memory narratives, of Britain as the saviour of Jews from Nazism were established and have been consolidated throughout the twentieth century. Firstly, I consider Richard Dimbleby's report of the liberation of Belsen concentration camp as a case study of British engagement with the Nazi genocide in 1945. The way this report shaped British understandings of the Holocaust has been covered in detail in the volume *Belsen in History and Memory* (1997) edited by Jo Reilly et al. Here, I add a new dimension to their discussion using the theories of prosthetic memory and political memory, exploring why the broadcast did not spark critical self-reflection in Britain in spite of its significant impact on British audiences.

I then discuss the ways in which British Holocaust memory has followed its own unique trajectory by contrasting the awakening of a West German Holocaust consciousness in West Germany in the 1960s with the general ignorance of the topic in Britain during the same period. Rothberg has used his theory of multidirectional memory to account for the emergence of active engagement with the history of the Nazi genocide amongst young West Germans in the protest movements of the late 1960s. In Britain, however, a similar period of self-reflection did not occur. The lack of critical engagement with the national past can be partly explained by the popular acceptance of national memory narratives first established at the end of the Second World War. A continued adherence to self-aggrandising national narratives is identifiable in 1980s Britain amid calls from the Anglo-Jewish community for the establishment of a national Holocaust memorial. The public and government responses to this proposal reveal that forty years after the end of the Second World War, remembering the victims of the Nazi genocide

and considering its implications for the present day was still perceived as an exclusively Jewish responsibility in Britain.

Yet, by the early 1990s, the Holocaust had come to be seen as a central political priority, exemplified by its inclusion in the first National Curriculum and by the British government's role in instituting multinational remembrance projects. I investigate this transition from a social engagement with the Nazi genocide to the formation of a state-determined master narrative using Assmann's political memory. To do so, I use the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET)'s Lessons from Auschwitz programme as a case study of 1990s British Holocaust education, indicating the ways in which it embodied a political, metaphysical narrative of the Nazi past. From this analysis, it is apparent that remembering the Holocaust at a state level was taken up in governmental circles in the 1990s as a means to counter increasingly popular critical evaluations of wartime and present-day government actions to progress further. Instead, by regaining control of the narrative of the Holocaust, the government was able to reinforce existing positive national self-perceptions.

British engagement with the Holocaust in 1945

In April 1945, British audiences were shocked by the horrific images and eyewitness accounts of suffering inflicted by the Nazis on human beings in Belsen concentration camp.⁴⁵ Images of the camps appeared in newsreel footage, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts and in special publications such as the Daily Mail's book *Lest We Forget: The Horror of Nazi Concentration Camps Revealed for All Time in the Most Terrible Photographs Ever Published* (1945). Initial reporting of the Nazis' crimes has since been criticised for a lack of sensitivity in their handling

⁴⁵ Tony Kushner et al., "Approaching Belsen: An Introduction", in *Belsen in History and Memory* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.3.

of the dead; a failure to identify those who had survived as human beings, let alone as autonomous individuals who existed beyond Nazi oppression; and their reflection of the British war effort in a positive light stemming from the positioning of Belsen as the justification for involvement in the conflict.⁴⁶ This representation of liberation ‘gave rise to a single, monolithic and heroic narrative embedded in popular memory and official documents’.⁴⁷ The focus of my analysis will be Dimbleby’s account of Belsen concentration camps recorded just a matter of days after its liberation. Applying the terms political memory and prosthetic memory to the contents and mediation of this report, it is possible to shed further light on the reasons why this narrative was constructed, and how it came to form a central pillar of British understanding of the Nazi genocide.

Dimbleby’s harrowing account of what he witnessed when accompanying British troops to Belsen shortly after its liberation played an important role in shaping Britons’ understanding of the Holocaust at the end of the Second World War. Audiences were shocked to hear the description of ‘the world of a nightmare’⁴⁸ where ‘human beings are herded like animals behind barbed wire’.⁴⁹ In a departure from the typically restrained style of BBC reporting at the time, Dimbleby is audibly emotional as he describes a young girl who resembled a ‘living skeleton’ whose face ‘was only a yellow parchment sheet with two holes in it for eyes’.⁵⁰ Yet while the aim when recording this report was to relay the extremities of Nazi violence against European Jews, it focuses primarily on the experiences of the liberating soldiers as opposed to that of the people incarcerated at the camp. For example, Dimbleby describes a woman begging a British soldier for milk to give her baby. When the soldier goes

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.17.

⁴⁸ “Richard Dimbleby Describes Belsen”

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

to take the child, he finds that it had been dead for several days.⁵¹ The soldier is identified as a member of the British army on guard the night that the 11th armoured division arrived at the camp, yet no description is provided for the woman aside from her desperate search for food for her child. The trauma of this interaction is therefore conveyed from the perspective of having witnessed it as opposed to directly experiencing it.

The limiting of identifying information about the victims of the camps was an active decision made by BBC news editors. The extent of the horror relayed in the report almost prevented its broadcast, and it was only when Dimbleby threatened to resign that executives agreed to release a shortened version that was edited to remove references to the victims as Jews.⁵² As opposed to contextualising the horrors of Belsen within the context of almost ten years of anti-Jewish policymaking, the camp was positioned as a more generic emblem of Nazi barbarity. The obfuscation of the majority of the victims' Jewish identity as a means to exalt the actions of the British military during the conflict is further exemplified by the deliberate effort to present the suffering at Belsen as the reason for Britain's involvement in the war. For example, a 1945 news directive instructed reporters to 'show that this [the scenes at the concentration camps] was the justification of the war. It is the answer to those who did not believe atrocity stories'.⁵³ Thus, the coverage of Belsen concentration camp was shaped by the desire to cast British actions in a positive light, and to avoid any critical reflection on British responses to Jewish refugees prior to 1945.

The transmission of Dimbleby's report via the BBC and in line with the instruction to avoid references to the fact that the majority of its prisoners were Jewish indicates the

⁵¹ Ibid,

⁵² Richard Brooks, "BBC Cut Reference to Jews from Dimbleby's Belsen Broadcast", *thetimes.co.uk*, 2015 <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bbc-cut-reference-to-jews-from-dimblebys-belsen-broadcast-895nnhs2ntc>> [Accessed 12 August 2019].

⁵³ Douglas Ritchie, "WWII: Witnessing the Holocaust", *bbc.co.uk*, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/holocaust/5133.shtml>>, [Accessed 10 February 2019].

development of a British political memory of the Holocaust. The intentional portrayal of the devastation of the camp as the rationale behind Britain's involvement in the Second World War helped to justify the loss of over 380,000 British soldiers during the conflict, presenting the British military as an unambiguously heroic institution. This narrative was legitimised by its retelling by an established and trustworthy source. As a result, questions of national responsibility for the deaths of those who were denied asylum were evaded, and Britain could be upheld as a haven for those suffering persecution and discrimination.

The way in which the images of Belsen were mediated to the British public in 1945 can be understood using Landsberg's prosthetic memory. Prosthetic memories 'emerge at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum'.⁵⁴ The technology available to the majority of Britons in 1945 means that reports like Dimbleby's would have been engaged with in communal settings, either by a shared radio or, in the case of newsreel footage, in cinema settings. This creates the communal, immersive atmosphere necessary for the development of a prosthetic memory. Additionally, unlike typical news reporting, Dimbleby's report was a monologue and relied on similes and metaphors to convey the horrors of the camp. This unusual, even unprecedented, reporting style would have captured listeners' attention and reiterated the gravity of the situation, creating an immersive quality that evoked a visceral response. Furthermore, the use of metaphorical language indicates the creation of a metaphysical Holocaust narrative, in which abstract concepts of morality and "lessons" are prioritised over the historical context of the event. This metaphysical narrative again helped to avoid questions about problematic past actions on the part of the British government, instead prioritising abstract metaphors of the triumph of "good" over "evil".

⁵⁴ Landsberg, p.2.

According to Landsberg's original definition of prosthetic memory, audiences would share in the experience of the victims of a traumatic event. However, as previously discussed, these reports tended to prioritise the experience of liberating forces over the identification of the victims. The prosthetic memory of Belsen as representative of the Nazi genocide therefore enabled viewers to identify with the camps' liberators more than its victims. As a result, listeners were experiencing the shock of witnessing the suffering at Belsen as a prosthetic memory, while vicariously also experiencing the pride of being part of the nation that relieved it. The development of such a memory supported the broader, political narrative of the past, stifling criticism of wartime actions with the powerful and dominant narrative of Britain as a saviour nation.

The typical presentation of the Holocaust in dualistic terms, establishing Germany as the perpetrator and defeated nation, and Britain as the liberator of the camps and victor in the war, meant that in Britain, there was little reason for more nuanced, critical engagement with the past. This attitude is also reflected in the minimal engagement with the proceedings of the International Military Tribunal (IMT), and the responses to returning British POWs: Sharples has found that immediately after the war, the British general public was 'unencumbered by any issues of guilt or responsibility' and therefore showed a lack of interest in the prosecution of Nazi war criminals; and Duncan Little's research into the treatment of British POWs held at E715, a camp within the Auschwitz compound, has revealed an unwillingness to engage with eyewitness accounts of suffering that did not centre around an overarching narrative of heroism.⁵⁵ On top of this, the tumultuous socio-political circumstances of the immediate post-war period required the prioritisation of stability over self-reflection. As interest in the IMT waned and the growing threat of the USSR came to the forefront in the British political sphere, there was little to no reception for works that expressed the extent of suffering during the war.

⁵⁵ Sharples, p.33.

A self-glorifying, metaphysical narrative thus took root in Britain, and would remain unchallenged in the decades that followed.

British Holocaust Engagement in the 1960s

Throughout the 1950s, there was minimal public or state interest in memorialising and teaching about the Nazi genocide. Despite a concerted effort from Holocaust survivors such as Primo Levi, there was simply little public reception for eyewitness accounts of Jewish suffering during the war.⁵⁶ Outside of Britain, this changed in the 1960s, when high media coverage of trials against National Socialist leaders sparked an awareness of the Holocaust based on victims' experiences rather than perpetrators'. For example, the trial and execution of senior SS official Adolf Eichmann by the Israeli secret service was televised globally and arguably marked a turning point in public understanding of the Nazi genocide. The centring of the trial around victims' experiences shook existing understandings of the Holocaust as a historical event and emphasised its ongoing impact on human beings.⁵⁷

The renewed awareness of the Nazi genocide was taken up by some of the popular protest movements in the late 1960s, enabling past injustices to act as an historical justification for attacks on contemporary societal figures and structures. Rothberg suggests that 'multidirectional memory is often the very grounds on which people construct and act upon visions of justice'.⁵⁸ As such, emergence of a multidirectional Holocaust memory can be identified in the protest movements, which broke out around the world in the late 1960s in

⁵⁶ David Cesarani and Eric J Sundquist, *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁵⁷ James Jordan, "'And the Trouble is Where to Begin to Spring Surprises on You. Perhaps a Place You Might Least Like to Remember' *This is Your Life* and the BBC's Images of the Holocaust in the Twenty Years Before *Holocaust*", in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.91.

⁵⁸ Rothberg, p.38.

response to the excessive use of force by American troops in Vietnam; to the inequalities reinforced by existing societal structures; and in relation to civil rights movements globally.⁵⁹ In West Germany, dissatisfaction with existing political figures and structures was intensified by the memory of the Holocaust as protestors began to recognise and condemn national leaders' participation in the Nazi dictatorship.

Young Germans' attacks on the capitalist system were shaped around a disgust for National Socialism. For example, demonstrators carried placards that compared American President Lyndon B Johnson with Adolf Hitler, equating the brutality shown by the US in Vietnam with the barbarity of Nazism.⁶⁰ Similarly in 1967, member of the radical leftist terror group the *Rote Armee Faktion* (RAF) denounced the West German authorities as "Generation Auschwitz" in response to the shooting of an unarmed protestor.⁶¹ The conflation of contemporary acts of violence with the atrocities committed by the Nazis as a means to bring about societal change and construct a new sense of moral understanding thus indicates the development of a multidirectional West German Holocaust memory. The manner in which this memory emerged suggests the development of a metaphysical narrative, where present-day issues are made sense of by being placed within metaphorical framework of historical trauma.

The emergence of this multidirectional memory of the Holocaust in West Germany was reliant upon a contemporary trigger, which can help to explain why the same introspective discussions of the Second World War did not emerge in 1960s Britain. Of course, it is not necessarily surprising that criticism of contemporary society in West Germany was related to the Nazi past; Nazism was initially a German political and social ideology. Yet it is notable that while such vocal conversations were taking place about the roles of historical authority

⁵⁹ James Hawes, *The Shortest History of Germany* (Yowlestone House, Devon: Old Street Publishing, 2017), p.202.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.203.

⁶¹ Ibid, pp.203-4.

figures, there was not a period of reflection in Britain. It is perhaps because of this absence of self-reflection that British national identity has often been able to be defined by the experience of the Second World War.

