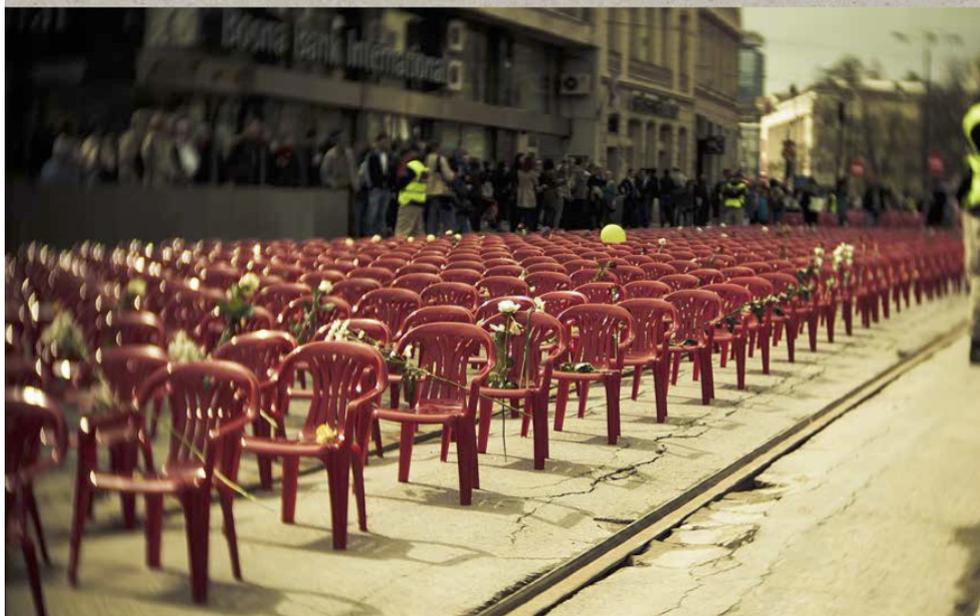


# The Forensic Turn in Holocaust Studies?

(Re-)Thinking the Past Through Materiality

25 & 26 June 2015  
Bruno Kreisky Forum  
für internationalen Dialog  
Armbrustergasse 15  
1190 Wien

WIENER WIESENTHAL INSTITUT  
FÜR HOLOCAUST-STUDIEN (VWI)



Simon Wiesenthal Workshop 2015

Abstracts & CVs

Ewa Domanska

(Uniwersytet Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan /Stanford University)

**Keynote:**

***Corpus Delicti, Non-Human Witnesses and a Post-Secular Turn***

---

My talk concerns environmental forensics and the way it changes our understanding of *corpus delicti* and witnessing. I am interested in the ontological status of the dead body as a multispecies entity and as an organic habitat that might reconfigure our understanding of what it means to be human in the non-human environment. I claim that it is not a realistic discourse of historical writing that sets criteria for social change and our worldview, but rather a forensic imaginary based on a fantasy of science, law, religion and multispecies community. I would risk a hypothesis that in the future, social changes will be limited by legal regulations based on scientific discoveries on one hand, and on religious principles on the other.

[ewa.domanska@amu.edu.pl](mailto:ewa.domanska@amu.edu.pl)

---

Ewa Domanska is Associate Professor of theory and history of historiography in the Department of History, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland and since 2002 Visiting Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology, Stanford University. Her teaching and research interests include comparative theory of the human and social sciences, history and theory of historiography, ecological humanities, genocide and ecocide studies as well as dead body studies. She is the author of four books, most recently *Existential History. Critical Approach to Narrativism and Emancipatory Humanities* (in Polish, 2012); *History and the Contemporary Humanities* (in Ukrainian, 2012) and editor and co-editor of 14 books on historical theory. She is currently completing a book entitled: *Necros: Introduction to an Ontology of the Dead Body*.

**Chair:**

*Éva Kovács (Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI))*

[eva.kovacs@vwi.ac.at](mailto:eva.kovacs@vwi.ac.at)

---

Éva Kovács, sociologist, studied sociology and economics at the Universities of Economics in Pécs and Budapest, PhD 1994, habilitation 2009. She is Head of Department of Methodology and History of Sociology in the Institute of Sociology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her research fields are the history of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, memory and remembrance, Jewish identity in Hungary and Slovakia. She authored five monographs, edited eight volumes and published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals. She co-founded the audiovisual archive “Voices of the Twentieth Century” and was a member of the VWI International Academic Board from 2010 to September 2012. Éva Kovács is Research Programme Director at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) since October 2012.

## Panel 1: Archeology as Political Practice

Thursday, 25 June 2015  
14:30 – 16:30

*Chair:*

*Juliane Wetzel*

*(Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Berlin)*

[wetz0154@mailbox.tu-berlin.de](mailto:wetz0154@mailbox.tu-berlin.de)

---

Juliane Wetzel, historian, PhD 1986 at the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, Munich; 1986-1991 researcher at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich; since 1991 senior researcher and academic staff member at the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Technische Universität Berlin; Member of the German delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance; Member of the German Bundestag's Expert Board on Combating Antisemitism; member of the Board of Directors of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI). Numerous publications on contemporary antisemitism, extreme right-extremism, antisemitism in Europe today; antisemitism on the internet, Jewish persecution during National Socialism; emigration of Jews during the Nazi era; solidarity and help for Jews in Italy during the Nazi occupation; antisemitism in Italy since the 1930s; Jewish Displaced Persons in Germany after the Second World War.

Francisco Ferrándiz/Luis Ríos

(Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid)

## Scientific Rituals in Contemporary Spanish Civil War Exhumations

Since 2000, more than 375 Civil War mass graves, containing around 6,500 bodies of civilians, executed by paramilitary units in Franco's rebel army's rearguard have been exhumed in Spain. Spanish contemporary exhumations are peculiar in that (a) they do not have legal coverage and (b) most have been carried out as part of an "outsourcing model" in which the State provides funds to groups of relatives and NGOs to carry out all tasks involved, but does not directly get involved in them. This exhumation model was established after 2006, when the socialist government set up a specific funding scheme for "memory recovery" activities, and was consolidated after 2008, when Judge Baltasar Garzón attempted an indictment of Francoism according to available legislation in Human Rights International Law, specially tapping into the figures of *crimes against humanity* and *forced disappearances*. In the absence of the powerful institutional umbrella provided by the investigative scenario of the legal crime scene, the steady development of protocols – both by the technical teams and, later, by certain public administrations – has been crucial in the increasing importance of an archaeological and more specifically forensic regime of truth and aesthetics in the management of exhumations and in the overall construction of historical memory in Spain. Albeit lacking judicial sanction, this freelance modality of human-rights-violations knowledge production is based on rigorous methodology, evidentiary scientific, not legal logic, new forms of technical and digital imaging, scientific custody, electronic archive building, and the growing use of DNA identification and its associated logics of genetic kinship and statistical certainty.

Within this framework – and engaging other studies of the Spanish experience and, more generally, of exhumations linked to Human Rights violations cases in other parts of the world –, in this paper we will focus on the critical analysis of the performative aspects of scientific practice in the period 2000-2012, analysing the evolution of technical protocols during the decade and assessing how they both condition and become embedded in broader mourning and funerary practices, creating novel and transforming amalgams with family, religious and political memory plots and rituals. More concretely, we will explore the consequences of the increasing predominance of scientific setups in excavations, for the contemporary social memory of the Spanish Civil War how evidence is transmitted to relatives in on the spot teach-ins, how laboratory routines transform exhumed bodies, how DNA samplings often become commemorative and kinship rituals, how individualised scientific identifications have transformed former notions of the *community of death*, and how scientific knowledge is deployed in reburial ceremonies through forensic reports, classification and cataloguing of the corpses, technical imaging, PowerPoint presentations and other associated practices. In sum, how science's deployment in all phases of the exhumation process has become a preeminent – if controversial – dignifying tool, both merging with, coloring and displacing other available commemorative rituals.

