Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain

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Mass Mediation, Rhetoric, Interpellation

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Section 3 – Interpellation, norm circles and the affective power of discourse – reworks the following articles:
Richardson, John E. (2018) 'If Not Me, Then Who?' Examining Engagement with Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration in Britain, *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 32(1): 22-37

Richardson, John E. (2020) Making memory makers: Interpellation, norm circles and Holocaust Memorial Day Trust workshops. *Memory Studies*, 13(4) 434–451
Richardson, John E. (2021) Holocaust commemoration and affective practice: a rhetorical ethnography of audience applause. *Social Semiotics*, 31(5): 757-772

FOREWORD

MICHAEL BILLIG

John Richardson's excellent, well-researched book addresses a deceptively simple question: how should we remember the Holocaust? Most people would agree that the Nazi regime's attempt to kill all persons of Jewish origins was so monstrous that it should never be forgotten. It was an organized crime that revealed the depths of the human spirit. Few would dispute that we must try to take lessons from the catastrophe. Not least of these lessons is that we should be careful not to see history as the continuous advance of civilized progress. The Holocaust was not the act of a so-called savage, pre-historic tribe, but it was an act by one of the most advanced nations of the modern world. The German Nazis mobilized science to turn the systematic murder of a whole people into an industry whose immediate product was corpses and whose ultimate aim, or so the Nazis hoped, would be a world without Jews.

But how can people remember an event that they never experienced? Some personal memories are so strong that they are unforgettable, even if we wish to escape from them. But how are people today and in the future to 'remember' an event that occurred before they were born and, in consequence, belongs to history, and not to their personal selves? To remember historic events involves a different type of remembering than does remembering personal events, such as a wedding day, a mother's funeral or a first day at school. Richardson examines how the Holocaust is being remembered by subsequent generations of British people. And he shows that this remembering is not easily accomplished.

The specific difficulties of 'remembering' the Holocaust do not lie in the fact that it is becoming a historical event. After all, many communities and nations have special days and ceremonies for remembering past triumphs and tragedies. Most newly independent nations will have independence days, which often include ceremonies that commemorate their struggles for

freedom. In some countries, especially those that have been firmly established for many years, these special days can become public holidays that can be celebrated without necessitating that the celebrants contemplate the events being celebrated. The French public can celebrate Bastille Day with food, drink and family gatherings and the day can pass without remembering to think about the prisoners freed from the Bastille. Similarly, concerts, fireworks and much waving of flags can mark each fourth of July in the USA. It is not imperative to a have quiet moment of reflection while the whole nation collectively recalls George Washington or those who fell at the hands of the British. It takes many July fourths and fourteenths, as well as many years of national history, to achieve such days of celebration that are simultaneously special and quite banal.

However, these days of celebration provide no model for commemorating the Holocaust. In 2001 the British government declared the twenty-seventh of January to be the annual Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), and in 2005 the government passed responsibility for organizing the commemoration to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. The twenty-seventh of January is no public holiday like July the fourth in the USA or France's annual celebration ten days later. Many people in Britain carry on with their normal lives, turning up for work unaware of the day's significance. The day is very much a British commemoration of an event that did not occur within Britain. Other countries also mark the Holocaust and have chosen other dates on which to commemorate the event.

The very word 'commemorate' illustrates the link with memory. Even fun-filled independence days are supposedly days of recall, as the nation jointly remembers (or 'co-memorates') its past. A national past is not just jointly recalled, but it is recalled as 'our past', 'our history'. Its tragedies and triumphs are marked as 'our tragedies and triumphs'. In this way, the celebrations have an educational dimension – to teach future generations who they are and what they should be socially remembering (and forgetting) about their unexperienced, national past. This can even occur on national days which are shared as a public holiday for enjoyment.

Immediately, it can be seen why a Holocaust Memory Day differs from commemorating 'our' nation's past. As John Richardson shows, the vast majority of British people who devise and participate in ceremonies to remember the Holocaust, are not remembering 'their' past, although they

may be forgetting national failures. These are ceremonies remembering the deeds and sufferings of 'others', while calling on the dwindling band of witnesses to speak of their experiences. As Richardson perceptively notes in his second chapter, the ceremonies held in Israel and Germany are not quite the same as those held in countries such as Britain. There is no need to communicate who were the victims and the perpetrators; 'we', whether Germans or Israeli Jews, do not need to be reminded of 'our' roles in the horror.

