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Horrific Pasts and Mundane Presents: Living among the Jewish Ghosts of Warsaw and Lublin

Abstrakt: Artykuł jest rozważaniem nad sposobem w jaki przeszłość żydowska dwóch obszarów Polski została zaciemniona przez procesy historyczne, które doprowadziły do stworzenia lub odtworzenia tamtejszej przestrzeni miejskiej. Posługując się przykładami warszawskiego Muranowa i lubelskiego Majdanku, autorzy dowodzą, że zestawienie przerażającej przeszłości i bardziej prozaicznej teraźniejszości daje destabilizujący rozdźwięk, który Suzanne Knittel nazywa „historyczną niesamowitością" – niesamowitością, która niepokoi i stoi na drodze pojednania się Polski z jej żydowską przeszłością.

Słowa kluczowe: pamięć o Holocauście, Żydzi, Polska, Warszawa, Muranów, Majdanek

Abstract: This article represents a consideration of the way in which the Jewish past in two key areas of Poland is obfuscated by the historical processes that led to the creation and re-creation of the urban space. Focussing on the district of Muranow in Warsaw and the Majdanek site in Lublin, the authors argue that the juxtaposition of the horrific past and a more mundane present create a destabilizing disjunction – what Suzanne Knittel calls the "historical uncanny" – that unsettles and stands in the way of a Polish reconciliation with its Jewish past.

Keywords: Holocaust Memory; Jews; Poland; Warsaw; Lublin; Muranow; Majdanek

"There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument." – *Robert Musil*

Robert Musil's reflection on the invisibility of monuments presents a profound critique of the morality of remembering. As James Young [1993: 5] remarked in his book *The Texture of Memory*, we are "living in an age of mass memory production and consumption." In this age of modernity, remembering the past is viewed as a fundamentally moral act, and forgetting is thereby viewed as a risk that could lead society to repeat its past mistakes. One of the more popular ways to preserve memory is through the construction of monuments and memorials that commemorate specific historical events [Young 1993: 4]. On display for all to see, these memorial sites become a particular container of memory and allegedly demonstrate society's commitment to preserving the past. Yet according to Musil, although monuments are constructed to attract attention, they instead repel attention because their essential "stiffness" reflects a memory that remains static and fixed in place [Young 2000: 176].

The proliferation of monuments and memorials can therefore have the unintended consequence of sanitizing past events, not only because of their inherent stiffness but due to an effort to appeal to mass consumption in a globalized era. Most notably with Holocaust commemoration, the bombardment of a "never again" narrative that transcends time frequently reduces a complex and multifaceted atrocity into a singular, repetitive, and consumable history bereft of both nuance and essence. Such oversaturated representations of the Jewish genocide render the Holocaust narrative as a "comfortable horrible memory" [Knittel 2014: 10]. In this way, although traditional monuments and memorials are built in the name of remembering the Holocaust, they can actually fail to meaningfully confront and engage with a deeper understanding of the atrocity. Commemorative monuments to the Holocaust can thereby become 'mundanized' in their environment, and can therefore, in Musil's words, become "invisible."

On these assumptions, we argue that while Holocaust monuments can be important markers for remembering, they can also be inadequate for our understanding of the multiplicity of ways that the Holocaust can be remembered, neglected, or forgotten. Outside of the monumental Holocaust history, fragments of the Jewish atrocity pervade the landscape of European cities. European citizens and its visitors (whether consciously or not) thus perpetually interact with the ghosts of the Holocaust. Unintentional encounters and engagements with these fragments of shattered Jewish spaces can serve as an uncanny moment of interaction between a horrific past and an ordinary mundane present.

The authors therefore seek to broaden an analysis from the formalized monument itself, to instead foreground the urban landscape surrounding it. In this paper, the monument/memorial to the Holocaust thereby becomes the built environment of the cityscape that has witnessed Jewish atrocity. Poland here represents a critical site of examination due to the central place that the Holocaust occupies as well as how this history has shown itself in the country's approach to post-war reconstruction, particularly with Jewish spaces. Of course, Nazi occupation plays an important part in this story, but even more so the collective memory of Polish victimhood has had a significant impact on the ways in which the Polish people perceived – and continue to perceive – the genocide against the Jews. As Katrin Steffen points out, a "competition of victims […] has dominated the dialogue between Poles and Jews and contributed to the failure to remember Jewish life in Poland" [2008: 209]. Deeply scarred by both war time and post-war experience, therefore, Poles have navigated a constellation of tensions in their engagements (or lack thereof) with the Holocaust, complicating the way in which the Jewish past is manifest in major urban centres such as Warsaw and Lublin.