[paco.ferrandiz@cchs.csic.es](mailto:paco.ferrandiz@cchs.csic.es)

Francisco Ferrándiz is a tenured researcher at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), Madrid. He has a PhD in social and cultural anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, funded by a Fulbright Scholarship. Since 2002, he has conducted research on the politics of memory in contemporary Spain through analysis of exhumations of mass graves from the Spanish Civil War. Since 2010 he is the PI of the research project *The politics of memory in Contemporary Spain*, funded by the Spanish government. On this topic, he has recently published the monograph *El pasado bajo tierra: Exhumaciones contemporáneas de la Guerra Civil* (2014) and coedited with Antonius C.G.M. Robben the comparative volume *Necropolitics: Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights* (2015).

Luis Ríos is Researcher in the Department of Biology, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and in the Department of Physical Anthropology, Society of Sciences Aranzadi. Since 2000 he has been involved in the study of human skeletal remains from archaeological and forensic contexts in Guatemala, México, Portugal and Spain. In Spain, he has coordinated a laboratory in which more than 400 skeletons exhumed from mass graves and prisoners cemeteries from the Spanish Civil War have been studied, and over 140 identifications have been proposed. Currently he is a member of the research project *The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain: A Decade of Exhumations* (<http://politicadela memoria.org/>), funded by the Spanish government.

---

Robert Harris' murder mystery *Fatherland* (1992) is based on the counterfact that Germany won the Second World War, that all of Europe's Jews had been killed, and that this Holocaust had been forgotten. In 1964, police detective Xavier March investigates the murder of retired State-Secretary Josef Buhler, discovers that his murder is linked to a meeting held 22 years earlier in a villa in Wannsee, and then uncovers the genocide of the Jews. Concerned about March's investigation, Odilo Globocnik arrests and tortures the detective in an effort to find out how much he had learned about the Holocaust. When March finally breaks, and utters the names of the camps, Globocnik responds cynically: "They're just names, March. There's nothing there anymore, not even a brick. Nobody will ever believe it. And shall I tell you something? Part of you can't believe it either." In the denouement, March escapes from his the torture cellar to make a final effort to acquire certainty about the past he had discovered. Pursued by Globocnik he reaches the site where, twenty years earlier, Auschwitz-Birkenau had been. There is nothing but a birch forest. Then March notices a brick, "pitted with yellow lichen, scorched by explosives, crumbling at the corners. But it was solid enough. It existed. He scaped at the lichen with his thumb and the carmine dust crusted beneath his fingernail like dried blood. As he stooped to replace it, he saw others, half hidden in the pale grass – ten, twenty, a hundred . . ." And thus March confirmed below the undergrowth of that birch forest a missing page – nay chapter, book, library – of European history.

Taking *Fatherland* as my point of departure, I shall explore with the help of Hannah Arendt's reflections on the epistemology of Nazism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and her articulation of the relationship between truth and politics, published in *The New Yorker* (1967), the meaning of archeological remains as evidence of the crimes of Nazism – a political movement that stands out in the history of politics for its tendency to deny the importance of facts as an inescapable reality and for its willingness to understand reality as propaganda – that is as a conglomeration of ever-changing events and slogans in which a thing can be true today and false tomorrow.

---

[rjvanpelt@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:rjvanpelt@uwaterloo.ca)

Robert Jan van Pelt has taught at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture since 1987, and held appointments at many institutions of higher education in Europe, Asia and North America, including the Architectural Association in London, the Technische Universität Wien, the National University of Singapore, the University of Virginia, Clark University, and MIT.

He has published ten books dealing with diverse topics such as the cosmic speculations on the Temple of Solomon, relativism in architectural history, the history of Auschwitz, the history of the Holocaust, and Holocaust denial. At this time he is writing a book on the history of the concentration camp barrack

An internationally recognised authority on the history of Auschwitz, van Pelt appeared in Errol Morris's film *Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter Jr* and acted as a senior consultant to the BBC/PBS series *Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi State*. Van Pelt chaired the team that developed a master plan for the preservation of Auschwitz, and served as an expert witness for the defense in the notorious libel case *Irving vs. Penguin and Lipstadt* (1998-2001).

*Keith K. Silika*

*(Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent)*

## **Forensic Archaeology and Politics in Zimbabwe**

---

Ever since the birth of nationalist political movements in present day Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, the country has experienced varied sporadic acts of political and tribal motivated violence. Most of the violence by both government and other pro government groups has resulted in the death of many victims. During the war of liberation that lasted from 1963 – 1979, 30-40,000 people lost their lives both within country and neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Mozambique. After independence from Great Britain between 1981-1987 internal strife gripped the country a resulting in the death of between 20-30,000 people mostly from the Matabeleland provinces. The birth of new political paradigm in 1999 and subsequent elections also brought violence which has claimed over 2,000 victims. Within all these periods of violence all clandestine burials bear ‘material causes of death’ which points to a particular period in question in terms of crime scene marking and apportioning responsibility.

Using the Holocaust studies as a template and approaching the Zimbabwean atrocities, there are political archaeological concerns, legal, cultural, religious issues, ethical sensitivities, and excavation and reburial methodologies that can be borrowed to inform this experience.

---

[keith.silika1@gmail.com](mailto:keith.silika1@gmail.com)

Keith K. Silika is a PhD-student in the field of genocide investigation at Staffordshire University. He holds an MA in forensic archaeology from the University of Bradford, a BSc in Forensics & Criminology from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Małgorzata Wosińska  
 (Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu)

## Turning to Present. Forensic Methods in Holocaust Studies as a Practical Approach in Modern Post-Conflict Societies

---

The studies I have conducted over the last few years on the identity of genocide survivors and their trauma (understood in both the cultural and psychological context) point to an integrating identity, showing that memory of the Jewish Holocaust and its representations today constitute not only this painful European heritage but somehow may also form a non-European one. It seems, however, that these observations may have both the academic and practical/preventive dimension.

This paper attempts to look at the memory of the Shoah, and especially the forensic approach in Holocaust Studies from a comparative perspective. In my presentation, I will talk about the possibilities of applying selected elements from forensic methods established already in Europe (including identification, conservation and visual symbolisation of human remains in museum space) in the context of non-European countries that experienced genocide.

The legacy and dynamic of Holocaust discourse will be shown through the example of two countries: Poland and Rwanda, or – to be more specific – chosen places of commemoration that are symbolic for the story of the Jewish Holocaust and the genocide of the Tutsi: the Polish Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum (space structured in terms of implemented representations although expressed with dynamic discourse), and the Rwandan Murambi Memorial Site (space still building its identity).

In 1994, an ethnic civil war breaks out in Rwanda. Within 100 days (April-July) between 870,000-1,000,000 Tutsi civilians are killed by Hutu paramilitary groups. The conflict is legally recognised as genocide, and in the following years, within Holocaust and Genocide Studies discourse it is recognised as the so-called close genocide. The concept of closeness in the present context of use is understood as transgressing the borders of kinship relations (as mothers killed children from mixed marriages), social roles (priests killed the members of their congregations). It also relates to the type of the weapon – the machete can only be used when the victim remains within the hands' reach of the perpetrator. Finally, it refers to the closeness between the hiding / the survivors and the dead bodies. Rwanda is not a big country, and the mass graves covered only in lime are a feature of the landscape in practically every village and town.