The lack of a re-evaluation of national history in Britain can be attributed to the perception of the Holocaust as a distant, if traumatic, event. Whereas the process of reconstruction in West Germany had necessitated a period of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – the process of coming to terms with the past – the consolidation of a memory of the Holocaust in Britain in 1945 intentionally avoided any national self-criticism. In Germany, a direct link could be made from current political figures to the Nazi past, but in Britain the wartime leaders, in particular Churchill, had been positioned as national heroes within the national political, prosthetic memory of the Second World War. As such, the Eichmann Trial and other manifestations of Holocaust memory did not spark a period of introspection because it had been long understood that Britain bore no responsibility for the mass murder of European Jews during the Second World War. This understanding had resulted in a metaphysical narrative of the Holocaust that reduced World War Two to a matter of absolute evil of Nazism defeated by absolute good of British forces. Therefore, there was little sense in attempting to mobilise the memory of national actions during the Holocaust to confront contemporary institutional and societal inequality.

British Holocaust Engagement in the 1980s

The events of the 1960s did not result in a wider, public self-critical engagement with the actions of the wartime government in Britain, yet in the years that followed there was a gradual increase in academic interest in exploring these more problematic areas of the national past. In the 1980s, historians including A J Sherman, Bernard Wasserstein and Martin Gilbert were beginning to explore Britain's experience of the Holocaust in more critical terms, marking a

departure from previous engagement that had tended to focus on the mechanics of the Nazis' mass murder policies. However, London has stressed the fact that they were published over a decade after similar analyses had appeared in American historical studies.⁶² At the same time as these historical studies emerged, efforts were being made to reflect on the Holocaust in a metaphysical sense. For example, pedagogical organisations such as the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) developed a teaching resource titled *Auschwitz: Yesterday's Racism* that encouraged teachers and students to consider the relevance of the Holocaust to contemporary injustices.⁶³ Viewing the Holocaust as a source of lessons for contemporary society conflicted with more traditional historical perceptions of the Nazi genocide as a traumatic past event.

As a more critical engagement with the Holocaust appeared to be taking root, the Anglo-Jewish community began to call for the establishment of a national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Plans for this national memorial were first devised by the Board of Deputies of British Jews in response to Yehuda Bauer's assertion that 'in Britain, nothing at all has been done' to remember the Nazis' victims.⁶⁴ The development of the project was exceptionally complex and convoluted, seeing several restructures of organisational bodies and countless disagreements over the site's design, contents and location.⁶⁵ Eventually, in 1983, the memorial was constructed in Hyde Park and opened to the public. It featured a large stone inscribed with the quotation "For these I weep, streams of tears flow from my eyes because of the destruction of my people"⁶⁶ written both in English and in Hebrew, which was embedded

⁶² London, p.3.

⁶³ Pearce, 'The Anatomy of a Relationship', p.53.

⁶⁴ Steven Cooke, "Negotiating Memory and Identity: The Hyde Park Holocaust Memorial, London", *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26.3 (2000), 449-465
<<https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2000.0238>>, p.452.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.458.

within a memorial garden. It was intended that the stone would ‘blend into the park and into the lives of and memories of Britain’s people, Jews and non-Jews alike’.⁶⁷

The adherence to pre-existing Holocaust narratives in Britain that enabled a positive national self-identification and precluded discussions of more problematic areas of wartime actions is evident in the government’s response to the creation of this memorial site. Whereas it is now expected that plans for new memorials will spark significant debates, the planning process of the Hyde Park Memorial attracted little support or opposition.⁶⁸ The fact that the government agreed to the creation of the memorial should also not be interpreted as an effort to counter this general public indifference to the history of the Nazi genocide; indeed, as Pearce has noted, its creation was simply ‘more palatable than endorsing educational initiatives aimed at exploring the present-day relevance of the genocide’.⁶⁹ In fact, the British government was clear in its refusal to help finance the project, with the then Secretary of State for the Environment Michael Heseltine declaring that ‘if a memorial like this cannot attract enough private support it is not worth erecting it in the first place’.⁷⁰ Heseltine’s comment in and of itself reveals that in the early 1980s, the Holocaust was still perceived as an event that had little relevance to non-Jewish British national culture or identity.

The issues highlighted by government officials during the planning stages of the Hyde Park Memorial echo the liberal concerns that coloured wartime government’s response to Jewish refugees from Nazism; as has been suggested by Cooke, the site ‘is structured by the particular historical relationship between the Board of Deputies – as the Anglo-Jewish élite – and the British state’.⁷¹ For example, the government’s rejection of the Board of Deputies’

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.449.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Andy Pearce, "Britain's Holocaust Memorial Day: Inculcating ‘British’ or ‘European’ Holocaust Consciousness", in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.195.

⁷⁰ Cooke, p.454.

⁷¹ Ibid, p.451.

suggestions to construct the memorial either in the Jewel House Gardens or along the river frontage of Lambeth Palace was attributed to a fear that such prominent locations could provoke antisemitic attacks.⁷² This reasoning evokes the wartime perception that allowing entry to Britain to significant numbers of Jews would stoke domestic antisemitism. Similarly, the intentional blending of the memorial into the surrounding landscape calls to mind the expectation for Jewish communities to assimilate into British culture. This is all the more relevant in light of Cooke's observation that the memorial becomes 'indistinct as it merges into the English landscape'.⁷³ Finally, the expectation for Anglo-Jewish organisations to shoulder the financial cost of the site can be related to the wartime responsibility of the Jewish community to support refugees. Thus, the connections between the state response to the Hyde Park Holocaust Memorial in 1983 and the response to Jewish refugees between 1933 and 1948 indicate that longstanding British perceptions of the Holocaust persisted in commemorative efforts almost forty years after the end of the Second World War. Both the location and form of the Hyde Park Holocaust Memorial help to further minimise the particular identity of the Holocaust's victims, reinforcing liberal values of a homogeneous national identity.

British Holocaust Engagement in the 1990s

In contrast to the early 1980s, the 1990s saw a rapid increase in political and cultural interest in the Nazi genocide. A rise in individuals' awareness of the Holocaust can be attributed to a range of factors. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the gradual collapse of the Soviet Union not only improved communication between Western and European states, but also opened up previously inaccessible historical archives. As a result, a wealth of new information about the Holocaust was made available to Western European historians for the

⁷² Ibid, p.453.

⁷³ Ibid, p.461.

first time. As well as this unprecedented geopolitical shift, British societal identity was also undergoing a period of realignment. Whereas an emphasis on cultural assimilation had prevailed for the most part of the twentieth century due to the dominance of a liberal ideology, in the 1990s national values were increasingly shaped around multiculturalism and pluralism. As a result, Anglo-Jewish communities were able to speak more openly about the need to recognise and commemorate the atrocities committed against Jews by the Nazis.⁷⁴

Jewish communities' increased confidence in speaking out about the particularly antisemitic nature of the Nazi genocide was compounded by a growing sense of urgency to ensure justice had been served for all parties as survivors and perpetrators aged. In the late 1980s, the British public was outraged by the fact that Nazi war criminals had been living and working in Britain since the end of the war without facing prosecution.⁷⁵ Furthermore, efforts to compensate Holocaust survivors and their families for their loss of property during the Holocaust, such as the 1997 London Conference on Nazi Gold, not only drew public attention to the ongoing human impact of the Nazi genocide, but also highlighted the need for improved education and remembrance practices in Britain.⁷⁶ This social interest in the Holocaust was met by the development of cultural representations of the period. Particularly influential was Steven Spielberg's phenomenally successful film *Schindler's List* (1993) that follows the efforts of Oskar Schindler to rescue hundreds of Polish Jews from Nazi persecution. As has been discussed by Landsberg, this film may have been one of the first times that global, and therefore also British, audiences had some visceral inkling of how it felt to be a Jew during the Holocaust.⁷⁷ The rise in public awareness of the Nazi genocide in the 1990s also took on a new importance as British audiences were shocked by news of contemporary genocides: in Bosnia,

⁷⁴ Kushner, p.277.

⁷⁵ Pearce, 'Holocaust Education 25 Years On', p.9.

⁷⁶ Allwork, p.4.

⁷⁷ Landsberg, p.111.

where approximately 100,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed by Serb forces between 1992 and 1995,⁷⁸ and in Rwanda, where up to one million Tutsis were murdered on the orders of a Hutu government in 1994.⁷⁹ These atrocities were often discussed and understood through the lens of the Holocaust.

In different ways, these factors all contributed to a greater cultural and political awareness of the Holocaust in Britain. Perhaps the most obvious sign that representing the Nazi genocide had taken on a new political significance was its inclusion as a mandatory area of study in the first National Curriculum of 1991. At the end of the 1980s, the British government announced a series of reforms to the existing tripartite school system in the 1988 Educational Reform Act. A cornerstone of these reforms was the creation of a cohesive national curriculum that would standardise the areas studied by British pupils in state-maintained schools. Tense debates broke out over what should be included within the History syllabus, reflecting a perception of historical awareness as a facet of national identity building. The History Working Group (HWG), an organisation established to determine which areas of history should be taught, originally suggested World War Two as an optional area of study, and did not mention the Holocaust.⁸⁰ Though the majority of the outrage over this decision was targeted at the exclusion of the Second World War, pressure was also put on the HWG from the Anglo-Jewish community, the newly formed pressure group the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET), and a small group of cross-party MPs.⁸¹ Following extensive lobbying from these groups, the HWG eventually proposed that the Nazi genocide should be a compulsory area of study for Key Stage

⁷⁸"Bosnia", *encyclopedia.ushmm.org* <<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/bosnia>> [Accessed 16 August 2020].

⁷⁹ "The Rwanda Genocide" *encyclopedia.ushmm.org* <<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-rwanda-genocide>> [Accessed 16 August 2020].

⁸⁰ Pearce, 'The Anatomy of a Relationship', p.53.

⁸¹ Ibid.

4 students within a broader unit looking at the Second World War.⁸² Yet, due to further reshuffling of curriculum's contents largely brought about by Kenneth Clarke that saw history removed as a mandatory Key Stage 4 subject, the twentieth century elements were 'severed from the Key Stage 4 curriculum, and unceremoniously dumped into Key Stage 3'.⁸³ The position of Holocaust education was consolidated in 1995 and since then has, perhaps unexpectedly, not only remained a mandatory area of study, but has taken on an increasing importance in the British school system.

The inclusion of the Holocaust within the first National Curriculum has a political inflection not only because it was part of governmental policymaking, but also in the sense of Assmann's political memory. School curricula will rarely stand independently from broader social and political circumstances. Indeed, Pearce has noted that the ideological calibration of a curriculum reflects the constellations of power and influence around it'.⁸⁴ This inherently political nature of educational policymaking was compounded by the explicit intentions of the 1988 Educational Reform Act to position school education as a site of national identity building. The reforms were pitched as a counter to an alleged degradation of social values and educational standards since the 1970s.⁸⁵

Holocaust education had existed in British schools prior to the National Curriculum. Survey work by historian John P Fox conducted in 1987 with financial support from the Yad Vashem Charitable Trust (YVCT) reflected the concerns relayed during the *Historikerstreit*. While most respondents recognised that teaching about the Nazi genocide was important, Fox found that the delivery of Holocaust education was beset by teachers' uncertainty regarding

⁸² Ibid, p.2.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Andy Pearce, 'Holocaust Education 25 Years On: Challenges, Issues, Opportunities', in *Holocaust Education 25 Years On: Challenges, Issues, Opportunities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p.5.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

how it should be taught, resulting its common portrayal as ‘abstract example or backcloth for discussion of other issues’.⁸⁶ These factors meant that the Holocaust education that did exist was often one-dimensional, metaphysical and failed to contextualise Nazism and the extermination of European Jews within a historical framework. Taking into account the 1988 Educational Reform Act’s conceptualisation of the purpose of education as well as the general nature of school curricula, it is evident that the development of a political memory of the Holocaust was not meant to confront the problematic metaphysical narratives identified by Fox. Instead, these narratives were adapted and reworked to respond to contemporary national social and political needs. This contention is supported by Pearce’s characterisation of the politicians involved in the campaign for Holocaust education, who generally ‘tied the Holocaust to a self-congratulatory British war memory’⁸⁷, considered it to be a reference point for contemporary issues facing minority groups, and minimised the specific suffering of Jews.⁸⁸ Their perception of the meaning of the Holocaust, in addition to the implicitly political nature of the National Curriculum and educational reforms, indicates an effort to develop a metaphysical, political Holocaust memory during the 1990s.

One of the ways in which this was achieved was through the work of the HET. The HET was originally established with the purpose of ensuring the Holocaust’s inclusion within the history syllabus, but it not dissolve once this aim had been achieved. Instead, the organisation has gone on to provide teaching resources, training and targeted pedagogical programmes to supplement in-school education. Here, I focus on the *Lessons from Auschwitz* (LfA) initiative, a training programme for students aged sixteen and above that centres around a one-day visit to Auschwitz concentration camp; this was devised in 1999 and financially

⁸⁶ Fox, p.3.