The commemorations centre on remembering the crime of genocide. This means using a word that did not exist before the Second World War. Phillipe Sands, in his much-praised book East West Street, has traced the origins of the word. He attributes it to Rafael Lemkin, a Jewish lawyer from the city of Lviv, now part of Ukraine. In Lemkin's view, the Nazis had created a new type of crime that could only be properly described by a new category. Lemkin contested the view of Hersch Lauterpacht, a fellow Jewish lawyer from Lviv, who believed that the Nazis should be prosecuted for committing 'crimes against humanity'.

In the final chapter of East West Street, Sands notes that the concept of 'genocide' has prevailed over 'crimes against humanity'. To quote Sands, the concept of genocide gained traction in the Nuremburg courts and generally in public discussions as constituting 'the crime of crimes'. (2017, p. 380). This is certainly reflected in Richardson's close rhetorical and conceptual analyses of the British ceremonies marking Holocaust Memorial Day. Speakers and organizers accept as fact that the Nazi crime was 'genocide'. It went beyond the murder of people: it was the murder of a people.

As part of his research, Richardson attended three workshops organized by the HMD Trust in late 2015 to prepare for the 2016 Memorial Day. In one workshop, the presenter discussed the concept of genocide. She said that the Trust takes a legalistic view: it only recognizes instances of genocide when perpetrators have been specifically convicted, or indicted, of the crime genocide 'by an international criminal tribunal'. Since the crime of 'genocide' and international criminal tribunals, did not exist before the Nuremberg Tribunals, the Trust, by following its legalistic definition, only recognizes genocides that were committed by Nazi Germany and by subsequent national regimes. Accordingly, the Trust recognizes that there

have been six genocides: the Nazi regime's genocide against the Jews, the regime's genocide of gypsies, homosexuals and other groups; and genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The presenter said that remembering these six genocides will enable us to detect the early warning signs of possible future genocides and maybe to prevent them from occurring.

I am writing this foreword in early 2024, and I would predict that the next HMD will differ greatly from all previous ones. It is six months since Hamas organized an armed raid from Gaza into Israel, resulting in over a thousand Israelis, mostly civilians, being killed and more than two hundred being taken as hostages. Israel has responded with an invasion of Gaza. The statistics are horrifying: more than thirty-three thousand Palestinian Gazans have been killed, including more than thirteen thousand children (Bowen, 2024). The population of Gaza faces famine and starvation. At the time of writing, the war is continuing.

The International Court of Justice (2024) considered an accusation brought by South Africa that Israel is committing genocide. The Court has warned Israel that preventing aid from reaching the starving population would be treated as pertinent to the charge. At the moment, we do not know what judgement the Court will deliver. However, the fact that the Court is considering the accusation, and thereby treating it as prime facie plausible, cannot fail to affect the next Holocaust Memorial Day in Britain and elsewhere. Not all those who are horrified by the Israeli government's reactions will hold views that fall within the definition of antisemitism which has been proposed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Some will be antisemites according to this definition, but others will not be.

The organizers of the next HMD commemoration will need to plan how they will deal with the issue that the Jewish state might be involved in genocide according to the legal definition of the crime. Even if the state is eventually found to be not guilty of genocide, the way that the Israeli government has responded to the Hamas outrage is likely to involve breaking some codes of war and even committing some crimes against humanity. As the organizers ponder this problem, it is to be hoped that they will read Richardson's perceptive and balanced view of past commemorations. He may have written his book before present disasters, but previous

commemorations have always enjoined us to learn from the past. To understand how to remember the Holocaust in the future, we must know how it has been remembered in the recent past.

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INTRODUCTION

HOLOCAUST CONSCIOUSNESS AND COMMEMORATION

Commemorations are ongoing dynamic processes, through which narratives about the past, about 'us' and 'them' as well as beliefs and values contained in these stories, are produced and reproduced. Remembrance and commemoration entail communication processes wherein people, events and stories of the *past* are recalled, retold and recontextualized in the *present*, frequently with a view to ensuring a just and moral society in the *future* (Gutman et al 2010). The processes by which certain narratives of the past come to prominence over others, how we are to understand them and how to understand ourselves in relation to these pasts, are matters of deep social significance (Edgerton & Rollins 2001; Kansteiner 2006; Stone 2013). Commemorative events play a subtle role in the garnering of public consensus, working to consolidate myths about social in-groups and out-groups (particularly nations) and hence contributing to processes of group inclusion and exclusion. This facilitates room for the creation of unity but also the collision of opposing political interests and interpretations of the past, as well as the potential for conflict with the collective myths/narratives of other national, ethnic or religious groups (Heer et al 2008; Wodak & Auer-Borea 2009). Consequently, processes of collective memorializing are not neutral, but rather always tied to collective identity, politics and power in complex and mutually informed ways (Billig & Marinho 2017; Wodak & De Cillia 2007). This introductory chapter discusses these issues, in relation to the development of Holocaust commemoration in Britain. I end the chapter with an outline of the form and contents of the remainder of the book.