In Rwanda today, the commemorative practices are a key element of social and international policy. They are predominantly based on oral tradition linked to the traditional local performative culture. A memorial, a museum, an artefact are alien forms, stemming from the colonial past, however, due to the closeness of the mass graves to the survivors in 1994, these forms have been adapted in the process of creating local representations in specific ways. The forms of visual representation dominant in Rwanda raise controversies in European Museum Management are human remains / bodies in situ, often at different stages of decomposition. They are mass graves without a clear legal or institutional status, open for commemoration practices and visiting.

The question I want to ask in the context of the above-mentioned research, and the one which will constitute interpretation basis for the whole essay, is how forensic methods applied to the Holocaust can help function (survive) Rwandan places of commemoration and create historical memory about the Tutsi genocide. Another issue I will analyse is whether applying a universalising character of the Holocaust discourse, expressed above all with the symbol of Auschwitz, in the non-European environment can threaten the process of creation of local commemoration methods connected not only with managing the physical landscape and commemoration policy, but also with the existing cultural landscape, its tradition and the identity and personal memory of its users/inhabitants.

[yakinda@gmail.com](mailto:yakinda@gmail.com)

---

Małgorzata Wosińska, ethnologist and psychotraumatologist. PhD-student in the final year at the Faculty of History at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Her research interests include Holocaust and Genocide Studies, anthropology of memory, Modern Curatorial and Museum Studies. She also works with the witnesses of traumatic events. Currently she is working on a doctoral thesis concerning the identity of Tutsi survivors in Rwanda, where she has conducted regular field research since 2009. Curator of exhibitions for the former concentration camps in occupied Poland. The youngest winner of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage Award „Museum Event of the Year Sybilla 2011” for individual project *Sztutowo or Stutthof? The taming of the cultural landscape*. Author of 30 publications in scientific journals, co-editor of three books and one collection of Reportages.



## Panel 2: Contested Methodologies

Thursday, 25 June 2015  
 17:00 – 19:00

*Chair:*

*Dominique Trimbur (Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, Paris)*

[dtrimbur@fondationshoah.org](mailto:dtrimbur@fondationshoah.org)

---

Dominique Trimbur, German Studies and History of International Relations, Universities of Metz and Strasbourg; PhD, University of Metz (France) on German-Israeli Relations (1995). Post-doc at the French Research Center, Jerusalem (CRFJ) and the German Historical Institute, Paris (1997-2002). Since 2002 Senior Program Associate, Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, Paris / Associate Resarcher, Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem. Historian of the German-Israeli relations (1945-today), and of the European (French and German Catholics) presence in Palestine/Israel, 1850-1948. Lecturer on History of Modern Israel, University Paris (Sorbonne), member of the International Academic Advisory Board of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI).

Author of numerous papers and of several books: *De la Shoah à la réconciliation ? – La question des relations RFA-Israël (1949-1956)*, Paris, CNRS-éditions, 2000; *De Bonaparte à Balfour – La France, l'Europe occidentale et la Palestine, 1799–1917*, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2001 (ed., with Ran Aaronsohn ; 2nd edition: 2008); *Une École française à Jérusalem – De l'École pratique d'Études bibliques des Dominicains à l'École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem*, Paris, Ed. du Cerf, 2002; *Entre rayonnement et réciprocité – Contributions à l'histoire de la diplomatie culturelle*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002; *Europäer in der Levante – Zwischen Politik, Wissenschaft und Religion (19.-20. Jahrhundert) – Des Européens au Levant - Entre politique, science et religion (XIXe–XXe siècles)*, Munich, Oldenbourg, 2004 (Pariser Historische Studien 53); *De Balfour à Ben Gourion – Les puissances européennes et la Palestine, 1917-1948* (ed., with Ran Aaronsohn, Paris, CNRS éditions, 2008); *Europa und Palästina 1799-1948: Religion – Politik – Gesellschaft/ Europe and Palestine 1799–1948: Religion – Politics – Society* (ed., with Barbara Haider-Wilson, Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2010).

Caroline Sturdy Colls  
(Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent)

## To Dig or not to Dig, “That Is the Question”. Reconsidering Archaeological Approaches to Holocaust Landscapes

---

Excavation has been seen as the cornerstone of archaeological investigations for centuries. Similarly, over the last fifteen years, forensic archaeologists have been increasingly involved in the search for and recovery of buried remains in both domestic missing persons cases and international mass grave investigations. However, the methods and techniques employed by experts in this area have not been widely applied to the investigation of Holocaust sites. Where body recovery efforts have been attempted in this context, they have often been hindered, prevented or objected to. This paper will discuss the reasons why large-scale searches for Holocaust mass graves have not been undertaken and will critically evaluate the ethical, religious, political and social implications of excavation in this context. Following this, the variety of state-of-the-art non-invasive techniques now available to forensic archaeologists will be presented and their benefits in terms of locating mass graves and other evidence of atrocity will be discussed. Through a series of case study examples from the author's own research, it will be demonstrated how forensic and archaeological investigations can assist in the location and characterisation of buried or concealed evidence, even if excavation is not permitted.

---

C.Sturdy-Colls@staffs.ac.uk

Dr Caroline Sturdy Colls is an Associate Professor of Forensic Archaeology and Genocide Investigation within the Forensic and Crime Science department at Staffordshire University. She is also the co-founder and Research Lead for the Centre of Archaeology at the same institution. Her current research focuses on the application of novel forensic and archaeological techniques to the investigation of the Holocaust. Dr Sturdy Colls has led the first scientific investigations at Treblinka extermination and labour camps in Poland, Semlin concentration camp in Serbia, and the labour camps and fortifications in Alderney in the Channel Islands. She is particularly interested in the ethics surrounding the investigation of Holocaust landscapes and has developed a unique non-invasive methodology so as to cater for the scientific, ethical and religious aspects regarding investigations at sites of mass murder. She is the author of a number of publications including two recent monographs: *Holocaust Archaeologies: Approaches and Future Directions* and *Forensic Approaches to Buried Remains*. She is also a practicing forensic archaeologist and regularly works with UK Police forces on missing persons investigations.

Ivar Schute

(RAAP Archaeological Consultancy, the Netherlands)

## The Archaeological Excavations at the Sobibor Extermination Camp: an Example of the Forensic Approach in Holocaust Studies

---

The archaeological excavations at the Sobibor extermination camp started on a small scale in 2007 on the joint initiative of Wojciech Mazurek (Poland) and Yoram Haimi (Israel). In 2013, Dutch archaeologist Ivar Schute joined the team. In the beginning, the excavations drew little attention. In 2011, Poland, Israel, the Netherlands and Slovakia combined their efforts to realise a new memorial centre in which plans for archaeological research were incorporated. The plans for the memorial centre not only include a visitor centre but also a monumental redesignment of the landscape – it is a forest because the camp was demolished by the Nazis in October 1943.

Until 2011, archaeological research was done on the basis of a project outline and a research agenda. The restrictions laid upon the work were primarily financial ones. It has to be stressed that from 2007 on, the work was carried out respecting the so called Jewish Halacha law (including laws regarding burials). Things changed after 2011. The design of the new memorial centre determines the places where the excavations take place. In other words: the archaeological research is reactive to the planning process. On this basis relatively large areas were excavated. The results of this, especially of the 2014 season, drew worldwide attention. That year the ramp and the foundations of the gas chambers were discovered.