Post-war reconstruction in Warsaw sought to render a Jewish identity of the city invisible. As Erica Lehrer writes: "On the Polish side, the priorities of the postwar Communist state and the demands of Polish nationalism made the heritage of Poland's longstanding Jewish community invisible, unwanted, or irrelevant to what had become a mono-ethnic (Catholic) Polish nation" [2015: 175]. It is hardly surprising therefore that during its rebuilding, architects and urban planners erased any traces of the atrocity from the Jewish district of Muranow by consciously not acknowledging the district's Jewish history in its reconstruction plans. Such an attempted erasure however, has not been entirely realized, since Jewish culture has witnessed a significant revival in the decades following the end of the Soviet Union. In Lublin, the proximity of the city to the former death camp of Majdanek demonstrates an uncanny overlap between the past Jewish atrocity and an ordinary present. Not only has the Jewish element of the Holocaust been relegated as a footnote to the overarching Polish martyrdom in public descriptions of Majdanek itself, but its proximity to the daily routine of Lublin's inhabitants has made its place in the landscape uncanny.

The Polish cities of Warsaw and Lublin will be analyzed in a way that foregrounds the fluidity of the (in)visible Jewish identity within these urban landscapes. We therefore argue that these Holocaust memorial sites can be unsettling not only because of the particular atrocity they attempt to commemorate, but also because of their banal interactions between a horrific past and a mundane present.

Such an analysis however, recognizes that these cases only represent a microcosm of a broader context of engagement with the Holocaust, both within Poland and across the globe. In the subsequent sections, we will outline how the theoretical frameworks of curatorial urban landscapes and the historical uncanny, advanced by Shelley Horenstein and Susanne Knittel respectively, can be applied to analyze the fluid nature of a Jewish identity in the unique setting of post-war Poland. We will then use the cases of Warsaw/Muranow and Lublin/Majdanek to demonstrate how encounters with these fragments of Jewish spaces are uncanny before presenting a broader reflection on contemporary tensions over Holocaust memory.

Theoretical Development

In her book *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory and Place*, Shelley Horenstein explores the relationship between memory and place, and the ways that built architecture can capture and trigger memory. Architectural history, according to Horenstein [2011: 4], is about more than merely an examination of monolithic and static buildings. Such an approach to history analyzes how citizens actively engage in their lived urban landscapes. Horenstein [2011: 4] views this process as a fundamentally curatorial act, in which citizens interact with their built environment, and thereby generate symbolic means of remembrance and memory in these places. In this way, traces of the past are inscribed into the present built architecture of cityscapes. The past and present thus continually overlap and intertwine with one another. We accordingly view the post-war urban landscape of Warsaw and Lublin as inscribed with the memory of the Holocaust, which is simultaneously erased and made visible in its present landscape.

The examination of these sites through a theoretical perspective of the "historical uncanny" is also critical to understand how Holocaust memory is rendered (in)visible in their Polish urban landscapes. In her book *The Historical Uncanny,* Susanne Knittel defines this concept as "the inherent potential of sites of memory to trouble the self-conception and identity of individuals, groups and nations" [2014: 8]. The 'uncanny' can therefore be explained by the uncomfortable sensation that one experiences when unexpectedly encountering a traumatic historical site overlapping and intertwining with an ordinary present. Importantly, these unexpected confrontations are generally not intentional, but rather occur in a sudden moment when the visitor stumbles across a fragment of a horrific past embedded into an ordinary landscape.

Knittel [2014: 9] uses Auschwitz as an example of a Holocaust site that is no longer uncanny. She argues that the concentration camp "remains a monumental and

disturbing symbol of inhumane suffering. But the shocking truth that it represents is by now more readily assailable to an accepted historical past." The seamless assimilation of the Jewish genocide into a collective historical consciousness can be viewed as a consequence of an oversaturation of its images in popular culture.