⁸⁷ Pearce, ‘The Anatomy of a Relationship’, p.53.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

supported by the government. Since it was first introduced, over 41,000 people have taken part in the initiative.⁸⁹

The LfA programme is organised into four sessions, attendance at all of which is compulsory. Firstly, participants take part in an orientation session, where they learn about pre-war Jewish life and attend a talk by a Holocaust survivor. The aim of this first part is to ensure a basic historical knowledge and to challenge any pre-existing myths or misconceptions. Having completed orientation, the group then travels to Oświęcim, seeing the areas where Jewish life had flourished before the Nazi occupation before visiting Auschwitz concentration camp. This visit is particularly intense, with participants flying to Poland in the morning and returning the same evening. The HET consequently runs a follow up session, encouraging students to reflect on their personal experiences of the visit and think about the importance of learning about the Holocaust for the present day. Finally, a “Next Steps” session is held, where individuals must provide a short piece of writing outlining the impact LfA has had on them, and provide some evidence of their plans to share what they have learnt with their community at home.⁹⁰

The overarching intention of LfA is to teach participants about the Holocaust as a means to alter their own personal values, and to inspire them to confront contemporary intolerance and discrimination at home. The blurring of education with more general concepts of morality is evident in the conclusion of the camp visit with a memorial service that is held next to the destroyed crematoria.⁹¹ The collocation of education and commemoration gives greater gravity to the act of learning about the Holocaust, while also leading participants to reflect on the historical trauma of the Nazi genocide and its relevance to their own lives. The requirement for

⁸⁹ “Lessons from Auschwitz Project”, The Holocaust Educational Trust, *het.org.uk* <<https://www.het.org.uk/lessons-from-auschwitz-programme/about-lfa>> [Accessed 16 August 2020].

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ ‘Lessons from Auschwitz Project’.

students to bring what they have learnt into their own communities indicates the expectation for Holocaust education and remembrance to offer particular lessons about humanity and morality, thus signalling the presence of a metaphysical narrative. The impact of this approach has been identified in a study of Scottish teachers who have participated in the LfA programme. Though respondents did on the whole report that the programme had improved their awareness of the historical facts of the Holocaust, this historical knowledge was often accompanied references to more general social issues. For example, one respondent reported that the visit to Auschwitz ‘re-affirmed my views and feelings about human rights, equality issues and the refugee situation today’⁹², while another stated that ‘it gave me a new impetus in my teaching about human rights’.⁹³ Such statements suggest that the 1990s Holocaust education did not confront existing and often problematic conceptualisations of the Nazi genocide as an abstract source of moral lessons, but instead helped to reinforce this narrative.

Political memory is not established arbitrarily, but signal a moment when ‘history is put to the service of identity formation, when it is appropriated by citizens and attested to by politicians’.⁹⁴ The decision to inculcate a political memory of the Holocaust via school education can thus be understood as a response to broader social circumstances. Firstly, the government’s agreement to independent organisations’ calls for the inclusion of Holocaust education in the National Curriculum can be interpreted as a response to the rise of critical evaluations of Britain’s role in the war and subsequent treatment of Jewish refugees.⁹⁵ Incorporating Holocaust education into the state-organised National Curriculum may have presented an opportunity to reinforce the dominant narratives of British national heroism seen

⁹² Henry Maitles and Paula Cowan, "“It Reminded Me of What Really Matters”": Teacher Responses to the Lessons from Auschwitz Project", *Educational Review*, 64.2 (2012), 131-143 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2010.537314>>, p.139.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Assmann, p.23.

⁹⁵ Pearce, “Holocaust Education 25 Years On”, p.9.

throughout the twentieth century, thus diluting these more problematic actions. The idea that British political interest in Holocaust education in the 1990s partly came from a desire to restrict more critical analyses is supported by Pearce's characterisation of the MPs who worked alongside independent Holocaust education organisations.

As well as preserving a positive national understanding of the wartime government's actions, the decision to publicly commit to teaching and learning about the Holocaust should be viewed in light of ongoing humanitarian crises. Contemporary instances of genocide and the lack of Western intervention also saw a rise in discussions of the Holocaust. This might be explained using Rothberg's multidirectional memory; it could be argued that ongoing genocides led people to look at past instances of mass murder in order to make sense of the present. This conclusion can be called into question, however, by the fact that Holocaust memory work was increasingly taking place at a political level. As opposed to contemporary acts of genocide sparking a discussion of past actions, it is possible that the renewed political interest in the Nazi genocide served to counter criticisms of state inaction in present-day crises by pointing to more distant example of apparently positive British national actions. Referencing the existing, self-congratulatory political memory of the Holocaust may have helped to reassure Britons about present day inaction by highlighting past heroism during the Second World War.

The implementation of mandatory Holocaust education as a state initiative enabled the Government to regain control of the dominant Holocaust narrative, limiting the reach and impact of more critical discussions of the past. Furthermore, political commitment to Holocaust commemoration can be viewed as a response to state inaction in the face of contemporary genocide. This can also help to explain the presentation of Holocaust remembrance as a symbolic victory against oppressors that I will discuss below in relation to the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies held in the 2000s.

Section I: Summary

In this section, I have aimed to add to existing research into the development of Britain's Holocaust consciousness by considering key events in terms of memory studies theories. The initial memory of the Holocaust that was established in 1945 can be understood as a political narrative mediated as a prosthetic memory. As a result, audiences were able to engage with the severity of the Nazi genocide while simultaneously taking pride in national actions. This meant that attention was detracted from more damning aspects of the British war effort, including the failure to destroy the infrastructure of the Holocaust or to accept greater numbers of Jewish refugees from Nazism.

The unambiguously positive narrative of British wartime actions persisted in the ensuing decades, helping to account for the unique trajectory of Britain's Holocaust consciousness. Here I have referred to the emergence of a critical engagement with dominant narratives of the Holocaust in West Germany in the 1960s as an example of a multidirectional memory. Whereas young Germans were able to confront contemporary societal inequalities by referencing the horrors of the Nazi genocide, British understandings of the Second World War were grounded in the metaphorical presentation of the national triumph over evil. This therefore meant that wartime authority figures, in particular Winston Churchill, were able to take on a role of national heroes, again precluding a critical evaluation of the Second World War. The narrative of British national heroism can once again be identified in the 1980s, as the Anglo-Jewish community began to call for the creation of a national Holocaust memorial site. Whereas in the US and in West Germany, the 1980s saw similar proposals develop into extensive debates, there was a muted response amongst the British general public and government. Thus, in the 1980s the remembering the Holocaust continued to be considered a Jewish responsibility.

The 1990s, however, saw the rapid, and perhaps unexpected, realignment of political engagement with the Nazi genocide. This is evidenced by the inclusion of the Holocaust as a mandatory subject in the first National Curriculum and by support for international remembrance organisations. The relatively sudden political interest in promoting Holocaust remembrance and education can be viewed as a response to increasingly critical discussions of Britain's wartime actions, and to the government's failure to act in response to contemporary atrocities. By taking the lead on remembrance initiatives, the government was able to reinforce pre-existing narratives of national heroism, limiting the impact of critical readings of the national past and present.

In the following section, I consider the ways in which this persistent narrative of national heroism has been affected by the ostensibly transnationalisation of Holocaust memory since the turn of the twenty-first century. To do so, I analyse the ways in which a range of post-2000 manifestations of Holocaust remembrance and education reflect on Britain's past and present-day actions. From this investigation, it becomes apparent that the understanding of Britain as the heroic nation in the Second World War that was formed in 1945 and developed throughout the twentieth century has continued to inform commemorative and pedagogical activity in the twenty-first century.

Section II: Twenty-First Century Holocaust Remembrance

In the previous section, I outlined the ways in which a Holocaust memory narrative emerged and has been consolidated in Britain throughout the twentieth century that typically casts national wartime actions in an unambiguously positive light. According to the dominant transnational trend in the field of memory studies, the adherence to a particular national narrative should have been disrupted by the development of multinational remembrance agreements and organisations – such as the Stockholm Declaration and the IHRA - established at the start of the twenty-first century. However, more recently transnational readings of Holocaust commemoration have been re-evaluated, suggesting that the ostensible shift towards a globalised collective memory of the Nazi past is primarily a matter of political rhetoric.

In this section, I firstly outline the processes that led to the creation of the IHRA, and provide an overview of the projects the organisation has overseen since its creation in 2000. The significance of these memory projects is outlined with reference to Helmut Dubiel's analysis of the conference as an effort to consolidate a foundational myth for a collective, Pan-European Identity. I then expand the existing criticism of transnational readings of the SIF further in relation to the political rejection of the EU marked by the 2016 Brexit referendum. To achieve this aim, I firstly consider the ways in which manifestations of Holocaust remembrance and education have transformed in Britain from the 2000s to the 2010s. I outline the development of Holocaust representation in the IWM's permanent Holocaust exhibition and in HMD commemorative ceremonies, indicating the ways in which a prioritisation of national needs has persisted in twenty-first century Holocaust representation. This analysis reveals that the implicit prioritisation of British needs has come to the forefront in more recent commemorations held around the time of the Brexit referendum. I then highlight the ways in which this realignment of British national Holocaust commemoration has been made all the more obvious in the plans for the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre (UKHMLC).

From this analysis, it is apparent that state-level engagement with the Nazi genocide continues to be shaped by broader national political needs.

The SIF, the Stockholm Declaration and IHRA

The unexpected development of political involvement in Holocaust remembrance and education continued to grow at the turn of the twenty-first century, as Holocaust commemoration began to be envisioned not as the responsibility of each individual nation, but as a matter that required international co-operation. Arguably the most impactful event was the 2000 Stockholm International Forum (SIF), which was held on January 27 2000 to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The convening of an international conference that aimed to define the Holocaust and promote initiatives that would improve the quality of Holocaust education and research was the culmination of three years of work carried out in Sweden under Prime Minister Göran Persson. In 1997, survey work had uncovered in the Swedish youth a lack of knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust, a rise in support for right-wing political movements, and a popular enjoyment of White Power music.⁹⁶ In response, Persson launched a public information campaign titled *Living History*, and commissioned a series of new training programmes and pedagogical resources that were underpinned by the themes of ‘democracy, tolerance and equality’.⁹⁷ Though *Living History* was a Swedish national project developed to counter particular domestic issues, it had a significant impact across Europe.

The international popularity of *Living History* and, perhaps more cynically, Persson’s own desire to hold a more significant European leadership role, led to the creation of the

⁹⁶ Larissa Allwork, *Holocaust Remembrance Between the National and the Transnational: The Stockholm International Forum and the First Decade of the International Task Force*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) pp.29-35.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.30.

International Task Force for Holocaust Research, Remembrance and Education (ITF) in 1998.⁹⁸ The founding members of this group included Persson, US President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. In the following two years, Germany, Israel, Poland, Italy, France and the Netherlands would also become members of the ITF. The SIF was held to formalise this organisation's aims and to develop a plan for further projects, and was attended by representatives from 46 governments.⁹⁹ In 2012, the ITF was renamed the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* (IHRA) to reflect the permanence of the project, which is how I will refer to it from here on.

One of the main purposes of the SIF was to develop a shared international understanding of the Nazi genocide that would pave the way for future Holocaust commemorative and educational projects. Attendees' commitment to such projects was symbolically confirmed in the Stockholm Declaration. Though not legally binding, this declaration outlined eight proposals to improve knowledge and understanding of the Nazi genocide. These terms included: the establishment of a shared definition of the Holocaust, its scale and its lasting impact; a recognition of Holocaust memory as a means to counter contemporary intolerance; commitment to further Holocaust education, remembrance and research; the establishment of an international Day of Holocaust Remembrance; plans to develop existing knowledge about the Holocaust and explore lesser known aspects; and an overarching aim of working towards a better future.¹⁰⁰ The Stockholm Declaration was then adopted as the foundational document of the IHRA.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Helmut Dubiel, "The Remembrance of the Holocaust as a Catalyst for a Transnational Ethic?" in *New German Critique* No.90, Taboo, Trauma, Holocaust (Autumn 2003), p.68.

¹⁰⁰ "Stockholm Declaration", *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, <<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration>> [Accessed 29 July 2020].

The extent to which the SIF and its resultant research and commemorative projects can be understood as an effort to construct a Pan-European identity has been assessed by Helmut Dubiel. In his analysis of the SIF, Dubiel is careful to reiterate that the creation of a shared European understanding of the Nazi past and approach to its commemoration is not capable of entirely supplanting individuals' identification with their own nation state. Yet he contends that a shared understanding of the Holocaust forges a "negative" paradigm of human bonding that is built on the legacy of human catastrophe¹⁰¹, providing a common framework through which subsequent horrific events can be understood. Since the Holocaust and devastating wars of the twentieth century 'exploded the boundaries of state citizenship and ethnic and class belonging'¹⁰², the SIF could step in as a unifying institution that could help to reaffirm human solidarity and identity.

Therefore, the presentation of the Holocaust and its relevance to the present day at the SIF can be understood as an effort to establish a European foundational myth. Dubiel defines foundational myths as 'constructed narratives which extract an important event of the common past from the historical continuum in which is it embedded, endow it with mythical qualities, and turn it into a starting point of communal history'.¹⁰³ The SIF helps to unify modern states by developing a shared historical understanding of the past, a common understanding of its relevance to present and future generations, and a framework on which acts of remembrance should be structured. Indeed, despite the fact that it is not an official legal document, agreement to the terms of the Stockholm Declaration is now considered to be an informal condition for membership of the EU.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Dubiel, p.60.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.70.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.68.