Reflecting on the project some critical remarks must be made. Firstly, the lack of a scientific research agenda, or rather, the lack of a need for it, imply that the excavations are done more or less randomly, so only where construction works will take place. Furthermore, there is a lack of communication and understanding between the Majdanek Memorial Center, the architects responsible for the design and the archaeologists. Up to today the design is adapted after every season of excavations. The involvement of four countries, and the natural differences in their communication, makes it difficult to alter this project organisation. In my opinion it should be, and the results of the excavations should be, the input for a new design, made in collaboration with the responsible architects.

Questions can be asked about the scale of the research. Where Holocaust Archaeology in itself is a paradox it is clear that although the results of this research have an enormous impact and meaning to science, on the other hand a more restrained approach could be considered. It has to be stressed that out of the perspective of heritage management there is – in the given situation – no other option. Refraining from excavating and letting the last traces of the extermination camp of Sobibor be destroyed by construction work, and thus finishing the work of the Nazis just by building a Memorial Centre, is another paradox which has to be prevented. A dramatic example of this is in my opinion the realisation of the Belzec Memorial Centre, there the enormous monument has destroyed almost all archaeological traces of the camp. Concluding, the research at Sobibor shows clearly the meaning of archaeological research, not only for science and heritage management, but also for the process of remembrance and reconciliation. It also shows that better understanding of the different countries and partners involved is badly needed.

---

[i.Schute@raap.nl](mailto:i.Schute@raap.nl)

Ivar Schute is an archaeologist who started his career at the State Service of the Netherlands. From 1992, he was responsible for the archaeological guidance of construction works around Berlin, being project leader of a research foundation of the University of Amsterdam. This foundation transformed into RAAP Archaeological Consultancy for which he is currently responsible for research of the Second World War. On that basis, he has since 2008 carried out excavations in the Amersfoort transit camp and the Jewish transit camp of Westerbork. Furthermore, he carried out geophysical surveys in Bergen-Belsen, mapping mass graves, and takes part in the Treblinka project and the excavations at the Sobibor extermination camp.

Claudia Theune-Vogt  
(Universität Wien)

## Fragestellungen - Quellen – Methoden – Erkenntnisgewinn

---

Historischen Fragestellungen zum Holocaust – und auch archäologische Fragestellungen gehören dazu – steht heute ein breites Repertoire an wortbasierten, bildbasierten und materialbasierten Quellen zur Verfügung. Lange sind nur die schriftlichen Quellen und die Zeitzeugenberichte analysiert worden, doch etwa gleichzeitig mit dem sogenannten „material turn“ erkannte man auch den hohen historischen Wert der materiellen Relikte in den ehemaligen Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslagern. Die drei genannten Quellengattungen bieten jeweils einen eigenen spezifischen Zugang, bzw. eigene spezifischen Aussagemöglichkeiten und sie lassen unterschiedliche Perspektiven auf die Handelnden bzw. auf die Ereignisse, Sachlagen oder Zustände der Zeit sichtbar werden. Die ältere Forschung hat dieses Potential weniger erschlossen. Durch die intensive Nutzung von materiellen Quellen für Untersuchungen zum Holocaust im interdisziplinären Verbund mit den anderen Quellengattungen und den jeweils facheigenen Methoden ist ein deutlicher Erkenntnisgewinn zum Holocaust zu erzielen. In dem Vortrag wird argumentiert werden, dass die Auswahl der Methoden in direkter Abhängigkeit von den Fragestellungen und dem möglichen Erkenntnisgewinn steht.

---

Claudia.theune-vogt@univie.ac.at

Claudia Theune-Vogt, Professorin für Ur- und Frühgeschichte mit Schwerpunkt auf Mittelalter- und Neuzeitar- chäologie an der Universität Wien. Seit rund zehn Jahren Forschungsschwerpunkt in zeitgeschichtlicher Archäologie mit Forschungsprojekten in den ehemaligen Konzentrationslagern von Sachsenhausen und Mauthausen, bzw. deren Nebenlagern.

Thomas Pototschnig  
(Wien)

## Zeitgeschichtliche Archäologie und forensische Methodik im Dienste der Holocaustforschung

---

In den letzten Jahren wird, aufgrund der Zeitspanne zwischen den Ereignissen des Zweiten Weltkriegs und heute ein Wandel in der zeitgeschichtlichen Forschung bemerkbar. Es scheint so, dass die artefaktenbasierenden Wissenschaftsrichtungen zunehmend neue Quellenlagen für die zeitgeschichtliche Forschung generieren.

Eine dieser, mit Artefakten arbeitenden Wissenschaft ist die Archäologie. Innerhalb des Faches ist es vor allem die zeitgeschichtliche Archäologie, die sich mit den Fragestellungen des 20. Jahrhunderts und des beginnenden 21. Jahrhunderts auseinandersetzt. Die zeitgeschichtliche Archäologie ist sowohl in der Methode als auch in der Methodik sehr eng mit der forensischen Archäologie verzahnt. Immer mehr ArchäologInnen, die im forensischen Bereich tätig sind, setzen sich auch sehr intensiv mit der zeitgeschichtlichen Archäologie auseinander und umgekehrt.

Sowohl die Archäologie generell als auch die Kriminalistik und im speziellen die Spurenkunde arbeiten mit annähernd gleicher Methodik, lediglich die Fragen an das Material sind in der Archäologie historischer Natur, in den Kriminalwissenschaften juristischer. Da wie dort ist das interdisziplinäre Arbeiten, über die Fachgrenzen hinaus essentiell.

Was bedeutet dies nun aber für die Holocaustforschung und die Archäologie? Anhand von Fallbeispielen soll aufgezeigt werden, welche neue Möglichkeiten zur Generierung von Quellen es geben kann und wo die Grenzen des aktuell machbaren liegen.

---

[thomas.pototschnig@mac.com](mailto:thomas.pototschnig@mac.com)

Thomas Pototschnig studierte Ur- & Frühgeschichte sowie Rechtswissenschaften in Wien und Linz. Er war Mitbegründer des Arbeitskreises Forensische Archäologie der ÖGUF – Österreichische Gesellschaft für Ur- und Frühgeschichte - (2005) und der GIFÖ – Gesellschaft für Interdisziplinären Forensik in Österreich (2014). Seit der Gründung ist er Mitglied von iFAG – Interdisziplinäres Forschungszentrum Architektur-Geschichte. Seit 2005 Mitarbeiter und Projektleiter in diversen Projekten zur zeitgeschichtlichen und forensischen Archäologie.

Robert van der Laarse  
(Universiteit van Amsterdam)

**Keynote:**

**Bones Never Lie? Unearthing Europe's Age of Terror in the Age of Memory**

The recent 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in the Polish town Oświęcim on 27 January 2015, was by far the most contested remembrance of the Second World War after the ending of the Cold War. For among some three hundred survivors and dozens of presidents and royalty the most notable absentee was Vladimir Putin, head of the state whose Red Army had liberated the camp in 1945. This symbolic isolation of Russia was no less remarkable than the meeting of the Israeli Knesset in Auschwitz-Birkenau on the invitation of the Polish government one year before. How could the Holocaust paradigm have become so bluntly used, abused and misused by (trans) national politics of memory and identity? Auschwitz and other former Nazi camps define the common ground of western civilisation as monuments of Europe's 20th century Age of Terror.