But encounters with the fragments of a traumatic Jewish past, foregrounded in cities such as Warsaw and Lublin, are unsettling because of the sudden ways that they become visible in their urban landscape. In turn, they become the "historical uncanny": a suppressed yet ever-present reminder (whether consciously or subconsciously evident) of the Jewish Poland now lost that constantly threatens to destabilize Polish identity via its psychic exhumation.

Making the Invisible Visible: Warsaw and Muranow
Polish relations with post-war Jewish spaces have been largely subsumed into an overarching narrative of a Polish national martyrdom. Indeed, as Michael Meng [2011: 27] notes in his book *Shattered Spaces,* "victimization is at the very core of what it means to be Polish." The devastating impact of the Second World War on Poland reinforced this collective consciousness but as a consequence obscured the notion that segments of Polish society could have played a part in the Holocaust. That a Pole could have played a role in the death of their Jewish neighbour went against the dominant narrative of an overall Polish victimization at the hands of the Nazis. Nevertheless, as Meng [2011: 23] critically points out:

> Terms like "indifference" and "passive complicity" do not fully capture how entangled Poles became in the Holocaust. In a country where Jews made up 10 percent of the overall population and where in many small villages Jews constituted nearly half of the population, the persecution, ghettoization, deportation, and mass murder of 3 million people over five years intersected with the lives of numerous ordinary Poles in countless ways.

The complex and entangled relationship between Poles and Jews (both before and during the war) significantly impacted the approach to post-war reconstruction in Poland.

The post-war reconstruction of Warsaw, and its Jewish district of Muranow, presents an important case study on the historical uncanny because of how the Polish and Jewish (and socialist) relationship shaped the memory of the Holocaust in the rebuilt cityscape. Warsaw's near total destruction during the war had

a profound impact on the ways that its residents and urban planners viewed their approach to post-war redevelopment.[1] Reconstruction designs of the city drew heavily on the deep-rooted national narrative of an attempted annihilation of the entire Polish nation by the Nazis. In both a real and imagined sense, the rebuilding of Warsaw was envisioned as a symbol of redemption, and emblematic of a destroyed, broken, and yet resilient nation [Meng 2011: 72].

Importantly however, this redemptive re-imagining of Warsaw subsumed its horrific Jewish past into a broader Polish narrative of martyrdom. The reconstruction of the historic Jewish district of Muranow was considered a "sensational project" in global architectural development, since it is the only residential quarter in the post-war era that was constructed from, and on, ruins [Uchowicz 2014: paragraph 2]. When the Nazis invaded the city in 1939, they had used this pre-existing Jewish district to create an enclosed ghetto, in which they forcibly confined all of Warsaw's Jewish population. By its official establishment in November 1940, Muranow, transformed into the Warsaw Ghetto, became one of the largest ghettos in Nazi occupied Europe. Surrounded by a ten-foot wall and covering an area of 1.3 square miles, at its height the district housed 460,000 Jews. The population of the Warsaw Ghetto dramatically reduced in July-August 1942 however, with the deportation of 280,000 Jews to the death camp of Treblinka. The entirety of the Ghetto was subsequently annihilated in April 1943, following the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Initial urban reconstruction plans for the destroyed Jewish district sought to erase its traumatic Jewish past by building a new socialist future [Meng 2011: 77]. The catastrophic state of the immediate post-war Muranow presented a difficult situation for redevelopment because the amount of rubble was so dense that much of it could not be removed [Meng: 78]. As a result, urban designers, unable to clear away the ruins of the past, were forced to incorporate the rubble in the rebuilding of the district. Designs first published in 1946-1947 outlined technical details for a spacious housing complex that was to be constructed on top of the destruction. As one architect proclaimed [Meng: 78], "now, on the ruins and embers of Warsaw will be built a new city, adjusted to new ways of life." These initial plans to build over the remnants of the Jewish space consequently ignored, and attempted to erase, the traumatic symbolism of the district [Meng: 78].