Holocaust Commemoration in Britain

The record of Holocaust commemoration in Britain mirrors the actions of the British government towards Jews during WWII: patchy and inconsistent (Kushner 1994, 2004b). In Britain, the predominant Holocaust mythology developed almost immediately after the liberation of the Western camps and has remained fairly consistently rooted since then: that of unknowing bystander and eventual liberator. In Reitlinger's (1953) early historiography of the Holocaust, Britain (and the US) only feature as camp liberators, and particular emphasis is placed on the British army's liberation of Bergen-Belsen. Commemoration of tragic/traumatic events involving 'Others' tend to be tied to narratives of the Self (Stone 2000). Accordingly, the Western camps, and Bergen-Belsen in particular, quickly became central in the British narratives of the Holocaust and the way that it, and Britain's role, were to be collectively remembered. Thus, "the Imperial War Museum Holocaust Gallery in London […ends] with British soldiers liberating western concentration camps in the spring of 1945" (Kushner, 2004a, p.259).

Cesarani (1996) argues that post-war British culture was characterized by a "reluctance to engage with the Jewish tragedy in Europe" (quoted in Levene, 2006, p.34). As a result, the journeys of Jewish refugees, their trauma and the Holocaust they escaped went, largely, under-discussed and seldom commemorated outside of Jewish gatherings, whether secular or religious. Seidler (2000) paints a particularly poignant picture of how such trauma played out in the ways that his parents raised him. His name 'Victor' was to be one of the only ways the victory of VE Day was remembered in his home: "Our parents, scarred by the horrors of Nazi rule, looked forward to their children 'becoming English'. They felt this was one of the gifts they could offer us. This was part of working for a future and refusing to look back at the past" (p.4).

In the 1950s, British Jews were "in many ways a frozen, traumatized community that had not really begun to come to terms with the Shoah" (Seidler, 2000, p.11). That said, with some significant exceptions, "the majority of attempts at Holocaust memorialization in Britain have come from the Jewish community" (Cooke, 2000, p.450), with the heterogeneity of the community fostering sites of contestation. "Political groupings such

as the Jewish Socialist Organization of Great Britain and the Bundist Jewish Workers' Circle Friendly Society, held memorial evenings, as did the predominantly Anglo-Jewish organizations such as the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women (AJEX) and the British section of the World Jewish Congress" (Berman, 2004, p.53). In the 1950s, these groups gradually combined to hold one annual memorial evening commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. In the three decades following the end of WWII, such memorial evenings "attracted only a narrow section of Anglo-Jewry, mostly Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe and their families" (Berman, 2004, p.54).

In response to a growing sense that commemoration in Britain was lagging behind other diaspora communities, the British Board of Deputies (BoD) initiated a campaign for a national Holocaust memorial. The Yad Vashem Committee of the Board of Deputies was set up in 1977, and tasked to promote commemoration, education, research, and to collect testimony. However, early meetings between Greville Janner (President of the BoD) and HM Government regarding a national memorial were not that productive. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Heseltine, labelled the plan a "provocation" and "a 'problem' within the context of the discursive framework of Anglo-Jewish identity and their relationship with the State: i.e. any memorial seen as a 'Jewish' memorial would be desecrated because it was a *Jewish* memorial" (Cooke, 2000, p.452). A proposal to site a memorial near to the Cenotaph was also rejected because it was thought that Britain's national memorial to its war dead would be symbolically damaged by association with a Holocaust memorial. In 1983, after several years of struggle, Britain did establish a permanent Holocaust memorial in Hyde Park, in the Dell. It was, however, not entirely satisfactory given that it was "*meant not to be prominent*" (Cooke, 2000, p.461; emphasis in original). "Shrouded by birch trees", it blends into the environment and, "Instead of being a stark reminder of past tragedy, the monument becomes a secluded garden" (p.460).

Initially, the annual *Yom haShoah* commemoration at the Hyde Park Holocaust memorial was not widely attended. "Substantial efforts were made to attract a large audience", aiming to bring Anglo-Jewry together at the commemoration "in collective remembrance and mourning of the Jewish victims of Nazism" (Berman, 2004, p.59). In 1986, an editorial in

the *Jewish Chronicle* encouraged its readers "to take *Yom haShoah* firmly into our communal calendar" (28 March 1986, p.22), but despite this, only 63 people turned up. The following year, attendance had risen to between 2-3000 people, dropping back to 1000 in 1989 and down further to around 500 by 1992 (Berman, 2004, p.59).