Yet, as I will argue, the assumption of the Holocaust as a common European experience, and hence as a basic part of Europe's post-war identity, raises some critical objections. Firstly, the Holocaust paradigm is currently challenged by a deep incompatibility of opinions about the impact, interpretation and meaning of the persecution of the Jews and other victims of Nazi and Communist terror, and secondly it is challenged in increasing competition with by the rise of a post-1989 Occupation paradigm in Eastern Europe, declaring Soviet terror and occupation of former communist countries – ipso facto the Gulag camp system – as equal to Nazi crimes and genocide.

Interestingly, archaeology and forensics play a prominent role in this dynamic of memory. This may seem self-evident, as archaeologists are digging for truth and authentic traces, but archaeology has never been an innocent discipline. First of all, stones and bones played already a pivotal role in Nazi ideological propaganda. Yet transformed into the material testimonies of our current Age of Memory (or Age of the Witness) - which happens to be also an Age of Digital Communication – a new awareness of the materiality of conflict asks for a new awareness of conflicting materialities. For objects, bodies and things might be valued as forensic or historical 'proof', displayed in museums, or appropriated as signs of trauma or identity, and all such claims might easily fuel clashing social media and memory events. This 'heritaging' of the past asks for a transnational rethinking of the archaeology of terrorscape.

[rvanderlaarse@gmail.com](mailto:rvanderlaarse@gmail.com)

Professor Rob van der Laarse is research director of the Amsterdam School for Heritage and Memory Studies (ASHMS) at the University of Amsterdam (<http://ashms.uva.nl/>), and Westerbork professor at VU University Amsterdam. He studied history and anthropology at the UvA, and his PhD (cum laude) on the 19th century politics of religion was awarded with a Praemium Erasmianum research prize (1990). He held positions and visiting scholarships at different universities and research institutes, such as the European University Florence and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS). His published widely on European cultural history, memory studies, and the intellectual roots and memories of the Holocaust. He initiated several large research projects to the heritage of the 20th century World Wars and the Holocaust, such as Terrorscape which was awarded with the Euromediterraneo Prize (2013): <http://www.terrorscape.org/>

**Chair:**

Éva Kovács (Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI))

[eva.kovacs@vwi.ac.at](mailto:eva.kovacs@vwi.ac.at)

Éva Kovács, sociologist, studied sociology and economics at the Universities of Economics in Pécs and Budapest, PhD 1994, habilitation 2009. She is Head of Department of Methodology and History of Sociology in the Institute of Sociology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her research fields are the history of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, memory and remembrance, Jewish identity in Hungary and Slovakia. She authored five monographs, edited eight volumes and published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals. She co-founded the audiovisual archive "Voices of the Twentieth Century" and was a member of the VWI International Academic Board from 2010 to September 2012. Éva Kovács is Research Programme Director at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) since October 2012.

### Panel 3: Research, Preservation, Memorialisation

Friday, 26 June 2015

14:30 – 16:30

*Chair:*

*Brigitte Bailer (Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands)*

[bjbailer@aon.at](mailto:bjbailer@aon.at)

---

Brigitte Bailer, Historikerin, Univ.-Doz., Dr., bis April 2014 wissenschaftliche Leiterin des Dokumentationsarchivs des österreichischen Widerstands; Forschungsschwerpunkte Widerstand und Verfolgung 1934-1945, Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945, „Wiedergutmachung“ für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus, zahlreiche Monographien, Beiträge und Artikel zu den genannten Themen, darunter *Vermögensentzug – Rückstellung – Entschädigung. Österreich 1938/1945-2005* (= *Österreich-Zweite Republik. Befund, Kritik, Perspektive Bd. 7*), Innsbruck-Wien-Bozen 2005 (gemeinsam mit Eva Blimlinger), *Die Entstehung der Rückstellungs- und Entschädigungsgesetzgebung. Die Republik Österreich und das in der NS-Zeit entzogene Vermögen* (= *Veröffentlichungen der Österreichischen Historikerkommission Bd. 3*), Wien-München 2003



Jean-Marc Dreyfus  
(University of Manchester)

## Corpses in Societies. A General Reflexion on the Reinscription of Human Remains in Societies after Mass Violence and the Holocaust

The difficult questions posed by the atrocities of the twentieth century have added to the issues raised by corpses and human remains preserved outside of funerary spaces. Genocides and episodes of mass violence have, in this area as in so many others, overturned existing symbolic and social orders, giving rise to new configurations that are emblematic of the dark side of our modernity. Chief among these are the presence of very large numbers of corpses in numerous countries. It seems that the main aspects of contemporary practices of re-inscribing human remains within the ordinary life of peacetime societies are invariably still structured by the threefold register of religious, scientific and political considerations. In my presentation, I will aim at distinguishing and categorising the various rituals, agencies and administrations in charge of dealing with corpses or human remains en masse after the Holocaust in particular and incidents of mass violence in general. This questioning of the tentative “peaceful” reinscription of corpses in societies raises in fact many problems. The time span and the chronologies of those various treatments should be taken into account, together with the justification and arguments given by various “entrepreneurs” of a seemingly new “necropolitics”. Exchanges of practices and experiences, “bricolage” of new rituals, etc. – all those aspects should be considered, together with stringent religious and ethical questions.

To illustrate the developments of this presentation, I will use several of my case studies, including one about transfers of ashes after the Holocaust. From 1945 until around 1960, ceremonies took place throughout Europe to commemorate the deportation of Jews and the Holocaust: ashes would be taken from the site of a concentration camp, an extermination camp, or the site of a massacre and sent back to the deportees’ country of origin (or to Israel). In these countries, commemorative ceremonies were then organised and these ashes (sometimes containing human remains) placed within a memorial or reburied in a cemetery. These transfers of ashes have received little attention from historical researchers. A typology of this phenomenon can be drawn from several examples. The symbolic function of ashes in the aftermath of the Second World War will be discussed, and also those transfers as instruments of political legitimisation.

[jm.dreyfus@corpsofmassviolence.eu](mailto:jm.dreyfus@corpsofmassviolence.eu)

Jean-Marc Dreyfus is reader in history and in Holocaust studies at the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. He was a post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for European Studies, Harvard and the Centre Marc-Bloch in Berlin. He is the author of five books, including *L'impossible réparation. Déportés, biens spoliés, or nazi, comptes bloqués, criminels de guerre* (*The impossible eparation. Deportees, looted properties, Nazi gold, war criminals*), Paris, Flammarion, January 2015. He has recently edited a special issue of the *European Review of History*, on “Traces, memory and the Holocaust in the writings of W.G. Sebald”. He is the co-organiser (with Elisabeth Anstett) of the ERC research programme “Corpses of mass violence and genocide” ([www.corpsofmassviolence.eu](http://www.corpsofmassviolence.eu)).

Francesco Mazzucchelli  
(Università di Bologna)

## From the Era of the Witness to an Era of Traces. An Epistemic Turn in Traumatic Memories

---

The diffusion of forensic approaches in Holocaust Studies could be seen as the expression of a wider and more general trend which in the last decades have affected not only Holocaust Studies, but also memory studies and, moreover, public attitudes toward cultural memory, especially that of traumatic events.

On the one hand, genocide studies, and memory studies as well, have experienced what could be considered an authentic “spatial turn”: sites and landscapes (and then *in situ* museums and monuments, consequently), have attracted in a new way the interest of researchers, in order not only to enlighten some historical events of twentieth century but also to account for the dynamics of collective remembrance; on the other hand, “historical sites” (and their materiality), which in some cases have been converted into places of memory, have acquired a new central (and political) role as vehicles for expression and transmission of cultural memory, being admitted to (national, local but also “transnational” and global) cultural heritages.