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[1] Many studies cite that the Capital Reconstruction Office (*Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy*—BOS) had quantified Warsaw as 85% destroyed at the end of the war, and up to 60% of its population annihilated (a total of around 685,000 people). Jerzy Elzanowski, "Ruins, Rubble and Human Remains: Negotiating Culture and Violence in Post-Catastrophic Warsaw." *Public Art Dialogue*, 2 no. 2 (2012): 114.

In 1948 however, architect Bohdan Lachert[2] took over reconstruction plans, and envisioned Muranow's post-war redevelopment as a space to memorialize the Ghetto. As Lachert expressed [Meng: 78], "the history of the great victory of the nation paid for through a sea of human blood, poured out for the sake of social progress and national liberation, will be commemorated in the Muranow project." Lachert sought to infuse the design of the new housing complexes within an overarching commemorative urban environment, and therefore curate a lived-in memorial landscape. His project intended to infuse Muranow's material ruins – the dark red, rusty brick – with concrete to construct the buildings as a reference to the ashes of those who had perished. In this way, "every time a Muranow tenant entered a building, she would have to climb a greened mound of rubble to reach the front entrance. Each time she stored or retrieved preserves from the common cellars, she would touch walls made of the same rubble that formed her new ground plane-her new horizon" [Elzanowski 2012: 131]. Further, Lachert's architectural designs presented a visually somber, reflective atmosphere since the outside walls would be left un-stuccoed and unadorned [Elzanowski: 131]. Such an approach to Muranow's post-war reconstruction by Lachert was therefore deeply cognisant and embracing of the traumatic Jewish history of the space.

Significantly however, Lachert's commemorative reconstruction project was rejected by the Capital Reconstruction Office in 1950, and instead supplanted with designs that favoured the style of socialist realism.[3] This type of architectural form, devel-

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[2] A brief and important bibliographic sketch of Bohdan Lachert: Lachert was part of a growing architectural movement that advocated for a break with traditionalism. His wife, Irena Lachert, was a social activist in prewar Poland and during the occupation became an active member of Żegota (Council to Aid Jews) and the Union of Armed Struggle. Their house in Warsaw's Saska Kępa neighbourhood became an underground hub for the Resistance movement. Moreover, the Lachert's secretly rescued several Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, including Bohdan's friend and close colleague Maksymilian Goldberg. Despite Lachert's attempts to convince him otherwise, Goldberg decided to remain in the Warsaw Ghetto instead of escaping the city, and subsequently died in August 1942. In a short commentary in one of his diaries, Lachert noted that Goldberg was "one of the greatest architects. A phenomenal memory. A subtle and sharp intelligence. Great speaker and great satirist. I agree with his wife's biography that he died while still being alive and that's why he cut himself off from reality even though he still had a good sense of this reality." These personal experiences probably had a significant bearing on Lachert's desire to rebuild a future Muranow as a larger site of commemoration to its Jewish residents. Uchowicz, "Reading Muranow,"; Olga Szymanska,"Lachert, The Law Court on Leszno and Saska Kepa." Jewish Historical Institute, January 13, 2016: http://www.jhi.pl/en/blog/2016-01-13-lachert-the-law-courts-on-leszno-and-saska-kepa

[3] Lachert ultimately resigned from the project in 1951, and handed his role over to Stepkowski. It has been noted however, that while the wave of criticism for his approach to Muranow's

oped in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist era, aimed to showcase Soviet ideals through designs that emphasised a historic triumph of Communism over capitalism in the built environment [Meng: 79]. Socialist realist architecture conceived of the urban landscape as light, clean, spacious and orderly, in contrast to the dark, dirty, disorderly, and cramped capitalist cities. Lachert's project was criticized by many socialist realist architects in this way, particularly by Polish critic Jerzy Wierzbicki in the professional periodical *Architektura*. Wierzbicki argued [Meng: 81] that Lachert's designs were "monotonous, sad and grey," with the "rubble hallowed brick" creating a somber environment. This perspective, which failed to acknowledge the Jewish atrocity of the space, was shared by the Capital Reconstruction Office, and therefore, Lachert's buildings – rusty and unadorned in their symbolic space – were painted over in white and decorated with small ornamental designs that were etched into the façade of the apartment complexes. The new urban development created a "bright, cheerful and colourful place" for the socialist working class [Meng: 81]. The decision to conceive of Muranow's destruction as rubble to be cleared away, rather than ruins to be sanctified and acknowledged, therefore rendered the memory of the Jewish space in Muranow invisible.