¹⁰⁴ Allwork, p.11.

The terminology used in the terms of the Stockholm Declaration indicates that this European foundational myth is based around a metaphysical Holocaust narrative at the SIF. The Stockholm Declaration's authors called for delegates to ensure that the Holocaust is 'forever seared in our collective memory'¹⁰⁵ through education, remembrance and the confrontation of Holocaust denial or distortion. Similarly, it states that the atrocities committed by the Nazis had left 'an indelible scar across Europe'.¹⁰⁶ The emotive language used in these statements unifies member countries within a physically painful experience of recalling the traumatic past of the Holocaust. The metaphysical understanding of the Holocaust is also conveyed through its presentation as an event that transcends history and nationality, and resonates around the world. For example, the Declaration pledges members' 'commitment to plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past'¹⁰⁷ in order to 'reaffirm humanity's common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice'.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, the it states that 'the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning'.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the Holocaust is removed from its historical context and come to represent a metaphorical source of lessons about modern moral values and behaviours. As such, the SIF should be interpreted as an effort to instil a common European identity grounded in an ostensibly shared historic experience, as opposed to solely aiming to ensure future generations' historical understanding of the past.

The number of events, programmes and projects dedicated to commemorating the Holocaust and expanding the existing body of research has grown significantly as a result of the SIF and the creation of the Stockholm Declaration in 2000. The designation of 27 January as a shared Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), as proposed in the Stockholm Declaration, has

¹⁰⁵ "Stockholm Declaration".

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

become a key event on the political calendar around the world. Additionally, the SIF acted as the model for biannual plenary conferences held in the country currently holding the presidency of the IHRA. At these conferences, member countries work together to outline the year's events which can tackle 'issues related to Holocaust education, research and remembrance in the international political arena'.¹¹⁰ The current focus areas of the IHRA discussed in these conferences are: Antisemitism, Holocaust Denial and Distortion; Archives and Research; Education; Genocide of the Roma; Holocaust, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity; Remembrance; and Safeguarding Sites.¹¹¹

The development of a homogeneous collective Holocaust memory in the SIF was not only intended as a means to engage with the past, but also as a tool to confront contemporary instances of societal intolerance and even genocide. Allwork has attributed the initial appeal of membership to the ITF to 'pan-liberal anxieties over not only the extreme right but also the increasing success of radical right-wing parties in the 1990s'.¹¹² As such, it can be argued that the roots of European commemorative activity in the twenty-first century lie within the bounds of contemporary political needs as opposed to solely representing a desire to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and ensure future generations' historical knowledge. This aim was particularly pertinent given the development of this commemoration work took place in the aftermath of contemporary genocidal events in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s.

Relating other atrocities to Holocaust history and memory is one of the focus areas of the IHRA, as is outlined in a 2016 report titled "History Never Repeats itself, but Sometimes It Rhymes: Comparing the Holocaust to Different Atrocities".¹¹³ This paper, which is intended

¹¹⁰ "Our Structure", *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, <<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/our-structure>> [Accessed 31 July 2020].

¹¹¹ "Focus Areas" *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance* <<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/focus-areas>> [Accessed 31 July 2020].

¹¹² Allwork, p.32.

¹¹³ 'Committee on the Holocaust, Genocides and Crimes against Humanity', *History Never Repeats Itself, but Sometimes it Rhymes Comparing the Holocaust to Different*

for use in education and museum settings, outlines the ways in which the Holocaust should and should not be used in order to cast light on subsequent atrocities. It states that it is only appropriate to relate the Holocaust to other acts of brutality if they share thematic similarities, or to help identify the characteristics of a genocide.¹¹⁴ The report concludes with the assertion that ‘careful Holocaust comparison through scholarship, education and commemoration can enhance learning and understanding our world, build bridges between communities, and guide political action today’.¹¹⁵ From this guidance, it is clear that the IHRA conceives of Holocaust memory not only as a means to transform persecutory political movements, but goes further to suggest that a better awareness of the atrocities committed by the Nazis would have prevented their emergence in the first place.

The SIF and Memory Theory

Dubiel’s contention that the SIF represented an effort to consolidate a collective European foundational myth has been supported by memory studies theorists, in particular Levy and Sznajder. Levy and Sznajder argue that the Jewish diaspora is a precursor to a globalised, cosmopolitan world, meaning that the Holocaust can be interpreted as ‘an attack on cosmopolitanism’¹¹⁶, and thus ‘is the event that best expresses the value of cosmopolitanism’.¹¹⁷ According to their conceptualisation of Holocaust memory, multinational remembrance efforts have resulted in the subordination of national identities to ‘the symbolic power of a victim-centred, cosmopolitan memory’.¹¹⁸ By this logic, twenty-first century

Atrocities (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2016)

<https://holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/history_never_repeats_but_sometimes_it_rhymes_final.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2020].

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Levy and Sznajder, p.6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.185.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.184.

multinational commemorative activity represents an effort to construct a homogeneous, global identity and set of moral values based on the memory of the victims of the Nazi genocide.

On the surface, Levy and Sznajder's analysis of Holocaust memory in the global age appears to accurately describe the nature of the memory work carried out at the SIF in 2000 and its resultant projects and programmes. Their perception of Holocaust memory as a unifying collective memory that transposes ostensibly unrelated incidents onto a broader, globalised framework can be justified by the commemorative and educational stance taken in the IHRA's documentation as well as its institutional actions. Yet, as Allwork and Van der Poel have shown, national membership of organisations such as IHRA has not necessarily guaranteed a re-evaluation of pre-existing Holocaust memory narratives.

The notion that Eastern European states have developed a memory of the Holocaust for national purposes that conflicts with the outward narrative in support of SIF commemorations can also be applied to the British national context. Doing so would suggest that the obscuring of problematic areas of Britain's past through participation in European projects is actually two concurrent processes. On the one hand, Britain in the 2000s was taking part in European memory work, reflecting the political goal of reinforcing its national eminence in the EU. On the other, the construction of a common European narrative was appealing to British political figures precisely because it did not require a reassessment of pre-existing, unassailable historical narratives. Furthermore, Allwork's criticism of the affixation of the term cosmopolitan to post-SIF memory work can shed light on the persistence of positive British national narratives in spite of their role in consolidating European remembrance organisations. Her undermining of the cosmopolitan understanding of the SIF enables the discrepancy between narrative and action to come more clearly into focus, thus indicating that the adherence to positive British self-understanding could not be reversed by the institution of Pan-European memory project. These arguments become all the more pertinent in light of the shift in British

Holocaust memory from the universalised, moral narratives of the early twentieth century to the explicit national focus in the 2010s.

This kind of re-evaluation has begun to appear in more recent analyses of Britain's engagement of with the Holocaust. Dan Stone, for example, identifies similar issues as those outlined by Allwork and Van der Poel in the implementation of Europeanised narratives of the Holocaust in Britain, yet does not challenge Levy and Sznajder's interpretation of the SIF as emblematic of cosmopolitan Holocaust memory. Indeed, he agrees with their contention that the deterritorialised narrative of the Holocaust has come to act as a 'kind of Western European civil religion',¹¹⁹ though he does note that this "religion" does not fully apply to Eastern European contexts.¹²⁰ Stone's primary issue with cosmopolitan Holocaust memory and the SIF lies more in its capacity to overlook problematic areas of the national past, and promote a self-serving and even insensitive narrative of the Holocaust. Stone highlights the fact that British national Holocaust consciousness was established far later than that of Germany and the United States. He contends that as a result, Holocaust memory has smoothly transitioned into national heritage, 'bypassing a period of reflective or contested *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*',¹²¹ by the term 'heritage', Stone refers to the result of a process of shaping past events into 'myths that people want to hear about themselves and that can be nicely packaged and sold'.¹²² In the case of British Holocaust memory, this means a narrative that prioritises tales of rescue and victory in the war, while avoiding discussions of exclusionary foreign policy, domestic antisemitism, and a failure to intervene despite a widespread awareness of Hitler's attacks on European Jews. As identified above in relation to twentieth-century Holocaust commemorations, this means

¹¹⁹ Levy and Sznajder as referenced in Dan Stone, "From Stockholm to Stockton: The Holocaust and/as Heritage in Britain", in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), on p.222.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid, p.212.

¹²² Ibid, p.217.

that Britain has been able to participate in efforts to construct a globalised metaphysical narrative of the Holocaust that positions contemporary society as the antithesis of Nazi brutality without undergoing any critical self-evaluation. Therefore, the proceedings of the SIF have ‘contributed little to the reconfiguration of British national identity’¹²³, and mean that ‘we have forgotten British history, the history of the Holocaust and, first and foremost, the dead’.¹²⁴

The Brexit Referendum

Any realignment of British Holocaust memory in the twenty-first century towards Europeanised commemorative narratives seems all the more unlikely given the rise in Euroscepticism during the past decade. The roots of popular British Euroscepticism in the 2010s can be identified in the responses to the 2009 Lisbon Treaty. This treaty sought to reorganise the European Union (EU)’s institutions following the introduction of several new member states. It laid out the role of EU member states, and prevented the vetoing of policies concerning climate change, emergency aid and energy security.¹²⁵ Additionally, it outlined specific goals and values of EU member countries.¹²⁶ The ostensible European values put forward in the Lisbon Treaty were constructed through a conflation of the founding principles of the EU with the aims of resistance movements active during the Second World War. This is evident in the statement that ‘by the early 1940s, movements of resistance of fascism and Nazism, elaborating their post-war strategies, were actively promoting the idea of European unification’.¹²⁷ As such, the Lisbon Treaty constructs a moral authority grounded in a historical

¹²³ Ibid, p.224

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.226.

¹²⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Consolidated Texts of the EU Treaties as Amended by the Treaty of Lisbon* (London: Crown, 2008).

¹²⁶ "The EU in Brief | European Union", *European Union*, 2019 <https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en> [Accessed 13 June 2019].

¹²⁷ Hugh Starkey, "Europe, Human Rights and Education", in *Schools for the Future Europe: Values and Change Beyond Lisbon* (London: Continuum, 2012), p.54.

tradition of resistance of totalitarianism and acceptance of difference. By extending the narrative of World War Two as conflict between absolute good and evil, this treaty legitimises present-day EU actions as a continuation of the fight against extremism.

The creation of this legally-defined European identity was met with controversy across Europe, indicating a conflict between the EU's political self-image, and the reception of its policies in different national contexts. In Britain, the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty saw the resurgence of debates concerning Britain's membership of the EU. The Euroscepticism of many Britons, in particular amongst members of the Conservative Party, resulted in calls for a public referendum on Britain's EU membership, which was eventually held in 2016.

This referendum disrupted the projected pathway of a collective European approach to Holocaust remembrance and education. Contrary to predictions, the Leave campaign won the election with 51.9% of the vote compared to 48.1%¹²⁸ for the Remain campaign, leading to David Cameron's resignation. His successor, Theresa May, triggered Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which, it was intended, would see the UK leave the EU within two years. Since 2016, continuing clashes between voters, politicians and governments internationally have dominated the press, eventually causing May to resign in 2019. She was succeeded as Prime Minister by one of the principal architects of the Leave movement, Boris Johnson.

During these tense Brexit debates, references to British actions in the Second World War have emerged as a powerful rhetorical device. In the run-up to the referendum. Boris Johnson referred to Hitler's occupation of Europe, claiming that the EU was attempting to achieve the same 'by different methods'¹²⁹, and later announced that Brexit was 'a chance for

¹²⁸ "Brexit Timeline: The Key Dates in the UK's Exit from the EU", *The Week UK*, 2019 <<https://www.theweek.co.uk/100284/brexit-timeline-key-dates-in-the-uk-s-break-up-with-the-eu>> [Accessed 12 June 2019].

¹²⁹ Tim Ross, "Boris Johnson Interview: We Can Be the 'Heroes of Europe' by Voting to Leave", *The Telegraph*, 2016 <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/14/boris-johnson-interview-we-can-be-the-heroes-of-europe-by-voting/>> [Accessed 18 September 2019].

British people to be the heroes of Europe and to act as a voice of moderation and common sense, and to stop something getting [...] out of control'.¹³⁰ Such statements epitomise the attitude of many Brexiteers, who concur with the narrative of Britain as *the* heroic nation in World War Two that had to singlehandedly save Europe. Another notable example of politicians utilising the history of World War Two can be seen in Theresa May's 2019 resignation speech, during which she referred to the efforts to evacuate Jewish children from Nazi Germany. May recalled her interactions with 'the great humanitarian Sir Nicholas Winton – who saved the lives of hundreds of children [...] through the Kindertransport'¹³¹ when addressing her successor. She recalled working with Winton as her constituent and learning from him the importance of compromise that she believed had assisted her throughout the Brexit process. This appears to be an effort to legitimise and justify her own actions as Prime Minister despite her failure to deliver Brexit.