The renewed interest into the “materiality of history” is at the centre of this “paradigm shift” which regards then also collective memory and its “substantiation”. Indeed material remnants and remains can claim today an authentic “witness function”: the “discourse of memory” is largely expressed by the spatiality of places of memory where “historical traces” are contained, preserved and “assembled” in different manners. Therefore, spatial and material traces have become a sensitive point on which History and Memory meet, and sometimes “short-circuit”: traces are not only evidences of the past but also the elements through which spatial narratives of memory are constructed and conveyed.

With the help of some considerations coming from philosophy and especially semiotics (Paul Ricœur, Umberto Eco, Charles Sanders Peirce and others) I will try to speculate on the notion of trace (and namely spatial trace) with the aim not to define the ontology of traces, but rather their “epistemology”, that is, the way they are “assumed” in spatial narratives. Through a comparative analysis of different Holocaust and genocide sites, I will show how different spatial organisations and solutions of preservation or transformation (or reconstruction or dilution) of material remains may result in diverse semantics of traces, manifesting different memory narratives and different strategies of memorialisation.

---

[francesco.mazzucchelli@unibo.it](mailto:francesco.mazzucchelli@unibo.it)

Francesco Mazzucchelli is Research Fellow at the University of Bologna, where he is also scientific secretary of TraMe, Centre for the Interdisciplinary study of cultural memory and traumas. He has been visiting researcher in several universities in Europe (NIAS, UvA Amsterdam, VU Amsterdam, University of Manchester, Fondation Maison Sciences de l’Homme) and participated to the “Terrorscapes” research project. His research interests include semiotics and theory of culture (also applied to cultural memory and discourse and space analysis) and the Western Balkans area. He is author of the book *Urbicidio. Il senso dei luoghi tra distruzioni e ricostruzioni in ex Jugoslavia* (BUP, 2010) and co-editor (with van der Laarse and Reijner) of *Traces of Terror, Signs of Memory* (Versus 119, special issue).

Roma Sendyka  
(Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków)

## Forensic Memorials. Memorialisations on Non-Sites of Memory

Central and Eastern Europe, the scene of brutal genocides of the past century, is dotted by sites of trauma. Recently, the researchers of the Holocaust Memorial Museum have cataloged 42,500 such memorialisable sites (ghettos, camps) related to the Shoah. The IHRA Killing Sites initiative reminds in its documents that 2.2 million Jews were killed by bullets on dispersed killing sites. Only some of those potential sites of memory are signed with plaques, gravestones or memorials. I am interested in the sites that has been left behind, contested or forgotten.

The contested sites remain unmarked if we think of memorialisation practices in a traditional way. They seem overlooked, absorbed by woods and bushes or new buildings. Yet their location is recognisable to locals. They lead researchers to mass graves with no mistake, so the sites must be somehow marked. But how are the sites, where human remains, flora and soil turned into an entangled, undiscernible entity, different from their physical surroundings, since there is no plaque, no information, no monument to sign the spot?

I would like to present a preliminary hypothesis on the types of memorialisation practices related to those contested sites. Photographs from Galicia by Chris Schwarz document cases of trees and plants used as “discerning structure”; works from Kurdistan done by a New York photographer Susan Meiselas show personal belongings and pieces of clothing used for the same purpose; photographs from Ukraine by Patrick Desbois show how the memorial function is taken over by agricultural machines, documentary essays by Jason Francisco contain evidence of garbage covering such sites .

How should we understand the agency of those “memorials”? Are they “memorials” in the sense of latin root sense of the word *moneo* – meaning “warning” or “instructing, advising”? Or, as typical monuments, are they “reminding” of something? Are they tools of memory or oblivion? Can they be understood with the help of classical studies on commemorative structures and concepts devised by memory studies? I would like to prove that due to the specific physical state of the contested sites, their “markers” can be understood more efficiently only if a non-anthropocentric approach will support the reasoning of the researcher. The forensic turn provides tools and a theoretical approach to understanding the policy of memorialisation in the locations in question.

[rsendyka@gmail.com](mailto:rsendyka@gmail.com)

Roma Sendyka, Assistant Professor at the Centre for Anthropology of Literature and Culture Studies (Polish Studies, Jagiellonian University). Author of *The Modern Essay* (2006), co-edited *Od pamięci biodziedzicznej do postpamięci* (2013). Editor of the book series *Nowa Humanistyka* (New Humanities, IBL PAN). Visiting professor at the University of Chicago (2011 - Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Program), recipient of the Kosciuszko Foundation Grant (2011), awarded in the Patterns Program (Erste Stiftung, Vienna, 2010) for the project “(In)visible Loss. The Holocaust and the Everyday Visual Experience in Contemporary Poland and Central Europe”; EHRI research fellow at NIOD (Amsterdam, 2013). Her work combines elements drawn from three major disciplines: literature, cultural studies, and visual studies. She works on a project on non-sites of memory in Central and Eastern Europe.

Borbála Kriza  
(Budapest)

## What to Do With a Mass Grave? Significance and Insignificance of Holocaust Victims' Mass Graves in Kőszeg to the Local and National Memory in Hungary

Kőszeg, a small picturesque town (with 12,000 inhabitants) in western Hungary by the Austrian border was the location of a 'concentration camp' set up by the Nazis in November 1944. Until the camp was closed in March 1945 an estimated 8,000 Jewish forced laborers were detained there. Around Kőszeg there were also several other smaller camps and industrial sites where Jewish forced labourers were detained. During the winter of 1944-1945 these people (civilians including young and elderly women deported from all over Hungary) were forced to take part in the construction of the Western "defense" which meant hard physical labor i.e. digging trenches in the frozen soil. The living conditions were inhuman: no proper accommodation, sanitary facilities or food. Most of the detainees either died of illness or starvation or were killed by the guards who were recruited in part from the local population of Kőszeg. Some survivors have given accounts of a primitive gas chamber set up to kill around one hundred very ill people. Kőszeg was the labor camp site with the highest death toll in Hungary. The dead were buried in mass graves in the neighbouring woods.

As on the national level, local memory of what happened during the Holocaust remains highly controversial and contested, and particularly those events in which local people were also involved. In 2004, I carried out a research project comprising approximately twenty interviews with people aged about 80 years, who witnessed what happened in the area during the Holocaust. The research focused on how local remembrance takes place and how the episodes of the Holocaust are recalled and explained by non-Jewish eyewitnesses. As well as the interviews, local commemorative practices related to the Holocaust were collected and analysed (including other artefacts of memory: for example monuments and memorials), as well as post-war local media coverage of local Holocaust-related events.

Since the 1980s, an annual official Holocaust commemoration has been organised by local authorities and Budapest-based Jewish organisations at a roadside monument – barely visible and difficult to find – which was erected in 1984. Apart from local rumour, the existence of the long-forgotten mass graves was not openly discussed until 2004, when an amateur archivist, a local primary school teacher, appeared to locate the grave sites and insisted on their exhumation. The location and the dimension of all the graves remain uncertain. One was exhumed in 1947 and, following the teacher's work, another partial exhumation took place in 2008. A temporary one-month-long exhibition was organised comprising a few items (personal belongings) found in the exhumed mass grave by the local history museum.

In my presentation, I will analyse the impact of the existence of the Kőszeg mass graves on local (and national) memory via recounting the history of the graves: localisation of the mass graves immediately after the war, the exhumations in 1947 and 2008, the reburials which have taken place, commemorations, and also the role of the local teacher in the whole process.