Towards Holocaust Memorial Day

The 1990s brought a series of inter-related developments which, dialectically and cumulatively, marked a turning point for both Holocaust consciousness and commemoration in Britain (Macdonald 2005; Pearce 2014). In response to the campaign work of the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET, established 1988), the Holocaust was included in the History National Curriculum from the early 1990s, which, in turn, spurred a demand for quality teaching resources. In 1991 the Imperial War Museum held a small exhibition *The Relief of Belsen 1945,* and then in 1995 *Belsen 50 Years On*, leading them to decide to establish a permanent Holocaust exhibition. Britain's first Holocaust museum, the privately funded Beth Shalom (now named the National Holocaust Centre and Museum), was opened in Nottingham in 1995. And in June 1999, a bill proposing "a day to learn about and remember the Holocaust" was introduced to the House of Commons by the Labour MP Andrew Dismore, apparently following a visit to Auschwitz organized by the HET. There was, however, "a political process" (Smith, 2000, p.3) behind Dismore's proposal. After all, "the Swedish, British and US governments agreed in Stockholm in May 1998 to create the Inter-Governmental Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research" and, as a member of the British Delegation, Stephen Smith (Director of the National Holocaust Centre and Museum) "was asked by the Task Force to write a paper on the possibility of creating an international day of Holocaust Remembrance" in December 1998 (Ibid.).

Dismore's justification for a British HMD demonstrates the extent to which the proposal reflected a combination of national (indeed, nation*alist*) and international political concerns: a Holocaust remembrance day, he argued, would offer an opportunity to "emphasise the positive values of Britain and of civilisation", and that "NATO's reasons for intervention in Kosovo graphically demonstrate the Holocaust still has resonance for today's world leaders" (quoted in Pearce, 2014, p.144). On 26th January

2000, following the Stockholm International Forum, Robin Cook, then-British Foreign Secretary, announced the government's plans to initiate a Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) on January 27, the day the Red Army liberated Auschwitz.

From its inception, the stated aim of the national HMD was "to move from the past to the present, from the particular to the universal. The stories of individuals and families will be used so that the fate of the Jews and other 'targets' of Nazi racial-biological politics can be personalized and the catastrophe perceived as a human event" (Cesarani, 2000a, p.63). As Cesarani (2001) reminds us, HMD primarily exists for didactic purposes; it is aimed, above all, "as an educational event" (p.60).

However, the sense, for some critical scholars, is that the government '*does* commemoration' for performative rather than ethical reasons (Bloxham 2002; Levene 2006; Stone 2000, 2013). On announcing HMD, Britain's then-Home Secretary Jack Straw declared: "Our aim in the twenty-first century must be to work towards a tolerant and diverse society which is based upon the notions of universal dignity and equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens. The Holocaust Memorial Day is a symbol of this" (quoted in Levene, 2006, p.26). The noteworthy phrase in his speech was, of course, "for all *citizens*" – non-citizens are not afforded "universal dignity and equal rights" in Britain. It is this exception that enabled Jack Straw, six-weeks later, to lobby the UN, demanding "a complete overhaul of the United Nations Convention on refugees in a bid to stem the tide of refugees entering Britain".[i] On this point, Kushner (2003, p,266) ruefully observed "the genuine refugee of popular mentality hardly exists in the here and now but is firmly, and of course safely, located in the past, where numbers are no longer a problem and action irrelevant. The ideal genuine refugee of the past should be part of a self-contained narrative in which members of a deserving minority persecuted by an evil regime […] find refuge in another country to which they contribute generously, productively and with intense gratitude."

Berman (2004, p.65) points out, there was "no unified Anglo-Jewish response to the proposal for the institution of a Holocaust Memorial Day, and Jews in Britain remain divided over the benefits of its continued existence". Indeed, it could be argued that (aside from the predictable opponents on the extreme-right) the strongest opponents of HMD in Britain

have been British Jews. Geoffrey Alderman, writing in the *Jewish Chronicle*, was particularly scathing: "As for Holocaust Memorial Day, show me a British Jew who thinks this is a good thing and I will show you a fool. […] Our many gentile enemies will only exploit the event in order to discomfort us. I have already heard calls for the event to include the self-inflicted Palestinian Arab 'holocaust' of 1948-49" (*JC*, 1 March 2002, p.27). The crux of his argument is clearly his second point, where he objects in very strong terms to equivalences being drawn between the Holocaust and other 'holocausts', especially the Palestinian *Nakba* – the 'scare quotes' and lower case 'h' clearly indicating his political position.