May's choice to refer to the Kindertransport in this context has been attacked by critics, including immigration and asylum barrister Colin Yeo. The Conservative government's "hostile environment" following the Windrush Scandal, presaged by May's attitude towards migrants and refugees in the role of Home Secretary, led Yeo to denounce references to British actions in the Second World War as 'blatant hypocrisy'.¹³² The hypocrisy of May's statement can be further drawn out by the fact that, as London and Kushner have shown, the Kindertransport was not a government-led initiative that represents a rare moment of humanitarianism that contrasted with the overwhelmingly restrictive foreign policy, but was

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ "Prime Minister Theresa May's Statement in Full", *BBC News*, 2019
<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48397311>> [Accessed 12 June 2019].

¹³² May Bulman, "May Accused of 'Blatant Hypocrisy' after Quoting Man Who Saved Hundreds of Refugee Children from Nazis", *The Independent*, 2019
<<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/theresa-may-speech-child-refugees-nicholas-winton-syria-kindertransport-resigns-immigration-a8928771.html>> [Accessed 12 June 2019].

rather the work of charitable institutions and individuals. Politicians' efforts to utilise the Second World War as a means to muster public support have been consistently undermined by both past and present-day political actions. As opposed to reflecting a genuine justification for Brexit, it is clear that allusions to the Second World War and the Holocaust were instead employed as a means to consolidate a British national identity that stands independently from the EU.

Cases Studies of Twenty-First Century Holocaust Commemoration

Existing studies of British Holocaust memory are beginning consider the ways in which national narratives have persisted in commemorative and pedagogical activity in spite of the ostensibly transnationalisation brought about after the SIF. Here, I expand this discussion by comparing iterations of HMD and the IWM's permanent Holocaust exhibition developed prior to and following the Brexit referendum. From this analysis, it is not only apparent that post-SIF Holocaust memory work continued to promote the existing twentieth century narratives of national heroism, but also that these have become more explicit in light of contemporary political shifts. This contention is then supported by an analysis of the memory narrative developed in the plans for the UKHMLC. An investigation into the intended form and function of this site reveals that the efforts to portray British past and present actions have become all the more explicit since the rejection of the EU signalled by the Brexit referendum.

Imperial War Museum

The idea for a national museum dedicated to recording British experiences of war was approved by the War Cabinet in 1917, when the First World War was still raging. It opened its doors to

the public in 1920, and aimed to record and present ‘the sacrifices of all sections of society’¹³³ in wartime. From its very beginning, then, it is clear that the boundaries between historical pedagogy and commemoration have been somewhat blurred at the IWM. This dual purpose calls to mind Williams’ analysis of memorial museums, which seek to ‘add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth explanations to commemorative acts’.¹³⁴ The IWM’s handling of the past is therefore structured around a moral framework based on the sacrifices made by British people in wars since the start of the twentieth century. From the outbreak of the Second World War, the museum began to collect and archive items representative of the ongoing war, and, since 1945, its scope has been further expanded to include all the Commonwealth conflicts. As well as the widening of its scope, the museum has also grown physically, and now has three branches in Duxford, Belfast and Trafford on top of the Churchill War Rooms.¹³⁵ These sites are partly funded by the Government, but also rely on donations and sponsorship to maintain exhibitions and launch additional projects.

Reflecting aforementioned political and social interest in the Nazi genocide during the 1990s, work began on a permanent Holocaust exhibition at the IWM in 1996. The original Holocaust exhibition was spread across two floors and displayed ‘for the first time rare and important objects, some of them from former concentration and extermination camp museums in Germany, Poland and the Ukraine’.¹³⁶ It was arranged chronologically, opening with an explanation of post-World War One political turmoil that ‘made a fertile seedbed for Hitler’s

¹³³ "About IWM", *Imperial War Museum* <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/about>> [Accessed 22 September 2019].

¹³⁴ Williams, p.8.

¹³⁵ "About IWM".

¹³⁶ "The Holocaust Exhibition", 2000, The Wayback Machine, <<http://web.archive.org/web/20001205100800/http://www.iwm.org.uk/lambeth/holoc-ex1.htm>>, [Accessed 05 August 2020].

anti-Jewish beliefs'¹³⁷, and then tracing the persecution of European Jews using artefacts including photographs, propaganda posters and filmic evidence. In addition to viewing these artefacts, visitors were also able to 'walk up to a wagon once heaved by slave labourers in a concentration camp'¹³⁸, which had been donated to the IWM by Belgian Railways. Particularly interesting in this first version of the IWM's Holocaust exhibition is its treatment of victims' and survivors' testimony. The experiences of those who suffered during the Nazi genocide is positioned in "contrast" to the 'story of industrialised murder'¹³⁹, in order to give a 'fresh and haunting perspective to the narrative'.¹⁴⁰ The emphasis on victims' experiences is reflective of the museum's overall purpose to represent the human impact of war.

In his review of the IWM's inaugural Holocaust Exhibition, Lawson praised the wealth of factual information provided in its presentation of the Nazi genocide. However, he argued that both the contents of the exhibition, and its location within the IWM were problematic in their reflection of British national understanding of the Nazi past. One of the key issues Lawson identifies was that the chronology revolved around a monocausal axis, meaning that antisemitism was posited as the explanation not only for the Nazis' persecution of European Jews, but also for the Second World War as a whole.¹⁴¹ This effect was intensified by "sound leakage" between the various elements of the exhibition space; Lawson highlights the fact that when visitors are learning about pre-war Jewish life, the audio of hysterical Nazi speeches playing later in the space can already be heard.¹⁴² As a result, the Nazis are 'explained only with reference to maniacal antisemitism and ideology'¹⁴³, preventing an understanding of the genocide as human event rather than an abstract metaphor of good and evil.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Lawson, p.176.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p.179.

The portrayal of the Holocaust in such simplistic, metaphysical terms is not only an issue because it misrepresents the realities of the Third Reich; it is also troublesome because of its positive national inflection. The exhibition did contain some mention of Britain's exclusionary foreign policy and failure to intervene as news of the Nazis' persecution of the Jews reached Britain. Yet, Lawson indicates that the overarching presentation of Nazism in dualistic terms of good and evil meant that 'comfort [could] be sought in the differences between liberal democracy and Nazism – the former may have shortcomings and may have made the wrong decisions, but the latter was evil incarnate'.¹⁴⁴ As such, visitors did not need to reflect on their own attitudes or national history because, compared with the depravity of the Holocaust as a distant event carried out by the inhuman Nazis, Britain was a morally superior nation.¹⁴⁵ This effect was only heightened by the exhibition's inclusion within the IWM, an institution that is inextricable from a narrative of British historic and present day military strength and noble sacrifice. The emphasis on victims' experiences within the broader setting of the IWM results in an uncomfortable conflation of those who were murdered in the Holocaust with British loss of life in military conflicts. As a result, British visitors understood suffering of Jews in the Holocaust within a framework of national military sacrifice, further limiting the capacity for in-depth national- and self-reflection.

More recent studies that follow Levy and Sznajder's analysis of twenty-first century European commemorative practice consider the ways in which the IWM's presentation of the Holocaust relates to the handling of other genocidal atrocities. In her comparison of the permanent Holocaust Exhibition with the more recent Crimes Against Humanity (CAH) Exhibition, which was positioned alongside the Holocaust exhibition in 2009, Jinks argues that the Holocaust is presented as 'an anchor' for further case studies of genocide, 'placing them

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.182.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.183.

on *its* spectrum rather than marking out the Holocaust as a category all of its own'.¹⁴⁶ This reinforces a metaphysical understanding of the Nazi genocide, divorcing it from its historical context and establishing it as a source of eternal, though perhaps undefined, moral lessons. As a result, individuals recognise the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust and reflect on ongoing global injustices without being prompted to ask more complex questions of British responses to the Holocaust and subsequent atrocities.¹⁴⁷ Representations of the Holocaust can therefore determine the ways in which Britons engage with other genocides without undermining an ostensible historic tradition of national moral superiority.

Jinks' relation of the Holocaust Exhibition to the more general CAH Exhibition provides a useful analytical example for a further examination of the Holocaust Exhibition's position within the broader context of the IWM. For the most part, the IWM is arranged chronologically, opening with the First World War Galleries and ending with the Lord Ashcroft Gallery, which presents examples of British military heroism.¹⁴⁸ The Holocaust is the exception to this timeline, and is physically separated from the otherwise chronological structure of the museum by a series of temporary exhibitions. Similarly, of the guidebook's sixty pages, the Holocaust takes up just three. This separation is justified by the argument that 'the [Holocaust] exhibition is not recommended for children under 14.'¹⁴⁹ However, it also has the effect of removing the Nazi genocide from the standard historical narrative, reinforcing its metaphysical presentation as an event that transcends history and remains relevant to the present day.

Separating the Holocaust from the history of the Second World War facilitates a self-aggrandising and often nostalgic representation of wartime Britain. The Second World War itself is also divided into two subsections in the IWM: *A Family in Wartime* and *Turning Points*

¹⁴⁶ Jinks, p.149.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p.153.

¹⁴⁸ "What's Here", Imperial War Museums, *iwm.org.uk* <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-london/whats-here>> [Accessed 18 August 2020].

¹⁴⁹ "About IWM".

1934-1945. Both of these collections are housed on the first floor of the museum. *A Family in Wartime* focuses on the British experience of the war, displaying artefacts such as ration books and propaganda posters. There is also a reconstruction of a 1940s home, depicting the fashions and lifestyles of the period. *Turning Points: 1934-1945* predominantly deals with the military aspects of the Second World War. This includes a timeline of key events in warfare and the machinery used, including submarines and weapons. Between these two collections, there is no explicit description of the antisemitic policies integral to Nazism. Britain's involvement in the war is explained in the vague statement that 'Britain's safety and basic values felt threatened as dictators and extremist nationalists emerged'.¹⁵⁰ The true nature of these nationalist regimes is not explicated, with the only mention of victims being the statement that 'as Hitler's power grew, some Germans began to flee abroad'.¹⁵¹ This ambiguity enables a generally positive depiction of Britain's involvement in the war that prioritises moments of heroism and triumph. This, in addition to the reference to the familiar political motif "British Values" aligns the exhibitions with the heroic narrative of the Second World War promoted by the Conservative government since 2014; the motif of "British values" in contemporary British Holocaust remembrance will be revisited in greater detail below in reference to the plans for a new national Holocaust memorial.

Furthermore, the immersive quality of the Holocaust exhibition helps to promote a positive reflection on contemporary British society and structures. This is all the more pertinent in the 2010s, as national politics have veered away from European co-operation and has become increasingly isolationist. As the timeline of the Holocaust exhibition progresses, visitors are increasingly isolated from the rest of the museum. When moving through the exhibition, the use of colour is gradually phased out until it is entirely black, white and grey,

¹⁵⁰ Board One of "Turning Points 1934-1945", Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London, SE1 6HZ, (1st October 2018).

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

and there is no natural daylight. This sensory deprivation submerges viewers in the history of the Holocaust and simultaneously provokes a sense of disorientation and claustrophobia. This culminates with the white scale-model of Auschwitz, shown next to a pile of shoes evoking the images of those taken from victims as they entered the camp, and the uniforms they were forced to wear. The final part of the exhibition concerns the liberation of concentration camps as well as the trials of Nazi officials. This section is displayed with natural textures, such as wooden tables, and is brightly lit, contrasting with the darkness elsewhere. Finally, visitors re-enter the main foyer of the IWM.

As I discuss below in relation to the proposed UKHMLC, the immersive quality of the exhibition and deliberate contrasting with modern society evokes Alba's concept of the negative epiphany. This is a process by which a traumatic past event is deliberately contrasted with a positive image of modern society in order to create a renewed appreciation for the present-day systems and structures.¹⁵² There is a palpable sense of relief when exiting the claustrophobic, manmade environment of the exhibition to the natural, well-lit information centre. The visceral effect of this is further heightened by the fact that the exhibition closes with the liberation of concentration camps and the prosecution of high profile Nazi criminals. In the summary of the Holocaust exhibition available on the IWM's website, one of the two featured aspects of the memorial is a rag doll given to a British soldier by a prisoner of Belsen as a 'token of gratitude' for liberating the camp.¹⁵³ This, and other artefacts with a similar background, help to conclude the exhibition space with a redemptive narrative for British visitors based on the moment of liberation, harking back to that initial political, prosthetic

¹⁵² Alba.

¹⁵³ "The Holocaust Exhibition", *Imperial War Museums* <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/the-holocaust-exhibition>> [Accessed 27 August 2020].

memory of the Holocaust that was established at the end of the war and consolidated throughout the twentieth century.

