

Stitching Together What Had Been Rent Apart: the Utopia of Reinstating Harmony in the Landscape of Post-Holocaust Poland

Olga Kubińska
(University of Gdańsk, Poland)

Wojciech Kubiński
(University of Gdańsk, Poland)

Cultural memories of the Holocaust in Poland have recently undergone dramatic adjustments, possibly in the wake of the narratives of the second and third post-Holocaust generations. These memories are often overlaid by other reminiscences of World War II traumas affecting other ethnic minorities, i.e. Ukrainians or Ruthenians, and ethnic Poles, further aggravated by self-imposed silence about one's past.

Paul Nora, who distinguished between the *milieux* and *lieux de memoire*, claimed that in the wake of historical events the former were obliterated thus necessitating the concerted construction of the latter. Research on visual and textual narratives abounded in reflections on the forms of moulding and manipulating of collective memory in accordance with officially professed "historical policy". Ample exemplification of such manipulation is manifest in two new historical museums recently opened in Poland: the Museum of the Second World War and Museum of the Ulm Family. The two exhibitions contribute to the formation of collective memories, allegedly promoting harmony in the presentation of the turbulent past. They fail to appeal to "heteropathic memory" (Silverman), thus leaving a gap between the collective memories of Poles and Jews, which needs to be filled.

Such is the task pursued by Mieczysław Abramowicz from Gdańsk who fashions cultural memory by using literary means, as well as constructing spaces of memory through the implementation of theatrical techniques. His novel published in 2013, *Bowiem jak śmierć potężna jest pamięć* [For memory is strong as death], and the performance at the Jewish cemetery in Sopot jointly constitute a many layered fabric of (re)constructed collective memory. Such attempt to reinstate a lost harmony, however utopian it might seem, stands out in stark contrast to the exclusive narrations of collective memories epitomized in the two freshly opened Polish museums.

Keywords: the Holocaust, Polish-Jewish collective memories, Abramowicz