The pros and cons of HMD have also been discussed quite fiercely by certain British academics. Notable here are Stone (2000) and Cesarani's (2000) rejoinder, and the especially vituperative exchange between Yuval-Davies & Silverman (2002a, 2002b) and Cesarani (2002). Stone (2000) criticized the proposed HMD on several grounds: that it will probably be ignored by most Britons, thus upsetting survivors and their families; that it will "relieve the community of the burden of memory, for here is an established day on which everyone can express their grief before heading off and forgetting about it" (p.56); and that it will be used by the British government as "a convenient, if not cynically opportunist occasion" (p.57) to present itself as morally upright. Bloxham (2002) argues that this political mendacity may actually be enabled by HMD's focus on remembrance of victims rather than a critical engagement with the structures and pressures that led to the crime. In short: "If 'lessons' of the Holocaust are to be found at all, they are to be found on the side of the perpetrators, not in the lighting of candles of remembrance. The latter act shows decency […] but it does nothing concrete about ensuring 'never again', and is often carried out while 'again' is indeed recurring" (Bloxham, 2002, p.47). In Henderson's (2008) terms, HMD is said to animate empathy rather than anger. Rather than approaching the Holocaust "as an ill-defined metaphor of terrible evil" – which is the rhetorical upshot of what he terms "the pathos approach" to commemoration – Bloxham (2002, p.47) argues we should instead aim to understand "what institutional and personal pressures, what precise belief systems and circumstances, allowed the idea of genocide to be accepted and acted upon by tens of thousands of people".

A National HMD is a "self-contradictory experience", Stone (2000, p.57) argued, given that it (at minimum *implicitly*) flags the superiority of 'Our Nation' and yet, simultaneously, warns of the dangers of chauvinistic nationalism. Reading Adamson's (2000) account of 'nationalistic' speeches made at the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust (26-28 January 2000), it look like Stone might have a point. However, a speech delivered during the 2002 HMD by Cesarani (2002), on the subject of 'Britain, the Holocaust and its Legacy' was far more critical of Britain and its historic record. He noted that "It would be reassuring to think that we need only look at the perpetrators to draw lessons about the origins of evil-doing. But, sadly, we can learn a lot from British responses to the Nazi rampage against civil liberties, human rights, and the lives of millions of innocents […] The Government preferred to accept fit and strong refugees who, after a brief while, would get employment in other countries. The old rarely got in; children were saved, but their parents were rejected" (p.1). Later, and specifically on the theme of 'uses of the past' he argued:

> You might think that we have nothing to learn from the extreme and unusual circumstances of war and occupation, but even here we need to engage in reflection, if only because the British people tend to have a rather self-satisfied perception of the Second World War as unambiguously a 'good' war from which this country emerged triumphant and morally vindicated. As always, the historical record is more complicated than that. While there is more to be proud of than to regret, there were shameful episodes which have tended to be swept under the carpet of historical forgetting. (Cesarani, 2002, p.2)

Given that the 'lessons' one draws from history vary according to time and place (Forchtner 2016; Marrus 2015), there is no intrinsic reason why HMD should be either a self-congratulatory or a "self-contradictory experience" (Stone, 2000, p.57). Indeed, as I discuss later in this book, some organisers of local HMD commemorative events use the occasion to open up Holocaust memory and ask questions of Britain's political conduct in the present, as well as the past.

Commemorative practices

The first British HMD ceremony, in 2001, was held in Westminster Central Hall and televised live on the BBC to around 1.5 million viewers. A capacity audience of 2,000 were present in the Hall, including leaders of the three main political parties, cultural figures, 200 Holocaust survivors and representatives of the wider Jewish communities; Prime Minister Tony Blair gave the keynote speech. Since then, the national ceremony has been broadcast four further times: an edited version in 2002 on Regional Independent Television, and on BBC2 in 2005, 2015 and 2016. From 2021, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has 'broadcast' the event, or edited highlights from it, on their YouTube channel.

When planning this first ceremony in 2001, Gaby Koppel – the BBC Event Producer, responsible for its staging and television direction – was "very clear about one thing. Holocaust Memorial Day wasn't to be an event just for Jews. It was a national occasion, relevant to all British citizens" (2001, p.7). Such a televisual agenda resonated with the governmental aims for HMD. For example, after receiving 512 responses to an initial Consultation Paper on HMD, the Blair government announced some amendments: "in light of 'criticism that the event appeared to be excessively Holocaust- and Jewish-centred', the 'element devoted to education and awareness of genocide and human rights abuses since 1945 was accentuated'" (Pearce, 2014, p.146). How anyone could conceive of a Holocaust Memorial Day that wasn't "Holocaust- and Jewish-centered" remains to be seen. But regardless, as Pearce (2014) argues, the staging of HMD as a national event was instrumental in sedimenting a shift from commemorating the Holocaust as a specifically Jewish tragedy to an event that could be functionalized in service of broader political concerns: opposing prejudice, the protection of human rights and strengthening civic society.