From this analysis, it is evident that the presentation of the Holocaust at the IWM mirrors broader metaphysical narratives of British national heroism in spite of the apparent transnationalisation of Holocaust memory. At present, the Holocaust exhibition is undergoing significant renovations, which will change the artefacts on display as well as reconfiguring the museum space itself. It will be interesting to see whether this rejuvenation of the IWM's permanent Holocaust exhibition will see it move further in line with the political memory of the Holocaust emerging in the 2010s, or whether the European commemoration projects of the early 2000s will take effect and result in the embodiment of a cosmopolitan, Europeanised narrative of the Third Reich.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2005 and 2016

As construction on the IWM's Holocaust Exhibition was underway in the late 1990s, British politicians also began to consider the creation of a day of remembrance for the Holocaust. These plans were formalised during the SIF and included as the sixth point of the Stockholm Declaration, which states that IHRA member states will 'encourage appropriate forms of Holocaust remembrance, including an annual Day of Holocaust Remembrance, in our own countries'.¹⁵⁴ 27 January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, was designated as HMD with its primary aim being to 'commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and to honour those who stood against it'.¹⁵⁵ For the first four years, HMD in the UK was co-ordinated and organised by the Home Office with local authorities taking responsibility for the events held in their area. In 2005, Home Secretary Charles Clarke established the Holocaust Memorial Day

¹⁵⁴ "About Us".

¹⁵⁵ "Stockholm Declaration".

Trust (HMDT) and appointed a board of trustees who would take on the responsibility for conducting HMD in Britain. The content of each year's HMD is shaped by an overarching theme devised by the HMDT. The purpose of declaring a specific theme is to help organisers develop 'fresh ideas for interesting and inspiring commemorations'.¹⁵⁶ Since its initial proposal in the Stockholm Declaration, the scope of HMD has been expanded to include not only those murdered by the Nazis, but also the victims of genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.¹⁵⁷

Superficially, the integration of HMD into the British national calendar appears to represent the consolidation of a globalised Holocaust memory in Britain. Not only is HMD one of the main events set out by the Stockholm Declaration, it is also observed on the same day each year by countries all around the world. Yet, in his analysis of the first HMD held in 2001, Pearce argued that the event continued to be inseparable from the post-war historical, sociocultural and political developments with the UK,¹⁵⁸ that contributed to the particularities of British understandings of the Holocaust. Pearce largely attributes the intense politicisation of the day to the pervasive motif of "lessons" – a rhetorical device also evident in the HMD's Statements of Commitment, which state that 'we will do our utmost to ensure that the lessons of such events are fully learnt'.¹⁵⁹ Because the importance of taking specific lessons about the heights of good in humanity and the depths of evil, the narrative of HMD became unassailable, with critics being accused of antisemitism or xenophobia.¹⁶⁰ This is problematic, as the course of HMD in 2001 was determined at a governmental level, meaning that the ostensibly

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ "Why Mark HMD?", *hmd.org.uk* <<https://www.hmd.org.uk/what-is-holocaust-memorial-day/why-mark-hmd/>> [Accessed 5 August 2020].

¹⁵⁸ Pearce, "Inculcating British?" p.205.

¹⁵⁹ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, *The Statement of Commitment for Holocaust Memorial Day, 2001* <<https://www.hmd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Statement-of-commitment-activity-1.pdf>> [Accessed 4 August 2020].

¹⁶⁰ Pearce, 'Inculcating British', p.205.

indisputable lessons being imparted were devised by a political body. As such, the representation of the Holocaust itself hinged on pre-existing political narratives which, as we have seen, tend to prioritise positive actions such as the liberation to avoid criticisms of wartime foreign policy. Therefore, the first HMD promoted a political memory that ‘not only diluted Britain’s historical relation to the Holocaust but also entailed the effacement of Britain’s own national history of imperialism, discrimination and persecution’.¹⁶¹ Pearce concludes his analysis of the 2001 HMD by pondering whether subsequent HMD events would continue to perpetuate positive national narratives, or if they have incorporated elements of self-criticism. He questions

whether the passage of subsequent HMD’s since 2001 together with 20 years of Holocaust education has managed to rectify this [self-preserving British narrative], or whether a widespread “critical” Holocaust consciousness in Britain remains elusive.¹⁶²

Here, I compare the ceremonies held in 2005 and 2016 in order to determine the degree to which HMD perpetuated pre-SIF British understandings of the Holocaust. I structure this analysis around the four “metafunctions” of remembrance ceremonies identified by John E Richardson. These metafunctions serve the following purposes: ‘to Communicate History; to Communicate Values; to Communicate Solemnity; and to Communicate Hope’.¹⁶³ They do not operate independently, but interact to convey a narrative of the Holocaust that emphasises its seriousness and impact for the present day, while simultaneously, though perhaps somewhat contradictorily, also conveying a message of hope for the future.¹⁶⁴ The intersections between these four metafunctions create a framework on which an analysis of the rhetorical devices employed during HMD commemorations can be based. The resulting interpretation can, in

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid. p.206.

¹⁶³ John E. Richardson, "Mediating National History and Personal Catastrophe: Televising Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration", *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11.4 (2018), 465-485 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-017-0209-4>>, p.468.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

turn, be related to broader questions levelled at the legitimacy of viewing the Holocaust in the twenty-first century as a cosmopolitan or transnational memory.

HMD 2005 is a particularly interesting case study for two key reasons. Firstly, because it was the first HMD to be organised not by the Home Office, but by the newly established HMDT. The transferral of the event from the direct responsibility of the Government to an ostensibly independent charitable trust suggests that there may be a realignment of its approach to conducting the event. Secondly, because it was held on the 60 anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, thus garnering an exceptional degree of public interest. Whereas HMD 2005 was a significant television event, HMD 2016 countered the upward trend in airtime dedicated to the event seen since 2011. This is not unexpected, however, given the fact that 2015 saw a dramatic increase in Holocaust memorial programming to mark the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of World War Two. In spite of the reduced media coverage of the event, HMD 2016 is an important case study, as it was held a year after the state took on a more central role in Holocaust commemoration, signalled by the publication of *Britain's Promise to Remember*, and in the same year as the Brexit Referendum.

The events of HMD 2005 were based around the theme “Survivors, Liberation and Rebuilding Lives” In the “Theme Paper” announcing the title of the 2005 HMD, the historian David Cesarani called for Holocaust survivors to become role models, replacing the current vapid celebrity culture.¹⁶⁵ Part of the inspiration that, according to Cesarani, can be derived from the experiences of survivors and liberators is their resilience to ignorance and even aggressions after emigration to Britain. He argues that in spite of direct threats from figures such as Oswald Mosely, and in light of post-war policymaking that denied refugees entry to

¹⁶⁵ The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, *Survivors, Liberation and Rebuilding Lives*, 2005 <<https://www.hmd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/HMD-2005-Survivors-liberation-and-rebuilding-lives.pdf>> [Accessed 4 August 2020], p.1.

Britain, the survivors ‘never clamoured to be heard and did not want attention’.¹⁶⁶ Cesarani’s suggestions in the Theme Paper appear to encourage a more critical engagement with Britain’s role in the war. Similarly, the theme of the 2016 event was “Don’t Stand By”, building on the work conducted the previous year by ‘focusing on the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, and considering our individual responsibilities not to be bystanders to hate crime and prejudice’.¹⁶⁷ The key areas of focus recommended in the Theme Paper included Bystanders, Rescuers, and Resistance and Challenge. Interestingly the report also asks: did Britain stand by?¹⁶⁸ Referencing the research presented in *Britain’s Promise to Remember*, the Theme Paper recognises ‘British flirtations with fascism, the UK’s refusal to accept significant levels of Jewish emigration’¹⁶⁹ and ‘the seeming failure to make any special effort to disrupt the extermination’.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the Paper highlights the fact that Britain’s military opposition to Nazi Germany was not intended as a means to rescue European Jews.¹⁷¹

From the guidance offered in these papers, it seemed promising that HMD 2005 and 2016 may have helped to promote a self-critical national narrative of the Nazi genocide. However, as shown in the analysis presented below, it becomes clear that this apparent effort to develop a more nuanced narrative of British wartime actions did not translate into the televised versions of the event. Instead, HMD 2005 and 2016 both, in different ways, adhered to the pre-existing metaphysical narrative of British heroism that have dominated national discourse since 1945. This follows the same pattern identified above in relation to the National

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, *Holocaust Memorial Day 2016 - Don't Stand By: Theme Vision*, 2016 <<https://www.hmd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/HMD-2016-Dont-stand-by.pdf>> [Accessed 14 August 2020].

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p.4.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Curriculum, where academic discussion has become more nuanced and critical, but public implementation has not.

HMD 2005 was held in Westminster Hall, a location typically reserved for significant national events including Jubilee celebrations and state funerals. The programme opened with narrator James Naughtie announcing the arrival of the Queen and Prince Phillip, which was timed to match the exact moment of the liberation of Auschwitz.¹⁷² They entered the Hall to a congregation of six hundred Holocaust survivors and their families, around forty liberators, and numerous politicians, British Jewish leaders and cultural figures. Several recognisable members of British culture participated, including actor Christopher Ecclestone, Paralympian Ade Adepitan, comedian Stephen Fry and football manager Sven-Görran Eriksson, as well as Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.

The ceremony itself was made up of several speeches, readings, poems and musical elements, which were interspersed with a four-part video following Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack's first return to Belsen concentration camp after its liberation in 1945. Upon Pollack's arrival at Belsen, she met Major Dick Williams who was amongst the troops that liberated the camp. Together, they lit a candle that was then taken and preserved by Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (RSDG) and transported to London. At this point, Naughtie noted that the RSDG's 'predecessors fought to liberate Europe sixty years ago' (40m30s).¹⁷³ An extract of Anne Frank's diary was then read by actor and author Imogen Stubbs, followed by a speech from Frank's childhood friend Hannah Goslar. In her recounting of pre-war memories of their friendship, Goslar re-humanised Frank, reminding audiences that 'before she became an international symbol of the Holocaust she was my childhood friend' (13m40s-13m46s).¹⁷⁴ Her

¹⁷² Holocaust Memorial Day, 19:00 27/01/2005, BBC2 England, 60 mins.
<<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0050D1CF?bcast=6623389>>
(Accessed 05 Aug 2020).

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

account was followed by an extract from Oratorium Annelies, a musical composition written in Frank's memory by British composer James Whitbourn.¹⁷⁵ The ceremony concluded with the lighting of sixty candles, one for each year since the liberation of Auschwitz, using the flame lit at Belsen by Pollack and Williams. The candle-lighting was also accompanied by an orchestral arrangement of Oratorium Annelies. Naughtie's closing statement reminds viewers that 'genocide did not end with the Nazis' (59m15s).¹⁷⁶

In terms of its overall structure, the 2016 ceremony broadly mirrored that of the 2005 event, but the cultural figures involved in the event and its location suggest that it attracted far less political attention. HMD 2016 was held at Guildhall, a location associated with political events as opposed having the revered status of Westminster Hall. The ceremony was largely conducted by the actor Robert Lindsay, with contributions from fellow actors Emilia Fox, Freddie Fox, Kevin Whately and Dame Kristin Scott Thomas as well as Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and historian David Olusoga. The televised version of the event was narrated by newsreader and television presenter Mishal Husain. A variety of film clips were integrated into the event, including Olusoga's historical explanation of the Nazi persecution of European Jews, two survivors' story of their escape to Britain, and the testimony of a young woman's experience of violence in Darfur. The 2016 event also ended with a candle lighting ceremony, during which six large candles on plinths bearing the names of Nazi concentration camps alongside those of contemporary sites of genocide were lit as violinist Jennifer Pike performed the Theme of *Schindler's List*. Finally, the choir of Clare College Cambridge performed Howard Goodall's *A Song of Hope*, and Husain expressed the hope that 'one day humanity

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

may live up to the promises of Never Again and thus truly learn from this dark chapter in our history' (1hr00m40s-1hr00m50s).¹⁷⁷

Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack's eyewitness testimony and return to Belsen can be understood as the historical metafunction of HMD 2005. Pollack's suffering in childhood was contrasted with her adult life in Britain, following existing tendencies to contrast the horrors of Belsen with notions of British national heroism. The symbolism of Belsen in the British memoryscape was reiterated by Pollack's encounter with Major Williams upon arriving at the site, a meeting that appears to have been arranged without Pollack's prior knowledge. Her gratitude to soldiers, such as Major Williams, was expressed in the statement 'I have an idealised vision of the liberators [...] as heroes, as someone who had some answer to our needs in the midst of such evil' (36m15s-36m26s).¹⁷⁸ As opposed to revealing a new aspect about the experiences of life in Belsen or the challenges of post-war life, the historical function of HMD 2005 instead mirrored existing narratives of Britain's military actions in the final weeks of the war. As such, a historical narrative was presented that reinforced the existing British connection of the Holocaust to Belsen – this is in spite of the fact that HMD is intentionally held on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Similarly, the communication of history during the 2016 HMD was achieved primarily through two embedded video clips of historian Olusoga's visit to Belsen concentration camps. These two videos outlined the development and encouragement of antisemitism in Nazi Germany from 1933, up to the discovery of the genocide by British troops in 1945. The choice of Olusoga – a historian best known for his work to bring greater awareness to Britain's history of racial discrimination – to present these videos added a new dimension to the narrative of the

¹⁷⁷ Holocaust Memorial Day 2016, 19:00 27/01/2016, BBC2 England, 60 mins. <<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0BE061AE?bcast=120937243>> (Accessed 05 Aug 2020).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Holocaust presented during HMD 2016. In line with the wider efforts to connect the history of the Holocaust to subsequent genocides during the 2016 ceremony, Olusoga's involvement implied that a link was also being drawn between British historical and present-day racism and the antisemitism of Nazi ideology. The symbolic importance of Belsen is indicated in the statement that 'too much had happened on this spot for it to ever be anything other than a warning of what lies within us and what can happen if we're not watchful' (9m08s-9m19s).¹⁷⁹ This statement is again particularly charged given Olusoga's eminence as a historian dedicated to exposing Britain's historical and continued oppression of black people; is the "us" he refers to humanity in general, those who exhibit prejudiced behaviours, or those who may fall victim to such attitudes? This historical report of what happened in Belsen was then re-embedded within the British context in a speech by Susan Pollack, who, as in 2005, relayed her experience of Nazi persecution and post-war effort to rebuild her life in Britain. The historic metafunction of HMD 2016 continued to take the liberation of Belsen as a symbolic representation of both suffering and heroism in the Second World War. There was also an implicit extension of existing representations of Belsen as a representative of the triumph of good over evil to a broader discussion of British national history, somewhat fulfilling the recommendations made in the event's Theme Paper.