Katarzyna Uchowicz [2014: paragraph 4] points to Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak's 2001 Polish monographic study *Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście (The Warsaw Ghetto. A Guide to a Non-existent City)*, wherein they poignantly illustrate the uncanny encounters with an erased Jewish memory in the post-war Muranow space:

> The place-after-ghetto is empty (though it is covered with architecture), it is emptied and dead (though filled with lively activity) […] Walking today in the area of the former ghetto, we experience a particular kind of paradox of the presence of emptiness. This experience comes with a kind of broadened vision, a doubling of perspective. Suddenly, we start to see what we cannot see (an imagined reconstruction of the ghetto); while in a sense we no longer see what we actually see (the reality of here and now). The topography of contemporary Muranów becomes in a sense a transparent curtain that covers what we really want to see. Absence suddenly becomes present, the place-after-ghetto becomes real, and the ghetto itself – this non-existent city – is recovered in memory.

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redevelopment probably led to his resignation, the actual circumstances of his decision remain unclear. This is primarily because Lachert is generally known to have accepted the socialist realist doctrine. Uchowicz, "Reading Muranow,": at para. 25.

Such a visceral description fundamentally embodies a depiction of the historical uncanny, particularly in the landscape of post-war Muranow. Engelking and Leociak identify the "place-after-ghetto" as a paradox, in which they are aware of the juxtaposition between a space filled with architecture, but devoid of any signs of the horrific Jewish atrocity. As they walk through the modern urban landscape of Muranow, they express their "doubling of perspective," of the overlapping catastrophic past with the ordinary present. This engagement with Muranow thereby foregrounds (and makes visible) the moments when a memory of the past Jewish atrocity collides with its absence in the modern cityscape. As a consequence, the sense of unease and displacement that one experiences in these encounters can be described as uncanny.

However, the attempted erasure of the Jewish memory in Muranow has not been entirely realized. There still are a few historical fragments that remain in the city, which have been miraculously spared from socialist realist architectural development. At Złota Street #60 for instance, one of the last remaining fragments of the Warsaw Ghetto wall stands uncannily juxtaposed with modern apartment complexes; commemorated by a small plaque that indicates its horrific past [Zaborowska 2004: 105]. Moreover, the dissolution of the Soviet Union prompted a significant Jewish cultural revival in Warsaw. A restoration project beginning in the late 1990s restored Jewish buildings along Próżna Street, as an attempt to bring back, and rediscover, the historical Jewish roots of the neighbourhood. Such redevelopment thereby seeks to make visible the Jewish culture in the city.

Further, in July 2007, Bilewicz et al. conducted a study entitled, "Living on the ashes: collective representation of Polish-Jewish history among people living in the former Warsaw Ghetto area." The authors' research, "sought to analyze the extent to which the Jewish history of the place was present in the shared collective memories and representations of the district among its present residents, vs. whether it was replaced by Polish history and attached Polish meanings [Bilewicz et al. 2010: 199]. Among the residents interviewed, results showed that those "'living on the ashes' perceived the Jewish history of their place of residence as important and meaningful, even though almost no visible remnants of the Jewish pre-war district have survived" [Bilewicz et al.: 195]. While such findings are not necessarily representative of a wider recognition of Polish involvement in the Jewish genocide, they nonetheless demonstrate an important engagement with the revival of Jewish spaces in post-war Warsaw.

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Making the Visible Invisible: Lublin and Majdanek

An analysis of the Majdanek concentration camp, and its place in the wider city of Lublin, can be viewed as a reversal of the invisible/visible framework of Muranow in Warsaw. Here, the devastating site of the Holocaust is on display for all to see. Majdanek was liberated by Soviet forces in July 1944 and was established as a national memorial and museum by July 1947. As one of the first concentration camps to be transformed into a commemorative site, Majdanek has been preserved almost entirely as it was found. The memorials and historic sites at Majdanek are devastating in their impact since they compel visitors to confront the unfathomable reality of the Holocaust. Arguably even more visceral in some cases than Auschwitz, Majdanek presents physical reminders of an incomprehensible atrocity, primarily by the exhibition of the Mausoleum, which holds representative ashes of the victims murdered at the camp.[4]