In 2005, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) took over responsibility for organising HMD from the government. The HMDT is a registered charity established by the UK Government to promote and support Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK. They receive the vast majority of their funding directly from the UK government – initially this was from the Home Office, but in 2007 that changed to the Ministry for Housing,

Communities and Local Government (renamed the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in September 2021, changing again to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in July 2024).

Every year, the HMDT coordinates and hosts the national HMD ceremony as well as supporting organisations and individuals across the UK to organise their own commemorative events. In 2023, 78% of local authorities marked HMD, in addition to thousands of schools, universities, prisons, libraries and countless other organisations. The HMDT has a significant outreach and communications team, running workshops across the UK every year, to help inspire and instruct people to run their own HMD events. Their website - https://www.hmd.org.uk/ - has grown to be a considerable resource for Holocaust education, and commemoration, including films, books, images, poems, portraits, life stories, activity templates, faith resources, youth resources, schools/teaching materials, and 'get involved guides', amongst other materials.

This book collects the work that I completed whilst (and since) working as a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellow. My research project analysed linguistic and other semiotic processes employed in the commemoration of HMD, their potential for shaping the understanding of mass audiences and the ways that the commemoration of HMD has changed since 2002. My work employs a discourse analytic approach to a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1998), drawing in particular on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Studies (Heer et al 2008; Krzyżanowski 2010, 2011, 2017; Krzyżanowski and Oberhuber 2007; Muntigl et al 2000; Wodak et al 1999; Wodak 1996).

The project triangulated data and methods in order to make sense of both the field of remembrance and its genres (e.g. ceremonies, speeches, stories, testimony, music, minutes of silence, etc.) and the ways that they reflect the complex interplay between historiography, popular understandings of history, and social and historic contexts. Specifically, the project examined data, and discourses, from multiple sites: ethnographic participant observation of three Holocaust Memorial Day Trust workshops; interviews with participants and organisers of all these workshops; analysis of the UK broadcasting schedules (2002-2016); analysis of the national HMD

Commemoration Ceremonies in the four years it has been broadcast on British television (2002, 2005, 2015 and 2016), both as a whole as well as rhetorical analysis of specific speakers; and an embodied and emplaced rhetorical ethnography of a later national HMD Commemoration Ceremony, which I attended as a volunteer. As I hope to show in this collection of chapters, these different forms of discourse, these different sites of memory, are analytically rich and ideologically complex – far more complex that has been thus far acknowledged. HMD calls to people, interpellating them and provoking them to act. In the chapters that follow, I start to explore some of the ways this occurs, its implications for public understandings of the Holocaust and what it says about Britain and its Holocaust cultures.

SECTION 1

MASS MEDIATED COMMEMORATION

Introduction

The mass media, whether television, radio, feature films, the press and various websites on the internet, constitute the most significant sites for the representation and consumption of historical narratives in modern societies (de Groot 2016; Zelizer 1992). As Berger (2008, p.7) argues, "History writing has never been the sole guardian of national narratives […] A range of other media and genres play a much more important role in shaping national discourses." The mass media – and perhaps especially television broadcasters[2] – "provide a public arena for various agents […] who want to influence the ways in which collective pasts are narrated and understood" (Meyers et al, 2014, p.5). Public awareness and understanding of the Holocaust – what Pearce (2014) calls Holocaust consciousness – has developed hand in hand with its mass mediation, whether through fictional or actuality genres.

The first British Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) took place January 27 2001. The decision to initiate a British HMD was taken in the Stockholm International Forum in 2000, at the end of which representatives from 46 governments around the world signed a declaration committing to preserve the memory of those who have been murdered in the Holocaust (Allwork 2015). The 2001 national HMD ceremony was held in Westminster Central Hall and televised live on the BBC to around 1.5 million viewers. The contents and staging of the first national HMD in Britain have been written about in detail (Macdonald 2005; Pearce 2013, 2014; Sauer 2012), but in contrast, there is a surprising lack of analysis of British Holocaust commemoration since 2002 (though see Eadson et al 2015). Academic analysis of the mass mediation of Holocaust commemoration is even thinner, aside from a series of ground-breaking studies by Meyers, Neiger and Zandberg on Holocaust commemoration in Israeli mass media (though

also see Gray and Bell 2013). The two other chapters in this section of the book aim to address this absence, by examining the various programmes that British television and radio broadcast to mark HMD.