The value metafunction of 2005 not only stemmed from the interaction between the heroic figure of Major Williams, but can be identified in Prime Minister Tony Blair's speech, during which he asserts that HMD 'teaches us a lesson of remembrance. We must never forget the victims and we must never dishonour their memory by allowing the ugly poison of racial prejudice and hatred to hold sway again' (51m30s-51m49s). The imperative to remember was reinforced by Blair's following statement that 'by keeping the Holocaust in our minds and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

hearts we allow the dead to live again' (52m05s).¹⁸⁰ By this reasoning, not only does Holocaust commemoration enable us to pay respect to those who died, but it also serves as a form of resurrection, symbolically giving victims a final victory over the Nazis who tried to eradicate them that is facilitated by British willingness to remember.

The 2016 ceremony presented a set of moral values that were even more closely intertwined with British identity through the profile of Major Frank Foley. An MI6 Agent and diplomat working in Berlin, Foley was able to save the lives of around ten thousand Jewish people by breaking Nazi and British laws to issue false papers, visas and passports.¹⁸¹ The story of his rescue effort was relayed by Lindsay, and then a video clip was shown of Judy Field and Werner Lachs who were both able to escape Nazi Germany thanks to Foley. In this clip, Lachs states: 'as far as I'm concerned, Frank Foley is my saviour and my saint' (21m20s-21m24s).¹⁸² Lindsay emphasised Foley's inspirational role for future generations in his statement that 'not everyone can be a Frank Foley' (21m30-21m47s), but that individuals should do what they can to stand up to hatred. Undoubtedly, Foley showed great courage in his acts of defiance against Nazi policies, which easily could have seen him killed. What was not mentioned in this account of his actions, however, is the fact that providing Jews with false papers also contravened British wartime immigration policy. Omitting this fact enables Foley to be presented as a national role model without evoking a critical discussion of the British government's wartime policy and practice, recalling the reference to Winton made in May's resignation speech as outlined above.

Furthermore, the editing of the televised ceremony removed elements that would otherwise have prompted the more nuanced engagement with British Holocaust narratives

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ "Rescuer Story: Frank Foley", *hmd.org.uk*, 2016
<<https://www.hmd.org.uk/resource/frank-foley-0/>> [Accessed 14 August 2020].

¹⁸² *Holocaust Memorial Day 2016*.

encouraged in the 2016 Theme Paper. This is particularly evident in Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis' speech titled 'No Ifs, No Buts' (40m18-43m49s).¹⁸³ In the version of the speech that was broadcast, Mirvis denounces individuals' silence in the face of hatred and inequality. He points to missed opportunities to stop the Nazis, such as Weimar Germany's electorate's lack of faith in democracy, silence in the face of mounting antisemitism in post-1933 Germany, and the unquestioning obedience of Zyklon B factory workers.¹⁸⁴ At 41m58s, there is a quite obvious cut in the footage. The speech transcript published by the Office of the Chief Rabbi reveals that at this point in his speech, Mirvis had declared that 'if the Allied forces had decided to bomb the railway lines into Auschwitz-Birkenau when they first received detailed information about the camp in June of 1944, who knows how many lives could have been saved?'¹⁸⁵ Of course, the editing of the ceremony in and of itself is not problematic; the programme had to fit in within the BBC scheduling. However, the decision to remove this element of Mirvis' speech over other elements, such as the presentation of Frank Foley, indicates that while the ceremony itself may have contained nationally critical elements, the version portrayed to the vast majority of Britons aligned national values with longstanding and unassailable narratives of heroism.

Connected to both the functions of communicating history and values is the communication of solemnity. As Richardson highlights, 'the history of genocide and our values needs to be presented in such a way that emphasises their gravity'.¹⁸⁶ There is no doubt that HMD 2005 was presented as a solemn, formal event during which attendees paid respect to the victims of the Holocaust and expressed grief for the great loss of life. Aside from the sheer

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ "Holocaust Memorial Day: 'No Ifs, No Buts'", *chiefrabbi.org*, 2016

<<https://chiefrabbi.org/all-media/holocaust-memorial-day-no-ifs-no-buts/>> [Accessed 14 August 2020].

¹⁸⁶ Richardson, p.483.

gravity of the subject matter, this sense of solemnity was created by the recognisable participants in the ceremony as well as its location. Most notably, the opening of the event by the British monarchy immediately conveyed both the seriousness of the ceremony, and its importance to Britain's national self-understanding. Solemnity is also conveyed during the lighting of sixty candles, one for each year since the liberation of Auschwitz, using the flame lit at Belsen by Pollack and Williams. The first two candles were lit by the Queen and Prince Phillip, and the remaining fifty-eight by Holocaust survivors. Given its accompaniment by Whitbourn's Oratorium *Annalies*, this act embedded a symbolic act of Holocaust remembrance within the narrative of the liberation of Belsen and the *Diary of Anne Frank* – both of which reflect a particular British engagement with the Nazi genocide.

The solemnity of HMD 2016 was conveyed through repeated references to the genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia and Darfur. In this iteration of the event, these further genocides were not presented abstractly, but made up the majority of the second half of the ceremony. For example, Mirvis' speech called for self-reflection amongst contemporary audiences, arguing that a greater commitment to the lessons of the Holocaust and to the notion of "Never Again" could have prevented more recent genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia, Darfur and Rwanda (42m22s).¹⁸⁷ The 2016 event also featured a symbolic lighting of candles, led by Holocaust survivors alongside survivors of subsequent genocides. Six large candles were placed on plinths bearing the names of Nazi concentration camps alongside those of contemporary sites of genocide were lit as violinist Jennifer Pike performs the Theme from the film *Schindler's List*. Just as in the 2005 ceremony, this act framed the Holocaust commemoration using a recognisable cultural retelling of the Nazi past as well as contemporary events. As such, the seriousness of Holocaust commemoration was embedded within a perception that, had previous generations shown greater commitment to the ostensible

¹⁸⁷ Holocaust Memorial Day 2016.

“lessons” of the Holocaust, then future genocides could have been prevented. This notion added greater weight and importance to the act of remembering the Holocaust.

The final metafunction delineated by Richardson is the communication of hope. This element is more complex, for in a ceremony ‘with too great an emphasis on hope, the solemnity of the whole occasion can be undermined’.¹⁸⁸ In HMD 2005, hope, that is to say the sense that ‘we are not defined by this catastrophic past’¹⁸⁹, was epitomised by Eriksson’s statement that ‘the fact that stories of hope can survive even in Auschwitz should be an inspiration to us all’ (39m27s-39m35s).¹⁹⁰ This statement restated the depravity of Auschwitz, but also provided a redemptive arc for humanity in the fact that some kind of hope could survive, even there. Additionally, Pollack’s memory of the liberation of Belsen helped to position British troops as a symbol of hope in a period of despair. The same idea was built upon by Tony Blair in his declaration that HMD ‘lets us with humility remember some of the extraordinary acts of courage by Jewish people and others during the Holocaust’ (50m50s-50m57s).¹⁹¹ Not only was Britain in the 2000s distanced from the horrors of the Nazi genocide, it is positioned as the antithesis of them.

HMD 2016 ended with the choir of Clare College Cambridge performing *A Song of Hope* by Howard Goodall. According to Richardson, the positioning of this song at the end of the programme offered an ‘uplifting vocal refrain’¹⁹² that motivated audiences to actively change their behaviour so that positive changes may ‘be noticeable at some distant time in the future’.¹⁹³ The message of hope put forward in the 2016 ceremony therefore echoed broader memory work being carried out in Britain, in which learning about and remembering the

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p.483.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p.465.

¹⁹⁰ Holocaust Memorial Day 2005.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Richardson, p.481.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Holocaust was positioned as a way to protect against future injustices. As highlighted by the reference to subsequent genocides, the way in which this work was conducted needs realignment in order to be truly effective. Therefore, the renewed financial investment and political energy being poured into Holocaust remembrance was legitimised by the notion that previous work has left the task of “Never Again” unfulfilled.

An analysis of both HMD 2005 and HMD 2016 using Richardson’s metafunctions reveals that, on the whole, their ultimate manifestation did not reflect the encouragingly self-evaluative approach outlined in each year’s Theme Paper. The various ways in which the Holocaust is represented and commemorated in these national commemoration services consolidates the same rhetoric of unassailable British national heroism versus the ultimate evil of the Holocaust. Thus, the influence of the IHRA on British remembrance in the years immediately succeeding the SIF did not, as Pearce hoped, lead to re-evaluation of dominant narratives of the past. HMD 2016 is admittedly a more complex event than HMD 2005 in terms of its connections to broader political issues and its status within the British national calendar. Whereas the 2005 event received extensive airtime and drew in significant audiences – attributable to the fact it was held on the sixtieth anniversary of liberation – there was no political presence at HMD 2016, and the cultural figures involved generally have a lower national and international profile. Additionally, by HMD 2016, the HMDT at been established for over a decade, therefore suggesting more autonomy and independence than in the 2005 event. As a result, it appears that the contents of the ceremony were able to include more critical elements, indicated by the references to subsequent genocides and the questioning of past actions. The critical aspect of HMD 2016 is also signalled by the presentation of the historical narrative by Olusoga, connecting his research into British anti-black racism to the existing metaphysical understanding of Belsen. Yet, as has been shown by the editing of Mirvis’ speech, the version of the ceremony presented to British audiences had had the more explicitly

critical elements removed. Thus, while independent organisations may have been seeking to present a more critical version of events, the mainstream engagement with the Nazi genocide was explicitly shaped around heroic figures, such as Frank Foley, and politically inflected, if largely undefined, “lessons”.

UKHMLC and Britain’s Promise to Remember

The lack of a political presence in the 2016 HMD ceremony is all the more surprising given the extensive research being carried out into Holocaust education and remembrance by the British government that year. Such research was conducted in a political climate that was increasingly centring on debates about Britain’s EU-membership, indicating an effort amongst politicians to express the same level of commitment to remembering the Holocaust as was being shown by the EU. In 2013, at a dinner celebrating the 25th anniversary of the HET, Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron first announced the establishment of a Holocaust Commission assembled by head of the Jewish Leadership Council Mick Davis. According to Cameron’s speech, the decision to create this Commission was prompted not only by a desire to continue the work of the HET, but also by a need for Holocaust memory to encourage individuals to counter ongoing violence and intolerance.¹⁹⁴ Cameron referred to recent genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica, to the war in Syria and treatment of refugees, and to the use of chemical weapons threatening Israel as evidence of a greater need to learn about the Holocaust.¹⁹⁵ In the speech’s conclusion, Cameron reinforced the specific national commitment to remembering the Holocaust, stating:

I believe that remembering for the future is vital for us all. When I visited Yad Vashem in 2006 I wrote that “We owe it to those who died – and those who

¹⁹⁴ “25th Anniversary of the Holocaust Educational Trust: Prime Minister’s Speech”, *gov.uk* <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/25th-anniversary-of-the-holocaust-educational-trust-prime-ministers-speech>> [Accessed 14 July 2020].

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

survived – to build a world in which this can never happen again.” That is my pledge. That is why Britain will remember. That is why Britain will never stand by. And that is why I stand here as Prime Minister and say to the survivors here tonight: the past will never die and your courage will never be forgotten.¹⁹⁶

As will be seen, the emphasis on Britain in this statement sums up the approach taken to Holocaust commemoration and education projects produced by the government in the following years.