Historic manifestations of cultural tensions however illustrate a complex entanglement of Holocaust memory at Majdanek. When the camp was officially inaugurated in 1947, the Polish parliament declared that, "the territory of the former Nazi concentration camp Majdanek is to be forever preserved as a monument to the martyrdom of the Polish nation *and of other peoples*" (emphasis added) [Steinlauf 1997: 69]. By proclaiming the intention of preserving Majdanek for such a purpose, Poland's parliament obscured the Jewish element of the atrocity within a larger narrative of Polish national martyrdom. In this way, Polish Jews were subsumed under the overarching category of "Polish" and non-Polish Jews were subsequently relegated to the category of "other peoples." Although the Jews (Polish or otherwise) comprised a majority of the targeted killings, the attempted genocide against them was relegated as a footnote to the more significant martyrdom of the Polish nation. Moreover, these sentiments expressed in Poland's parliament neglected to recognize or acknowledge the notion that segments of Polish society were also culpable in the attempted genocide against the Jews.

Beyond the grounds of the camp itself, Majdanek's proximity to the city of Lublin illustrates an uncanny integration of a catastrophic history with an ordinary

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[4] There are conflicting reports in the literature of exactly how many people were killed at Majdanek. According to the official Majdanek Museum website, a total of 150,000 men, women and children of various nationalities were imprisoned at the camp; and the direct and indirect extermination resulted in the deaths of nearly 80,000 people; 60,000 of whom were Jewish. Early scholarly literature however, has put this figure at 350,000 deaths, of whom the Jews accounted for four-fifths of the murdered victims. Janet Jacobs, "From the Profane to the Sacred: Ritual and Mourning at Sites of Terror and Violence." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 43 no. 3 (2004): 313.

present. In the memoir *A World Erased*, Noah Lederman, the grandson of Holocaust survivors, poignantly describes the uncanny place that Majdanek holds in Lublin. Recounting his visit, Lederman notes:

From Lublin to concentration camp Majdanek was a fifteen-minute drive. The guard towers and barracks were visible from the main road. Unlike other camps, which were tucked away in forests, easier for those culpable to at least deny, Majdanek sat in plain sight. An award on the shelf. It had been built to be seen, to remind the Jews that no one cared. The gas chamber stood a few hundred feet from rush hour traffic. […] I watched as a mother pushed her baby in a stroller along the perimeter of the camp. […] Hundreds of apartment buildings [in the near distance] were painted in colours that felt as bright as Miami Beach pastels. Their terraces faced the black barracks, the gas chambers, and the crematorium. Every morning was breakfast at Majdanek. [Lederman 2017: 203]

Lederman's account of Majdanek in Lublin demonstrates a complex intertwining of the camp's horrific past into the ordinary daily routine of the city's inhabitants. The camp is plainly visible for residents; on constant display for all to see. Its permeable border between the camp and hundreds of apartment buildings that line its perimeter place Lublin's residents in direct contact with the Holocaust site on a daily basis. Nonetheless, such visibility can be obscured through the normalcy of daily interactions with this site of atrocity. The seamless blending of Majdanek's tragic past with the mundane present can consequently render this monumental history invisible. When the visitors' gaze identifies this juxtaposition however, the uncanny place of the shattered Jewish space in the landscape becomes apparent.

Even further beyond the blurred boundary of Majdanek and the suburbs, fragments of the Holocaust pervade the inner landscape of Lublin. At the intersection of Wieniawska Street and Krakowskie Przedmieście currently stands a small orange-yellow building. The building, now the Faculty of Law department for John Paul II University of Lublin, previously served as the headquarters for Operation Reinhard, the euphemism for Hitler's Final Solution to the Jewish Question. Despite this monumental and horrifying history however, there are no plaques or commemorative signs that indicate the building once served such a purpose. As such, when its history is made apparent, the building's seamless interaction with a mundane present becomes uncanny.