The limits of representation

Analysis of the ways that the mass media contribute to shaping public knowledge and understanding of the past has expanded significantly in recent years (Neiger et al 2011b; Zelizer 1992; see also Dillon 2010; Edgerton & Rollins 2001). Some academics have questioned whether popular broadcast media are able "to produce meaningful, valid and engaging representations of difficult pasts, and especially of the Holocaust" (Meyers et al, 2014, p.103), given the commercial imperatives of the medium. Others question such a prim attitude towards mass mediation, pointing out that an "increasing number of historians do recognise the value of this form of public communication in disseminating historical knowledge" (Bell and Gray, 2007, p.144). "The key challenge for BBC History", according to a BBC Strategy Document (2009), "is to balance entertainment and information in the right proportions for a range of different audiences" (quoted in Gray and Bell, 2013, p.60).

The Holocaust has become a fixture of Western culture (Marrus 2015; Pearce 2014) and, as such, is the frequent focus of mass media broadcasts. However, just as the Holocaust exposes the limits of evidence and representation in historiography (Stone 2012b), so too "the extreme nature of the Holocaust clearly illuminates both the limitations and the capabilities of commercial media in its representation of a difficult past" (Meyers et al, 2014, p.5). Criticism of Holocaust broadcasting tends to take one of three forms, all of which question the limits of representation. First, at the most fundamental level, there is the question whether any televisual representation of the Holocaust constitute *mis*representations, given that "the medium cannot convey the physical–and, therefore, the metaphysical–ugliness of the subject" (Shandler, 1999, p.168). Such a criticism, however, must necessarily include all academic historiography of the Holocaust as well, given that it too is (only) a representation of the past and so ostensibly incapable of conveying its metaphysical ugliness. And so (for me) this first criticism seems to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Second, "the incursion of commercial culture into most forms of cultural production" (Meyers et al, 2009, p.459) is assumed to mitigate against rigorous examination of the Holocaust through its pursuit of a mass audience. Such "media contents strive to attract a superficial kind of attention, and their main quality is that they do not challenge the consumer" (Meyers et al, 2014, p.6). Accordingly, to appeal to a popular/mass market of viewers, the desperate moral challenges of the Holocaust, as one of the foundational events of our age, are "cut down to size" and rendered "commonplace instead of awesome and frightening" (Mosse, cited in Marrus, 2015, p.16).

Third, and following on from this second point, "in order to *please* consumers, media products are designed according to schemes that have been proven to be successful in the past" (emphasis added, Meyers et al, 2014, p.6). Corner (1999, p.93) argues that "giving of pleasure is the primary imperative of most television production". In the case of factual programming, this is derived from balancing "the pleasures which gaining knowledge involves" (Corner, 1999, p.96) with the pleasure of consuming narratives structured in accordance with conventional schemes and tropes. As Smither (2004, p.51) put it, "the best guarantee that a project will make you money, or at least will not lose you money, is to ensure that it conforms closely to the pattern of something that has visibly worked before." Cole (2000) argues that in popular/mass mediated Holocaust historiography, stories of survival are frequent, as are active heroes and rescuers – particularly those from 'Our nation' – and definitive 'happy endings', which "skirt the horrors of the Holocaust and offer us something much more palatable in its place" (p.xvii). In sum, the reception and criticism of mass mediated representation of the Holocaust suggest "that aesthetically appropriate mediations (e.g. documentary film) and venues (non-commercial television) for the presentation of the Holocaust do exist, but what distinguishes them as appropriate, dignified or serious also disqualifies them from effectively reaching mass audiences" (Shandler, 1999, p.171).

However, Kansteiner (2008, p.154) maintains that "public negotiations about national and other identities have been increasingly conducted through narrative visual media, especially film and television" and that feature films and TV programmes about the Holocaust *have* played "an important role" in this (see also Kansteiner 2006). The broadcast of the TV

drama series *Holocaust* is usually identified as representing "a key turning point towards, perhaps even the first example of, the development of a popular transnational memory of the Holocaust" (Kansteiner, 2008, p.166), particularly in the Federal Republic of Germany. In Britain, in contrast, Kansteiner argues that "Holocaust themes surfaced with some delay and never became a popular staple of mass entertainment. […] It is tempting to attribute this lack of an indigenous Holocaust culture to the fact that the British, in contrast to many other European nations, never had to endure occupation and deportation at the hands of the Nazis" (p. 168). This explanation, drawing as it does on a phlegmatic version of the Churchillian narrative of British resistance, is a common place in historiography.[3] However, it is also incorrect; a region of Britain *was* occupied, from June 1940 until the end of the War – the Channel Islands – citizens of the islands *were* deported to camps on mainland Europe and Jewish citizens and residents of the Islands had their property subsequently 'aryanised' (Fraser 2000).