The task of the Holocaust Commission announced in this speech was to ‘investigate what more needs to be done to ensure Britain has a permanent and fitting memorial and the educational resources needed for generations to come.’¹⁹⁷ The group was made up of politicians, public figures, businesspeople and leading members of the British Jewish community. Members included actor Helena Bonham-Carter, broadcaster Natasha Kaplinsky, Arts Council Chair Sir Peter Bazalgette, politicians Michael Gove, Ed Balls and Simon Hughes, and Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. On HMD 2015, exactly a year after the creation of this commission, Cameron presented a document titled *Britain’s Promise to Remember: The Prime Minister’s Holocaust Commission Report*. The result of a year’s worth of research into Holocaust education and commemoration in Britain, this report put forward four suggestions to improve Britons’ knowledge and awareness of the Nazi genocide. They recommended greater financial investment in educational projects, a programme to record British Holocaust survivors’ and liberators’ testimonies, the development of a Learning Centre tasked with promoting national Holocaust education that takes advantage of new technologies, and the creation of a national Holocaust memorial site.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ “Prime Minister Launches Holocaust Commission”, *gov.uk*
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-launches-holocaust-commission>>
[Accessed 14 July 2020].

¹⁹⁸ Cabinet Office, *Britain's Promise to Remember: The Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission Report* (London: Crown, 2015).

Echoing the language used by Cameron in his 2013 speech, *Britain's Promise to Remember* emphasises the centrality of Holocaust remembrance to British national self-understanding. In its introduction, the report states 'ensuring that the memory and the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten lies at the heart of Britain's values as a nation'¹⁹⁹, a claim which is justified by the war effort against Hitler as well as the rescue of 10,000 Jewish children in the Kindertransport. The concept of "values" unique to Britain is a recurrent motif throughout the document: the actions of Britons who saved Jewish refugees are attributed to their 'strong belief in British values'²⁰⁰; Ian Austin MP writes 'it is Britain's unique response to the Holocaust and its unique role in the war that gives us the right to claim a particular attachment to the values of democracy, equality, freedom and fairness'²⁰¹; and the new memorial is intended to 'stand as a permanent affirmation of the values of British society'²⁰².

As a result of its emphasis on British national actions and values, the narrative of the Holocaust established in *Britain's Promise to Remember* and the plans for the UKHMLC undermined the Lisbon Treaty's depiction of the EU the fulfilment of Nazi resistance fighters' hopes for the future. The authors defined the Holocaust as 'the product of a thousand years of European antisemitism'²⁰³, and stated that 'not long ago, and not far from where we live, ordinary people across [continental] Europe became complicit in the murder of their neighbours'.²⁰⁴ This is contrasted with the depiction of Britain as the sole country that 'soldiered on, against all odds'²⁰⁵ to defeat the evils of Nazism. The contrasting of British and European wartime actions suggests that the political rupture with EU structures has bled into subsequent Holocaust memorial work.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p.10.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p.23.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p.24.

²⁰² Ibid, p.42.

²⁰³ Ibid, p.6

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p.21.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p.23.

The focus on British national political identity is further evident in the choice of location for the new memorial. In 2016, it was decided that the most appropriate site for the UKHMLC was Victoria Tower Gardens, a small park adjacent to the Houses of Parliament. According to a 2016 press release, this use of this site is advantageous because ‘when children come to Parliament and learn about the history of our great democracy, they will also be able to learn about and remember what happened when racism, antisemitism and hatred was left unchecked and allowed to flourish’.²⁰⁶ It is worth noting that this is almost the same location as the Jewel House Gardens that were rejected by Heseltine in 1983 for the Hyde Park Memorial apparently because it was considered ‘one of the few remaining sites close to the Palace of Westminster which might provide a location for a Parliamentary or State memorial in the future’.²⁰⁷ The reversal of the official stance on the use of this space in itself indicates a dramatic transformation of the status of Holocaust memory in British political settings. Whereas Heseltine perceived a Holocaust memorial as a matter of little relevance to British national identity, twenty-first century commemorative activity has deliberately positioned Holocaust memory within a network of national political sites. As a result, it is clear that a particular British political memory of the Holocaust has taken precedence over private commemorative work since the 1980s.

In 2016, a competition was launched to determine the design of the new memorial. According to the competition brief, entrants were to create ‘an outstanding and sensitively-designed Memorial and Learning Centre that is emotionally powerful while offering visitors

²⁰⁶ “PM: Holocaust Memorial Will Stand Beside Parliament as Permanent Statement of our British Values”, *gov.uk*, < <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-holocaust-memorial-will-stand-beside-parliament-as-permanent-statement-of-our-british-values> > [Accessed 14 July 2020].

²⁰⁷ Cooke, p.453.

an opportunity to deepen their understanding of humanity's darkest hour'.²⁰⁸ Of the ninety-two initial entrants to the competition, ten were chosen to further develop their proposals in 2017.²⁰⁹ In October 2017, Adjaye Associates, Ron Arad Architects and Gustafson Porter + Bowman's collaborative design was unanimously voted the winner of the competition. Their concept is made up of an over-ground memorial comprised of twenty-three bronze fins, which create twenty-two pathways down into an underground learning centre. The pathways represent that twenty-two countries in which Jewish communities were destroyed during the Holocaust.²¹⁰ Entering the memorial via these pathways is intended to be a sensory experience, isolating visitors and leading them to engage with the memorial and learning centre on a personal level. The pathways lead into an area named "The Threshold", representing the transition from the external memorial to the internal Learning Centre. Inside, the designers proposed the creation of a "Hall of Testimonies" where survivors' eyewitness accounts are displayed digitally, and "Contemplation Court" with eight bronze panels.²¹¹ Upon leaving the memorial, visitors are confronted with a 'classic uninterrupted view of Parliament – and the reality of democracy'²¹², deliberately contrasting the horrors of the Holocaust with the image of twenty-first century British political structures. Enabling visitors to end their visit with a view of Parliament is a central element of the overall memorial's impact.

²⁰⁸ "UK Holocaust Memorial Expression of Interest", *malcolmreading.com*, 2016 <<https://competitions.malcolmreading.com/holocaustmemorial/assets/downloads/UK-Holocaust-Memorial-Expression-of-Interest.pdf>> [Accessed 10 July 2020].

²⁰⁹ "UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation", *gov.uk*, 2017 <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/competing-designs-for-the-uks-new-holocaust-memorial-and-learning-centre>> [Accessed 10 July 2020].

²¹⁰ "Adjaye Associates and Ron Arad Architects win UK Holocaust Memorial International Design Competition", *malcolmreading.com*, 2017 <<https://competitions.malcolmreading.com/holocaustmemorial/news/2017/adjaye-associates-and-ron-arad-architects-win-uk-holocaust-memorial-international-design-competition>> [Accessed 14 July 2020].

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

The dual purpose of the UKHMLC as both a Holocaust memorial and an education centre evokes Williams' discussion of memorial museums. The intention of teaching visitors about the Nazi genocide is not only to ensure an in-depth historical understanding and awareness of the continued implications of the Holocaust for contemporary international relations and political structures. It is also to encourage visitors to consider their own behaviour and interpersonal relationships, meaning that the UKHMLC performs as a site of moral renewal. Not only does the museum seek to lead visitors to reflect on their own lives, but it also casts contemporary political structures in a positive light. David Tollerton has interpreted the intentional positioning of the UKHMLC alongside Parliament using Alba's concept of "negative epiphany".²¹³ By intentionally guiding visitors through an underground and immersive space, the designers hope to evoke a visceral response to the history of the Holocaust. The intensity with which the horrors of the Nazi genocide are conveyed is then contrasted with the relief of the over-ground viewing platform which is angled towards the Houses of Parliament. The relief of exiting the museum space is associated with the realities of modern day democracy, thus giving visitors a renewed sense of pride in national political systems, and an appreciation for the values of twenty-first century society. The outcome of this negative epiphany is explicitly rooted in British national political needs, positioning today's government as the antithesis of past traumatic events.

In addition to this physical experience of the memorial, the positive presentation of present-day politics is also achieved through the repeated references to "British values" that apparently stem from the national response to Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Despite the fact that this memorial site emphasises Britishness as opposed to an overarching European identity, the actual form of these values is largely the same in the plans for the UKHMLC as

²¹³ David Tollerton, "The Problem with London's New Holocaust Memorial", *The Conversation*, 2017 <<https://theconversation.com/the-problem-with-londons-new-holocaust-memorial-86411>> [Accessed 16 August 2020].

those presented during the SIF and in subsequent IHRA work. Whilst British values include ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’²¹⁴, European values encompass ‘respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law’.²¹⁵ As opposed to implying that the UKHMLC is part of Europeanised Holocaust memory work in the twenty-first century, however, I argue that the creators of the UKHMLC are staking Britain’s claim to the assumed moral lessons of the Nazi genocide over other European countries. That is to say, Britain does not need to “learn” these values because they are already an inherent aspect of national identity, meaning that European nations must learn from the British example. This is a continuation of the portrayal of Britain as the heroes of Europe, reiterating national morality and rejecting the Europeanised narrative established by the Stockholm Declaration and the Lisbon Treaty.

Section II Summary

An analysis of British engagement with the Holocaust in the twenty-first century reveals not only that organisations and events continued to adhere to a positive national narrative after the SIF, but also that this positive political self-evaluation has become all the more explicit in light of the rejection of the EU signalled by the Brexit referendum. The significance of the Holocaust exhibition within the IWM as an institution dedicated to recording British wartime heroism and sacrifice has been addressed in detail by Lawson and, more recently, Jinks. Considering the ways in which the issues identified in 2004 have not only lingered, but have come to the forefront indicates a tendency to present the Holocaust in metaphysical terms even within

²¹⁴ "Guidance on Promoting British Values in Schools Published", *gov.uk*
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/guidance-on-promoting-british-values-in-schools-published>> [Accessed 13 June 2019].

²¹⁵ "EU Values and Objectives", *europarlamenti.info*,
<<https://europarlamenti.info/en/values-and-objectives/values/>> [Accessed 13 June 2019].

ostensibly pedagogical, historical organisations. This is not an inherent quality of representing the Holocaust, but seems to be a deliberate museological technique on the part of the IWM's organisational bodies. There appears to be an attempt from the organisers of both HMD 2005 and 2016 to present a more nuanced narrative of Britain's wartime actions. However, the televised manifestations of the events in 2005 are inextricably tied to a presentation of Britain's wartime actions in unambiguously positive terms. In the 2016 iteration of the event, the prioritisation of British values, in line with a broader scheme of policymaking, made this narrative all the more explicit. The presence of this nationally oriented memory approach not only affects an understanding of British Holocaust memory, but has broader implications for transnational readings of memory, affirming criticisms by scholars such as Allwork and Van der Poel.

Overall Conclusion

The overall intention of this thesis has been to show that a positive narrative of the Holocaust was established in 1945 that prevented a self-critical engagement with British actions during the Second World War throughout the twentieth century. This narrative has persisted in spite of the apparent transnationalisation of Holocaust memory since 2000, and, following the departure from the EU signalled by the Brexit Referendum, has been increasingly mobilised in the service of national political needs. As has been seen, at the end of the Second World War a political memory of the Holocaust that celebrated national heroism and elided negative actions on the part of the wartime government was established. One of the ways in which this memory was able to take root can be attributed to its mediation as an example of Landsberg's prosthetic memory, prompting a visceral response in audiences and, thanks to its political inflection, limiting critical evaluations of the war. The impact of such a narrative can be identified well into the 1960s. As other countries saw the resurgence of Holocaust memory in the 1960s in connection to contemporary social and political issues, thus aligning it with Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, the same could not occur in Britain. This is because the dominant narrative praised wartime political actions and had established British democracy as a bastion of moral values. This attitude continued to dominate understandings of the Holocaust in the 1980s, memorialisation efforts were viewed passively by the majority of the British public, and laid within the purview of the Anglo-Jewish community and specialist historians. Yet, by the 1990s, the Holocaust had become an area of particular political interest and concern. The transition of the Holocaust from a relatively insignificant social memory to a political memory can be understood in light of contemporary events, including the reshaping of Europe, contemporary genocides, and increasing global co-operation in Holocaust commemoration efforts.

The awakening of a British Holocaust consciousness in line with global commemorative efforts has often been interpreted as a sign that the memory of the Holocaust itself has become cosmopolitan. According to this interpretation, a shared memory of the trauma of the Nazi genocide had become a unifying factor for European countries in the twenty-first century. However, more recent analyses have called into question the popular interpretation of commemorative activity that took place at the start of the millennium as indicative of the consolidation of a transnational memory of the Holocaust. Instead, it has become apparent during the course of the twenty-first century that memory work has continued to align with specific national needs. By relating this to the British national context, I have been able to identify a continuation of the self-aggrandising narrative formed in 1945 within memory work that is ostensibly part of the transnational turn of Holocaust memory. The emphasis on British national needs has only heightened amid growing Euroscepticism and the rejection of the EU in British society and politics during the 2010s. Not only is there an implicit focus on the nation in today's commemorative work, but I contend that this has become overt in recent years. In sum, British engagement with the Holocaust today explicitly serves national needs and rejects efforts to construct European identity around a shared understanding of the Nazi genocide carried out in the 2010s.

Of course, Holocaust commemoration and memorialisation is never complete, and each generation must discover this past on its own terms. However, at this crucial stage as we begin to face the prospect of a world with no more living witnesses to the Holocaust, we seem to be at an important turning point. It is now not clear whether it will be possible to reverse the return to explicitly national Holocaust remembrance when this post-survivor age dawns.

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