How is the life of a town affected when it learns, or remembers, that it is surrounded by mass graves? What are the lessons of an exhumation? How are the details and facts that emerge from an exhumation publicised? How does an exhumation influence memory, or public discourse? How do official and unofficial opinion about the future of these mass graves compare?

One of the outputs of our 2004 projects was a documentary film (*Once They Were Neighbours*; director; Zsuzsanna Gellér-Varga) that explores the mass grave site as well as the teacher whose investigations led to the exhumation.

[krizab@gmail.com](mailto:krizab@gmail.com)

Borbála Kriza is a sociologist, documentary filmmaker. Currently she is working for an oral history project of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum documenting non-Jewish eyewitness testimonies about the Holocaust in Hungary. Between 2007 and 2011, she worked as a research fellow at Institute of Sociology of Eötvös Loránd University, her edited volume *Identities, Ideologies and Representations in Post-Transition Hungary* was published in 2012, (co-editor: Mária Heller). She contributed to a documentary film *Once they were neighbours* (director: Zsuzsanna Gellér-Varga) on the non-Jewish eyewitnesses of the Holocaust in the Hungarian town of Kőszeg, and she was the director of a film about the contemporary far right subculture (*Rocking the Nation*).



## Panel 4: Ethics and Aesthetics

Friday, 26 June 2015  
17:00 – 19:30

*Chair:*

Béla Rásky (Wiener Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien, VWI)

[bela.rasky@vwi.ac.at](mailto:bela.rasky@vwi.ac.at)

---

Béla Rásky, Dr., historian, studied history and history of art at the University of Vienna. Contributed to numerous projects and exhibitions in contemporary history, research at the Österreichische Kulturdokumentation. Internationales Archiv für Kulturanalysen, Expert on Cultural Policy for the Council of Europe, until 2003 director of the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office, Budapest; then freelance and at the Wien Museum. Currently, he is Managing Director of the VWI.

Eyal Weizman  
(Goldsmiths University of London)

## Violence at the Threshold of Detectability

---

Taking the David Irving trial of 2000 and its central debate over the existence of four vents in the ceiling of Crematorium II in Auschwitz-Birkenau as a vantage point – and while moving towards the analysis of the materiality of contemporary drone warfare –, the paper examines legal, technical, political and aesthetic implications of material limits of images mobilised as forensic evidence. Considering both the perpetrating of violence and its investigation as image based practices operating in the field structured by uneven access to media conditioning the vision, the paper focuses on the spaces of denial established through utilisation and production of various ‘thresholds of detectability:’ visual, territorial and juridical zones at which and through which violence is performed and disavowed.

---

[e.weizman@gold.ac.uk](mailto:e.weizman@gold.ac.uk)

Eyal Weizman is an architect, professor of visual cultures, and director of the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. Since 2011, he has directed the European Research Council funded project, Forensic Architecture. He is a founding member of the architectural collective DAAR in Beit Sahour/Palestine. His recent publications include *Forensic Architecture* (2012), *Mengele's Skull: The Advent of Forensic Aesthetic* (with Thomas Keenan, 2012), He also contributed to and edited *Forensis: The Architecture of the Public Truth* (2014).

## The Forensic Gaze: Reading Bodies and Objects as Evidence

---

A forensic, or quasi-forensic, response to occurrences of mass death, conflict and systematic human rights abuses has become increasingly prevalent in the last thirty years, from the Truth Commissions of Latin America and South Africa, to the investigative activities of the international community in the Balkans and Iraq, and increasingly extending its reach back in time to historical events such as the Spanish Civil War or the Armenian Genocide. This paper will engage with the materiality, visual representations and aesthetic affordances of these large-scale investigations. It will first examine the visual and material trappings, or dressing, of the forensic investigation and the construction of the crime scene as a representational space. As popular notions and understandings of forensic practice become more widely disseminated through news media and vernacular culture, the forensic investigation can function as a framing device, encouraging or permitting certain readings of the traumatic past that is under investigation. The connotations of control, objectivity and neutrality associated with scientific practices are particularly powerful in historically charged or contested settings. The visible manifestation of expertise, care and authority afforded by forensic trappings also serve to mask the violence or rupture inherent in many of these investigative processes such as the exhumation of the long-buried dead, the dissection or sampling of human remains, and even the cross-examination of witness testimony, all of which can provoke profound public unease.

The second theme to be discussed in this paper is the aesthetic and memorial impact of re-constituting bodies and objects as forensic evidence. The evidential power ascribed to hitherto mundane objects, such as personal possessions or the minutiae of the human body, change our understanding of bodies and objects, and in so doing, can change our way of relating to the past. This paper will reflect on Zoe Crossland's idea of the metonymic relationship between clue and solution. It will consider some examples of how evidence is assimilated into imaginative networks or assemblages of existing memory objects or mementoes of the past, and how the emergence of new objects, or the re-classification of objects as evidence, reactivates and intensifies an engagement with the material traces of the past, suffusing these traces with new purpose and possibility. In particular, it will look at the strong aesthetic charge of some kinds of evidence and how its status as evidence, seemingly objective and unmediated, effectively circumvents feelings of resistance against an aestheticised reading of the past, so that the wider representational power of forensic evidence often avoids critical scrutiny. The seemingly miraculous quality of forensic evidence, its survival, discovery and interpretation against the odds, also carries an aesthetic, or even moral, power, enabling a teleological reading of the rightness of the forensic investigation and its outcome. This paper will refer to investigations in a number of different contexts, with a focus on the Spanish Civil War and the Western Front in the First World War.

---

[l.renshaw@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:l.renshaw@kingston.ac.uk)

Layla Renshaw, Dr; Associate Professor in the School of Life Sciences at Kingston University, London, where she teaches forensic archaeology and anthropology. She has worked as an assistant archaeologist to the UN's International Criminal Tribunal in Kosovo and has conducted extensive field work in Spain. She is the author of *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War*. Her research interests include the role of archaeology in post-conflict investigations, the relationship between human remains and traumatic memory, and public and media perceptions of forensics. She is currently writing a book on the identification of soldiers in the First World War recently recovered from mass graves on the Western Front, and the link between genetic testing and memory.

Zuzanna Dziuban

(Wiener Wiesenthal Institut für Holocaust-Studien, VWI)

**Human Remains and the Politics of Survivance**

The vulnerability of human remains to various expressions of power established through material and discursive practices evolving around them has come to occupy a prominent position in the scholarly theorisations of their afterlives emerging in recent decades. Analysed through the conceptual prism of ‘dead-body politics,’ introduced to the discursive arena by Katherine Verdery in her *Political Life of Dead Bodies*, the entanglement of the corpses and human remains in the broader historical and political processes as symbolic vehicles embodying particular political meanings and constructed as specific (most often nationalised or racialised) subjects, is today considered unquestionable. Being both things and remnants of once living human beings, human remains constitute a particularly malleable – if tricky – material for the inscription and politicisation of identities, and privileged fields for articulating hegemonic narratives of the past. While acknowledging the basic reality that dead bodies are shaped by and embedded in the matrix of broader social, cultural and political forces, the paper expands upon this understanding by focusing on the implications of the turn towards the materiality and agency of bones and dead bodies in the developing field of dead body studies. Bringing to the fore the capability of bodily remains not only to animate, but also to ‘act back’ and subvert the various dead-body politics constructed around them – founded both in their materiality as objects or in their constantly changing material properties as things – the paper will discuss the ethical, theoretical and political implications of their constitutive excessiveness.