Over the last few years attempts have been made to remind Lublin's residents of the city's past in the Holocaust atrocity.[5] Visible from that Faculty of Law department on Wieniawska Street and Krakowskie Przedmieście is a mural painted on the façade of a nearby building. Written in solemn Yiddish verse are the words: "Here there once lived a Jewish girl in a house that is no more, on streets that are no more." The art installation, by Mariusz Tarkawian, was created in 2011, as part of Lublin's Open City festival. Initiated in 2009, the contemporary art festival is one of the largest of its kind and was created on the idea that "a city is a narration in itself as well as a meditation upon the narrative role played by the works created by the participating artists" [Szabłowski 2016]. The mural, entitled "The Street is Gone," poignantly expresses the ambivalent nature of Jewish memory in Polish communities. By drawing attention to the erased memory of the shattered Jewish spaces in Lublin, Tarkawian effectively makes visible the ways in which the lasting legacy of the Holocaust stretches into the present, and fundamentally intertwines itself within the modern urban landscapes. These explicit reminders of an overlapping past and present convey an uncanny remembrance on its gazers.

The last five years have seen a further effort to make explicit Lublin's connections to its Jewish past. With support from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre – a local government cultural institution that works "towards the preservation of cultural heritage and education" – established an ambitious project seeking to make visible once again the Jewish presence in Lublin.[6] Focussing on the Holocaust experience, this project has since 2016 created a series of commemorative sites and markers (e.g. murals at important communal spots, flagstones outlining the boundaries of the Podzamcze Ghetto, concrete slabs lining the route to Umschlagplatz, etc.) and engaged in educational programs meant to teach about Lublin's Jewish past. The question remains, however, whether such reminders sufficiently intrude upon the present to allow for meaningful engagements that do more than soothe the souls of contemporary Lubliners in

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[5] As a critical demographic note – There were reportedly 45,000 Jews who lived in Lublin in 1939. Today, it is estimated that there are only about 20 individuals who identify themselves as Jewish in the city. It is important to recognize however, that the devastating loss of Jewish culture in Lublin was not entirely a direct result of the Holocaust itself but also due to the pervasive anti-Semitic attitudes throughout Poland in the post-war era. For example, some figures indicate that between 1944 and 1947, hundreds of Jews were murdered in Poland, most of them specifically because they were Jewish. One of the more horrific violent attacks against Jews occurred at a residence for Holocaust survivors in Kielce in July 1946, where a mob killed 42 Jews and injured more than 100. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead:* 51-52.

[6] History of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre by Tomasz Pietrasiewicz https://teatrnn.pl/kalendarium/wydarzenia/history-of-the-grodzka-gate-nn-theatre-centre/

a city left almost entirely bereft of living Jews.

Conclusions: Beyond the Polish Horizon

In this paper the authors have chosen to focus on the way in which the "historical uncanny" – the moments of interaction between a horrific past and an ordinary mundane present – appear and reappear in the Polish landscape whereupon the Holocaust was in many ways centered. But discussions of Polish encounters (or lack thereof) with the Holocaust in Warsaw and Lublin can present an important reflection on wider engagements with memory of the Holocaust. The cases examined in this paper represent a microcosm of the uncanny encounters with fragments of Jewish spaces that render a traumatic Jewish past (in)visible. As Knittel [2014: 292] notes, dwelling in the uncanny (and not seeking to eliminate its ambiguity) is important because it allows for a critical awareness that things have not "always been this way" and, therefore, they could be otherwise.

Pervasive and ever-present anti-Semitic sentiments tragically persist up to present day – not only within Poland, but across the globe. These attacks are emblematic of an overall failure to meaningfully engage with the horrific memory of the attempted Jewish genocide. Moreover, the increasing frequency of such actions (not only against Jews, but also toward other ethnic groups) is dangerously becoming normalized in current society. An oversaturation and simplification of these racist actions can have the unintended consequence of rendering the horrific Holocaust atrocity as a "comfortable horrible memory." Nevertheless, it would be too easy to dismiss such prejudice and intolerance as an inevitably intensifying process. Indeed, such an approach can actually serve to perpetuate anti-Semitic and racist attitudes since it fails to critically engage in an active process that seeks to render these moments as unsettling as they truly are. By making these intolerant attitudes dwell in an uncanny and uncomfortable moment between a horrific past and normalized present, society can thereby contribute to a more productive engagement with a traumatic Holocaust memory.

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