Such insights draw our attention to the ways that the depiction of the nation in history broadcasting relates to the social and political life of the nation in the present – both in terms of national "power structures and hierarchies maintained or rejected by such narratives of the past" (Gray & Bell, 2013, p.7), and the ways that broadcasting (sometimes constructing) rituals and traditions contributes to the rhythm of the nation across a calendar year (see also Scannell & Cardiff 1991). Gray and Bell (2013) argue that "anniversaries of key events are particularly sensitive in terms of national identity maintenance and this may be seen in UK television" (p.20) as much as in other countries. Indeed, in their chapter on commemorative television, they argue that nowhere is the representation of the nation (and its relation to gender, social class, ethnicity and race) "more significant than in commemorative programming, which seeks to represent a historical national identity, and in so doing, to create a sense of community within a culturally disparate nation" (p.100). Whilst Chapman (2007) highlights the subversive potential of some commemorative programming there is, as Young (1999, p.86) also points out, a danger "of turning Holocaust memory into a kind of self-congratulatory spectacle", ignoring controversial periods of British Holocaust history.

CHAPTER 1

'BROADCAST TO MARK HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY'

Introduction

This chapter examines the various programmes that British television and radio broadcast to mark Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), between 2002 and 2016. Adopting a content analytic methodology, I quantified the broadcast schedules of 15 successive HMDs, as recorded in archived copies of the *Radio Times*, in order to examine patterns in mass mediated HMD commemoration. Writers such as Jacobs (2000) and Holmes (2005) have also demonstrated the efficacy of such an approach to broadcasting history, when the audio-visual archive is either non-existent or, in my case, incomplete. My choice of data and method are quite novel – as Meyers et al (2009, p.458) point out, "The vast majority of collective memory studies rely on qualitative methods, and when quantitative methods are used, it is mostly to survey the public rather than to explore mnemonic contents" (cf Bennett 2006; Piccini 2007). Programmes which mark HMD are not only broadcast on the 27 January itself, but are also transmitted either side of the day, to fit with the normal programming week.[4] Accordingly, I sampled seven continuous days of broadcasting each year, either side of HMD in addition to HMD itself, to capture these variations in scheduling (see Ellis 2000).

A programme listing qualified for analysis if:
(1) it fell within the week of HMD *and* it mentioned (2) 'The Holocaust' in either the title or the description, or (3) a widely recognized metonym for the Holocaust (e.g. any concentration or death camp) *or* (4) that the *Radio Times* specifically stated that it was broadcast 'to mark' or 'on' HMD.

This procedure was adopted to allow me to distinguish between programming intended to commemorate HMD and the preoccupation with WWII that one frequently sees with British television, particularly on history channels. Only full programmes qualified for analysis, unless *Radio Times* explicitly stated that part of the contents of a (e.g. magazine) programme was broadcast to mark HMD. This was to distinguish between specifically commemorative texts and HMD being referred to in other actuality genres (e.g. coverage of HMD on the news).

I initially photographed all qualifying programmes in the *Radio Times*. This allowed me to maximise my time in the archive as well as giving me a sense of the sample as a whole. I then developed a coding manual of 20 variables, to apply to the programme titles and descriptions, to quantify their contents.

My analysis reveals significant variations in mass-mediated Holocaust commemoration. Principally, I found: a decrease in programming, despite a significant increase in the number of television channels; a tendency towards 'anniversarism' in the form and frequency of broadcast programmes; a stress on Auschwitz, as metonym of the Holocaust, and on survivors, children and music; and that commercial channels were significantly more likely to broadcast documentaries (and repeats) than the BBC's more varied and original outputs. These variations appear to be the result of three interlinked factors: first, a sense that the audience had grown weary of World War II commemoration, following saturation broadcasting of anniversaries in 2004-2005; changes in the management and programming priorities of key broadcasters, particularly the BBC; and that HMD has not yet become an established day for broadcasters in the nation's commemorative calendar.

Frequency and length of programmes

Across the 15 years of sampled issues of Radio Times, there were 150 items broadcast on British TV and radio to mark HMD – a very satisfactory average of 10 per year. Graphs 1.1 and 1.2, below, show how these programmes were distributed across the sample period, the first showing number of programmes and the second showing the total minutes broadcast each year.