Focusing specifically on the material and political afterlives of the human remains at the sites of the former National Socialist extermination camps in Poland, the paper will therefore critically engage the question of the ‘agency’ of ashes and burned human remains, as distinct from the ‘agency’ of bones. The concept of ‘survivance,’ borrowed from Gerald Vizenor and Jacques Derrida (and further developed), will delineate the theoretical frame in which the analysis is located.

[zuzanna.dziuban@vwi.ac.at](mailto:zuzanna.dziuban@vwi.ac.at)

Zuzanna Dziuban holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, where she also completed a Master in Cultural Studies and studied Philosophy. She has been a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Konstanz (Research Group “Geschichte & Gedächtnis”), at the Humboldt University of Berlin and the House of the Wannsee Conference in Berlin. Her research interests focus on the relation between violence, memory, and space, the Holocaust and the post-war cultural politics of grief. She published a monograph *Obcość, bezdomność, utrata. Wymiary atypii współczesnego doświadczenia kulturowego* [= *Foreignness, Homelessness, Loss: Dimensions of Atopia of the Contemporary Cultural Experience*] (2009). She is currently a Research Fellow at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) where she conducts research on the afterlives of ‘Aktion Reinhardt’ extermination camps.

My research addresses recent literature on memory and the past, which I argue is informed by the analytical, archeological and judicial orientation of forensic practices. Thus, I approach the question posed by Jakob Lothe, Susan Suleiman and James Phelan in their recent book *After Testimony* (2012) – but coming from the opposite direction: When the witnesses of many of the horrors of the 20th century are passing away, how will this influence the literary engagements with these events? My focus, then, is not specifically on the Holocaust, but I suggest that a contemporary forensic turn is closely connected to our temporal position in relation to the Holocaust and further to a weariness with a particular theoretical legacy connected to testimonies from the concentration camps. My aim is twofold: First, I want to describe and analyse a particular literary mode that challenges the aesthetics of testimony by approaching the past through detection, analysis and “archaeological” digging. How does a “forensic literature” narrate the past in terms of plot, language, narration and use of visual media? Secondly, I want to explore how this “forensic” literary engagement with the past *challenges* a forensic paradigm, which aims to eliminate the problems, related to human testimony through scientific objectivity. While forensics has the potential to analyse the past with scientific detachment and provide an external viewpoint, which can be scrutinised and challenged in the adversarial system of the trial and in scientific processes of peer review, it inherits - but also obscures - many of the issues related to testimony. I pursue three interrelated hypotheses: First 1) that a shift of emphasis from testimony to forensics has taken place in contemporary memory culture *and* in literature on memory and the past. Secondly 2) that this shift demands a reconsideration of *testimony* within a forensic framework. And thirdly 3) that the “forensic” literary mode that I discuss here provides a corrective to the assumption inherent in forensics that the scientific analysis of objects and bodies could (and should) leave behind human subjectivity and bias when the past and its meanings are negotiated.

In the workshop, I will engage with these questions focusing specifically on how a forensic turn reframes testimony. As forensic science gains authority in both popular culture and in the legal, affective and political processes that follow war and human made catastrophe around the world, it affects how we engage with past events and which modes of representation we rely on and find persuasive. Today, I argue, testimony (and the legacy of trauma theory connected to it) has become less authoritative in terms of evaluating past events, yet testimony “sneaks back in” as recurring phrases such as “material witnesses” and “the testimony of bones” reintroduce the human victim whose voice has been silenced. Using Göran Rosenbergs recent book *A Brief Stop on the Road from Auschwitz* I examine how, in the *forensic* literary work, testimony returns as a forensic genre or mode of writing.

litjdb@dac.au.dk

Johanne Helbo Bøndergaard, Ph.D, fellow at Aarhus University, Denmark, with a project on forensics in memory culture and contemporary literature. Engaged in networks in the field of Memory Studies (including Mnemonics, Frankfurt Memory Studies Platform and the COST action “In Search of a Transcultural Memory memory in Europe”) and in narratology and fictionality studies. Research stay with Dr. Prof. Astrid Erll at Goethe University in Frankfurt a.M. in 2014. Editor and treasurer of the Danish literary journal *Passage - Tidsskrift for Litteratur og Kritik* since 2010. Peer reviewed articles address forensics in literature, aesthetics and terrorism and the literary construction of authenticity in fiction. Member of the Ph.D. board at the Graduate School of Arts at Aarhus University since 2011.

Stephenie A. Young  
(Salem State University)

## Bodies of Evidence. Forensics, Photography and the Post-Yugoslav Document

---

In a recent interview about the apprehension associated with using documents as evidence, theorist Thomas Keenan says: “documents may not have any verifiable relation to reality ... but they still have to claim that they do. The document is a truth-claim-making machine, an operational form, structured so that even if it’s hollow it can and will go on functioning.” [“What is a Document?” An Exchange between Thomas Keenan and Hito Steyerl.” *Aperture* (spring 2014) 58-84. 62.]

In the 21st century there are many different approaches to how we document truth, and one of the most well known is the science of forensics. Forensics exists to counter amnesia and speak for those *in absentia* as a document of memory, as a way to speak for the victim in his or her absence. Yet “speaking” through whose voice? Through which mediums? To what end? One of the places where these questions about “documenting” and “speaking for the dead” are urgent is during the process of the excavation of mass graves in post-conflict regions, especially in contemporary Bosnia—a place where the quest for how to speak for the dead, to articulate and document the violent past in the aftermath of genocide, continues to be in dispute. In this region, bodies of victims and their possessions disinterred from mass graves from the war in the 1990s have been used as evidence of the crimes committed. Yet these same bodies and objects are also used as post- or extra-legal documents that have been reinterpreted into different contexts for diverse audiences. Thus, these bodies and objects are seemingly caught in a representational tug-of-war as divergent interests (local, national, international) attempt to establish a post-conflict narrative about the legacy of genocide in Bosnia.

In this paper, I am concerned with how photographs that depict forensic objects from mass graves in Bosnia are created for communities beyond the courtroom and function as “linking” documents - those whose “operational form” shapes the way that we consider the tenuous relationship between present and past and embraces the slipperiness of post-conflict memory. In particular, I focus on artistic photographs of possessions of the dead found in the primary and secondary mass graves discovered in the aftermath of the massacre at Srebrenica from the 1990s war. I am interested in how certain types of images of the remains of the dead and their possessions, what I refer to and categorise as “forensic art,” are used to aestheticise and interpret these found objects. The larger questions of my research include: what kinds of narratives do these photographs of these “things” create about the relationship between aesthetics and forensics as part of a search for a language of memory? To what extent do they help (or not help) shape the discourse about the legacy of genocide in Bosnia? How do we navigate these forensic topographies about subjects such as genocide and mass graves to create narratives about the recent past for a future audience? What does the work of these photographers add to our understanding of the fraught relationship between forensic evidence, memory and the document?

[syoung2@salemstate.edu](mailto:syoung2@salemstate.edu)

---

Stephenie Young is a professor of comparative literature and affiliated faculty member of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Salem State University in Massachusetts. She is currently working on a book about how contemporary artists from around the globe are increasingly using forensic findings from mass graves (the remains of the dead and the objects found with them) as a means of creating narratives of memorialisation in the wake of political, social, and/or cultural conflict since the Second World War. These narratives, which are more often than not photographic, examine artistic productions emerging out of regions and communities that have suffered genocide, including the 1990s war in Bosnia and the massacre of the indigenous Quechua people of Peru in the 1980s.